MEDIA RELEASE

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

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Best (and Cheapest) Home Improvement for Lean Times? Plants!

NASHVILLE – Chances are, this is not going to be the year you put in a pool … or re-do the kitchen … or paint the house. In the spirit of the times, how does one spruce up one's home in a fiscally responsible, yet hopeful way?

"Nothing brings more fresh color, appeal and good feelings to a homescape than flowers in bloom," says Robert Beets, horticultural marketing specialist with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. "Just a little investment in plants can make a great big difference to your view and your mood. Curb appeal, including colorful landscaping, really does add value to your home, too."

The important thing about adding annuals and perennials in the spring, says Beets, is to be sure the plants are sturdy, healthy plants to begin with, and ones that grow well in your area. What's the best way to ensure you're investing in the best plants?

"I recommend finding a local plant grower," says Beets. "We're lucky in Tennessee to have so many plant nurseries, run by people who are all about the plants they grow. They'll have a selection of plants already proven to grow well in Tennessee — because they've just grown them. They'll also have the newest varieties that may have just what you're looking for — heat resistance, for instance. Plus, you have the chance to get planting and care information firsthand from the expert who grew the plants, something you can't receive from most of the larger 'box' stores."

"It's so tempting to turn your car toward those big retail store parking lots full of color," says Beets, "with rows and rows of plants that look great. But do you know where they're grown? Does the person who's tending that part of the store know anything about plants? Even if he does know about plants, will he have time to answer your questions about how to use them or keep them alive?"

The most direct route to local growers, says Beets, is to visit the Pick Tennessee Products Web site to check out the statewide directory of plant growers and regional growers' associations. "The directory lists growers who offer quality locally grown

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items, educational opportunities, personal service and expert advice, which creates a win-win situation for both the growers and the customers who get to know them."

"For those who find themselves taking a 'stay-cation' instead of a vacation this year, a beautiful homescape can provide both a healthy activity and a way to make home an enjoyable a place to be. Home gardening is often encouraged as a stress management method, a plus that's especially useful, nowadays — and growing your own herbs and at least some of your own summer produce is a way to make your investment pay off!"

For a directory of nurseries and garden centers, visit the Tennessee Department of Agriculture Web site at www.PickTnProducts.org.

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TN.gov/agriculture

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