

Contact, Beyond Toxics:

Lisa Arkin, Executive Director

Phone: 541-465-8860

info@beyondtoxics.org | www.BeyondToxics.org

Press Kit: <http://www.beyondtoxics.org/resources/press-kit/>



News Release – August 16, 2016

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 formally committed against bee-killing pesticides

[Eugene, OR]– A national report released today showed a significant decrease in the number of major retailers selling “bee-friendly” plants pre-treated with pesticides known to harm and kill bees. The [study](#) of plants purchased at **Home Depot, Lowe’s, Ace Hardware, True Value** and **Walmart** was conducted by Friends of the Earth, Pesticide Research Institute and allies, including Oregon’s Beyond Toxics.

The report, *Gardeners Beware 2016*, is a follow-up to testing conducted in [2013](#) and [2014](#) that demonstrated the presence of bee-toxic neonicotinoid insecticides (neonics) in more than 50 percent 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 previous years. This reduction is likely due to new store policies that commit retailers to eliminate or phase-out neonicotinoid use on garden plants. Retailer commitments are having a ripple effect on suppliers and have resulted in reduced use of neonicotinoids in common garden plants overall.

Larger retailers Home Depot and Lowe's, have both 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**.

Lisa Arkin of Beyond Toxics said, “In Oregon, some True Value stores have stopped stocking neonicotinoids in their gardening section, including Hankins Hardware in Portland. We are calling on all retailers to do their part to save bees by eliminating neonicotinoid pesticides in pre-treated plants and garden products.”

A 2016 YouGov Poll [[link to poll](#)] commissioned by Friends of the Earth and Sum of Us released today found that 67% of Americans feel more positively about Home Depot and 66% feel more positively about Lowe’s because of their formal, stated commitments to eliminate neonics.

“The market is shifting away from selling bee-killing pesticides,” said Arkin. “We are calling on the Oregon Department of Agriculture and all retailers to eliminate neonicotinoid pesticide pre-treatments of plants and removal of off-the-shelf neonic chemicals. Until then, gardeners should buy organic plants to ensure the safety of bees.” Beyond Toxics is sponsoring a petition to require Oregon to make neonicotinoids a restricted-use pesticide, which would reserve it for use by professional applicators only.

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](#) found 74 percent of growers who supply mass merchants and home improvement chains said they will not use neonicotinoid insecticides in 2016.

“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.”

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.

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.

###

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.

Friends of the Earth – U.S., founded by David Brower in 1969, is the U.S. voice of the world’s largest federation of grassroots environmental groups, with a presence in 74 countries. Friends of the Earth works to defend the environment and champion a more healthy and just world. www.FoE.org.

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

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 Network, Natural Resources Defense Council, Organic Consumers Association, Pesticide Action Network North America, Toxics Action Center, Toxic Free North Carolina, 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 today. Results can be found here. 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 US adults (aged 18+).

Beyond Toxics works to guarantee environmental protections and health for all communities and residents. We expose root causes of toxic pollution and help communities find effective, lasting solutions.

www.BeyondToxics.org | 541-465-8860