

NOVA SCOTIA ASSOCIATION OF GARDEN CLUBS (NSAGC) PLANT SALE GUIDE

So, You Want To Have a Plant Sale - Garden club plant sales are something of a time honoured tradition. There are a number of things that should be considered when organizing a plant sale. The following information is a guide only. If your club has had successful sales in the past, then you are probably doing all the right things and don't need any new ideas. "If it isn't broke, don't fix it".

Why sell plants – Many plant sales are held to help sustain a garden club financially. Besides generating funds for the club, a sale may also contribute to making the public aware of the club and possibly help recruit new members to the club.

When to hold your plant sale – The sweet spot for plant sales is probably mid-May to mid-June. Much earlier and most plants haven't had a chance to get well established; much later and most organizations have had their sales and the buying public has picked up their quota of plants. As for the time of day; many sales start at 9:00 am and by eleven tables are looking rather empty. If you have advertised a time frame for your sale, it is a good idea to remain open for the duration, as late arrivals may be disgruntled and will not give you a good revue.

Where to sell – an indoor site is the most preferable if there is enough space to accommodate a large number of plants. An outdoor site provides plenty of space, but you are at the mercy of the weather and stand to lose out on not-so-enthusiastic buyers. A covered market area or at least a carport would be a good sheltered location. Piggyback with other local events such as a flea market or town yard sales.

What to sell – variety is the spice of life. Therefore encourage club members to bring in a good variety of perennial plants (short, medium, tall and groundcovers). It would also be a good idea to have some annuals and vegetable transplants on hand. Many homeowners are now getting into small veggie patches, so it wouldn't hurt to have something to satisfy that need. Annuals are a quick fix for bare spots around the garden. Low maintenance plants are always popular, as well as long bloomers. Woody plants usually don't sell well, unless they are in prime condition and the buyer knows what they are getting.

Preparations – pot up your plants at least three weeks in advance. Roots take about two weeks to re-establish and for new growth to begin. **Do not** dig plants the night before the sale as they will be wilted and will not leave a good impression about the quality of other plants you are selling. Negative publicity is bad for future business. Have cardboard boxes or flats available for buyers to carry out plants.

Advertising – Advertise early; begin at least a month in advance with posters on community bulletin boards. Check back on these posters as they have a tendency to disappear. Free, long-running ads in a newspaper flyer (Out & About) or a community flyer. Advertise in a local paper as the date draws near. Post an ad on internet websites. If you are piggy-backing your sale with another event, it is still a good idea to advertise, as not all gardeners are flea market junkies.

Staging, Pricing & Labeling – there are several ways to **stage plants for the sale**; by price category, by size of plants or by type of plants. **Price to sell is the name of the game.** You don't need a lot of leftover plants to take home. The average prices for plants at most sales should run between \$1.00 & \$5.00. Shrubs or specialty plants that are in very good condition may be priced a bit higher, but don't scare buyers away. **Label plants**; as a minimum the plant name and colour. Sun/shade, height and spread would be bonus information. If possible, have some pictures of plants in bloom or have a plant guide on hand to reference. Have club members on hand to advise customers about growth habits and placement.

Have a great sale.

If you do have leftover plants, you may want to consider donating them to a local school, community garden or a worthy charity event.

March 2013