

How to Volunteer at the TMN Native Plant Sale at the Hummer/Bird Celebration

Veterans: please use this list to refresh your memory! **New volunteers:** welcome to an experience in public education about the natural world, outreach, fund-raising for our Chapter training expenses, and fun! Please read all sections so you will know who to work with if a question arises.

Before the Sale

1. If you are helping transport tables and other equipment:
 - ~ Pick up tables from extension office on Thursday and store at the high school near the door where our sale will be, marked TMN so no one else will try to use them.
 - ~ Bring equipment & supplies to front of high school by 7:00 am on Friday.
2. If you are helping transport plants:
 - ~ Arrive at plant storage site/staging area about 7:00 am.
 - ~ Load vehicles with first half of plants and drive to front of high school on Friday of H/B. Transport second half of the plants on Saturday.
 - ~ Unload onto rolling carts, move plants to front area and set off on the ground, keeping same types together. Setup crew will position them on tables.
3. If you are helping set up:
 - ~ Arrive at the front of the high school about 7:00 am to help set up tables.
 - ~ Set up the cashier's table, supplies area, and plant tables.
 - ~ Post selling-point signs at eye-level on the windows behind tables.
 - ~ Help offload plants, keeping same kinds together.
 - ~ Put trees/large plants on the grass across from the cashier table.
 - ~ Put plants on tables in groups; intersperse blooming plants with non-blooming.
 - ~ Put remainder of plants under the table below same kind of plants above.
 - ~ If more space is needed, place extras on the grass side, just past the brick columns.
 - ~ Put laminated plant signs in one of each of the types of plants.
 - ~ Use shallow trays (some plants will arrive in them) upside-down under plants at back of table so they are easier to see.
 - ~ Put price signs on the cashier's table and in other locations near the tables and outside plants.
 - ~ Mark off a holding area using cones and flagging tape.
 - ~ Hang the Texas Master Naturalist banner from the edge of the roof.
 - ~ Put up the shade tents as directed by the plant sale manager.
 - ~ Stack plant transports and plastic transport boxes neatly out of the traffic pattern.
 - ~ Sale opens at 9:00.
4. If you are helping set up on Day 2 or 3:
 - ~ Move plants out of the building and arrange as on Day 1.
 - ~ Clean up any spilled soil or water in the area where plants were stored overnight.
 - ~ Tidy up plants, trim anything broken in moving around, check that barcodes are on the pots.

5. If you are the **Cashier**:
 - ~ All sales, whether paid for in cash, credit card or check, must be handled through the Square barcode reading system, using the scanner to read the plant label, charge the correct price and generate a receipt.
 - ~ If a plant has lost its barcode, use the barcode book to find the appropriate label based on the size and species of the plant.
 - ~ If the buyer wants us to hold the plant once paid for, print two receipts from the system—one for the buyer and one to go with the plant that is being held.
 - ~ We accept checks to Mid-Coast TMN, MCTMN, & variations.
 - ~ We cannot accept checks written to cash, or to any individual.
 - ~ Buyers can use credit cards.
 - ~ If you are running low on change, let the Treasurer know in time to get more.
 - ~ Don't leave the cash box unattended. If you need to take a break, turn the cash box over to the Cashier Assistant

6. If you are the **Cashier Assistant**
 - ~ If someone wants us to hold paid-for plants for later pick-up, print the buyer's name in large letters on an index card and put the buyer's plants in a box with a hold slip stake holding the index card with the buyer's name and one copy of the receipt.
 - ~ If a preorder buyer comes to pick up and pay for their preorder, which will be stored in the holding area, get their name and retrieve their plants. Provide them to the Cashiers who will ring up their order, designating it as a preorder. The purchaser will then pay for the plants.
 - ~ If the cash box becomes your temporary responsibility, please see above. If it isn't busy, you will be able to write receipts as you take payments. If it is too busy, recruit the holding area person to help.

7. If you are the Holding Area Volunteer:
 - ~ Put the buyer's plants in a box with a hold slip stake.
 - ~ Store sold items in the holding area only **after** the customer has paid.
 - ~ We **do not hold** unpaid items for customers. **No exceptions.**
 - ~ Let customers know we will hold plants until 5:30, & they can drive up to pick them up.
 - ~ When a customer comes to pick up plants, take back the stake/skewer for later use and offer to help take plants to their car.
 - ~ Plants special-ordered before the sale will be in the holding area, labelled with name of purchaser. If approached by a preorder buyer to pick up his plants, as described above, retrieve the buyer's plants and take them to the cashier for payment.

8. If you are a **Sales volunteer**:
 - When you arrive for your duty shift:***
 - ~ Check in with the Plant Sale Chair or representative for any last-minute information.
 - ~ Familiarize yourself with the area, handout, and plants.
 - During lulls***
 - ~ Rearrange plants as necessary for best display.
 - ~ Sweep up spills so we don't cause tracking into the school.
 - ~ Care for plants

Dealing with Customers

1. The most important thing for a Sales Volunteer is to be helpful, friendly and enthusiastic. While you do not have to be a plant expert, be familiar with the plant information sheet and offer one to customers. It shows common & scientific name, where native, hardiness zone #, type; mature size, bloom season & color, fruit; how to grow: light, water, soil requirements, salt tolerance; and value to wildlife. It, together with the signage at the sale, will provide a wealth of information about each plant—sufficient to answer almost all questions. Other handouts will be available for customers if they wish; don't hand them out.
2. Don't give customers the opening to say, "I'm just looking." Rather than "May I help you?" ask, "**Can I answer a question?**" Instead of "Would you like a plant list?" say, "**Would you like a plant information sheet?**" It's useful even if you don't buy anything."
3. For customers who are selecting plants to buy, as needed, help the customer carry the plants to the Cashier desk. Before taking the plants to the Cashier's desk, make sure that each plant has a barcode on it. If it doesn't, accompany the customer to the Cashier and tell the cashier the name of the plant so the Cashier can find the appropriate label in the barcode label book.
4. A laminated Hardiness Zone map will be available to help answer customer questions about whether a plant will grow where they live. Zones are marked on the handout.
5. Read signs taped to windows and use the information to help with customer questions.
6. We sell well-adapted perennial plants as well as natives, so don't imply we sell only natives. However, you should still talk about the benefits of natives.
7. If you don't know the answer to a question, ask one of the other volunteers. There will be reference books to consult on a table by the holding area. If no one on site knows, offer to find out.
8. If a customer asks for a plant we don't have:
~ If we are out of Turk's Cap, Esperanza, or Pride of Barbados suggest H-E-B/Wal-Mart.
9. If the plant a customer wants is already sold out on Friday, tell them we will have more on Saturday. No new plants Sunday.
10. Offer to hold plants for customers—they can buy them now and pick them up by 5:30, or even later by special arrangement. We **do not** hold plants unless they are paid for.
11. Be standing, moving around, offering the plant handout anytime a customer is in the area. Smile! Be enthusiastic! Be positive—we don't want to come across as Plant Nazis.
12. Wear your TMN name tag and pins. This applies whether you are working at the plant sale, Butterfly tent, the TMN booth, or in other H/B venues (bus tours, FAMI, other booths). Give people the opportunity to be curious about who you are and what you do.
13. Volunteers working for long periods, drink water often and take a break in the **air-conditioned** seating area just inside the building!

Dealing with Plants and the area

1. Prices: All gallon-sized pots are \$9.00, all 2-gallon pots are \$15. and 4-inch pots are \$4.00. A flat is \$40. For plants larger than a 2-gallon size, the price will be shown on the pot.
2. Replenish/rearrange plants tables as necessary using stock underneath table.
3. Check plants periodically to see if they need water, especially if they are drooping. It will be hot and it is important to keep the plants hydrated so water them periodically.
4. Mist plants occasionally. The booth location is hot.
5. Sweep up or wipe down as necessitated by potting soil spillage.
6. Use pruners and a garbage bag to nip off and get rid of any broken branches.
7. When a customer buys the last plant of a type, put the laminated sign in to the bucket in the holding area. We use this method to help gather data on how plant varieties sell.
8. If you are on shift just before noon or just before close of business, & **if the Plant Sale Chair requests**, use a lull period to do an inventory—mark an inventory checklist with plants that have already sold out or with the # of plants left of each type.

Items to be available for your use at plant sale:

- ~ Inventory checklist for noon and close-of-business inventories
- ~ Laminated plant signs in pots—for customer/your use in finding out about plants
- ~ Signs on the windows with selling points about why we suggest natives
- ~ Scotch, duct, masking, & flagging tape
- ~ Watering can/jugs for dry plants—refill in janitor's closet next to restrooms
- ~ Plant mister, pruners, and trash bags
- ~ Cardboard boxes & plastic bags—for customer take-away
- ~ Spare mini-blind slats—for plant labels if missing
- ~ Highlighter pens, marking pens
- ~ Broom, dustpan, rags—for area & inside storage clean-up.

At the End of the Day

1. If the Plant Sale Chair requests, do an inventory of remaining plants—use an inventory checklist as in #8 above.
2. We have permission to store the plants overnight just inside the doors to the HS Commons. Move them on the rolling carts and make sure they will not be in anyone's way before we get them out the next morning.

Selling Points to Use with Customers

1. You have a choice—you can come home from work and fertilize, mow, and water or you can sit back and enjoy wildlife in your own yard.
2. Any plant that is beneficial to insects is beneficial to hummingbirds, because they eat the insects for protein. Nectar is high-energy food, insects are steak, sugar-water is a snack.
3. Understory plants like Elbowbush, Spiny Hackberry, & Wax Myrtle not only feed birds and butterflies, they make good screens to block undesirable views.
4. “Larval host” means the plant is food for caterpillars of a particular butterfly or moth species. A ratty-looking butterfly weed is a good thing!

5. Why natives?

- ~ Local plants and local wildlife are adapted to each other
- ~ More resistant to heat and cold in their Zone
- ~ More food for birds, butterflies and other wildlife
- ~ More biodiversity to keep the planet working
- ~ More birds & butterflies to watch
- ~ Less water,
- ~ Less work
- ~ Less pesticide
- ~ Less fertilizer
- ~ Less expense
- ~ Less time

The natives are friendly when you get to know them!

(Slogan of Native Texas Nursery)