

Master Gardener

Plant Sale Best Practices

Plant sales are a great opportunity for local Master Gardener groups to carry out the mission of using research-based horticulture and gardening knowledge and practices to educate people and coordinator projects that promote healthy communities. These events provide multiple touchpoints for Master Gardeners to educate and inspire the public.

This document provides best practices, things to consider, and state licensing information to help Master Gardeners in organizing their plant sales.

This document is a resource, not a mandate.



General Fundraising Considerations

Plant sales and other educational events can provide great opportunities for local fundraising for Master Gardener programming. However, these fundraisers are not a primary focus of the Master Gardener program and should not compete with local businesses. Below are a few questions to consider before deciding to host a fundraiser, whether plant sale or other event:

⇒ Why do we need to fundraise?

⇒ What projects will be funded with the money raised?

⇒ Are these projects appropriate for the local community and do they align with county Extension and Outreach priorities?

Do not raise money for the sole purpose of raising money. There should be a cause behind any good fundraiser.

The following are best practices to ensure Master Gardeners remain trusted resources and to reduce the risk of spreading plant pests and diseases:

- Only sell plants that are free from pests and diseases
 - ◆ Use clean, [sterilized containers](#), pots, and trays for all production.
 - ◆ Regularly sanitize the production space and [tools](#).
 - ◆ Only propagate from plant materials free of disease and insects.
 - Carefully inspect plant donated from home gardens and take into account the following considerations with these plants:
 - Pests, insects, and viruses may be present.
 - Plants often are not identified to species and/or cultivar.
 - You cannot sell [trademark protected](#) plant material.
 - Easily divided plants can be aggressive spreaders/invasive.
 - Good examples of “clean” plant materials include commercially grown starts, seed, purchased bulbs, and cuttings from healthy plants in sterilized growing media.
 - ◆ Visually inspect plants and remove diseased/infested plants.
 - Do not transfer these plants for sale and keep them away from healthy plants that are ready to be transferred.
 - Properly treat and remove any afflicted plants.
- Properly identify, tag, and cross-check plants against the state and national noxious weed lists: [Iowa Chapter 317](#)
 - ◆ Do not sell plants on the Iowa Noxious weed list, those known to be [aggressive](#), and consider not selling plants that are on [neighboring states' noxious weed](#) lists.
 - ◆ Labels should be accurate, including common name, botanical name, and cultivar.
 - ◆ Other helpful information to include on plant labels or bench cards include category of plant, size at maturity, bloom color, bloom time, proper care, proper environmental conditions, and a picture of plant in bloom (if not in bloom at the time of sale).
 - ◆ QR codes are optional, but provide a great way to link buyers back to factual, research-based information for further education about their new plant ([ISU QR Code Generator](#)).
- Plants should be appropriate for the local climate, recommended by Master Gardeners or research-based trails, and healthy and well-grown.

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Licensing Information

In accordance with the [Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship \(IDALS\)](#), anyone who sells or otherwise distributes nursery stock must be licensed and inspected.

In Iowa, nursery stock is defined as “hardy, cultivated or wild woody plants, such as trees, evergreens, shrubs and vines, and small fruits such as strawberries and raspberries. Nursery stock dug from the wild and offered for sale or movement should also be labeled.

Iowa does not consider herbaceous vegetables or annuals “nursery stock”. Those may be sold in Iowa without being licensed and inspected.

[Application for Iowa Nursery Dealer Certificate](#)

[Application for Iowa Nursery Grower Certificate and Inspection](#)

Special Consideration: Jumping Worms

To minimize the risk of [jumping worms](#), follow the included precautions:

- Do's
 - ◆ Consider selling cuttings in water or bare root.
 - * [Root washing](#) is appropriate for ornamentals.
 - ◆ Check all potted plants prior to transportation for worm castings or active worms.
 - ◆ Collect and destroy any jumping worms if you see them.
 - ◆ Brush off boots/shoes after being in areas of potential or known contamination.
- Do Not's
 - ◆ Do not bring in plants from known or suspected infested gardens.
 - ◆ Do not use compost or potting media that has not been sanitized or solarized.

County Money Handling Procedures

Only Master Gardeners in active standing should handle money during plant sales and fundraising events. All plant sales should be tax-exempt.

Master Gardeners should work with their county office to ensure they are following their county's fiscal policy regarding money handling procedures. All cash, check, and/or credit card receipts received should be recorded in a pre-numbered duplicate copy receipt book unless the extension council has approved an alternative way to document monies received off-site. After each day, receipts received should be counted by two designated volunteers, recorded and signed by both, and locked in a cash bag/box. The locked cash bag/box must remain with the designated volunteer at all times until it is returned to the county extension office.

Upon return of receipts to the county extension office, an employee who did not receive the funds at the event should count the cash, checks, and/or credit card receipts and reconcile the pre-numbered receipt book or other council approved alternative.

If the county office accepts credit card payments, master gardeners may work with the office staff to see if they can also accept credit card payments during the plant sale. The use of credit card processing vendors not approved by the extension council is prohibited. Consult your local county fiscal policy for any additional procedures.