



AmericanHort®

From: Ken Fisher and the AmericanHort Team
March 16, 2020

During this period of uncertainty brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, we want to share with you our view and let you know some things we are working through on behalf of our members and the green industry. We understand this situation brings on high levels of anxiety due to the rapid change occurring around us. We will do our best to provide information relevant to horticulture businesses in as timely a manner as possible.

Here are some additional ways AmericanHort is working on your behalf:

- Announced last night (3/16/20), effective March 18, the U.S. Consulate in Mexico will cease all visa processing. We know many businesses are awaiting the arrival of workers via seasonal worker visa programs. We are in touch with government partners and business coalitions as we work to ensure these programs are not unnecessarily disrupted. We are pressing the case that H-2 visa processing should be prioritized and should continue.
- We have been in communication with the office of Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue and other USDA staffers requesting that they keep the green industry in mind as “essential agriculture” as any new legislation is brought forward.
- Many members have questions about workforce concerns.
 - We are in constant contact with our partners, CJ Lake and K-Coe Isom for expert employment and tax guidance and will share relevant insights as the situation evolves.
 - If you work with a third-party labor provider, they are likely to be closely monitoring State Department consular delays and travel restrictions that might affect your workers. They can also answer any other specific questions you might have about your worker contracts.
 - The CDC has helpful communication tools in various languages on their website, here, that you can share with your employees on the virus, good hygiene practices, etc.
- We are monitoring relief legislation taking shape in Congress and weighing in on points of concern for our industry. We are monitoring developments with respect to business “safety net” programs administered by agencies like the Small Business Administration and the Department of Agriculture.
- As some local communities consider mandating business closures, we and partners serving the garden retail community are discussing ways to mitigate the possible impact on retail operations, as well as develop success strategies for garden centers.

- Finally, as much as this unprecedented situation is rattling communities across America, we can make the best of a tough situation if we as an industry can leverage ways to communicate the positive human health, mental, and physical wellness benefits of plants and of gardening activities.

Many have asked us about the status of Cultivate'20 being held July 11-14 in Columbus. There is no indication that Cultivate'20 will be impacted at this time. Our staff continues to work hard preparing to deliver the high caliber event that everyone expects and enjoys at Cultivate.

It goes without saying that as we face the days ahead the primary importance is the wellbeing of our membership, employees, volunteers, event attendees and the communities in which we live and operate. We will continue to work on your behalf as we navigate uncharted waters. As an industry, we will get through this. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions you may have. We look forward to working together to ensure the future viability of our industry.