

Dear Ms. Killian and Mr. Howard,

I write regarding Governor Cooper's Declaration of Emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As you can imagine, the members of the North Carolina Nursery & Landscape Association (NCNLA) are concerned about their ability to continue seasonal operations during this difficult time.

NCNLA represents more than 1,000 nurseries, landscapers, garden centers and greenhouse operations throughout the state. Most of the income generated by these businesses is seasonal, and many of the businesses are dependent on seasonal workers. The workers provide a variety of services, including daily care to ensure plant material is healthy and marketable; treatment of lawns to reduce the transmission of dangerous diseases through pests like ticks, mosquitos and fleas; and regular maintenance of greenspaces to cut grass and remove damaged/diseased vegetation, which helps to protect public safety.

In addition to the need for seasonal workers to maintain operations, NCNLA members provide essential products and services that can assist the residents of North Carolina in coping with the unusual aspects of social distancing. For example,

- Nurseries, garden centers and greenhouse operations provide fruit and vegetable plants that not only provide sustenance, but also distractions from daily activities that may become mundane or challenging; and
- Colorful, well-maintained greenspaces can provide outdoor sanctuaries that help to boost morale and improve mental wellbeing during this unprecedented time.

For the reasons as stated, we ask that nurseries, landscapers, garden centers and greenhouse operations be classified as essential services should it become necessary to implement a temporary lockdown of nonessential services in order to protect the public's health, safety and welfare.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your continued efforts on behalf of the nursery and landscape industry. Please let me know if we can be of any assistance.

**Richard E "Rick" Lawhun**

Executive Vice President

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