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Dear Stakeholder,

While the Scottish Government's priority in the COVID-19 crisis is to protect lives, we also need to do all we can to protect livelihoods. We know that the health crisis has also become an economic crisis, with many businesses, including garden centres and plant nurseries, having had to close to the public. I want to thank you for doing so and helping our efforts to prevent the spread of the virus and protect our NHS.

But I am aware that this has created acute challenges for garden centres and plant nurseries, not least because many of you will have invested in growing or buying in stock that you expected to have sold over the Easter weekend and into May.

I am also aware that as we enter the fourth week of lockdown, many families are turning to gardening – rightly – as a means of keeping active and close to home, encouraging healthy outdoor activity with children, and even as a way of helping to grow their own food.

As the Minister who leads on gardening matters within the environment, climate change and land reform portfolio in the Scottish Government, I am keen to do what I can to help such activity while ensuring that businesses adhere strictly to the social distancing guidance and law on non-essential businesses closing.

I am aware that some garden centres, nurseries and plant growers in Scotland have already switched to offering only a mail order service for seeds and plants and I am writing to encourage more of you to consider doing so. Of course, any business is free to remain closed.

The Scottish Government emergency regulations allow businesses like yours to offer a mail order service for delivery where they can do so while adhering strictly to the social distancing and public health guidance. For more information on this please see Part 2 4(2) of The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 which you can find [here](#).

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The guidance that you must adhere to, to protect the health of any workers, can be found at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-business-and-social-distancing-guidance/>

I believe that allowing garden centres in Scotland to operate a home delivery service for seeds, plants, equipment, tools, pots and other essential gardening materials has the potential to promote physical and mental health and keep us active whilst also providing some much needed revenue for a pressured sector of our economy.



MAIRI GOUGEON

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