

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 18, 2015
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Introducing SHIFT: An AmericanHort Initiative

Columbus, Ohio – AmericanHort, along with its research affiliate the Horticultural Research Institute, introduces SHIFT: An AmericanHort initiative. This innovative research project takes a hard look at the future of the industry. What was once announced as the “the future of retail” research project isn’t just about retail anymore – it’s about how the collective industry can rise to the challenge of meeting modern and future consumers’ expectations. This research demands a shift in strategies, thinking, and paradigms. It forces us to think and to ask ourselves, “What if we started doing things differently?”

SHIFT is the largest research initiative of its kind for the industry. The resulting data, insights, and recommendations paint a clear picture of opportunity for all industry businesses to capitalize on trends and even get ahead of the curve. SHIFT is the future of consumers, the future of retail, the future of the supply chain, and the future of the horticulture industry. With raw, real, and bold insights and recommendations for businesses at all stages and sizes, SHIFT offers small steps and big changes to help the industry evolve and thrive for the future.

“It’s important to our industry,” says Mark Foertmeyer, owner of Foertmeyer and Sons Greenhouse and Chairman of the AmericanHort board of directors, “because a shift in marketing and retailing of our products is critical in giving thought to our customers, and how they interpret what we do. They don’t see it the way we do. We are utilizing design thinking because it’s a great way to get into the minds of our customers, figure out where they’re at, and then move them to a place where they can see the benefits of what we offer. Then, they can quit looking at the ‘plant in the pot’ as a commodity but see rather what the plant can do for them. It’s a really important shift, and our industry has a lot to look forward to. We have a bright, bright future.”

“Along with our research partner, the MindMarket program of the Columbus College of Art & Design, we explored retail trends among various consumer products, reviewed the existing research on our own industry, and directly included the perspective of our future customers, the Millennials,” said Michael V. Geary, CAE, president and CEO of AmericanHort. “This is a collaborative effort that included our members and non-industry professionals in order to give us an informed perspective about the possibilities. One thing is certainly clear, now is the time to make the shift to ensure future profitability.”

In the coming months and years, AmericanHort members will see insights and recommendations of this continuing research in several ways. These will include training pieces for employees, webinars, educational sessions at various AmericanHort events, content in industry and association publications, and marketing and communication strategies.

More information on this initiative can be found at AmericanHort.org/SHIFT. The debut of this initiative and the resulting insights and recommendations can be experienced at Cultivate’15 in the new Retail District.

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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.