

**NEWS RELEASE**

July 28, 2020

**Unsolicited seeds could wreak havoc on agriculture, environment, state officials warn**

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — People across the country are receiving unsolicited packages of unidentified seeds in the mail that seem to be coming from China. The Office of the Indiana State Chemist, located at Purdue University, is urging Hoosiers not to plant or dispose of the seeds since they could be spreading noxious weeds, plant diseases or invasive species.

Anyone in Indiana who receives a package is told not to open the seed packet and to mail it and any packaging materials to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Indiana office (full instructions below). State and federal authorities will work together to identify and properly dispose of all seeds and plant materials.

“It might be tempting to put this into some soil to see what happens, but there’s a lot of damage that can cause,” said Don Robison, seed administrator for the Office of the Indiana State Chemist. “We don’t know what these seeds are, and there is potential for doing serious harm to everything from your backyard garden to the commodity and specialty crops that are such an important part of the agricultural economy. The last thing we want is to spread a weed, invasive species or disease, and that’s a real risk if people plant these or throw them in the garbage.”

Weed seeds, invasive species and disease pathogens can spread rapidly costing millions of dollars annually for just a single plant or disease and cause billions of dollars of impact overall each year.

It’s possible that the seeds are part of a “brushing” campaign in which online retailers send out unsolicited packages and use the fake sales to improve the seller’s ratings in the marketplace. But state agricultural and environmental leaders don’t want to take any chances.

“Once a new disease or invasive species is out there, it’s a very costly problem,” Robison said. “It’s like trying to put a genie back in the bottle.”

Anyone who receives unsolicited seeds should:

- Keep the seeds and packaging, including the mailing label, but do not open the seed packet;
- Place all contents in a zip-top bag, then place the bag in an envelope or small box and mail it to:

USDA APHIS PPQ

... more ...

State Plant Health Director

Nick Johnson

3059 N. Morton St.

Franklin, IN 46131

- If you cannot mail the items, do not dispose of them. Keep the seeds, packaging and mailing label and contact the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Entomology & Plant Pathology at 866-663-9684 or [DEPP@dnr.IN.gov](mailto:DEPP@dnr.IN.gov).
- Anyone has already planted seeds should not dispose of the plants or soil. Contact the Indiana DNR Division of Entomology & Plant Pathology at the phone number and email address above.
- Never plant seeds of unknown origin.

Writer: Brian Wallheimer; 765-532-0233; [bwallhei@purdue.edu](mailto:bwallhei@purdue.edu)

Source: Don Robison; 765-494-1557; [drobiso@purdue.edu](mailto:drobiso@purdue.edu)

**KEYWORDS:** “Purdue” and “Indiana State Chemist” and “seeds” and “China”