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Horticultural Research Institute Releases BMPs for Bee Health

The Horticultural Research Institute (HRI), the research foundation of Americanhort, has just announced the release of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for bee health in the horticulture industry.

Jennifer Gray, Research Programs Administrator shares the following news release (Washington DC and Columbus, OH, January 19, 2017).

Best Management Practices are intended to inform horticultural professionals about the green industry's impact on bee health. Through the use of BMP guidelines, horticulture can continue to play an important role in pollinator health.

In 2015, the Horticultural Research Institute recognized the need for sound research to develop best production and management practices, educate, and empower the green industry. HRI, in collaboration with AmericanHort, continues to directly fund and leverage research to refine science-based guidance on horticultural practices and protecting bee and pollinator health. As part of the broad-based Horticulture Industry Bee and Pollinator

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Stewardship Initiative that includes industry and consumer outreach and the establishment of industry best practices, HRI has directly funded four important research projects, launched the Grow Wise, Bee Smart website, and joined the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge campaign.

Jon Reelhorn, HRI President, states, "Investment in research surrounding horticulture's role in pollinator health is part of HRI's longstanding commitment to fostering new information relevant to horticultural practices, techniqes, and principles. We are pleased to have developed a set of BMPs that offer specific guidance to the industry to refine their stewardship role in bee health."

Pollinators as a whole encompass a diverse population of thousands of different species, such as managed honey bees, wild bees, butterflies, birds, and bats. Protection of pollinators in general, especially bees, continues to be a major concern among the general public and with the green industry. Several culprits have been identified as factors contributing to managed honey bee losses, including Varroa mites, other pests/diesease of bees, loss of habitat and nutrition, and off-target effects of pesticides. Alternatively, wild, unmanaged bee populations are most greatly affected by landscape changes and habitat degradation.

HRI developed the BMPs, which cover greenhouse and nursery production, woody ornamentals, and managed landscapes, with the assistance of researchers and apiarists throughout North America. Updates to these recommendations will be made as additional research results regarding bee and pollinator health are released.

For the full Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Bee Health in the Horticultural Industry, and to learn more about the HRI and its efforts in developing science-based recommendations, visit the Grow Wise, Bee Smart website. Or contact Jennifer Gray, HRI Administrator, at jenniferg@americanhort.org or (614-884-1155).

Greenhouse and Nursery Production BMPs from HRI:

1. Consider using Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies for pest control and avoid unnecessary preventive applications when possible. IPM focuses on pest prevention through inspections to identify pests of concern, monitoring pest populations, and recordkeeping. Should pest populations approach unacceptable levels, tactics such as chemical, biological, cultural and mechanical control are deployed for pest management.

2. Avoid spraying pollinator-attractive plants with systemic insecticides toxic to bees the last three weeks before shipping and sale. Products that the EPA deems potentially hazardous to bees are labeled with a Bee Advisory Box.

3. Always read and follow label instructions and application restrictions. The label is the law, and these directions are intended to protect pollinators.

4. Some alternative products that can be used in the final three weeks of production include acetamiprid, Beauveria bassiana, Bacillus thuringiensis, insecticidal soap, and horticultural oils.

5. Do not treat pollinator-attractive plants with a basal drench of clothianidin, dinotefuan, imidacloprid, or thiamethoxam.

6. Do not apply product to blooming, pollen-shedding, or nectar-producing parts of plants if bees may be foraging during this period.

7. Minimize direct exposure to foraging pollinators.

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