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The Nature Conservancy and Meijer Relaunch Garden Center Partnership with Earth Day “Open House” New Look, Big Contest, More Choices for Shoppers This Year

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. - April 18, 2008 - The Nature Conservancy and Meijer stores are teaming up again to encourage shoppers to select non-invasive plants, trees and shrubs for their backyards, and they are kicking off this year’s program with a special Earth Day open house on April 26 from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at all 181 Meijer stores throughout the Midwest.

“Invasive species can wreak havoc on local ecosystems by disrupting the delicate balance found in nature,” said Helen Taylor, Michigan state director for The Nature Conservancy. “This ongoing partnership between Meijer and The Nature Conservancy will hopefully help to reduce some of the damage done by invasive species by giving consumers the information they need to help their local environment.”

This year Meijer removed another known invasive plant from their inventory, privet, in addition to Norway maple and Lombardy poplar, which were removed from their inventory last year.

Shoppers visiting Meijer stores on April 26 will be able to learn about environmentally friendly products such as non-invasive plants recommended by The Nature Conservancy through a storewide open house being held at all 181 Meijer stores. Meijer representatives will be on hand to provide background information and informal discussions on non-invasive plants, as well as free seeds and literature on how to make your yard more earth friendly.

Customers visiting Meijer on April 26 can also pick up a variety of free informational items, including a special Earth Day booklet, stickers and magnets, as well as enter to win prizes such as a \$4,500 backyard upgrade or a new hybrid vehicle.

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“Providing healthy choices for our customers through our nutrition and lifestyle offerings is a key part of our business philosophy,” said Hank Meijer, co-chairman and CEO. “We believe that by providing our customers with earth-friendly information in a fun and informative way, we are empowering them to make healthy choices for our earth as well.”

Invasive plants are those that have negative effects on our economy, environment or human health. They can quickly overwhelm native plants by reducing the availability of light, water, nutrients and space. Commonly known invasives include plants such as purple loosestrife and garlic mustard which are found throughout the state.

According to The Nature Conservancy scientists, almost all invasive plants are non-native, but not all non-native plants become invasive. Hundreds of non-native plants have become established in the Midwest, yet relatively few become invasive. Experts say that invasive species cost Americans about \$137 billion every year.

Conservancy scientists developed criteria for recommending plants, trees and shrubs that will carry the Conservancy’s logo on tags in Meijer Garden Centers. Up to 16 percent of Meijer’s plants, trees and shrubs have a special icon created by The Nature Conservancy indicating “Recommended Non-Invasive.”

Species that will receive the special icon on tags redesigned this year include:

- Purple coneflower (flower)
- White pine (tree)
- Big blue stem (grass)
- Flowering dogwood (tree)

Meijer is proud to partner with The Nature Conservancy on this important project to make an impact on invasive species to protect our natural landscape. To learn more about what Meijer is doing to help the environment, visit nature.meijer.com.

The Nature Conservancy is the leading conservation organization working to protect the most ecologically important lands and waters around the world for nature and people. To date, The Nature Conservancy and its 1 million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 117 million acres worldwide. For more information, visit <http://www.nature.org>.

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