



April 20, 2020

The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer  
Governor of Michigan  
P.O. Box 30013  
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Governor,

Thank you for asking Michigan greenhouse growers and garden centers to identify and provide you ways in which we can safely operate, provide paychecks, and meet the needs of consumers during the state's ongoing public health crisis.

Michigan's retail greenhouses and garden centers can and are ready today to open and operate safely, protecting customers and Michigan workers from COVID-19.

**We are encouraged by your commitment to allowing jobsites to safely re-open and your hope to begin the process by May 1<sup>st</sup>.** *Michigan greenhouses and garden centers are ready to be a part of that first phase and having a May 1 target date in mind would help employers begin and accelerate training for new safety processes in locations across the state.*

The Michigan greenhouse industry is a key part of the state's agriculture economy, employing more than 9000 people across our state and contributing more than \$740 million to our economy. Spring is a critical time for these businesses and the men and women they employ. Failing to return to work soon will be devastating to greenhouse and garden workers and their families.

We also know the threat and impact of COVID-19 is real. People are sick and families have lost loved ones. There is no way we can ignore that.

**It is our responsibility to operate in a safe way, and garden centers can.**

Michigan garden centers can and are ready to do what our neighbors in Ohio are already doing as they operate during this time. We have taken and are taking many important and carefully targeted steps to ensure our operations are safe, including changes in the way we do business to:

- Offer online shopping, call ahead orders, curbside pickup or delivery as available.
- Limit the number of customers near the cash registers and in the store at any given time. Many retailers are marking the floor in check-out lines to encourage social distancing.
- Sanitize all carts, baskets, door handles throughout the day, as well as the credit card pads.
- Require staff members to sanitize regularly.

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- Have hand sanitizer available for consumers and staff at the checkout.
- Require social distancing between staff and customers in the store, grounds and greenhouses. Greenhouses are so large, social distancing is not hard and the person per square foot guidelines are easily met.
- We also respectfully ask any individual – whether a customer or an employee – exhibiting even minor symptoms to stay home.

There are many other ways to “work safe,” and local greenhouses and garden centers are leading the way even during the current downtime. For example, Weesies Brothers Greenhouse in Montague has already installed plexiglass enclosures at all checkouts to protect employees and the public, spacing labels on the floor to encourage social distancing, and breakrooms are closed to discourage gatherings.

What’s more, at Weesies, 35 percent of all shopping occurs outdoors, and on sunny days, no matter the temperature, most customers spend their entire shopping experience outside.

At Schwartz’s Greenhouse in Romulus, they have dedicated employees to sanitizing shopping carts before and after every use and plan dedicated shopping hours for those individuals most vulnerable to the coronavirus. They’re also preparing their greenhouse with one-way aisles to limit customer interaction with one another.

Countryside Greenhouse in Allendale has already implemented many of the same precautions and features an open-air environment with ventilation, which means customers will experience over air far exceeding the air exchange of any indoor shopping experience.

Eckert’s Greenhouse in Sterling Heights has installed signage in the parking lot and throughout the greenhouse about social distancing guidelines and plans to hand out masks and gloves to shoppers upon reopening. They are setting up hand cleaning stations for customers in key areas of the greenhouse.

VanAtta Greenhouse in Lansing offers contactless curbside and delivery options for customers, and like every other greenhouse in the state, features outdoor and open-air shopping. The safety measures don’t stop there.

Each of these greenhouses and garden centers is in communication with others across the state, and each is implementing remarkable standards to protect workers and customers. Michigan garden centers are essential small businesses committed and prepared to protecting workers, producing products and plants, and providing paychecks.

We respectfully ask you to revise your orders and allow workers in greenhouses and garden centers across Michigan to return safely to their jobs.

Sincerely,



Dave Mast, President  
Michigan Greenhouse Growers Council