

PRESS RELEASE**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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AmericanHort Launches Initiative to Explore the Future of Garden Retail
Partnership with National Design College to Challenge Paradigms

Columbus, Ohio – The future of garden retail is being explored with a new initiative announced this week by AmericanHort at Cultivate'14. Over the next 12 months, the association will engage its membership and consumers in a project to explore and then identify strategies to expand garden retail. Along with the Horticultural Research Institute, the association will partner with the MindMarket program of the Columbus College of Art and Design (CCAD), the oldest design college in the United States, with its main campus in downtown Columbus, Ohio.

Like many business sectors of the post-2008 economy, the horticulture industry is actively looking for new perspectives and business models. One of the industry's strongest customer forces, the affluent baby boomer, is entering into retirement with their houses, savings accounts, and pensions intact with plenty of time for gardening. However, the next generation of consumers presents an entirely different set of realities. It is believed the millennial generation, with less leisure time, smaller housing, and possibly fewer financial resources, will challenge and confound current garden retail models, especially at the independent level.

"This initiative is more than just about designing attractive stores. We are taking a holistic approach to better understand and recommend how in the future we can bring more value to our customers and engage them in purchasing more products and services," said Mark Foertmeyer, AmericanHort's Chairman of the Board. "Store design, customer service, the mix of products and services, marketing, and staffing will be considered, for example."

The project will involve multiple phases, including research, developing concepts and feasibilities, and testing prototypes. Over the year, CCAD students and faculty will engage association members and consumers in the United States and Canada as part the project.

"We recommended taking a design approach to affect the garden customer experience in new ways for a new generation of consumers," said Jack Storey, Director of CCAD MindMarket. "We will bring together our multi-disciplinary campus and more than 1,000 students—most of them part of the millennial generation—to help find solutions for the future of the horticulture industry."

The Horticultural Research Institute, the research affiliate of AmericanHort, will support the project. "The Horticultural Research Institute has funded several consumer and retail-focused projects over the years. We feel this initiative is important so we are glad to lend our support. Our involvement also provides an opportunity to individuals and companies to make tax-deductible gifts to support the project," said Harvey Cotten, president of the Horticultural Research Institute.

The project kicked off at Cultivate'14, AmericanHort's annual exposition and convention "As the trade association for garden retailers, we are doing everything we can to support our members. This includes the expansion of the retail program and trade show at Cultivate'14 and now this initiative," said Michael V. Geary, CAE, AmericanHort's President and Chief Executive Officer.

Updates on the program will be shared with members over the coming months.

AmericanHort was formed in 2014 by the consolidation of the American Nursery & Landscape Association and OFA – The Association of Horticulture Professionals. With a combined history of 220+ years, AmericanHort supports nearly 16,000 member and affiliated businesses that include breeders, greenhouse and nursery growers, garden retailers, distributors, interior and exterior landscape professionals, florists, students, educators, researchers, manufacturers, and all of those who are part of the industry market chain. The horticulture industry's production, wholesale, retail, and landscape service components have annual sales of \$163 billion, and sustain over 1,150,000 full- and part-time jobs. Our mission is to unite, promote, and advance the horticulture industry through advocacy, collaboration, connectivity, education, market development, and research. The association has offices in Columbus, Ohio for administration and member services, and in Washington, DC to facilitate government relations and research activities.