

March 18, 2020

TO POLICYMAKERS WHO MAY BE CONSIDERING WHICH BUSINESSES ARE “ESSENTIAL”:

As our nation, communities and businesses react to the spread of COVID-19, Washington State Nursery & Landscape Association (WSNLA) commends the efforts of local, state and federal governments to mitigate the impact and strive to keep the public safe and healthy.

In some states, the discussion of how to best ensure the public health has included asking “non-essential” operations to shut their doors for a period of time, with the intent of minimizing exposure to the virus. As a decision maker in this process, I urge you to deem greenhouses, production nurseries, garden centers and landscape service providers as ‘essential’ for the foregoing reasons:

Greenhouse Growers, Production Nurseries, Garden Centers & Retail Nurseries

Agriculture is an essential part of the food supply chain, which includes Washington greenhouse growers and production nurseries who are an essential 'access point' for Washingtonian's growing food at home. Washington growers are producing vegetable starts, herbs, fruit trees, blueberry plants and so much more. Distribution is strong, and the next few months represent the beating heart of this agricultural segments annual sales.

Garden centers play a vital role in this food supply chain. Millions of Americans engage in food production at home, and more are sure to follow as the COVID-19 crisis unfolds. It is essential that garden centers are recognized as an access point for Washingtonian's to have 'safe and healthy food'. Garden centers also sell necessary tools and supplies needed for growing food at home, including farm supplies, nutrition for wildlife, and other home improvement materials.

Landscape Service Providers

Public safety is essential. Landscape service providers protect infrastructure, property and maintain greenspaces that could otherwise jeopardize public safety. Crime rates are increased in areas where green spaces are not maintained. Tree removal is also a critical function of our industry to avoid damaging homes and their families. Landscape professionals also keep our cities safe and sanitized through the removing of unsafe discarded trash, which could include drug paraphernalia left at commercial and residential green spaces.

Landscape service providers protect public health performing essential treatments to reduce the transmission of dangerous and deadly diseases through pests and are on the front line of finding invasive insects currently threatening our State.

Collectively, our industry plays a critical role in boosting morale and mental health during a difficult time for our Nation.

Whether helping Washingtonian’s produce home-grown fruits and vegetables, as Americans did during WWII as Victory Gardens, or simply enjoying a beautiful green space from a condo window, it is proven our mental and physical health greatly benefit from plants, trees and gardening. They also provide activities for children and for adults social distancing at home.

Spring is a critical time of year for our industry. Nurseries throughout Washington have adapted to required CDC guidelines to ensure safe and healthy environments for employees and customers. Many offering online or call-in sales, curbside pick-up and delivery services. Landscape service providers work in outdoor offices. Innovation is at its best!

We are all in this together! Because of these considerations, WSNLA urges policymakers to consider green industry operations as “essential” and to be able to exercise the option to remain open and support their communities during these challenging times.

Sincerely,



Breanne Chavez
WSNLA Executive Director