

PRESS RELEASE

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Home Depot to phase out bee-killing pesticides *Coalition presses for all retailers to make commitment to protect bees*

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Home Depot (NYSE: HD), the world's largest home-improvement chain, has [announced](#) that it has removed neonicotinoid pesticides, a leading driver of global bee declines, from 80 percent of its flowering plants and that it will complete its phase-out in plants by 2018. This announcement follows an ongoing campaign and [letter](#) by Friends of the Earth and allies urging Home Depot to stop selling plants treated with neonicotinoids and remove neonic pesticides from store shelves.

"Home Depot's progress in removing neonics shows it is listening to consumer concerns and to the growing body of science telling us we need to move away from bee-toxic pesticides," said **Lisa Archer, Food and Technology program director at Friends of the Earth U.S.** "However, we know that Home Depot and other retailers can do even more to address the bee crisis. Along with allies, we will continue to challenge retailers to engage in a race to the top to move bee-toxic pesticides off their shelves and out of garden plants as soon as possible. Bees are the canary in the coal mine for our food system and everyone, including the business community, must act quickly to protect them."

A study released by Friends of the Earth and Pesticide Research Institute, [Gardeners Beware 2014](#), showed that 51 percent of garden plants purchased at **Lowe's (NYSE: LOW), Home Depot (NYSE: HD) and Walmart (NYSE: WMT)** in 18 cities in the United States and Canada contained neonicotinoid pesticides at levels that could harm or even kill bees. Following the release of this report, Home Depot announced it would require its suppliers to label all plants treated with neonicotinoid pesticides, which have been shown to harm and kill bees, by the fourth quarter of 2014. It also committed to "find alternative insecticides for protecting live goods and bees."

Friends of the Earth and allies have [called on](#) Home Depot to strengthen its existing commitments to protecting bees and other pollinators and nursery workers by immediately disclosing the progress it has made to date in phasing out neonicotinoid pesticides in all of its plants and off-the-shelf products. The coalition also called on the retailer to make a public commitment to complete its phase-out of neonicotinoids in all plants and off-the-shelf products, while transitioning to least-toxic alternatives that are benign to human health and the environment, by December 2016.

“Home Depot’s public commitment will better position the company to meet the demands of an increasingly environmentally-conscious consumer base. And, it sends an important market signal that restricting the use of bee-harming pesticides is essential to stemming chronic bee declines,” said **Susan Baker, Vice President of [Trillium Asset Management](#)**. Trillium and partners in the [Investor Environmental Health Network](#), [Domini Social Investments](#) and [the Sustainability Group of Loring, Wolcott and Coolidge](#), have been in active dialogue with management on this issue.

"Home Depot's progress in removing neonicotinoids from the majority of its flowering plants shows how fast a corporation can move when it needs to respond to consumer pressure and science," said **Beatrice Olivastri, CEO, [Friends of the Earth Canada](#)**. "We expect all garden retailers, big and small, to be specifying right now to their suppliers to stop use of neonics for 2016 flowering plants."

"We welcome Home Depot's announcement that it has removed 80% of bee-killing pesticides from its plants. Together, over 750,000 SumOfUs members told Home Depot to stand up for the bees, and together we will be watching closely to make sure that Home Depot phases out these bee-killing pesticides as quickly as possible," said **Angus Wong, campaigner, [SumOfUs](#)**.

“It’s important that retailers like Home Depot begin to make the switch towards safer products for bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects. By phasing out neonicotinoid products, Home Depot is helping consumers break away from a dependency on the use of toxic pesticides in their homes and gardens,” said **Jay Feldman, executive director, [Beyond Pesticides](#)**.

In the past year, [more than thirty nurseries](#), landscaping companies and retailers have taken steps to eliminate bee-killing pesticides from their stores. A growing body of scientific evidence has continued to mount that neonicotinoids are a major contributor to both wild bee and honey bee declines and that they are [contaminating the environment](#), [harming a variety of other organisms](#) essential to healthy ecosystems and sustainable food production.

“Even though Home Depot has taken these steps in the right direction, it’s important for gardeners to be aware that many plants in stores today still contain neonicotinoids. We look forward to the day when we can all buy home garden plants without worrying about harming pollinators. In the meantime, gardeners should choose organic and neonic-free starts, seeds and soil,” said **Katherine Paul, associate director, [Organic Consumers Association](#)**.

"It's time for other retailers, such as Ace and True Value, to take a stand against toxic, bee-killing neonicotinoids by making a full-fledged, public commitment to eliminate bee-killing pesticides from store shelves," said **Laurel Hopwood, [Sierra Club's](#) pollinator protection program coordinator**.

Earlier in 2015, Friends of the Earth and Pesticide Research Institute surveyed nurseries and released the report [Growing Bee Friendly Garden Plants: Profiles in Innovation](#), to find out how growers and retail stores were working to meet consumer demand for neonicotinoid-free plants.

"The survey showed that many growers are stepping up to the plate to ensure that their plants are safe for pollinators," said **Dr. Susan Kegley, principal scientist at [Pesticide Research Institute](#)**. "These growers are using innovative approaches to control pests such as application of beneficial insects or fungi that eat or disable pest insects, as well as tried and true common-sense pest prevention methods like proper sanitation, frequent monitoring for pests, and selection of pest-resistant plants. Their

success shows that harmful systemic insecticides are not necessary to grow bee-friendly plants."

Greenhouse Grower magazine surveyed the one hundred largest greenhouse growers in the industry, and found 31 percent of the growers surveyed are not using neonicotinoids at all, and 38 percent have eliminated neonicotinoid use for some of their plant products.

Last April, the EPA placed a moratorium on new and expanded uses of neonicotinoids. In September, the 9th Circuit Court suspended the EPA's approval of sulfoxaflor, a neonicotinoid.

In November, the U.S. Geological Survey released a reconnaissance study demonstrating native bees collected in an agricultural landscape are exposed to multiple pesticides and of the bees tested, 70percent contained pesticides, including neonicotinoids.

***Organizations partnering with Friends of the Earth U.S. in the [campaign](#) to urge garden retailers including Home Depot to phase out the use and sale of neonicotinoids include:** American Bird Conservancy, Atlanta Audubon Society, Beyond Pesticides, Beyond Toxics, Center for Biological Diversity, Center for Environmental Health, Center for Food Safety, CREDO Action, Ecology Center, Endangered Species Coalition, Environment New York, Environment Texas, Environmental Youth Council, Farmworker Association of Florida, Friends of the Earth Canada, Georgia Organics, GMO Inside, Green America, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, Maryland Pesticide Network, Mercola.com, Natural Resources Defense Council, Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides, Olympia Beekeepers Association, Organic Consumers Association, Pesticide Action Network North America, Planet Rehab, Save our Environment, Sierra Club, Smart on Pesticides Maryland, SumOfUs, Toxics Action Center, Toxic Free North Carolina, Turner Environmental Law Clinic and The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation.

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