

## New Tests Find Significant Decrease in Bee-Killing Pesticides in “Bee-Friendly” Plants

Poll shows 51 percent of Americans more likely to shop at retailers committed to not sell bee-killing pesticides



WASHINGTON, D.C. —(ENEWSPF)—August 16, 2016. A report released today showed a significant decrease in the number of “bee-friendly” home garden plants sold at major retailers that have been pre-treated with pesticides shown to harm and kill bees. The **study** (<http://www.foe.org/gardeners-beware-2016>) of plants purchased at Home Depot (NYSE: HD), Lowe’s (NYSE: LOW), Ace Hardware, True Value and Walmart (NYSE: WMT) was conducted by Friends of the Earth, Pesticide Research Institute and allies.

The report, *Gardeners Beware 2016*, is a follow-up to testing conducted in **2013** (<http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/93/88/f/3354/Gardeners-Beware-Report-11.pdf>) and **2014** ([http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/93/3a/3/4738/GardenersBewareReport\\_2014.pdf](http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/93/3a/3/4738/GardenersBewareReport_2014.pdf)) that demonstrated the presence of bee-toxic neonicotinoid insecticides (neonics) in more than half of bee-attractive flowers tested. The 2016 analysis found that 23 percent of flowers and trees tested contain neonicotinoid insecticides at levels that can harm or kill bees, indicating that stores are selling far fewer plants treated with bee-killing neonics than in 2014. This reduction is likely due to changes in store policies that commit retailers to eliminate neonicotinoid use on garden plants. Retailer commitments are having a ripple effect in production methods by suppliers and have resulted in reduced use of neonicotinoids in common garden plants overall.

Large retailers, including Home Depot and Lowe’s, have made commitments to phase out use of these pesticides. The new data demonstrates that these two companies are making significant progress toward that goal. Ace Hardware, True Value and Walmart have not yet made similar commitments to eliminate neonics in their stores.

“The market is shifting away from selling bee-killing pesticides, and retailers including Ace Hardware and True Value are lagging behind their competitors,” said Tiffany Finck-Haynes, food futures campaigner with Friends of the Earth. “We are calling on all retailers to do their part to save bees and adopt formal policies to eliminate neonicotinoid pesticides.”

“Our data indicates that compared to two years ago, fewer nurseries and garden stores are selling plants pre-treated with systemic neonicotinoid insecticides,” said Susan Kegley, Ph.D., author of the report from the Pesticide Research Institute. “Yet it’s still not possible for a gardener to be sure that the plants they select at the store will be safe for bees and other pollinators. Retailers should work with their suppliers to speed up their phase out of bee-harming pesticides.”

A YouGov **Poll** (<http://www.foe.org/gardeners-beware-2016-poll>) commissioned by Friends of the Earth and SumofUs conducted in 2016 and released today found that 67 percent of Americans feel more positively about Home Depot and 66 percent feel more positively about Lowe’s because of their formal commitments to eliminate neonics. Following this survey, half of respondents said they are more likely to shop at Home Depot (50 percent) and Lowe’s (51 percent) because of the store’s commitment. Further, more than a third (39 percent) said they’d feel more negatively about a retailer that had not formally committed to eliminate systemic neonicotinoid insecticides.

“Our poll shows clearly that hardware store customers care about using neonic-free plants,” said Angus Wong, Lead Digital Strategist at SumOfUs. “Given this evidence, it’s no wonder that hundreds of thousands of Americans have signed petitions asking Ace and True Value Hardware stores to follow in Home Depot and Lowe’s footsteps by pulling neonicotinoid insecticides from their shelves and committing to stock products that do not harm bees. While True Value and Ace Hardware affiliates in Maine, Oregon

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and Washington have adopted store policies to eliminate neonicotinoids, both chains must adopt policies that apply to all of their stores nationwide."

More than 100 businesses, cities, universities, states and countries around the world have restricted use of these insecticides. Greenhouse Grower's 2016 State Of The Industry **Survey** (<http://www.greenhousegrower.com/business-management/the-home-depot-says-no-to-neonics/>) found 74 percent of growers who supply mass merchants and home improvement chains said they will not use neonicotinoid insecticides in 2016.

"Not just pollinators are affected by neonicotinoid pesticides. The men and women farmworkers who work in the nurseries and on the farms that grow the plants that bees and insects pollinate are also exposed to and at high risk from these pesticides, that have been shown to have environmental and human health effects," said Jeannie Economos, Pesticide Safety and Environmental Health Project Coordinator, Farmworker Association of Florida. "Even their children living in these agricultural areas are threatened by toxic exposures. We need urgent action. When we protect pollinators, we also protect farmworkers, children, and, ultimately, ourselves."

Bees and other pollinators, essential for every one in three bites of food we eat, are in great peril. The United Nations estimates 40 percent of invertebrate pollinator species, including bees and butterflies, are on the brink of extinction. Research indicates that bee-toxic neonicotinoid insecticides are one of the primary causes of the decline. Neonicotinoid insecticides have been responsible for several high profile bee kills from high doses of the pesticides, and a strong and growing body of science shows that neonics contribute to impaired reproduction, learning and memory, hive communications and immune response at doses far below those that cause bee kills. In this study, all of the nursery plant samples where neonics were detected have the potential to harm or even kill bees.

Flowering trees are frequently used in landscaping city streets and business campuses, providing nectar for bees, seeds for birds and shade for humans. Unfortunately, the results of the new report show that systemic neonicotinoids are commonly used in tree production and could be a major source of exposure for urban pollinators.

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The Report Gardeners Beware 2016: Bee-Toxic Pesticides Found in "Bee-Friendly" Plants Sold at Garden Centers in the U.S., survey results, tips for consumers and a complete list of the co-releasing organizations and cities where plant samples were gathered can be found at [www.foe.org/beeaction](http://www.foe.org/beeaction) (<http://www.foe.org/beeaction>).

Friends of the Earth fights to create a more healthy and just world. Our current campaigns focus on promoting clean energy and solutions to climate change, ensuring the food we eat and products we use are safe and sustainable, and protecting marine ecosystems and the people who live and work near them.

Pesticide Research Institute is an environmental consulting firm providing research, analysis, technical services and expert consulting on the chemistry and toxicology of pesticides. [www.pesticideresearch.com](http://www.pesticideresearch.com) (<http://www.pesticideresearch.com>)

Friends of the Earth U.S. and the Pesticide Research Institute are releasing Gardeners Beware 2016 today with Beyond Toxics, Central Maryland Beekeepers Association, Ecology Center, Environment Texas, Georgia Organics, Maryland Pesticide Education Network, Natural Resources Defense Council, Organic Consumers Association, Pesticide Action Network North America, Toxics Action Center, Toxic Free North Carolina and Turner Environmental Law Clinic in the following cities: Ann Arbor, MI, Atlanta, GA, Austin, TX, Boston, MA, Burlington, VT, Baltimore area, MD, Eugene, OR, Minneapolis, MN, Portland, ME, Raleigh, NC, Sacramento, CA, San Francisco, CA and Washington, DC.

Friends of the Earth U.S. and SumOfUs are releasing YouGov Survey **results** (<http://www.foe.org/gardeners-beware-2016-poll>) today. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1,119 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 28th – 29th April 2016. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all U.S. adults (aged 18+).

Source: <http://www.foe.org> (<http://www.foe.org>)

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