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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Buyer Beware - Watch Out for Nursery Stock and Landscaping Scams

LAKEWOOD, Colo. – The Colorado Department of Agriculture is warning consumers to be wary of nursery stock (trees, shrubs, perennial plants and turf grass sod) that is included for “free” with the cost of exorbitant planting and landscaping costs.

“If nursery stock is offered for ‘free’ it likely does not meet the States’ minimum standard,” said CDA’s Nursery, Seed and Phytosanitary Program Manager, Laura Pottorff. “Consumers run the risk of paying for installation services and winding up with poor quality or soon to be dead trees and shrubs.”

State Law, the Colorado Nursery Act, requires that all people who sell trees, shrubs, turfgrass sod and other perennial plants be registered to do so and that the plant material they sell meet standards that help give this plant material a “leg up” and increase likelihood of survivability. Trees and other landscape plants are a significant investment made to add value to property. Be wise and informed.

What types of standards do trees and other plants need to meet? Here are some examples:

- Trees – the larger the root ball the tree has, the better its chances of surviving transplant and adding long term value to a landscape. Nursery industry best practices and state law dictate standards for deciduous and coniferous trees. Deciduous trees are those that lose their leaves each autumn; for every caliper inch of trunk width measured at 6” above soil line there needs to be at least 10 inches of root ball to match. Similar standards exist for coniferous trees.
- Woody plants and perennials shall not be sold with insect or disease infestations.
- Turfgrass sod shall not be sold if it contains more than three weeds in a 6 x 6 foot (or 36 square foot) area.

Check with the Colorado Department of Agriculture to make sure that the company or person you are purchasing your woody plants, turfgrass sod and perennials from is registered to sell nursery stock. The Nursery Act is a consumer protection law and all woody plants, sod and perennials sold within the state of Colorado and the people who sell them fall under the jurisdiction of this law and the Colorado Department of Agriculture.

The Colorado Department of Agriculture inspects the plants at most of the nurseries in our State, yearly. The results of these inspections and any conditions under advisory or Stop Sale that were found during an inspection are available to the public. Contact CDA at 303-239-4154 or visit www.colorado.gov/ag/dpi and click on “Nursery.”

“If possible, go to the nursery and pick out the tree or plants you want,” continued Pottorff. “When those plants are delivered to you and planted in your landscape watch them closely for the first few weeks and months to make sure they appear to be growing normally.”

While the Department of Agriculture cannot regulate how the plant is planted, it can regulate quality of woody plant material, turfgrass sod, and perennials at the time of sale. CDA helps protect the consumer by ensuring that the product they see at the retail nursery meets minimum standards.

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