

To: Members of the Senate Committee On Environment and Natural Resources
From: Lori Vollmer – Owner, Garden Fever!
Date: 3-22-17
Re: In support of SB 929

My name is Lori Vollmer. My partner, Richard Vollmer and I own and operate a NE Portland plant nursery and garden store called Garden Fever. We have a 10,000 sq. ft. retail nursery space and a 5,000 sq. ft. interior retail store. We have been in business for 14 years and sell a full range of plants, vegetables and fruits, annuals and perennials, shrubs and trees and all the products needed to care for them.

My hope is the information I present will assist in a decision to prohibit the sale of plant care products containing neonicotinoids, to consumers. There is clear scientific evidence that neonicotinoids have a detrimental and in many cases, lethal effect on pollinators and the misuse of these products has contributed to the decline of pollinator populations.

In the spring of 2013, we removed all plant care items from our retail shelves that contained neonicotinoids and do not use those products to control pests in our nursery.

At that time, we also polled the growers we purchase plant material from in order to find out how many were using products containing neonicotinoids and were surprised to learn that many were not. A number of others were working towards eliminating them, many focusing on biocontrol alternatives. Now, the majority of our plant growers have eliminated the use of neonicotinoid plant care products on their farms.

The sales in our Plant Pharmacy Department have increased by 9.4% since the time we removed the products containing neonicotinoids. We have not lost sales in making this change. Instead, we have had healthy increases and the opportunity to continue educating our customers on sustainable gardening practices. It has not been difficult to guide customers in using different products or methods of pest control because most consumers want to do the right thing. And, they look to us to point them in the right direction.

Alternative pest control products are the biggest trend for current and future customers. Organic and natural, eco-safe products, beneficial insects and biological controls are the fastest growing category in pest and disease control products. Pollinator Gardens are one of the fastest growing trends in the nursery business. It makes no sense to customers to spend time and money planting a beautiful garden that will support birds, bees, and native pollinators and then spread pollinator-toxic products on those plants. Pollinator-safe products are what consumers want for their gardens and many ask specifically for them.

While it's true that public opinion is trending to use products that are safe for pollinators, it is unclear how long it will take before the reduced sales of these products will result in

manufacturers discontinuing their consumer product lines. As I mentioned earlier, consumers rely on retailers to sell products they feel are safe for them to use. As long as these products are on the shelves, some consumers will purchase them. In the mean time, pollinator populations will continue to be affected.

Attached to my testimony are pictures of the pest control section in our Plant Pharmacy Department. It is small compared to what you see at a big box retailer but is very effective. When it comes to this category of products, most consumers don't want the biggest selection. They want the best selection of products to meet their needs.

Thank you for your time considering my testimony.

Lori Vollmer
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*Biological control is a bioeffector-method of controlling pests (including insects, mites, weeds and plant diseases) using other living organisms.