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Michigan Greenhouse Growers and Garden Centers to Governor: We are Ready to Reopen with Safety Precautions on May 1

*Safeguards added to protect customers and staff, allowing business to
resume while preventing the spread of COVID-19*

LANSING – Michigan’s retail greenhouses and garden centers are ready to open and operate safely, while protecting customers and Michigan workers from COVID-19, the Michigan Greenhouse Growers Council stressed today.

The council provided an action plan to Governor Gretchen Whitmer on how greenhouses and garden centers would safely operate, provide paychecks and meet the needs of consumers during the state’s health crisis. Michigan greenhouses and garden centers are eager to be part of the first phase of business reopenings, which Gov. Whitmer indicated she hopes to begin around May 1.

“The threat and impact of COVID-19 is real, and we are not discounting that,” said Dave Mast of Andy Mast Greenhouses in Grand Rapids and president of the Michigan Greenhouse Growers Council. “We feel it is our responsibility to operate in a safe way upon reopening and that is why garden centers have taken carefully targeted steps to ensure safe operations, including changes to how we do business.”

Operational changes occurring in greenhouses to protect customers and workers include:

- Offering online shopping, call ahead orders, curbside pickup or delivery as available.
- Limiting 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.

- Sanitizing all carts, baskets, door handles throughout the day, as well as the credit card pads.
- Sanitizing all surfaces regularly.
- Having hand sanitizer available at the checkout for consumers and staff.
- Requiring 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.
- Greenhouses are also respectfully asking any individual – whether a customer or an employee – exhibiting even minor symptoms to stay home.

The greenhouse industry is a central part of Michigan’s agricultural economy, employing more than 9,000 people across the state and contributing \$740 million to the economy annually.

“Spring is a critical time for our industry and the Michiganders we employ,” said Chris Schwartz of Schwartz Greenhouse in Romulus. “If we don’t get back to work soon, there will be a devastating impact to greenhouse and garden workers and their families.”

Local greenhouses and garden centers across Michigan also have proactively added additional safety measures to ensure a safe work and shopping environment:

- Weesies Brothers Greenhouse in Montague has installed plexiglass enclosures at all checkouts to protect employees and the public, as well as spacing labels on the floor to encourage social distancing.
- Schwartz’s Greenhouse in Romulus has planned dedicated shopping hours for those most vulnerable to the coronavirus and have dedicated employees to sanitize shopping carts before and after each use.
- Countryside Greenhouse in Allendale features an open-air environment with ventilation, meaning customers will experience over air far exceeding an indoor shopping experience.
- Eckert’s Greenhouse in Sterling Heights has installed signage in the parking house and throughout the greenhouse reminding customers of social distancing guidelines, and plans to hand out masks and gloves to shoppers at the entrance.
- VanAtta Greenhouse in Lansing offers contactless curbside and delivery options for customers, and features outdoor open-air shopping like most other greenhouses in the state.

The Michigan Greenhouse Growers Council is confident that the operational changes greenhouse and garden centers have made will allow workers across Michigan to safely return to their jobs as soon as allowed. For more information, visit www.mggc.org.

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