

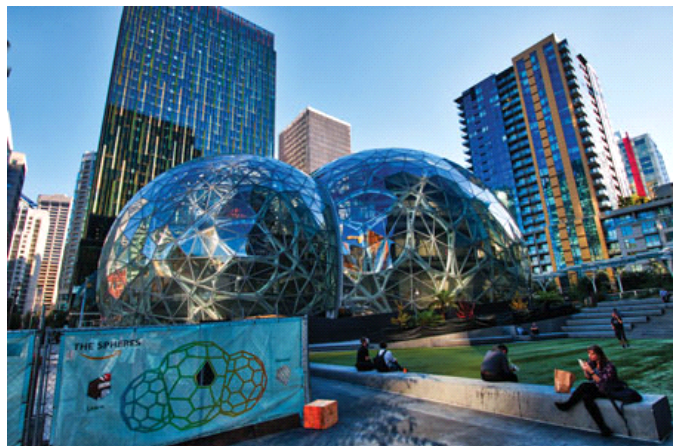
GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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“Sphere-heading” the Green Plant Movement

Chris Beytes



Though not scheduled to open until 2018, the “Spheres,” part of Amazon’s Seattle, Washington, headquarters, are already attracting international attention. When completed, the three interconnecting biodomes will house 40,000 plants in 400 species. The company says the Spheres will be a place “where Amazon employees can think and work differently.”

When one of the world’s most influential corporations decides that plants should be an integral part of their corporate culture, the world pays attention. That’s why GrowerTalks stopped by Seattle’s Denny Triangle

neighborhood in September to see the Spheres in person. We tried to arrange an inside look, but head horticulturist Ron Gagliardo was too busy with construction and plant installation. But even walking around the exterior is impressive. There’s plenty of outdoor relaxing space, restaurants, coffee shops and markets ... even a dog park. All told, Amazon will have some 46,000 employees in more than 30 buildings around Seattle. (The tall building in the background on the left is Amazon Tower 1, better known as Doppler.)

Despite the unusual construction method (pentagonal hexecontahedrons), the Spheres do function as greenhouses and the climate will be a compromise between people comfort during the day (72F and 60% humidity) and plant comfort at night (55F and 85% humidity). Watering will be by hand, due to the wide array of plant species and sizes. LEDs will provide additional lighting as needed.

One of the first plants installed was a 55-ft. tall, 36,000 lb. *Ficus rubiginosa*, which was dropped in by crane through the roof of the dome. Nicknamed Rubi, the 48-year old tree came from Berylwood Tree Farm in Somis, California, where it was first planted in 1969. **GT**