

SouthEast Wisconsin Master Gardener Plant Sale

Jumping Worm Protocol

The spread of jumping worms is a concern for all plant sales. The SEWMG plant sale committee has developed a protocol to prevent the transfer of worms during the sale. No donated plants are accepted for the SEWMG sale without going through our established screening process.

Our dig team has been trained in the identification of jumping worms. Anyone who wants to donate plants to our sale must have their garden go through our screening process. The dig team will visit the donor garden in July, August, or September, since worms are too small to identify before midsummer. Donors are interviewed regarding their garden and gardening practices (particularly mulch use). Team members wear clean shoe coverings and use clean tools during the visit. They will first do a soil inspection looking for characteristic soil symptoms of worm presence. That is followed by multiple mustard pours and diggings all over the donor garden to inspect for worms. Any worm indicators would immediately disqualify the donation. If there are no indications of worms, the plants will be harvested in the fall and heeled in at a winter storage site for spring potting or harvested in the following spring for immediate potting. Donors must not add mulch or new plants until after we complete our digging of plants.

Potting of plants for the sale is done in April and May. At spring potting work days, all volunteers are required to scrub and sterilize their tools. Soles of shoes are brushed, and all volunteers must put on clean shoe covers before they enter the donor garden work site to ensure no worm cocoons are transferred into the donor's garden. Shoe covers and gloves will be provided for volunteers at all sites. The dig team will do the digging of plants for that work day. Plants are cleaned, divided and potted in sterile potting mix and new pots. They are kept at the site in trays until sale week, when they are transferred to State Fair for the sale.