

WELCOME TO



# Plant Partners

**16400 Huntersville-Concord Rd  
Huntersville, NC 28078  
Toll Free: (888) 628-3958  
Phone: (704) 949-1178  
Fax: (704) 875-2982**

Revision Date: January 13, 2011

## **FOREWORD**

We are happy to welcome you to Plant Partners, Inc. Whether you have just joined our staff or have been with us for a while, we sincerely hope your employment here will be a positive and exciting experience and we are confident that you will find our company a dynamic and rewarding place in which to work. We look forward to having a productive and successful association. We consider the employees of Plant Partners to be one of its most valuable resources. This manual has been written as a guideline to policies and procedures to help serve as a reference for the employee in case of any questions .

There are several things that are important to keep in mind about this handbook. First, it contains only general information and guidelines. It is not intended to be comprehensive or to address all the possible applications of, or exceptions to, the general policies and procedures described. For that reason, if you have questions concerning eligibility for a particular benefit, or the applicability of a policy or practice to you, you should address these specific questions to the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202.

Second, the procedures, practices, policies and benefits described here may be modified, changed or discontinued from time to time. We will try to inform you of any changes as they occur by posting new changes on the company website, by email updates and/or by mail.

Third, no portion of this handbook should be disclosed to any individuals except Plant Partners employees and any representatives of Plant Partners, Inc.

Fourth, this handbook is not to be mistaken as any type of contract, in any manner. This handbook, nor any other company document, does not imply any right to remain in the company's employ, nor does this guarantee to you any fixed terms and conditions of your employment.

Finally, some of the subjects described here are covered in more complete detail in official policy documents. Since this handbook only briefly summarizes these benefits, please contact us at the Human Resources Department, 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202 if you have a need for further clarification. Please also note that the terms in the written detailed policies kept at Plant Partners, Inc. override this handbook.

# Plant Partners, Inc

## Handbook of Guidelines

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## Section 1

### **1:1 Welcome!**

It's our pleasure to welcome you to Plant Partners, Inc. We are an energetic and creative bunch, dedicated to high standards of excellence and quality. We value each one of our employees, and we hope that you find your work here rewarding and satisfying.

This section introduces you to our Company's history, purpose, and goals. Please read it carefully so that you can better understand who we are, what we do and where we want to go. In addition, we have included our Mission, Vision and Value Statements along with our Code of Conduct on the following pages for your future reference.

### **1:2 Introduction**

Plant Partners, Inc. was founded in 2003 by Metrolina Greenhouses and is based out of Huntersville, NC. We are a family -owned company and run a casual operation where people are free to voice their opinions and ideas. Do not let this informality fool you. We continually strive for, and demand, excellence from ourselves and our employees, as we consider ourselves to be the premier live goods merchandising company on the East Coast.

The basic principle of merchandising for live goods is to help our clients merchandise plants in such a dynamic fashion, with bright colors and quality product, that sales will increase enough to justify the extra expenditure of merchandising. Following consistent merchandising techniques, keeping product organized and keeping the product quality to high standards helps our customers to increase sales, increase the customer's loyalty and increases the shelf life of the plants we care for. Our measure of success is the value we can create for our customers and we maximize this value by recognizing the importance of the trust and accountability placed before us.

## Our Vision Statement

Plant Partners, Inc. will use excellent leadership skills and flawless execution to exceed our customer expectations, providing the absolute best service value with the highest level of professionalism.

## Our Mission

To be the most respected and trusted merchandising company in the live goods nursery department of the world's leading retailers and the "go to" consultants for our clients by providing innovative solutions and the highest quality service coverage.

## Our Values

### **Trust:**

Trust is the foundation of all our relationships. We are accountable to, and can rely on, each other for honesty and good faith efforts.

### **Commitment to Excellence:**

We challenge ourselves every day to achieve exceptional performance. We learn from our experiences and strive to continuously improve.

### **Integrity:**

We are honest, ethical and accountable for our decisions, actions and results.

### **Teamwork:**

Full participation and collaboration by everyone makes us stronger and allows us to better serve our clients.

### **Innovation:**

We reject complacency by embracing continual improvement, creativity and innovation.

### **Respect:**

We treat each other with respect and dignity, recognizing that innovation springs from unique perspectives.

### **Client Focus:**

We are passionate about helping our clients. Their success is a key measure of our success.

## Our Commitments

The Corporate philosophy of Plant Partners, Inc. pertains to the following three broad areas of commitment:

**Commitment to our customers** – We are committed to quality service and cost-effective, creative, and efficient excellence in serving the needs of our customers.

**Commitment to our employees** – We are committed to providing an open opportunity for employees to develop and succeed professionally. Each employee is valued, unique, and makes a contribution to our corporate mission. Each employee is committed to excellent performance. Employees are expected to treat each other with consideration, trust, and respect and to work together as a team.

**Commitment to Teamwork** – We believe teamwork produces more than the sum of individual efforts. Team members must be reliable and committed to the team, as well as to the company. Open and honest communication by employees is essential in building trust, respect and in achieving overall future success.

## Our Code of Conduct

At Plant Partners, Inc., we believe good ethics and good business go together naturally to generate the best possible long term benefits for both our employees and customers. These business principles reflect who we are, our processes and the way we behave. Through them, we continue to be a role model for our peers and highlight our responsibility, as a group and as individuals, to promote these principles. Our measure of success is the value we can create for our customers and we can only maximize this value if we recognize the importance of the trust and accountability placed before us. In our actions, we practice our core values and reflect our commitment to be the best at what we do. Though the adult business principles listed below cannot totally encompass all possible aspects of conduct, through them we can work together to ensure our company maintains a reputation for high ethical standards, and protect and perpetuate the ideals that make Plant Partners a great company to work with, and for.

We, the members of Plant Partners, Inc., in understanding the personal responsibility we have to our profession, our customers and our communities we serve, do hereby commit to being ethical and professional in conduct and agree while in the course of employment with Plant Partners to:

- ☑ Behave honestly and with integrity in all aspects of our position
- ☑ Treat everyone with respect and courtesy, and without harassment
- ☑ Comply with all state and federal laws
- ☑ Act with care and diligence in all aspects of our position
- ☑ Comply with any lawful and reasonable direction given by someone in the Company who has the authority to do so
- ☑ To avoid real or perceived conflicts of interests whenever possible and to disclose them to the affected parties when they do exist.
- ☑ To avoid real or perceived appearances of impropriety, and to disclose any of them to someone in the Company who has the authority to respond when they do exist
- ☑ Act in good faith towards the Company and our customers
- ☑ To be realistic, and with candor, when reporting work conditions
- ☑ Aim to make a positive impact through business relationships
- ☑ To perform assigned tasks with the highest level of quality
- ☑ Accept responsibility in decisions concerning the safety, health and welfare of public and property, and promptly disclose factors leading to the endangerment of such
- ☑ To seek, accept, and offer fair criticism of any work and to acknowledge and credit properly the contributions of others
- ☑ To assist colleagues and co-workers in their professional development and to support them in this code of conduct



## Section 2

### **2:1 Purpose of This Handbook**

We think that Plant Partner employees are happier and more valuable if they know what they can expect from our Company and in return, what our Company can expect from them. In the preceding sections, we introduced you to our Company's history, and our values, culture, and goals. We have the expectation for you to incorporate this information into your daily performance, striving to meet our Company's values in everything we do.

The remainder of this Handbook will familiarize you with the privileges, benefits, and other responsibilities of being an employee at Plant Partners, Inc. Please understand that this Handbook only highlights and summarizes our Company's policies and practices, and cannot possibly cover all situations. For any questions, or if there is need for more detailed and complete information, feel free to contact the Human Resource Department, at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202.

In this Company, as in the rest of the world, circumstances are constantly in a state of flux and changing. As a result, based on business conditions, federal and state laws and future organizational needs, we may have the need to revise, rescind, or supplement these policies from time to time. We here at Plant Partners, Inc. reserve the right to make these changes to any of the policies, procedures and other statements made in this Handbook at any time. Any of the statements in this Handbook should not be construed as any contract or any promise of employment and there are no guarantees on continuation of any policies. The policies can change at any time, for any reason, and without warning. These are necessary requirements in order to provide and maintain the appropriate employment relationship and to obtain the present and future goals of the company.

### **2:2 Employment At Will Statement**

Although you are a new employee, we cannot make any guarantee about any continued employment at Plant Partners. This handbook, nor any other company document, does not infer to any contractual right, expressed or implied, to remain in the company's employ. Nor does this guarantee to you any fixed terms and conditions of your employment. Your employment here is "at will", and is not for any specific time, and may be terminated "at will", with or without cause and without prior notice by the company, or you may resign for any reason at any time, with or without notice.

No employee or Company representative, other than the Merchandising Director, has the authority to change the at-will employment relationship or to contract with any employee for different terms of employment. Furthermore, the Merchandising Director can only change the at-will employment relationship with a written contract, signed by him/her and the employee.

## Section 3

### 3:1 Commitment to Equal Opportunity

Plant Partners, Inc. is strongly committed to providing equal employment opportunity for all employees and potential applicants for employment. We follow all state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination in hiring and employment and do not discriminate against any employees or applicants on the basis of race, national origin, disability, gender, religion, age, or any other characteristic protected by state or federal law. All employment decisions, including those relating to hiring, promotion, transfers, benefits, compensation, placement, and termination, will be made without regard to these same characteristics. For us, this is the only acceptable way to do business.

Any current employee, or applicant, who believes that he or she has been discriminated against in violation of this policy, should immediately contact us at the Human Resources Department, 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202. At Plant Partners, Inc. we encourage you to come forward if you have suffered or witnessed what you believe to be discrimination. The Company will not retaliate, or allow retaliation, against any employee or applicant who complains of any possible discrimination, assists in an investigation of any possible discrimination, or files an administrative charge or lawsuit alleging possible discrimination.

Our Company will not tolerate discrimination against any employee or applicant. We will take immediate and appropriate disciplinary action against any employee who violates this policy. As a reminder, members of management are required to report any discriminatory conduct or incidents, as set forth in our Company policies.

### 3:2 Harassment

It is our policy and our responsibility to provide our employees with a workplace free of harassment of any nature. Harassment and sexual harassment, either physical and/or verbal, undermines our workplace morale and our pledge to treat each employee with dignity and respect. Accordingly, harassment of any nature will not be tolerated at our Company.

Sexual harassment can take many forms, including but not limited to any physical contact or other unwanted touching, posting offensive cartoons or pictures, using slurs or other derogatory terms, telling offensive or lewd jokes and stories, and sending email messages with offensive content. An unwanted sexual advance, requests for sexual favors, sexually suggestive gestures, jokes, propositions, email messages, or other communications all can constitute a form of sexual harassment.

If you experience or witness any form of harassment in the workplace, please immediately notify the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext.202. We encourage you to come forward with complaints, the sooner the better, so we can take steps to resolve it. The Company will not retaliate, or allow retaliation, against any person who complains of any harassment, assists in a harassment investigation, or files an administrative charge or a lawsuit alleging harassment. In addition, all managers are required to immediately report any incidents of harassment to the Human Resource Department.

Complaints will start to be investigated promptly by interviewing all parties involved and possibly other parties who may have potential knowledge of any instances or behavior. The employees who are found to have violated this policy can be subject to immediate and appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including the potential for termination.

### **3:3 Americans With Disabilities Act Policy Statement**

The Company is committed to complying with all applicable provisions of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). It is the Company's policy not to discriminate against any qualified employee or applicant with regard to any employment opportunity because of such individual's disability or perceived disability, so long as the employee can perform the necessary and essential functions of the position. In accordance to this non-discrimination, the Company will provide reasonable accommodations to a qualified individual with any type disability, as defined by the ADA, who has made the Company aware of his or her disability, provided that such accommodation does not constitute an undue hardship on the Company. Employees with a disability who believe they need to request a reasonable accommodation to perform the essential functions of their job should contact the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202.

### **3:4 Requesting an Accommodation**

After receiving a request for accommodation, a senior member of the Human Resource Department will investigate the feasibility of the proposed accommodation considering various factors, including, but not limited to the nature of the accommodation, and the possible impact on the operation of the Company. Plant Partners will inform the employee or applicant of the decision in a timely manner. If the accommodation request cannot be approved, employees will be advised of their right to appeal the decision.

The ADA does not require Plant Partners to make the best possible accommodation, to reallocate essential job functions, or to provide personal use items (i.e., eyeglasses, hearing aids, wheelchairs, etc.). An employee or job applicant who has questions regarding this policy or believes that he or she has been discriminated against based on a disability should notify the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202. Any and all such inquiries or complaints will be treated as confidential to the extent permissible by law.

### **3:5 Proof of Work Eligibility**

Federal laws require Plant Partners to complete Federal Form I-9 and for you to show us documentation proving your identity and your eligibility to work in the United States. Plant Partners will retain this information in a confidential and secure location in accordance of any state or federal laws and guidelines.

### **3:6 Child Support Reporting Requirements**

Federal and state laws require Plant Partners to report any basic information about new employees, including name, address, and Social Security number, to a state agency called the State Directory of New Hires. The state collects this information to enforce child support orders. If the state determines that you owe child support, it will send us an order requiring us to withhold money from your paycheck to pay your child support obligations.

## Section 4

### 4:1 Pre-Employment Background Checks

To ensure that Plant Partners continues to hire the best possible candidates who are well qualified and have strong potential, it is our policy to check the employment references of the selected applicant prior to extending a job offer.

Plant Partners will also conduct a criminal background check and a Department of Motor Vehicles drivers license check on all new hire candidates. Once a hiring decision has been made regarding interest in an applicant, the offer will be contingent upon the satisfactory completion of reference checks and background checks.

Reference results and background results will be held in strictest confidence. If there are additional questions, please contact the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958.

### 4:2 Employment Reference Checks

All inquiries regarding a current or former Plant Partner employee must be referred to the Human Resource Department, at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202. Should an employee receive a written request, he/she should refer the request to the Human Resource Department for handling. No Plant Partner employee may issue a reference letter to any current or former employee without the written permission of the Human Resource Department. Under no circumstances should any Plant Partner employee release any information about any current or former Plant Partner employee over the telephone. All telephone inquiries regarding any current or former employee must be referred to the Human Resources Department.

In response to an outside request for information regarding a current or former employee, it is the policy of Plant Partners for the Human Resources Department to verify only the employee's name, dates of employment, job title, department and re-hire status. No other information will be released without the expressed written consent of the employee.

### 4:3 Policy on Free Speech

It is the policy of Plant Partners to support and promote each individual's right to express his or her views and opinions about actions or ideas in which he or she has an interest, to associate freely with others and the right to assemble peacefully. Although we encourage free speech, Plant Partners reserves the right to terminate employees for expressing opinions that may damage the company's reputation and could otherwise result in adverse publicity. These rights listed exist in equal measure for each employee of Plant Partners. An employee's rights exist regardless of the professional stature or rank and regardless of the degree of acceptability among others of the views or opinions advocated.

In the interest of the organization, each employee must strive to ensure that respect is granted to all clients and coworkers. Diversity is embraced at Plant Partners to augment the capabilities of the organization and add value to our wealth of knowledge and resources. The ability to offer one's input in the form of free speech enhances and extends beyond the service we offer to our customers. If there are additional questions, please contact us at the Human Resource Department, at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202.

### 4:4 Outside Communication

Plant Partners communicates openly, directly and accurately with their clients and with media outlets. We will not give special treatment to any individual or institution. However matters relating to our company must not be discussed with representatives of the media, or any potential clients unless you are specifically authorized to do so as a part of your role in the company. Our company Merchandising Director will communicate any necessary announcements, statements or responses to any questions from the media or from outside companies.

#### **4:5 Company Property**

Plant Partners has invested a great deal of money in the property and equipment that you may use to perform your job.

We ask all employees to take care of Company property and to report any problems to the Human Resource Department. If a piece of equipment or property is unsafe for use, please report it immediately. Please use property only in the manner intended and as instructed.

Failure to use Company property appropriately, and failure to report problems or unsafe conditions, may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

When your employment with this company ends, we expect you to return all company property. This includes all manuals and guides, documents, phones, equipment and tools.

#### **4:6 Company Cell Phones**

Plant Partners may provide a cell phone for certain job positions. These cell phones are for business purposes only. Although personal calls are inevitable, employees are expected to keep personal calls to a minimum. Any downloads for ring tones, games, texting or other additional cost features are forbidden. Extensive use of a company cell phone, or unauthorized downloads, are grounds for discipline, up to and including termination. The company reserves the right to monitor phone call patterns if necessary.

#### **4:7 Company Computers/Laptops**

Plant Partners may also provide a notebook computer or PDA for certain job positions. These computers are for business purposes only. On occasion, the use of the computer may be used for personal reasons, but must be kept to a reasonable level. The use of the computer for personal use must occur outside of business hours and any files created should not be saved on the computer hard drive. Employees are strictly forbidden from installing any software on the system unless specifically directed by the IT Department, or pre-approved by the IT Department. Further, this policy reaffirms that the Company's employees have no reasonable expectation of privacy with respect to any company owned computer hardware, software or electronic mail or files stored in respect to the use of this computer, regardless of whether the employee has private access or an entry code into the computer system.

#### **4:8 Conflicts of Interest**

Outside employment is permissible however we do not allow employees to engage in any activities or relationships that could create an actual conflict of interest or the potential for a conflict of interest. The Human Resources Department reserves the right to determine any reasonable accommodations with the employee. Although it is not feasible to list each activity or relationship that could create any actual or potential conflict of interest, some examples of activities that could violate this policy include the following:

- working for a competitor, customer or other vendor in any capacity
- using the resources of this Company for personal gain
- or using your position in this Company for personal gain

Employees who violate this policy face disciplinary action, up to and including termination. If you are unsure about whether an activity might violate this policy, or if you have any questions about this policy, please contact someone at the Human Resource Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202.

#### **4:9 Outside Employment**

Employees are requested to obtain approval from Human Resource Department before participating in outside work activities. The Company does not intend to inhibit your right as an individual to obtain and hold additional employment, however the Human Resource Department reserves the right to determine any reasonable accommodations that may be applicable. Approval will generally be granted unless the activity directly conflicts with the Company's overall interest. Although it is not feasible to list all scenarios which may be in question, examples of outside work activities that are not allowed are when they:

- prevent the employee from fully performing work for which he or she is employed at the Company, including overtime assignments;
- involve organizations that are doing or seeking to do business with the Company, including actual or potential vendors or customers;
- There is no clear distinction of which company you may be working for; or
- directly violate provisions of law or the Company's policies or rules.

Please be aware from time to time Company employees may be requested to work beyond their normally scheduled hours.

#### **4:10 Corporate Opportunities and Intellectual Property**

Plant Partners employees may not take for themselves personally any opportunities that are discovered through the use of corporate property, information or position, or use company property, information or property for personal gain. Employees owe a duty to the our company to advance its legitimate interests when the opportunity to do so arises.

#### **4:11 Confidentiality and Trade Secrets**

During your employment, you will periodically learn information of a sensitive nature relating to Plant Partners and its clients. This may include notes, files, records, policies or similar materials. It is important for the continued well-being of all employees who depend on this business for their livelihood that this information be kept confidential, and to be aware of the sensitivity of program details for that of our clients. Employees who improperly disclose sensitive information, confidential information or proprietary information, whether by purpose or inadvertently, to anyone, either inside or outside of the Company may face disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Disclosing information can occur by communicating, either verbally, electronically or in writing, with people who work for our client's competition, or Plant Partners' direct competition. When you are approached by someone who is not directly affiliated with our client with whom you are working, please refrain from sharing confidential information, and refer them to the Human Resource Department, at the number listed below. After leaving this Company, you are still prohibited from disclosing personnel, personal, confidential and proprietary information pertaining to the Company. If you do disclose information, we can seek legal remedies. We encourage you to contact the Human Resources Department, 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202, if you have any questions.

#### **4:12 Employment of Relatives**

Usually, this Company will not refuse to hire someone simply because he or she is related to one of our current employees. If you have a relative who might be perfect to fill an open position in our Company, please don't hesitate to refer this person to us.

There are times, however, when employing relatives is inappropriate and has the potential to affect the morale of other employees and to create conflicts of interest for the relatives involved. Therefore, we will not hire relatives of current employees where one relative will directly be supervising the other relative.

If two employees become related while working for this Company, and if one of them is in a position of supervision over the other, only one of the employees will be allowed to keep his or her current position. The other will either have to transfer to another position or leave the Company.

Under this policy, the term "relatives" will encompass husbands, wives, live-in partners, parents, children, siblings, in-laws, cousins, aunts, and uncles. This policy covers biological relationships, marriage relationships, and step relationships.

#### **4:13 Romantic or Sexual Relationships**

For the best interests of the Company, Plant Partners strongly discourages relationships of a romantic or sexual nature between a supervisor and an employee directly under his/her supervision. The Company does not intend to inhibit the social interaction that can be an important part or extension of the working environment. If a situation such as this arises, it is the responsibility and obligation of the supervisor to promptly disclose the existence of the relationship to the Human Resources Department. Upon being informed or learning of the existence of such a relationship, the Company may take all steps that, in its discretion, are deemed appropriate. Generally, at a minimum the two parties will not be permitted to work together in the same manner as previously done.

#### **4:14 Acceptance of Gifts**

No employee may solicit or accept gifts (i.e., lunch, tickets, etc.), lavish entertainment or other benefits of any value from potential or actual customers, suppliers and competitors. The employee is obligated to inform the Company of any such solicitation. Special care must be taken to avoid even the smallest appearance of impropriety.

#### **4:15 Fraud**

Plant Partners will not tolerate fraud of any nature. Our fraud policy and guidelines alert management to the ways in which fraud can happen and helps identify the best practices to prevent it.

#### **4:16 Open Door Reporting Procedure**

Plant Partners wants to maintain a positive work environment and has an open door policy to meet this goal. If there are questions, concerns or if you have an idea and input on doing something, please discuss immediately with your supervisor. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable discussing the matter with your supervisor, feel free to raise the issue with any Company official. We cannot solve a problem if we do not know about it.

An employee who thinks they have witnessed, or has knowledge of any behavior contrary to company policy must promptly disclose these facts, in writing, to his or her supervisor, or call a member of the Human Resource Department, at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202, to discuss and document any potential issues.

Plant Partners wants to maintain a positive work environment and has an open door policy to meet this goal. If there are questions, concerns or if you have an idea and input on doing something, please discuss immediately with your supervisor. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable discussing the matter with your supervisor, feel free to raise the issue with any Company official. We cannot solve a problem if we do not know about it.

#### **4:17 Whistleblower Protection**

A whistleblower as defined by this policy is an employee who reports an activity that he/she considers to be illegal or dishonest to one or more of the parties specified in this book. The whistleblower is not responsible for investigating the activity or for determining fault or corrective measures; these will be decided by appropriate management officials.

If an employee has knowledge of or a concern of illegal or dishonest fraudulent activity, the employee is to contact their immediate supervisor or the Human Resources Director. The employee must exercise sound judgment to avoid baseless allegations. An employee who intentionally files a false report of wrongdoing will be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

Whistleblower protections are provided in two important areas– confidentiality and against retaliation. The confidentiality of the whistleblower will be maintained, up to the point of having to be disclosed to conduct a thorough investigation, or to comply with the law and to provide the accused party their legal rights of defense. The Company will not retaliate against a whistleblower. This includes, but is not limited to, compensation decreases, poor work assignments and threats of physical harm. Any whistleblower who believes he/she is being retaliated against must contact the Human Resources Director immediately. However, the right of a whistleblower for protection against retaliation does not include immunity for any personal wrongdoing that is alleged and investigated.

#### **4:18 Company Website**

You can find important information about this Company and your employment on the company website at [www.plant-partners.com](http://www.plant-partners.com) . This is also the place where we update and post important information regarding your legal rights, job expectations, policies and other general information. We encourage all employees to log on and read this information at their earliest convenience and to use the site as a starting point for any research needed.

Because this is a company website and is our way of communicating with employees, we do not allow anyone to post non-employment related information there. If you would like to communicate information to your coworkers, consider using personal email accounts or personal communication pieces while not on working hours.

We are always looking for ways to improve communications with our employees. If you have any suggestions or ways to improve this handbook in particular or on employee relations in general, please feel free to bring them to our attention. You can always reach us by phone, 1-888-628-3958 ext.202, and may also reach us by mail by writing to:

Plant Partners, Inc.  
Attn: HR Dept  
16400 Huntersville-Concord Rd  
Huntersville, NC 28078



#### **4:19 Our Commitment**

We have a long tradition of encouraging direct, two way involvement and communication with employees. We want to obtain the fullest participation of everyone's energy and views and we believe this is best promoted by our openness to new ideas. We respect the dignity and human rights of our employees and compensate according to skills and performance and with reference to competitive industry and local conditions. We expect our employees to work only reasonable hours. We recognize the importance of health and safety within our business. We seek to provide a healthy, safe and clean working environment in line with local, state and federal laws, regulations and industrial practice.

Our policy on equal opportunities and diversity states we recruit and promote employees on the basis of their suitability for the job without discriminating on the grounds of race, color, ethnic or national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, marital status, or disability unrelated to the task. We will not tolerate sexual, physical or mental harassment of employees by other employees, customers or clients.

We value diversity. Employees from varied backgrounds enrich our company's culture and support our commercial success. We recognize the value that all employees create for the business and will do our best to provide opportunities for personal growth and career development when available.

## Section 5

### 5:1 Your Personnel File

This Company maintains a personnel file on each employee. The purpose of this file is to allow us to make decisions and take actions that are personally important to you, including notifying your family in case of an emergency, calculating income tax deductions and other withholdings, and paying for appropriate insurance coverage.

Although we cannot list here all of the types of documents that we keep in your personnel file, examples include the initial application, tax forms, wage tracking sheet, direct deposit information. We do not keep medical records or the work eligibility forms in your personnel file. Those are kept separately. If you have any questions about your personnel file, contact the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext.202.

### 5:2 Confidentiality of Personnel Files

Because the information in your personnel file is, by its nature, personal, we keep the file as confidential as possible. No one has access to your file unless they are a member of the Human Resources Department. We allow access to your file on a need-to-know basis only.

In regards to personal information concerning pay rate, benefits, or any other classified personal personnel information, Plant Partners prohibits discussing this information with any other employee unless it is with a member of our management supervisory level or a member of the Human Resource Department. Violation of this type of communication can result in disciplinary action, up to, and including, termination.

### 5:3 Please Notify Us If Your Information Changes

Because we use the information in your personnel file to take actions on your behalf, it is important that the information in that file be accurate. Please immediately notify a member of the Human Resources Department whenever any of the following changes occur:

your name

your mailing address

your phone number

your dependents

the number of dependents you are designating for income tax withholding

your marital status

the name and phone number of whom we should notify in case of an emergency

any life status change for insurance purposes if required, or

restrictions on your driver's license or lack of auto insurance coverage if required.

### 5:4 Work Eligibility Records

In compliance with federal law, all newly hired employees must present proof that they are legally eligible to work in the United States. We must keep records related to that proof, including a copy of the Form I-9 that each employee completes for us.

Those forms are kept as confidential as possible. We do not keep them in your personnel file. If you would like more information about your I-9 form, please contact

## **5:5 Medical Records**

We understand the particularly sensitive nature of an employee's medical records, so in accordance to HIP-PA federal guidelines we do not place any records pertaining to medical needs or insurance coverage's in the employee's personnel file. We keep all medical records in a separate and secure place. If you would like more information about your medical folder, please contact the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202.

If you have any questions about the storage of your medical records or about inspecting your medical records, contact \_\_\_\_\_.

## **5:6 Time and Attendance Records**

In accordance with all federal and state laws and rules, all attendance records are kept for the required period of time. The attendance records of all employees are recorded daily through a computerized IVR system. These attendance records are Company records used for payroll calculations and care must be exercised in recording the hours worked, overtime hours and absences. If an employee fails to clock in or out for any portion of their shift, he/she must notify their supervisor immediately so the accurate time can be recorded for payroll. Employees are forbidden to clock in or out for other employees. Employees are forbidden to leave the job site while clocked in, they must clock out. Failure to clock out will be considered as falsification of time and can result in disciplinary action. Violations of this policy may result in immediate discharge. If you would like more complete information concerning time records, please contact the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202.

## **5:7 Inspecting Your Records**

Current employees who want to inspect their personnel folder must make an appointment with the Human Resources Department. Appointments can be scheduled Monday through Friday between the hours of 1:00 pm and 5:00 pm. We will make every effort to give an employees an appointment within 48 hours. If an employee would like a representative to view his or her file, the employee must make the request in writing and also be present at the time of the appointment.

Former employees who would like to inspect their files must make a written request to do so. Upon receiving the request the Human Resources Department will call the former employee to schedule an appointment. We do not allow current or former employees to photocopy their file. Requests for a copy of your file must be in writing to the Human Resources Department and then they will copy it and mail it to the current address on file.

## Section 6

### 6:1 New Employee Information

On your first day of starting work, you will be scheduled for a new employee orientation meeting. During this meeting, you will receive important information about our Company's policies and procedures. Please ask any questions you may have about the Company during this orientation meeting. We realize it may not be practical to cover all aspects of this handbook and the policies that relate to your employment. It is your responsibility to review this Handbook and other related information to be fully aware of any rules or procedures that may effect your employment.

Although we hope you will be successful with the Company, the Company may terminate your employment at any time, either during your orientation period or afterwards with or without cause or notice. Successful completion of an orientation period does not guarantee continued employment for any period of time and does not change the at-will relationship. If additional questions come up after the meeting, you can ask your supervisor or contact the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext.202.

### 6:2 Orientation Period

All new employees are hired as “temporary part time seasonal employees”. There is no implied commitment or promise for any full time employment. All new hire classifications will have a 90 day orientation period. During this time, your supervisor will work with you to help you learn how to do your job successfully and what the Company expects of you. This period also provides both you and the Company with an opportunity to decide whether you are suited for the position for which you were hired.

When your employment begins, you will meet with your field supervisor, who will explain key employment policies/procedures. You will also go over your job expectations, goals and performance requirements. During the orientation period, your supervisor will give you feedback on your performance and will be available to answer any questions you might have. Employees are not eligible for applicable additional benefits unless and until they complete the orientation period.

After this orientation period, you will be evaluated by the field management, your peers and our customers on values such as quality of work, attendance, ability to get along with others, willingness to learn and ability to follow direction. If evaluation meets or exceeds typical and expected performance levels, the employee may be allowed to continue with employment, provided there is work available. Plant Partners is an at-will employer, and either party has the right to sever any associations with either party at the discretion of either party, with or without notice or cause.

Your orientation period may be extended if the Company decides that such an extension is appropriate due to unusual circumstances during the initial period the may prevent you from receiving sufficient training and/or feedback during this time.

## Section 7

### 7:1 Temporary Employees

In our business, it is necessary for us to hire individuals to perform a job or to work on a project that has a limited duration. Individuals whom we hire for such work are temporary employees, in fact all our employees are hired as temporary seasonal part time worker. They are not eligible to participate in any of our Company funded benefit programs, nor can they earn or accrue any leave, such as vacation leave or sick leave. However, we will provide to temporary employees any and all benefits mandated by law.

Temporary employees cannot change from temporary status to any other employment status by such informal means as remaining in our employ for a long period of time or through oral promises made to them by coworkers, members of management, or their supervisors. The only way a temporary employee's status can change is through a written notification signed by the Director of Merchandising.

Like all employees who work for this Company, temporary employees work on an at-will basis. This means that both they and this Company are free to terminate their employment at any time for any reason that is not illegal—even if they have not yet completed the time length or project for which they had been hired.

### 7:2 Part-Time and Full-Time Employees

Depending on the number of hours per year you are regularly scheduled to work, and the position classification, you are either a part-time or a full-time employee. It is necessary that you understand which of these classifications you fit into, because it will be important in determining whether you are entitled to benefits and leave.

Part-time employees: Employees who are regularly scheduled to work fewer than 1500 hours per year are considered part-time employees.

Full-time employees: Employees who are regularly scheduled to work at least 1750 hours per year are considered full-time employees, although their individual position classification signifies their true status in the receiving of any company provided benefits.

### 7:3 Exempt and Nonexempt Employees

Your entitlement to earn overtime pay depends on whether you are classified as an exempt or a nonexempt employee.

Exempt employees are those who do not earn overtime because they are exempt from the overtime provisions of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act and applicable state laws.

Nonexempt employees are those who meet the criteria for being covered by the overtime provisions of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act and applicable state laws.

If you are uncertain about which category you are placed into, please contact the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958.

### 7:4 Recruitment

We know that we are only as good as our employees, so we search as widely as possible for talented and motivated individuals to fill vacant positions in our Company. Some of our recruitment methods include employee referrals, website applicants, and general newspaper advertisements. Even though these methods have served us well in the past, we know that the marketplace is changing and that finding high-quality people is an evolving process. We encourage our employees to share with us their ideas about what more we can do to solicit and recruit talented and motivated individuals. We also encourage employees to recruit and to refer external applicants for open positions. We conduct all our recruiting in an open, fair and nondiscriminatory manner.

## **7:5 Internal Application Procedures**

In addition to looking outside the Company for new hires, we also look within. After all, we already know the value and quality of our current employees. Sometimes, the most qualified person for a job is already in the Company's employ. As a result, we encourage current employees to apply for vacant positions that interest them. We post all internal job openings on the company website at [www.plant-partners.com](http://www.plant-partners.com), or to apply for a position, you can give a copy of a current resume, to your immediate supervisor. We consider all the employees currently employed for all positions that become available. Employees should also feel free to discuss their career aspirations with their supervisor/manager or the Human Resources Department at any time.

## **7:6 Transfers and Promotions**

Plant Partners encourages employees to assume higher-level positions or lateral transfers for which they qualify. Plant Partners has a job posting program that offers employees the opportunity to apply for certain positions within the Company when they become available. Generally, employees must be in their job for at least one year or have similar position experience before applying for a change in position. In addition, employees must have good performance reviews, and an outstanding attendance record. Every employee requesting a transfer will be considered for the new position along with all other applicants. Each transfer is judged on an individual basis, depending on the needs of the company. All final decisions regarding transfers will be made by Management and in conjunction with the Human Resources Department.

Employees who wish to apply for a transfer should discuss it first with their supervisor or manager, and the Human Resources Department so that it may be determined if their skills fit the requirements of the desired job. In addition, the employee will be requested to provide a tentative address in order to determine if placement is possible within company guidelines. If any employee fits the basic criteria for the position, the Human Resources Department will make arrangements to set up an exploratory interview.

Plant Partners recognizes that the responsibilities and requirements of a potentially higher level position may not prove suitable for a particular employee as determined by various performance results of the promoted employee. In the event a promotion assignment is found unsuitable by either the employee or by the company, consideration will be given to allowing the promoted employee to return to a former or comparable position for which the employee possesses demonstrated skills, knowledge and interest. If such a position is not available, the promoted employee may be subject to termination with the opportunity to be rehired at a later time.

## Section 8

### 8:1 Your Job Performance

Each and every employee at Plant Partners, Inc. contributes to the success or failure of our Company. If one employee allows his or her performance to slip, then all of us suffer. We expect everyone to perform to the highest level possible. Poor job performance can lead to discipline, up to and including termination.

We believe our connection to our customers is of the utmost importance to our success. Therefore, each employee is empowered to make decisions that will help make customer service a top priority. Excellent performance includes excellent customer service reports.

In order to attract and retain a highly qualified and competent work force, Plant Partners has instituted a performance management program to compensate employees in a fair and equitable manner based upon demonstrated job performance, and in accordance with its Equal Employment Opportunity Policy. Through this program employees will receive constructive work reviews designed to address performance and skill developmental needs and interests. These performance reviews do not imply or promise any commitments for a salary or hourly rate increase at any time. There is no guarantee of any rate change.

### 8:2 Performance Management Program Schedule

Because our employees' performance is vital to our success, we hope that, through these reviews, our employees will learn what we expect of them, and we will learn what they expect of us. We require all employees to participate in this review process. The failure to participate could lead to discipline, up to and including termination. To learn more about our performance review system and process, please contact us at the Human Resource Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202.

Employees may receive constructive work reviews on the following schedule:

Full-Time Salary Exempt Employees:

- a. 90 day work review upon new hire
- b. annual work and salary review, based on fiscal year.

Full-Time Non-Salary Non-Exempt Employees:

- a. 90 day work review upon new hire
- b. annual work and wage review, based on fiscal year.

Under normal and appropriate circumstances, employees should receive a performance review annually. If an employee's job responsibilities change substantially at any time after the annual work review, however, another review will be performed before the next annual review, 90 days after the new assignment has begun. There is no implied promise or commitment to any wage increases during or after a performance review.

## Section 9

### 9:1 Hours of Work

Our Company's regular hours of business are during the times from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm, 7 days per week. We do not allow employees to start their shift prior to, or end the shift after these hours. All employees are expected to be on the job site, ready to start work, at the time they are scheduled. Your supervisor will let you know your work schedule, including what time you will be expected to start and finish work each day. If you wish to change your schedule, please talk to your supervisor. Although the Company will try to consider all requests, we cannot guarantee that any particular request will be granted.

### 9:2 Flexible Scheduling

We understand that many employees have to balance the demands of their job with the needs of their families and other outside commitments. Prior to the posting of the schedule, please talk to your supervisor. The expectation is for these instances to be an exception to the general rule, not to be a permanent rule. The Company will try to accommodate your request, to the extent practical. Because not all jobs are suitable to flexible scheduling, and because we must ensure that our staffing needs are met, we cannot guarantee that the Company will grant your request.

### 9:3 Meal and Rest Breaks

Employees are allowed a paid 15-minute break during their shift after 2 hours of work. Paid breaks must be taken on the immediate job site (**within the store**). Employees are forbidden to leave the job site while clocked in, they must clock out if they leave the job site. Failure to follow this policy could lead to discipline, up to and including termination. Also, all employees who are scheduled for more than 6 hours in a day are required to take a lunch break of a minimum of 30 minutes mid shift. Meal breaks are unpaid. Since meal breaks are not paid time off, you must clock in and clock out for lunch periods. Failure to follow these policies could be viewed and determined to be time fraud and could lead to immediate termination.

### 9:4 Payday

Our work weeks are 7 days, Sunday-Saturday. Employees are paid on a bi-weekly basis for the preceding 2 week work weeks. We do not hold checks or hours to pay at the end of employment. Employees must submit any time corrections to their supervisor immediately, no later than noon on the following Monday. We only use direct deposit and your payroll check will be deposited on Friday of every other week. If a payday falls on a holiday, you will receive your paycheck on the last workday immediately prior to that payday. A statement of earnings will be available via [www.plant-partners.com](http://www.plant-partners.com) to each employee indicating their gross pay, taxes and any deductions.

### 9:5 Payment of Wages

Employees are paid only through direct deposit either to a savings or checking account at their bank of choice (providing the bank has direct deposit capability). To activate direct deposit, a Direct Deposit Authorization should be completed online and filled out to its entirety. If there are any questions on how to fill out the form, you may seek the help of a representative from your bank or by calling the Human Resources Department.

In the event of a lost or mis-directed pay deposit, the Human Resources Department must be notified in writing as soon as possible before a replacement check can be issued



## **9:6 Payroll Deductions**

Your paycheck reflects your total earnings for the pay period, as well as any mandatory or voluntary deductions from your paycheck. Mandatory deductions are deductions that we are legally required to take. Such deductions include federal income tax, Social Security tax (FICA), and any applicable state taxes. Voluntary deductions are deductions that you have authorized. Such deductions might include family or supplemental health insurance.

If you wish to change your withholding form (Form W-4), complete your change forms online at [www.plant-partners.com](http://www.plant-partners.com). If you have any questions, contact a member of the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext.202.

## **9:7 Wage Garnishments**

A wage garnishment is an order from a court order or a government agency directing us to withhold a certain amount of money from an employee's paycheck and send it to a person or agency. Wages can be garnished to pay child support, spousal support or alimony, tax debts, outstanding student loans, or money owed as a result of a judgment in a civil lawsuit.

If we are instructed by a court or agency to garnish an employee's wages, the employee will be notified of the garnishment at once. Please note that we are legally required to comply with these orders. If you dispute or have concerns about the amount of a garnishment, you must contact the court or agency that issued the order. Plant Partners will not discontinue the wage garnishment until completion of garnishment or unless directly contacted by the department who authorized the garnishment.

## **9:8 Overtime**

On occasion, we may ask employees to work beyond their regular scheduled hours. We expect employees to be able to work a reasonable amount of overtime, as this possibility is a job requirement. We will try to give employees advance notice when overtime work is necessary; however, it will not always be possible to notify workers in advance.

Exempt employees will not be paid for working beyond their regular scheduled hours. Nonexempt employees are entitled to payment for overtime, according to the rules set forth below. (If you are unsure of your employee classification, please contact the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202.

- All overtime work must be approved, in advance, by the employee's supervisor. Working overtime without prior permission violates Company policy and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
- For purposes of calculating how many hours an employee has worked in a day or week, our workweek begins at 12:01 a.m. on Sunday and ends at midnight on Saturday.

Non-exempt employees will be paid 1 ½ times their regular hourly rate of pay for every hour worked in excess of 40 hours. Only time actually spent working counts as hours worked. Vacation time, sick days, holidays, or other paid time during which an employee did not actually work will not count as hours worked in the computation of overtime.

The Company will pay eligible classifications a premium pay of 1 1/2 times their regular hourly rate for working on the following 6 holidays: Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, New Years Day. In addition, any non-exempt hourly employees who are approved to, and agree to work on these days will be paid 1 ½ times their regular hourly rate of pay for each hour worked on these days. The holiday overtime pay benefits for working on a holiday begin immediately upon employment.

## 9:9 Advance Policy

Our Company does not allow employees to receive pay advances.

An employee who will be on vacation or other paid leave on payday may request an early paycheck. Please submit these requests to the payroll administrator. Although we cannot guarantee that every request will be granted, we will do our best to accommodate your request.

If, by accident, there is a discrepancy in your paycheck, please bring this to the attention of the Human Resources Director. Although great care goes into paying everyone correctly and on time, mistakes sometimes do happen and we want to accommodate these mistakes as quickly as possible. After a determination for the reason of the discrepancy, the Director will make the decision on how to properly make the correction. If it is determined to be the fault of the Human Resources Department a check will be immediately sent out via overnight courier. If the mistake is determined to be the fault of the employee, whether unintentional or not, the resolution will be to add the amount to the next payroll. Please contact a member of the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202 if there are any questions regarding this matter.

## 9:10 Expense Reimbursement

From time to time, employees may incur expenses on behalf of Plant Partners, Inc. We will reimburse you for the actual work-related expenses you incur, as long as those expenses are reasonable. You must follow these procedures to get reimbursed:

- Get permission from your supervisor **before** incurring an expense
- Keep a receipt or some other proof of payment for every expense
- The purpose of purchase, and any related info needs to be written on receipt, and,
- Submit the receipt for payment within 30 days of expense

Remember that you are spending the Company's money when you pay for business-related expenses. We expect you to save money wherever possible. Your supervisor can assist you in deciding whether an expense is appropriate.

### Procedures for Travel Expenses

If employees are required to travel beyond their normal scope of duty and area for work, the Company will reimburse you for your travel expenses, including:

- the cost of travel to and from, including parking expenses and tolls
- the cost of airline or train tickets, or an economy rental car, if necessary
- the cost of lodging, keeping safety and moderation in mind, depending on location (the company reserves the right to determine the amount of an approved expense), and,
- The cost of meals, up to, and no more than, a per diem limit of \$30/day

You must request advance approval of all travel expenses from your supervisor and follow the procedures above to have your travel expenses reimbursed.

### Procedures for Mileage Expenses

Employees who use their own vehicle for Company business will be reimbursed at the rate currently in place for Plant Partners mileage re-imbusement. Employees are not entitled to receive separate reimbursement for gas, maintenance, insurance, or other vehicle-related expenses, as the reimbursement rate above is intended to encompass all of these expenses. Before being approved for any mileage reimbursement, employees must demonstrate that they have a valid driver's license and adequate insurance coverage in compliance with state laws. The Company does not and will not reimburse employees for their normal commute to and from the workplace.

## **9:11 Mileage and Drive Time**

Plant Partners, Inc. has certain job classifications who are allowed to claim mileage and drive time as part of their benefit package. If you are in one of these job classifications we will reimburse these expenses for mileage every four weeks. Any other expenses will be included with this payment if the receipts are turned in on time. Travel time will be added to the normal work hours submitted during each 2 week work cycle.

### Drive Time Reimbursement

If eligible employees are required to travel during their normal scope of duty and area for work, the Company will reimburse you for your drive time at the same rate of pay as you are receiving for standard work.

Drive time is reimbursed for door to door travel time, **less 40 minutes per day** of travel. Drive time is calculated using our computerized mileage/travel time program. If there are any discrepancies in this program they will be researched and corrected immediately, if warranted, and with proper notification. Grievances can be filed at anytime by contacting a member of the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202. Drive time between work sites is considered as time worked by the Labor Relations Board, and as such will be treated with the utmost care in making sure employees are being fairly and consistently paid for their time. Drive time is also included in any calculations for the computation of overtime pay.

### Mileage Reimbursement

If eligible employees are required to travel during their normal scope of duty and area for work, the Company will reimburse you for your mileage at the rate per mile currently used by Plant Partners, Inc. Employees are not entitled to receive separate reimbursement for gas, maintenance, insurance, or other vehicle-related expenses, as the reimbursement rate above is intended to encompass all of these expenses.

Mileage is reimbursed for door to door travel distance, **less 40 miles per day** of travel distance. Travel distance is calculated using our computerized mileage/travel time program. Any discrepancies in this program will be researched and corrected immediately, if it is warranted and with proper notification. Grievances can be filed at anytime by contacting a member of the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202. Mileage is an added benefit from Plant Partners, and there is no law or contract stating that we are obligated to continue this practice for any period of time.

## **9:12 Inclement Weather**

During inclement weather conditions, Plant Partners does not want employees to take unnecessary risks in arriving to work, or leaving work to go home. The following policy has been adopted concerning working during, and taking time off for, inclement weather:

### **Hourly employees (PT)-**

Part time hourly employees who do not feel comfortable in driving to/from work during inclement weather have the following options:

- If they choose to work, they will be paid for all hours worked, if any, in accordance of FLSA guidelines for hours worked.
- If they choose not to work, they will not be paid in accordance of FLSA guidelines for hours not worked.
- Documented communication must accompany the decision to not work, to be retained in employee file.

## **9:12 Inclement Weather (continued)**

### **Hourly employees (FT)-**

Full time hourly employees who do not feel comfortable in driving to/from work during inclement weather have the following options:

- If they choose to work, they will be paid for all hours worked, if any, in accordance of FLSA guidelines for hours worked.
- If they choose not to work, they will not be paid in accordance of FLSA guidelines for hours not worked.
- Documented communication must accompany the decision to not work, to be retained in employee file.
- If they choose not to work, or leave work early, they have the option to re-schedule, or not, at a later time with their managers approval.
- Documented communication must accompany the agreement to re-schedule at a later time, and will be retained in the managers file.
- If they choose not to work, or leave work early, and not re-schedule, they have the option of using PTO, or not using PTO.
- If they use PTO, they will be paid for the requested amount of PTO, if available.
- If they choose to not use PTO, they will not be paid for any hours not worked, and the lack of hours worked during the week can affect their overall average of hours worked during any 3 month period, which could affect their employment and/or benefit status.

### **Salary employees (FT)-**

Salary employees who do not feel comfortable in driving to/from work during inclement weather have the option of not working.

- If they have available work to do from home, and capable of doing so, they can work from home as an “office” day, and be paid.
- If they choose not to work, they will not be paid in accordance of FLSA guidelines for hours not worked for exempt employees.
- Documented communication must accompany the decision to not work, to be retained in employee file.
- If they choose not to work, they have the option of using PTO, or not using PTO.
- If they use PTO, they will be paid for the requested amount of PTO, if available
- If they choose to not use PTO, they will not be paid, and the day will be deducted from their salary.

### **Immediately Prior to, or During, Inclement Weather**

If, during the day, news of inclement weather is approaching, or conditions worsen thru the day, and the Company makes the determination of conditions to be unsafe for our employees, the Company will issue an advisory to go home early to avoid potential dangerous conditions. The Company will use field reports from our management team, along with weather stations, television news, radio news and State Police postings in making a determination of unsafe conditions.

If the Company makes the determination to send employees home early, the Company will pay a 2 hour minimum to each employee who has arrived at work and is being asked to go home early. If an employee is not already at work when the Company makes the determination and prior to a statement being issued, the employee will not be paid for any time. If an employee has been at work for longer than 2 hours the employee will be paid for all hours worked, in accordance with FLSA guidelines for hours worked.

## Section 10

### 10:1 Involuntary Separation

Plant Partners, Inc. reserves the right under employment-at-will to terminate any employee at any time when it considers the termination to be in the best interests of the company. When feasible, employees will be given warning that they are in jeopardy of losing their position. Involuntary terminations could occur as a result of lack of work or performance, corporate restructuring, or for unacceptable personal conduct. Employees may appeal an involuntary termination using the company's normal grievance policy and procedure.

Reasons for an involuntary termination may include but are not restricted to:

- Misrepresentation on employment application
- Chronic absenteeism
- Theft
- Insubordination
- Intentional, wrongful, and unlawful misconduct.
- Time Fraud

### 10:2 Voluntary Separation

Resignation is a voluntary act initiated by the employee to separate employment from the Company. The employee should provide a minimum of two (2) weeks notice prior to the last day of employment. If an employee does not provide advance notice or fails to actually work the remaining two weeks, the employee will not be eligible for rehire and will not receive any accrued benefits, if eligible. In the event the notice falls over a holiday, the company will reserve the right to end employment prior to the actual holiday.

### 10:3 Job Abandonment

Employees who fail to report to work or contact their supervisor for three (3) consecutive scheduled workdays shall be considered to have abandoned the job without any notice, to be effective at the end of their normal shift on the third day. The supervisor shall notify the Human Resource Department at the expiration of the third workday to initiate the required paperwork to terminate the employee. Employees who are separated involuntarily due to job abandonment are ineligible to receive accrued benefits and are ineligible for rehire.

### 10:4 Lay Off

In the event that scheduled staff exceeds staffing needs, a supervisor may need to reduce hours temporarily, or permanently depending on the current and future needs. Because of the seasonality of our business these reductions in hours can be made at any time, based off the needs of the company and their customers.

- If management knows far enough in advance of the diminished need for merchandiser staff, the supervisor will first request volunteers.
- If there are no volunteers, or if the situation is not applicable to requesting volunteers, the supervisor will reduce hours within the job classifications based on seniority and work availability, unless specific skills are needed.
- Prior to reduction in hours, the supervisor will explore the possibility of floating some employees to another area for which the employee is oriented and qualified.
- Employees who have reported for a shift of work and are temporarily laid off will be paid a minimum of two hours or the time actually worked, whichever is greater.

### **10:5 Final Paychecks**

Final paychecks will be issued on the next regularly scheduled payroll deposit day. The final paycheck will include all compensation earned by the employee and not paid through the date of termination. Final paychecks will also include any accrued time off if the criteria is met for payment of such. Generally, Plant Partners, Inc. does not pay any severance to terminated employees, whether they quit, are laid off, or are fired for any reason. However, we reserve the right to pay severance to a terminated employee. Decisions about severance pay will be made on a case-by case basis and are entirely within the discretion of Plant Partners. No employee has a right to severance pay, and should not expect to receive it.

### **10:6 Exit Interviews**

We will hold an exit interview with every departing employee who requests one. We strongly encourage employees to schedule exit interviews. We may also request an exit interview with any departing employee we feel the need to. During the interview, you will have the opportunity to tell us about your employment experience and where you think we can improve. We greatly value these comments. The exit interview also gives us a chance to handle some practical matters relating to the end of your employment and you will have an opportunity to ask any questions you might have about insurance, benefits, final paychecks, references, or any other matter relating to your loss of employment.

### **10:7 Return of Company Property**

When your employment with this Company ends, we expect you to return all Company property. This includes this Employee Handbook, all manuals and guides, documents, phones, computers, equipment, keys, and tools.

We reserve the right to take any lawful action to recover or protect our property.

## Section 11

### 11:1 Employee Benefit Plans

As part of our commitment to our employees and their well-being, Plant Partners, Inc. provides certain classifications of employees with a variety of benefit plans. Although we introduce you to these plans in this section, due to space constraints we cannot provide the details of each plan here. Also, the actual benefits change continually so it is not practical to keep this handbook updated properly. You will be receiving official plan documents for each of the benefit plans that are available and that we offer at the time of your eligibility. Those documents (along with any updates that we give to you) should be your primary resource for information about your benefit plans. If you see any conflict between those documents and the information in this Handbook, the official plan documents are what you should rely upon.

The benefits we provide are meant to help employees maintain a high quality of life—both professionally and personally. We sincerely hope that each eligible employee will take full advantage of these benefits. If you don't understand information in the plan documents or if you have any questions about the benefits we offer, please discuss this with a member of the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202.

### 11:2 Health Care Benefits

Because your health is of great importance to us, we provide the following health care benefits to qualified classifications: medical, dental, vision and short term disability. If you are eligible and have not already received detailed plan documents about each of these benefits, please contact the Human Resources Department. They will provide you with all the information you need to decide what benefits package is best for you. As with all of the policies in this Handbook, our health care coverage may change at any time. For the most up-to-date information about your health care benefits, refer to the plan documents or call the Human Resources Department. Also, eligibility to receive health care benefits depends on your employee classification. Listed below are the different levels of job classifications eligible to receive benefits from the company:

Hourly Non-exempt full time supervisors are eligible for insurance on the first day after 90 days employment in the position. At this point in time the insurance premiums for this coverage are paid for 100% by the company, with the employee only having to pay for dependents or any insurance upgrades. Dental, Life and Short Term Disability for eligible employees are also 100% company paid.

Salary exempt supervisors are eligible for insurance immediately upon employment in their new position. If an eligible employee chooses not to accept insurance coverage, the use of cash benefits or payroll increases are not permitted to replace the Company contribution towards insurance benefits.

In order to maintain continuous health insurance benefits all eligible employees must work to maintain an average minimum of 30 hours per week of paid time during any rotating 12 week cycle of continuous work eligibility. If the company has the work available, and the work is offered to the employee, the employee must be able to work and maintain the average required amount. If an employee does not maintain this average there is a potential possibility that benefits will be withdrawn and the position forfeited.

### **11:3 Workers' Compensation Insurance**

If you suffer from an illness or injury that is related to your work, you may be eligible for workers' compensation benefits. Workers' compensation will potentially pay for medical care and lost wages resulting from job-related illnesses or injuries. If you are injured or become ill through work, please inform your supervisor immediately regardless of how minor the injury or illness might be. To find out more about the workers' compensation coverage, please contact the Human Resources Department 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202.

Because of the serious nature of job related injuries, employee's are expected to notify their supervisors immediately upon any injury if able to do so. Failure to report any injury in a timely fashion may result in non-payment of claim, and could result in termination from the company for not following procedure. Plant Partners is committed to providing a safe work environment and trains employees on all aspects of the job which can be the key contributors to potential injuries.

Plant Partners also provides a list of recommended and approved hospital and doctors to visit in case of injury. Please visit these doctors first when at all possible.

### **11:4 Unemployment Insurance**

If your employment with our Company ends for any reason, you may possibly be eligible for unemployment benefits. These benefits may provide you with a percentage of your past wages while you are unemployed and looking for work. To find out more, contact your local state employment agency.

### **11:5 Continuing Your Health Insurance Coverage**

Plant Partners offers employees the option of group health insurance coverage as a benefit of employment. If you are no longer eligible for insurance coverage because of a reduction in hours, because you quit, or because you are terminated for reasons other than serious misconduct, you have the right to continue your health insurance coverage in accordance with federal COBRA laws. You will have to pay the cost of this coverage.

Others covered by your insurance (your spouse and children, for example) also have the right to continue coverage if they are no longer eligible for certain reasons. If you and your spouse divorce or legally separate, or if you die while employed, your spouse may continue coverage under our group health plan. And once your children lose their dependent status, they may continue their health care as well. In any of these situations, your family members are entitled to continued health care up to the limits of federal law. They must pay the cost of this coverage.

You will receive an initial notice of your right to continued health insurance coverage when you first become eligible for health insurance under the Company's group plan. You will receive an additional notice when your hours are reduced, you quit, or you are terminated. This second notice will tell you how to choose continuation coverage, what your personal obligations will be, and how much the insurance will cost. You must notify us if any of your family members becomes eligible for continued coverage due to divorce, separation, or reaching the age of majority.



## Section 12

### 12:1 Holidays

Our Company observes the following 6 (six) holidays during each calendar year: New Years Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas Day.

If a holiday falls on a weekend, the Company will inform you when the holiday will be observed. Ordinarily, holidays falling on a Saturday will be observed the preceding Friday; holidays falling on a Sunday will be observed the following Monday.

All eligible employees are entitled to receive 8 hours of paid Holiday for each observed holiday. Paid Holiday benefits begin immediately after 90 days of current employment in the eligible position. For these employees, certain conditions must be met to be eligible for Holiday pay to be paid. They include: working for a minimum of 6 hours of in store time the last scheduled business day prior to the observed holiday day and the first scheduled business day after the observed holiday. All holiday schedules must be in writing and must be approved by the immediate supervisor. Vacation and time off requests must be approved at least two (2) weeks prior to the observed holiday. A holiday calendar is issued at the beginning of each year.

### 12:2 Leave of Absence without Pay

Should a situation arise that temporarily prevents an employee from working, he/she may be eligible for a personal leave of Absence without pay. However, the employee must be employed for at least three months prior to the requested leave.

Any request for leave of absence without pay must be submitted in writing to the your immediate supervisor as far in advance as possible and it will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the employee's supervisor and the Human Resources Department. The decision to approve or deny is based on circumstances such as the length of time off requested, the employee's job performance, their attendance record, the reason for the leave, and the effect the employee's absence will have in the department. In order to maintain any health insurance the employee will be solely responsible for any premiums due at the first of the month after the first 30 days of the approved leave.

### 12:3 Bereavement Leave

Plant Partners offers eligible employee classifications the benefit of bereavement leave. If you suffer the death of an immediate family member the company allows you to take up to 2 days off work during the immediate week after the death to attend funeral services or to make arrangements. This leave will be paid leave and will not count against any vacation or personal time off accrued for use in the current year. Immediate family members include mother, father, step-parents, siblings, step-siblings, children and step-children. To meet eligibility requirements for payment of bereavement leave, the employee must attend the funeral of the deceased relative and also provide written documentation of death.

The Company will consider, on a case-by-case basis, requests for bereavement leave for the death of someone who does not qualify as an immediate family member under this policy. An employee has the option of using their PTO time, or unpaid leave in the event paid leave will not be approved. The bereavement pay benefit begins immediately upon the first day of employment.

## **12:4 Vacation/PTO**

Our Company recognizes that our employees need to take time off occasionally, in case of sickness, or attend personal matters, or for rest and relaxation, and to enjoy a vacation. We offer a paid time off program (PTO) for all eligible classifications of employees. We believe this program will give our employees the flexibility to manage their time off as they see fit. Employees must manage their PTO responsibly to ensure they have time available for emergencies, such as personal or family illness, or outside activities.

All properly classified employees are awarded PTO based on a schedule determined by their position classification and the number of hours worked during the previous year of employment. PTO is awarded at the end of the current year for use during the following year. There is not any awarded PTO time during the first year of being in an eligible classification of employment. For more information on the schedule and process of awarding PTO please contact someone in the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958.

Employees must schedule their time off in advance, if possible, with their supervisor. We will try to grant every employee's request for the days off of their choice. However, we must have enough workers to meet our day-to-day needs, which means we might not be able to grant every request, especially during holiday periods. If any circumstances, such as a medical or family emergency, prevent advance scheduling, please inform us as soon as possible that you are taking paid time off. Also, in consideration of the business we are in and the clients we service, requests for paid vacations for the period of March 1-May 31 may be denied.

PTO will be considered one "bucket" of awarded hours, to include all vacation, sick and personal days. PTO can be used for any reason, at any time, and in half day or full day increments, with some limited restrictions such as during our peak season. When requesting time off, turn in the request to your manager prior to, or the day of, the expected day off. Upon receipt of a PTO request, hours will be deducted from total amount awarded.

PTO time is not allowed to be rolled over into the following year. Any unused PTO time not used will be paid out at the end of the year.

As an added benefit, employees will be paid for any awarded and unused vacation when their employment terminates, up to the limit of 10 days (80 hours) if they follow all of the conditional terms of employment and separation. The guidelines are listed below:

- PTO will not be paid if employee quits voluntarily and does not work a 2 week notice, this is considered to be job abandonment.
- PTO will not be paid out for gross termination.

## **12:5 Voting**

Our Company encourages employees to exercise their right to vote. If your work schedule and the location of your polling place make it difficult for you to get to the polls before they close, you are entitled to take up to 2 hours off work, at the beginning or end of your shift, to cast your ballot. This time will be paid if it is determined that you are unable to vote due to your posted work schedule.

Employees who will need to take time off work to vote must inform their supervisors at least 5 days in advance. Employees are expected to work with their supervisors to ensure that their absence doesn't negatively impact Company operations.

Employees who take time off to vote must supply their supervisor with proof that they actually voted. Please call the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202 to discuss what types of proof of voting are acceptable.

## **12:6 Jury Duty**

If you are called for jury duty, you are entitled to take time off, as necessary, to fulfill your jury obligations. This leave will be paid up to the period of 7 days. If your service extends beyond this period, the remainder of your leave will be unpaid. No employee will face discipline or retaliation for jury service. Jury Duty benefits begin immediately upon the start of employment.

You must immediately inform your supervisor when you receive your jury duty summons. If you are chosen to sit on a jury, you must inform your supervisor how long the trial is expected to last. You must also check in with your supervisor periodically during your jury service, so the Company knows when to expect you back at work.

Employees who take time off for jury duty must supply their supervisor with proof that they actually served. Please call the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202 to discuss what types of proof of service are acceptable.

## **12:7 Christmas Business Leave**

Salary exempt employees are eligible for a paid week off during the week of Christmas. This is in addition to any personal or vacation days, and will not be deducted from these days.

Due to the seasonality of our business, there may be occasion for hourly non-exempt full time employees to have time off during the weeks before and after Christmas off without pay. There may be an occasion where the company will approve work during this time period. If this option is available, the eligible employees will be paid as they normally would. Our work availability is determined by our customers need for our services.

Eligible employees also have the option of being paid during this period by using any earned vacation and/or personal days earned during the year prior. The amount of time worked plus the amount of PTO/Vacation time used cannot exceed 40 hours per week.

Merchandisers are laid off for the season and will not be able to return until work becomes available the next year.

## **12:8 Family and Medical Leave**

Employees who have worked for our Company for at least a full year, and have worked at least 1250 hours during that time, are eligible to take unpaid family and medical leave for one or more of these purposes:

- because the employee's own serious health condition makes the employee unable to work
- to care for a spouse, child, or parent who has a serious health condition, or to care for a newborn, newly adopted child, or recently placed foster child.

### Leave Available

Eligible employees may take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave per calendar year for any of the above purposes. For purposes of calculating available family and medical leave, the year starts on January 1.

A parent who takes leave to care for a newborn, newly adopted child, or recently placed foster child must begin this leave within a year after the birth, adoption, or placement.

### Notice Requirements

Employees are required to give notice at least 30 days in advance of their need for a family and medical leave, if their need for leave is foreseeable. In emergencies and unexpected situations, employees must give as much notice as is practicable under the circumstances.

## **12:8 Family and Medical Leave (continued)**

### Reinstatement Rights

When you return from an approved family and medical leave, you have the right to return to your former position or an equivalent position, except:

- If your position is eliminated for reasons unrelated to your leave, you have no right to reinstatement.

The Company is not obligated to reinstate you if you are a key employee—that is, you are among the highest-paid 10% of our workforce and holding your job open during your leave would cause the Company substantial economic harm. If the Company classifies you as a key employee under this definition, you will be notified when you request leave.

### Substitution of Paid Leave

An employee who has available any accrued paid time off must use these benefits prior to receiving any benefit of this leave policy.

### Medical Certification

The Company may ask employees who take leave for their own serious health condition or to care for a spouse, parent, or child with a serious health condition to provide a doctor's form certifying the need for leave. The Company is also entitled to seek a second opinion and periodic re-certifications. In some cases, the Company may ask employees who take leave because of their own serious health condition to provide a fitness-for-duty report from their doctors before they return to work.

## **12:9 Additional FMLA Leave Guidelines**

### Intermittent Leave

If you will need to take family and medical leave on an intermittent basis—that is, a day or two at a time rather than all at once—for your own serious health condition or to take care of a family member with a serious health condition, you will be allowed to do so. However, the Company may temporarily reassign you to a different position with equivalent pay and benefits to accommodate the intermittent schedule.

The Company will consider requests for intermittent leave to care for a new child on a case-by-case basis.

### Health Insurance During Leave

Your health insurance benefits will continue during leave designated as FMLA eligible for the period of 12 weeks. While out, all upgraded insurance premiums will be due by the first of each month, paid to the order of Plant Partners. Afterwards, if still on leave, the insurance benefits will revert to COBRA regulations, and the employee will be responsible to pay the entire portion of the premiums to continue coverage beginning on the first day after the leave ends.

Due to the nature of our business, Plant Partners cannot guarantee an employee's job will remain available, or that a comparable position will exist when return from an unpaid leave is sought. When an employee is ready to return from a leave of absence classified as FMLA, and does so within the 12 week window allowed by law, the Company will attempt to reinstate the employee to his/her former position or to one with similar responsibilities. If this is not available, the Company will search for a suitable position for 30 days from the date the unpaid leave was to officially end. The employee will not be paid for this time.

An employee who returns to work following an unpaid leave will be considered as having continuous service. If an employee does not return from an unpaid leave of absence, the termination date is the last day of the authorized leave period or the date the employee notifies their supervisor or the Human Resources Department that they are not returning, whichever is sooner.

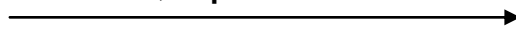
## 12:10 Disability Leave/FMLA cont.

Occasionally employees are injured or have a health issue that requires them to be off work for an extended period of time. Certain classifications of employees are eligible for paid short term disability through the company insurance plan. To be eligible for disability the employee must be classified as a Full Time hourly or salary employee.

When an employee needs short term disability the following policy is in effect:

- FMLA starts immediately on the first day of unpaid leave after the office receives notification of qualifying event. Plant Partners will notify the employee on this day of FMLA leave and potential for short term disability coverage.
- PTO time must be used prior to any unpaid leave and will not be counted against any FMLA leave, and FMLA will start the first day after PTO is exhausted.
- Short term disability begins 7 days after the qualifying event. The employee has the option of using PTO for this time, or not using PTO for this waiting period.
- Plant Partners will continue to pay for any company paid contributions towards health insurance benefits during the short term disability period. Any upgraded insurance or added dependents are the sole responsibility of the employee. The employee must pay for insurance prior to the first of the month ahead of the scheduled month of coverage. If the payment is not received the coverage will be dropped for the dependent or upgraded coverage. The company will continue to pay for company paid contributions for the employee.
- Short term disability can last up to 6 months. The employee must follow all policy and procedures of the insurance company, including communications, to continue to be eligible for disability payments.
- FMLA can last up to 12 weeks. FMLA runs concurrently with disability. After 12 weeks, and if the employee has not returned to work, the employees position with the company can be eliminated, however Plant Partners will continue to pay for any company health insurance contributions during the disability period. (see prior FMLA section)
- After 12 weeks, if the employee is able to return to work Plant Partners will try to place the employee into a similar position as prior, but is not obligated to place the person at all in any position. If Plant Partners cannot, or chooses to not place the employee, the employee will be terminated from Plant Partners and COBRA regulations will start for insurance coverage

**FMLA, up to 12 weeks**



**Short term disability, up to 6 months**



## **12:11 Military Leave**

Our Company supports those who serve in the armed forces to protect our country. In keeping with this commitment, and in accordance with state and federal law, employees who must be absent from work for military service are entitled to take a military leave of absence. This leave will be unpaid.

When an employee's military leave ends, that employee will be reinstated to the position they formerly held, or to a comparable position, as long as the employee meets the current requirements of federal and state law.

Employees who are called to military service must tell their supervisors as soon as possible that they will need to take military leave. An employee whose military service has ended must return to work or inform the Company that they want to be reinstated in accordance with these guidelines:

- For a leave of 30 or fewer days, the employee must report back to work on the first regularly scheduled workday after completing military service, allowing for travel time.
- For a leave of 31 to 180 days, the employee must request reinstatement within 14 days after military service ends.
- For a leave of 181 days or more, the employee must request reinstatement within 90 days after military service ends.
- During this unpaid leave, employees are entitled to use applicable paid time off (vacation time or personal days). The Company will continue your health insurance benefits during your leave, under these circumstances:
- If you are absent for 90 or fewer days, you will be treated as any employee not on leave. The Company will continue to pay its share of the insurance premium, and you must continue to pay your usual share.
- If your leave lasts longer than 90 days, you will have to pay the entire premium to continue your benefits past the 90 day period.

## **12:12 Conditions of Wage Benefits**

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) does not require payment for time not worked, such as vacations, sick leave, holidays or other benefits offered by the employer. These benefits are a matter of agreement between an employer and an employee (or their representative).

## Section 13

### 13:1 Please Act Professionally

People who work together have an impact on each other's performance, productivity, and personal satisfaction in their jobs. In addition, how our employees act toward customers and vendors will influence whether those relationships are successful for our Company. Because your conduct affects many more people than just yourself, we expect you to act in a professional manner whenever you are on Company property, conducting Company business, or representing the Company at business or social functions.

Although it is impossible to give an exhaustive list of everything that professional conduct means, it does, at a minimum, include the following:

- following all of the rules in this Handbook that apply to you
- refraining from rude, offensive, or outrageous behavior
- treating coworkers, customers, and vendors with patience, respect, and consideration
- being courteous and helpful to others, and
- Communicating openly with supervisors, managers and co-workers

Individuals who act unprofessionally will face discipline, up to and including termination. It is impractical for us to list every instance of behavior that we would expect you to follow, so please use general acceptable social standards as a starting point when deciding whether something is right or wrong.

### 13:2 Progressive Discipline

Plant Partners expects our employees to be mature, reasonable and behave in a businesslike manner that is appropriate to the workplace. Occasionally employees fail to meet or have some difficulty meeting their obligations. The handling of a particular situation and/or action to be taken in a particular situation will be determined at the sole discretion of Plant Partners.

Any employee conduct that, in the opinion of the Company, interferes with or adversely affects our business is sufficient grounds for disciplinary action. Disciplinary action can range from oral warnings, written warnings and immediate discharge. Our general policy is to take disciplinary steps in the following order:

- Oral warnings
- Written reprimand
- Suspension
- Termination

However, we reserve the right to alter the order described above, to skip steps, or to create new and or additional steps as needed or warranted at our sole discretion.

### **13:3 Employee Appearance and Dress**

Plant Partners has a traditional business attire dress code that takes into consideration the nature of the work we perform. All employees are expected to comply with this dress code. We believe that a professional image enhances our image and makes us more competitive in the marketplace. In part, we convey that image through your appearance. We ask all employees to use their common sense when dressing for work and to wear attire that is professional and appropriate. We also expect our employees to maintain a neat and clean appearance at all times. The following list is a guideline of what attire is appropriate and inappropriate. Please keep in mind that our clients may also have a dress code policy that may be more stringent than ours. We must comply to each individual client's requirements.

#### **APPROVED**

- T-shirts (solid colors only), with sleeves
- Walking shorts (no cutoffs, no jean shorts)
- Sturdy work boot or hiking boot
- Clean denim jeans and or Khaki colored work pants.

#### **NOT APPROVED**

- Short shorts (must be no higher than 3" above the knee)
- Logo clothing or other advertising logos (sport teams, cartoon characters)
- Sandals or other slip on shoes
- Halter-tops and muscle t-shirts, T-shirts with sleeves rolled up

Employees who report to work inappropriately attired will be asked to leave work for the entire day, and the event will be documented for future consideration.

### **13:4 Punctuality and Attendance**

You are important to the effective operation of this business. When you are not here at expected times or on expected days, someone else must do your job or delay doing his or her own job while waiting for you to arrive. If you work with customers or vendors, they may grow frustrated if they can't reach you during your scheduled work times.

As a result, we expect you to keep regular attendance and to be on time and ready to work by 8:00 am each scheduled workday. Occasionally things will happen that will prevent you from showing up to work on time. If you are going to be more than 15 minutes late, please call your immediate supervisor, and the store you are scheduled to work. If you cannot reach this person, please call the Human Resource Department at 1-888-628-3958. Please give this notice as far in advance as possible. If you are late for work or fail to appear without calling in as required by this or by other policies in this Handbook, you will face disciplinary action, including possible termination.

### **13:5 Pranks and Practical Jokes**

Although we want our employees to enjoy their jobs and have fun working together, we cannot allow employees to play practical jokes or pranks on each other. These actions disrupt the workplace and dampen the morale of some employees; and at worst, they lead to complaints of discrimination, harassment, injury, or assault. Employees who play pranks or practical jokes will face disciplinary action, up to and including termination. If you have any questions about this policy, contact the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202.

### **13:6 Horseplay**

Although we want our employees to have fun while they work, we don't allow employees to engage in horseplay. Horseplay disrupts the work environment and can get out of hand, leading to fighting, hurt feelings, safety hazards, or worse. Employees who engage in horseplay will face disciplinary action, up to and including termination.



### **13:7 Fighting**

Verbal or physical fighting among employees is absolutely prohibited. Employees shall not engage in, provoke, or encourage a fight. Those who violate this policy will be disciplined, up to and including termination.

### **13:8 Threatening, Abusive, or Vulgar Language**

We expect our employees to treat everyone they meet through their jobs with courtesy and respect. Threatening, abusive, and vulgar language has no place in our workplace. It only destroys morale and relationships, and it impedes the effective and efficient operation of our business. As a result, we will not tolerate threatening, abusive, or vulgar language from employees while they are on the worksite, conducting Company business, or attending Company-related business or social functions. Employees who violate this policy will face disciplinary action, up to and including termination. If you have any questions about this policy, contact the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202.

### **13:9 Sleeping on the Job**

When our employees arrive at work, we expect them to be physically prepared to work through their day. Employees who sleep on the job dampen morale and productivity and deprive us of their work and companionship.

As a result, we do not allow any employees to sleep while at work. Employees who feel sick or unable to finish the day because of weariness should talk to their supervisor about taking the rest of the day off.

### **13:10 Insubordination**

This workplace operates on a system of mutual respect between our supervisors and our employees. Supervisors must treat their employees with dignity and understanding, and employees must show due regard for their supervisors' authority.

Insubordination occurs when employees unreasonably refuse to obey the orders or follow the instructions of their supervisors. It also occurs when employees, through their actions or words, show disrespect toward their supervisors and/or the Company. Insubordinate employees will face discipline, up to and including termination.

We understand, however, that there will be times when employees have valid reasons for refusing to do as their supervisor says. Perhaps the employee fears for his/her safety or the safety of others. Perhaps the employee believes that following instructions will violate the law or pose some other problem for this Company. Or maybe the employee thinks that there is a better way to accomplish a goal or perform a task. When these issues arise, we do not ask that employees blindly follow orders. Instead, we ask that employees explain the situation to their supervisor. If, after hearing the employee's side, the supervisor continues to give the same order or rule, the employee must either obey the direction or follow the complaint procedures described in Section 4:16 of this Handbook.

### **13:11 Relatives in the Workplace**

Plant Partners values family and the work/life balance. Hopefully, our employment policies and benefits are indicative of our beliefs. Plant Partners believes in an environment that is conducive to work; therefore, the workplace should not be used in lieu of child care, or for a meeting place.

It is inappropriate for minor children and other minor relatives of employees to be in the workplace during working hours. This policy has been implemented to minimize potential liability to Plant Partners and our clients, risk of harm to children and decreased employee productivity due to distractions and disruptions.

Exceptions to this policy are permitted under extenuating circumstances and with written approval from the Human Resource Department. Plant Partners is sensitive to our employees' circumstances, we however, cannot permit children or relatives to remain in the workplace because of the legal liability. As necessary, managers and supervisors may grant leave at their discretion in emergency or unforeseen circumstances.

### **13:12 Overall Employee Expectations**

Listed below and on following pages, are some key bullet points to remember when working with Plant Partners.

#### **Attendance:**

- All employees must be in their designated stores at the time specified.
- All employees must report to store management after calling in their start time.
- All employees are expected to contact their immediate supervisor upon arrival.
- All employees must call their immediate supervisor if they are unable to work.
- All employees are expected to work the full shift scheduled.
- All employees must report to store management prior to leaving the store.
- “No call/no show” will not be tolerated. You will be dismissed.

#### **Work Ethic:**

- All employees must meet productivity standards.
- All employees must respect the confidentiality of all privileged information.
- All employees are expected to work together.
- All employees are expected to behave in a professional, ethical, and courteous manner, with respect to all fellow employees, vendors, and customers.
- All employees must prioritize their time in accordance with required duties.

#### **Safety:**

- All employees are required to abide by any Client mandated safety procedures.
- All employees must use appropriate safety equipment when needed.
- All employees must wear appropriate shoes, no open toe or open back shoes.
- All employees are expected to keep all aisles and fire exits clear.
- All employees are expected to use brakes on vendor carts when not in motion.
- All employees must exercise caution and follow general guidelines when engaged in activities that include pushing, pulling and lifting.
- All employees must be aware of surrounding work area.
- While at the work premises, employees must not be accompanied by children, animals, or any adult that is not actively employed by Plant Partners Inc.
- Employees are not permitted to use Client power equipment.
- All employees are expected to contact their supervisor immediately in the event of an accident, no matter the seriousness.

**Client Policies:**

All employees are expected to adhere to all client policies and procedures.

All employees are expected to become familiar with our client policies and procedures, since it is not practical for us to list all of them here.

All employees are expected to maintain a professional appearance, which would include covering offensive tattoos and removing excessive jewelry.

All employees are required to wear the specified vendor attire and name tag.

All employees are expected to wear clothing in compliance with Client dress code.

All employees are expected to maintain a clean and neat work area and remove all trash, containers, and other debris upon the completion of your workday.

All employees are expected to submit to random alcohol and drug tests upon request.

All employees are restricted from smoking anywhere on Client premises.

**Plant Partner Policies:**

All employees are expected to not have any personal cell phone calls while working.

All employees are expected to verify weekly time no later than 12:00 pm on Monday

All employees are expected to take breaks and lunches as required and requested.

All employees are expected to adhere to the policy of recording breaks and lunches as requested using the TVR system. If an employee leaves a job site for any reason the employee must clock out, regardless if on lunch or break.

All employees are expected to ensure corporate plans are implemented.

All employees are expected to maintain professional courtesy with Client management.

All employees are expected to be courteous and helpful to all customers.

**General Information:**

Maintain good relationships with fellow employees and the client's employees.

Offer support and guidance to fellow employees and store personnel when needed.

Communicate information and instructions to fellow employees.

Help to direct fellow employees in accomplishing tasks conducive to the workload.

Communicate issues, problems and concerns to supervisor.

Be responsible for calling, faxing, or e-mailing in cart counts on a weekly basis.

Inform all management of watering issues or any store issues affecting our work.

**Terms for Dismissal:**

*The following is a list that includes, but is not limited to reasons for immediate dismissal per Plant Partners policy. This stipulates unacceptable behavior both during and after work hours.*

- Continuous unauthorized absences.
- Possessing alcohol or illegal drugs on Client property.
- Being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while on Client property.
- Damage or destruction of Vendor or Client property or malicious conduct of any nature.
- Bringing personal firearms and/or weapons onto Client property.
- Engaging in theft of Client property.
- Time fraud of any nature, including not taking lunches as required.
- Insubordination or belligerence towards supervisors, any fellow employees or the Client's employees. Not following direction is considered as insubordination.
- Engaging in sexual harassment of any nature. Sexual harassment towards any customer, fellow employee or Client employee will not be tolerated and is cause for immediate dismissal. Sexual harassment can include any unsolicited or unwelcome contact in either a written, verbal, physical or visual nature. Sexual harassment can also include any suggestions, threats or inferences to a sexual or social interest, or any actions that create a uncomfortable, hostile or abusive work environment. In short, do not do it.

## Section 14

### 14:1 Safety Policy

Our Company takes employee safety very seriously. In order to provide a safe workplace for everyone, every employee must follow our safety rules which include:

- Employees must follow their supervisors' safety instructions, and follow any client mandated safety procedures.
- Employees are prohibited from wearing dangling jewelry or apparel, and in addition may be required to pull back or cover their hair, for safety purposes. Your supervisor will tell you if you fall into one of these categories.
- All safety equipment must be used properly. Do not use equipment for other than its intended purpose. Wear only appropriate clothing and shoes.
- All employees must immediately report any workplace condition that they believe to be unsafe to their supervisor. The Company will look into the matter promptly.
- All employees must immediately report any workplace accident or injury to their area supervisor or the Human Resources Department at 1-888-628-3958 ext. 202.

Plant Partners has a nationwide database of doctors and hospitals who work with Workers Compensation claims. It is expected that any employee whom is hurt to visit this list of doctors first, prior to visiting any other doctor. Unless the need is of an emergency nature, for example broken bones, bleeding that requires stitching or unconsciousness, all employees are expected to call their immediate supervisor or a member of the Human Resources Department to obtain the address and phone number of the nearest clinic in our database.

### 14:2 Workplace Security

It is every employee's responsibility to help keep ourselves and our fellow employees safe from unnecessary harm. Plant Partners has initiated normal hours of operation to try to keep our employees free from harm by not putting them in an area of work too early, or by keeping them too late. Although there are many precautions that can be taken, the most important one is for each employee to always be aware of their surroundings, and to help minimize any situation that may lead to getting out of control. We also expect all fellow employees to keep an eye out for any strange or peculiar behavior being carried out by other employees, store associates, customers or strangers.

### 14:2 Emergency Procedure

In case of emergency, such as a fire, earthquake, or accident, your first priority should be your own safety. IN the event of any emergency causing serious injuries, immediately dial 911 to alert the necessary authorities.

## Section 15

### 15:1 Policy Against Alcohol and Illegal Drug Use

Our Company is very committed to providing a safe, comfortable, and productive work environment for its employees. We recognize that employees who abuse drugs or alcohol at work—or who appear at work under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol—harm both themselves and the work environment.

As a result, we prohibit employees from doing the following:

- appearing at work under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- conducting Company business while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs (whether or not the employee is actually on work premises at the time)
- using alcohol or illegal drugs while conducting Company business (whether or not the employee is actually on work premises at the time)
- possessing, buying, selling, or distributing alcohol or illegal drugs on the worksite (whether or not the employee is actually on work premises at the time)

Illegal drug use includes more than just illegal drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, or heroin. It also includes the misuse of otherwise legal prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

This policy covers times when employees are on call but not working and times also when employees are driving Company vehicles or using Company equipment.

Employees who violate this policy may face disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

We do not prohibit employees from consuming alcohol at social or business functions that we sponsor where alcohol is served. Even at these functions, however, employees may not consume alcohol to the point of intoxication or to the point where they endanger their own safety or the safety of others. In addition, employees may not consume any alcohol at these functions if they will be returning to work that same day.

This policy does not prohibit employees from consuming alcohol while entertaining clients or prospective clients. However, employees may not consume alcohol to the point of over intoxication, nor may they consume alcohol if they are going to drive. In addition, these employees must always conduct themselves professionally while on Company business.

### 15:2 Inspections to Enforce Drug and Alcohol Policy

This Company reserves the right to inspect employees, their possessions, and their workspaces to enforce our policy against illegal drug and alcohol use.

The Company also reserves the right to conduct drug and alcohol tests on any employee who is hurt, or is involved in an accident while on company work related employment. The results of these tests will not be used to determine any future employment considerations, however the indication of using drugs or alcohol on company time can lead to disciplinary actions , up to and including termination.

## Handbook Acknowledgment Form

By signing this form I acknowledge that I have been informed of the Plant Partners Employee Handbook. I understand it is my responsibility to review and understand the policies set forth in this handbook. I understand this may be done by asking for a electronic version of the handbook, by asking for a hard copy of the handbook, or by reviewing the handbook on the Company website. I understand this Handbook contains important information about Company policies, and that I am expected to read the Handbook and familiarize myself with its contents, and that the policies in the Handbook apply to me. I agree to comply with the guidelines, policies and procedures of Plant Partners, Inc. I understand that the most current version of this handbook is also posted on the company website at [www.plant-partners.com](http://www.plant-partners.com).

By signing this form I understand that nothing in the Handbook constitutes a contract or promise of continued employment and that the Company may change the policies in the Handbook at any time, without notice. By signing this form, I acknowledge that my employment is “at will”. I also understand that I have the right to end the employment relationship at any time and for any reason, with or without notice, with or without cause, and that the Company has this same right towards me. I acknowledge that neither the Company, nor I, have entered into an employment agreement for a specified period of time, and that only the Director of Merchandising may make any agreement contrary to the “at-will” policy, and that any such agreement must be in writing, signed by myself and the Director of Merchandising.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Employee’s Name (Please Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee’s Signature