

VIRGINIA MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION PLANT SALE SURVEY
Conducted by VMGA, October 2013

Units reporting:

Central Shenandoah
Chesterfield
Fairfax
Franklin
Gloucester
Green Springs
Hanover
Heart of Virginia
Hill City
James City County
Loudoun
Louisa
Nelson
Northern Neck
Northern Virginia
Prince William
Rockbridge
Southside
Suffolk
Virginia Beach

Note: The following responses are not inclusive of all Virginia MG units, as not all units responded and, those that did, did not necessarily answer all questions.

How often do you have a plant sale open to the public?

Most units have one sale a year. Several reports two sales annually.

What month is the sale?

Most sales are held in the spring. When units hold two sales, the second sale is in the fall.

Do you always use the same location?

Location is a problem for some units. There is a desire for a better place to hold their sales. Other units use the same locations year after year.

Is this held with joint sponsorship? If so, with whom?

The majority of units hold plant sales in conjunction with other local groups. Some units hold their own plant sales as stand-alone events. Other units hold plant sales as a part of a larger MG event.

Inside or outside or both?

More sales are outside than inside.

Program held in conjunction?

Often plant sales are held in conjunction with other events, both MG and non-MG sponsored. Events include plant clinics, demonstrations (rain barrels, vermicomposting, etc.) One unit has an on-site café.

In the fall, one unit holds a plant sale as part of a larger MG event, with outside speakers, booths from local garden societies and environment groups and other area MGs, a silent auction and bake sale.

Vendors?

Some units include vendors in their plant sales; most do not. For some, vendors pay or donate a percentage of sales to unit. In other cases, vendors pay a flat fee to participate.

Net sales for most recent?

Sales amount ranged from \$200 to \$13,500. Some units use the profits for specific purposes, such as scholarships and school grants.

Have sales increased or remained constant in the last five years?

For the most part, sales have increased in the last five years.

Where do your plants come from?

The majority of plants are propagated by MGs. Some are donated by MGs and some are donated by outside vendors. Some are sold on consignment from local nurseries.

Other information you would like to share?

Several units reported they do not have plant sales.

Large displays and signs seem to bring in buyers. Some units advertise in the local newspaper. Some units work with local newspapers to have feature articles appear prior to the sale.

For many units, their plant sales are their only fundraisers.

Some units use the propagation of plants for the sale as training for new MGs.

One unit sells only vegetable plants in the spring.

Questions were raised regarding 501(c)3 status and plant sales as well as sales tax. VMGA will examine these issues.

Make sure you price your plants high enough. Don't try to compete with the big box stores.

One unit does most of their plant sales business before the sale, taking orders and filling them.

Some units specialize in native plants only.

Mary Ann Kincaid
VMGA Secretary