

Front Lines

4/27/2011

GCA Summer Tour, New Bathroom Award

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Summer Tour

After the hustle and bustle of May and early June sales, squeeze in a visit of Garden State garden retailers during the Garden Centers of America's Summer Tour, June 13-16. Getting out and seeing other retailers is the best way to gather moneymaking ideas and inspiration to take back and implement at home. It's a wonderful chance to network with peers, as well.

Tentative stops on the tour so far are: Reynolds Garden Center, Bob's Garden Center, Garden Green House & Nursery, Sickles Market, Barlow Flower Farm, Dearborn Market, Hall's Garden Center, Williams Nursery, The Farm at Green Village, Metropolitan Plant Exchange, Fairfield Garden Center, Strawberry Blossom Flower Shop and Rutgers Landscape & Nursery.

Registration for the GCA Summer Tour is open now. Visit www.GardenCentersofAmerica.org to learn more about the tour and to sign up. The host hotel is the Hyatt Regency New Brunswick, which can be reached at (888) 421-1442. Be sure to reference Garden Centers of America to guarantee the special room rate. For more information about the Summer Tour and to register, visit www.gardencentersofamerica.org.



GCA Bathroom Award

Garden Centers of America has created a new garden center industry award that they hope will be flush with potential winners—the GCA Bathroom Award. According to David Williams, GCA president, one of the most important elements in the operation of a garden center is the restroom. The customer base for independent garden centers is estimated to be 80% women, and one of the elements appreciated by women is a clean, fresh and well-designed restroom.

Dave notes that in the recent best-selling *What Women Want* by Paco Underhill, convenient and clean restrooms ranked very high in a woman's decision of where to shop. In the book Underhill says, "If you think about every major new hotel or restaurant,

you realize that having a fantastic women's bathroom is a design statement that creates buzz.”

In commenting on the new award, Dave says, “The GCA Bathroom Award will honor those garden centers that have recognized the importance of restrooms in their garden center and have done an outstanding job in making their restrooms a positive factor in the customer's shopping experience.”

The GCA Bathroom Award, sponsored by Jeff and Cheryl Morey of the IGC Show, will be presented at the GCA Annual Meeting and Luncheon held on Thursday, August 18, at the IGC Show in Chicago, Illinois. The top award is the Best of the Best Award, and the recipient will receive a plaque and a complimentary registration on the 2011 GCA Holiday Tour in Detroit this fall and also for the 2012 GCA Summer Tour in San Francisco. Other recognition will be a Gold Award, Silver Award and several Awards of Merit.

To enter the competition, garden centers should send the name of their store, address and a contact person at the store for questions along with their telephone and email address. Also email several pictures of your bathroom (saved in jpg format) along with a brief paragraph about the bathroom, why it's designed the way it is, and its benefit at the garden center. The information should be sent to info@gardencentersofamerica.org. The entry deadline is 5:00 p.m. EDT on July 15, 2011.

Judges will review the photographs and paragraph description, and judge the entries on creativity and comfort to the customer's overall shopping experience. All independent garden centers are eligible to enter. Membership in GCA is not required to enter the contest.

For more information, please contact Shanan Molnar, vice president of operations for the Garden Centers of America at (888) 648-6463 or email smolnar@asginfo.net. **GP**