

Agricultural Officials Proclaim May Spring Flower Month

BOSTON - Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Richard K. Sullivan Jr. and Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) Commissioner Scott J. Soares announced today that May is Massachusetts Spring Flower Month, as declared in a proclamation issued by Governor Patrick highlighting the economic contribution of the state's horticultural industry, and encouraging residents to shop at local garden centers for Mother's Day gifts and spring plantings.

"Among the welcome signs of the spring and gardening season are the palettes of color nurtured for months in greenhouses and nurseries across Massachusetts," said Commissioner Soares. "Mother's Day is the perfect time to select flowers, hanging baskets, flowering shrubs, and trees, or to hire a professional from a Massachusetts independent garden center for garden design and plant installation. Edible plants such as fruit trees and bushes, vegetables and herbs also make great gifts to enjoy all season long."

Commissioner Soares read the proclamation after he and Secretary Sullivan toured Russell's Garden Center in Wayland this morning. Originally a combination of farm, meat market, and grocery store, Russell's Garden Market was established in 1876 by 22-year-old Samuel Russell. Today it has transitioned and continues to grow as a family business and has expanded to become one of the largest garden centers in New England.

"This month we recognize the strength and vitality horticulturalists bring to our state," said EEA Secretary Sullivan. "It's great to be here so close to Mother's Day, a time when many will be searching for the perfect gift to honor the mothers, wives and grandmothers in their lives"

The greenhouse and nursery industry is the top economic contributor to Massachusetts agriculture, valued at \$177 million in 2008 or 31 percent of the total cash receipts in the state, according to the New England Agricultural Statistics Service. The *MassGrown & Fresher* Google Interactive Map, www.Mass.gov/Massgrown/map.htm, features a [list of over 125 local garden centers](#) across the Commonwealth. The interactive Agri-Google map allows consumers to easily find all of their locally grown needs in one convenient one-stop-shopping spot.

Massachusetts Flower Growers Association (MFGA) President Cindy Bertrand, of The Farmer's Daughter at Hillcrest Farm in Auburn, notes that association members offer consumers a tremendous selection of quality flowers and plants.

"We want to make gardening easy, fun and successful for our customers," said Bertrand. "We can give them individualized attention and knowledgeable advice on choosing what will work best for them so their gardens will burst with dazzling color. And with Mother's Day coming up on Sunday, what could be a better gift in honor of those special mothers in our families than a beautiful, locally grown hanging basket or colorful planter."

Chris Kennedy, a Massachusetts Certified Horticulturalist, president of the Massachusetts Nursery and Landscape Association (MNLA) and owner of Kennedy's Country Gardens in Scituate, recommends shopping at a local independent garden centers, which employ experienced staff.

"Look to see if they have certified professionals on staff and make sure they are members of industry organizations such as MNLA or the MFGA. Both organizations have a list of reputable landscapers, nurseries and garden centers across the state," Kennedy said. "We always have new plants and products but also focus on tried and true items that have a track record of being reliable for Massachusetts gardeners."

Listed below are some tips for buying local flowers and plants from local plant and garden centers.

- Get help with plant selection. Be sure any tree, shrub, perennial, or ornamental grass is hardy to the zone it is being planted. Be sure to get instructions on planting and care. Ask garden professionals if there is anything you should look for or risks with any of the plants you buy and what their sunlight or watering requirements are. If the plants are in bloom, ask how long they bloom and, if not, when they will bloom. Understand your site conditions such as sunlight and soil conditions before you decide on a plant. Let the conditions dictate the type of plants you use instead of buying impulsively.
- To get the best advice on issues ranging from pruning and pest diagnosis to landscape design, bring a photograph of your garden or yard to a landscape design or garden center professional. The photos don't have to be fancy, but large enough for an expert to get a good look of your landscape. Small camera and phone screens are often hard to see, especially outside on a sunny day.
- Many consumers are interested in earth-friendly practices and products that are safe for children and pets. More plants and products are being grown or manufactured with this in mind so look for plants, flowers and garden products labeled as safe for children and pets.

[Information on the best management practices for lawn and landscape turf.](#)

[Information about recycling lawn clippings.](#)



DAR's mission is to ensure the long-term viability of local agriculture in Massachusetts. Through its four divisions - Agricultural Development, Animal Health, Crop and Pest Services, and Technical Assistance - the DAR strives to support, regulate and enhance the Commonwealth's agricultural community, working to promote economically and environmentally sound food safety and animal health measures, and fulfill agriculture's role in energy conservation and production. For more information, visit DAR's website at www.mass.gov/agr, and/or follow at twitter.com/MDARCommish

MassDEP is responsible for ensuring clean air and water, safe management and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes, timely cleanup of hazardous waste sites and spills, and the preservation of wetlands and coastal resources. For more information, visit MassDEP's website at www.mass.gov/dep and/or follow at twitter.com/massdep.