

Dear Manager,

I am a customer at your store and I am writing to respectfully ask your company to help protect bees and other pollinators essential to our food supply and the environment by committing to not sell products containing pesticides linked to the global decline in bee populations. This includes pesticide products containing systemic neonicotinoid pesticides, as well as nursery bedding and vegetable plants treated with these chemicals.

One out of every three bites of food we eat, from almonds to strawberries and soybeans are pollinated by bees. Unfortunately bees and other essential pollinators around the globe have been dying at alarming rates. Last winter, beekeepers reported losses of nearly half of their hives—the second highest loss recorded to date.

A growing body of science points to neonicotinoid pesticides (neonics) as a key factor in bee die offs. Exposure to neonics can directly kill bees, and can also weaken their immune systems and increase their vulnerability to disease and pests.

The widespread agricultural use of neonics is a common exposure pathway for bees; however, cosmetic use of these pesticides in gardens, lawns, and landscapes may be an important contributing factor in declining bee and wild pollinator health. A study by Friends of the Earth found that many of the “bee friendly” seedlings and plants sold to unsuspecting consumers in nurseries and garden stores across the U.S. have been pretreated with neonics at much higher doses than are used on farms, where levels of neonic use are already raising concerns among beekeepers and researchers studying the decline of pollinator populations.

These nursery plants carry neither a list of pesticides used, nor do they carry a warning that these plants could harm pollinators. Customers who intend to plant “bee-friendly” gardens may unknowingly be buying off-the-shelf products and plants that harm or kill bees.

More than twenty garden retailers, wholesale nurseries and landscaping companies, including the two largest Home Improvement retailers in the world—Home Depot and Lowe's, as well as BJ's Wholesale Club and Whole Foods have taken steps to eliminate neonics from their stores.

As a customer concerned about bee health, I am worried that some of the plants sold at your store may be pre-treated with neonics. I am writing to ask you to take action to help protect bees and other pollinators by committing to the following:

- **Do not sell off the shelf neonicotinoid insecticides for home garden use.**
- **Demand neonicotinoid-free vegetable and bedding plants from nursery suppliers and do not sell plants pre treated with these pesticides.**
- **Offer third party certified organic starts and plants.**
- **Educate your customers on why your company has made the decision to protect bees and other pollinators.**

Please contact Friends of the Earth by emailing beeaction@foe.org to discuss your store's current policies and how your store can show its leadership in sustainability by committing to not sell products that harm or kill bees. Friends of the Earth would also be happy to answer any questions you might have or provide further information on this topic.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I hope to be able to count your store among the places where I can feel confident that I am purchasing plants and products that will help, not harm the small creatures that are so essential to our food supply and healthy ecosystems.

Sincerely,

Resources: Visit www.foe.org/beeaction to learn more, read a letter from Friends of the Earth and allies to retailers, and read the report *Gardeners Beware (2014): Bee-toxic pesticides found in "bee-friendly" plants sold at garden centers across the U.S. and Canada*