



Dear Governor Polis and Commissioner Greenburg:

GreenCO is an alliance of seven Colorado trade associations representing all facets of the horticulture and landscape industries. As Colorado grapples with COVID-19, we applaud the efforts of Governor Polis and the Colorado Department of Agriculture to minimize the spread of the virus throughout our state, and assist businesses through the SBA loan assistance program.

The discussion of maintaining public health has included the potential of asking "non-essential" businesses to close their doors temporarily to avoid further exposure to the virus. While we support sensible steps put forth by health officials to combat COVID-19, we ask government officials to see landscape companies, nurseries, greenhouses and garden centers as absolutely essential businesses within their communities.

There are significant and tangible health and safety benefits our industries provide Coloradans. Outdoor activities are one of our core values, and our businesses offer the opportunity for a safe haven in an outdoor space while practicing safe social distancing. Likewise, the professionals who take care of outdoor spaces are able work while maintaining a safe social distance from the general public.

Landscape professionals protect property and maintain greenspaces that could otherwise jeopardize public safety, including frequent snow removal. Landscape professionals also protect public health by performing essential treatments to lawns and green spaces to reduce the transmission of dangerous and deadly diseases through pests like mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas. Spring is a critical time of year due to the abundance of growth to maintain and care for the health of trees and landscapes. With heavy spring storms, tree removal is also necessary to protect homes, streets and businesses. Any halt or delay in landscape services during this time of year only magnifies potential safety problems and become much more difficult to maintain later in the year.

The spaces we create and maintain and the products we provide offer individuals a way to avoid heavily populated public areas and shelter in place by working at home on outdoor projects. Such activity promotes both physical and mental health, the importance of which cannot be underestimated during this difficult time. Additionally, our members provide what is necessary to allow people to grow their own herbs, fruits and vegetables, giving families access to healthy food options and helping them to relieve mental and financial stresses. More and more people concerned about food security will want to begin summer gardens soon. This could significantly help off-set the produce shortages we are seeing at local food markets if the pandemic should last into the summer months.

Many of the products carried by garden retailers are agricultural, like seeds and edible plants. Others are necessary tools and supplies. Together they are essential to maintaining a healthy living environment. In many communities, the garden retailer may be the only outlet where consumers have access to essential supplies for growing, gardening, maintaining or repairing their residences. It is also important to note that many garden retailers have been cornerstones in their communities for decades, providing essential supplies in past emergency situations, such as floods and fires.

Nursery, greenhouses, garden centers, and landscape professionals are entering a decisive moment as spring arrives. Any interruptions now will have long-lasting and dire consequences for the entire year and perhaps beyond that. Plants are highly perishable and must be cared for daily. If the stock is not cared for now, there will be a plant shortage for this year's growing season.

Colorado's green industry contributes approximately \$2.5 billion to the state's economy and employs over 40,000 workers.

Our organizations are going above and beyond the CDC's guidelines for safety, and our staff know to STAY HOME if they are sick. We want to keep paychecks in people's hands, happiness in our customer's hearts and food on everyone's table. Many of our businesses have already adopted curbside pickup and online ordering. Most offer wide-open spaces where there is more than sufficient space for social distancing.

Because of these considerations, we urge you to consider our businesses among those operations determined to be "essential" that can exercise the option to remain open in a manner that is protective of public health, to support their communities and continue to maintain healthy landscapes that provide critical mental and physical health benefits during these trying times.

Sincerely,

GreenCO

Representing:

Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado

Colorado Arborists and Land Care Professionals

Colorado Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects

Colorado Nursery & Greenhouse Association

Garden Centers of Colorado

International Society of Arboriculture. Rocky Mountain Chapter

Rocky Mountain Sod Growers Association