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**MAUMEE VALLEY GROWERS
ENJOY BUSY SPRING SALES**

Increased Sales & Custom Programs
Are Common Among Growers

TOLEDO, Ohio, July 3, 2007 – Favorable weather, an interest in personalized service and environmental concerns have combined to bring increased sales to the 70 members of the Maumee Valley Growers (MVG) this spring.

“Our growers have all experienced increased sales and a longer sales season,” explained Joe Perlaky of the MVG. “Although spring buying began a bit later this season because of weather concerns, we had many good weather weekends to bring out gardeners. All of our growers have had strong spring sales, and it’s continued into early summer.”

“We’ve had a much longer selling season than in the recent past,” explained Theresa Hoen of Hoen’s Greenhouse and Garden Center, Holland. “Our customers bought all their spring plants and are now buying plants to refresh their gardens. It looks like we’ll have a strong summer, too.”

Perlaky said that “people are taking much more interest in their gardens. I think a big reason is because they’re not traveling as much due to higher gas prices in the region; so families are spending more time at home.”

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Janice Bench, from Bench's Greenhouse & Nursery, Elmore, Ohio, agrees. "In addition to increased flower and plant sales this spring, we've seen a real increase in vegetable and herb sales, too. This is a real indication that people are spending more time tending their own homes and gardens.

"Our sales of impatiens are down this year," Bench continued. "We've had a great deal of interest from younger people in their 20s and 30s in using planters at their homes. Rather than planting a lot of flowers, like impatiens, they prefer to use a combination of plants in beautiful containers around their properties. We've also seen a great interest in hanging baskets – we've sold more than 12,000 this spring."

"Our customers are interested in much more personalized services, both in arranging planters and helping to plan landscapes," said Hoen. The greenhouse's Garden Gallery By Design will prepare a customized container planting in a container provided by the customer or purchased on site. They have also set aside an area in which customers can bring their containers and pot their own plants, with guidance from the greenhouse. "Our customers want a long-term relationship with their greenhouse," Hoen said. "They want our advice and suggestions on all their gardening projects. They also have a better eye for quality products, and are recognizing the value of locally-grown products. They have even begun seeking out greenhouses that are part of the Maumee Valley Growers."

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Gardening customers are especially interested in personalized assistance and advice when working with native plants, a specialty of Naturally Native Nursery in Bowling Green, Ohio. “I’ve worked with many new customers this season,” said Jan Hunter of the nursery. “The emphasis on global warming has created a great deal of interest in the environmental aspect of native plants, and how they can be incorporated into the landscape – even to the point of replacing lawns.” Hunter’s native specimens are self-sustaining year-round and grown at or near her nursery, with no fertilizers or chemical pesticides. “Because we’re a local nursery we’re not using fuel to truck in our plants from other parts of the country,” she said.

Hunter provides a great deal of information and counsel to her customers, advising them in establishing gardens to attract butterflies and birds, and selecting native plants for specific regions of Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan. She also designs and installs natural gardens for many residential and commercial customers around the region.

“We’ve had a great deal of success this spring in spreading the word about buying local plants and flowers through the MVG,” said Perlaky. “People understand the economics of buying local – more than 750 jobs created and an infusion of nearly \$100 million to the local economy. And we’re encouraged that Northwest Ohio residents are now looking for the MVG logo when they’re buying their plants and flowers.”

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Maumee Valley Growers is a not-for-profit, industry-based association of 70 retail and wholesale greenhouses committed to sustaining and growing the Northwest Ohio greenhouse industry. MVG is the first economic cluster formed in Northwest Ohio, which is in the top five percent of the country's greenhouse producing regions. Funding for the MVG is made possible through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and has been extended through September 2008. The grant for the MVG is managed by Michael C. Carroll, Ph.D., director of research from the Bowling Green State University Center for Regional Development, and Neil Reid, Ph.D., director of the Urban Affairs Center at the University of Toledo.

For more information, visit www.maumeevalleygrowers.com.