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MT Dept. of Agriculture Reminds Montanans to Sow Safe Seeds

Buying and planting seed from licensed dealers protects Montana from invasive species

Helena, Mont. – As people across the state gear up to plant their gardens this spring, the Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) is reminding growers about the importance of buying and planting seeds from licensed seed dealers to protect against invasive species and plant diseases.

“Spring is such an exciting time for agriculture in Montana, from our farmers and ranchers out in the field to the folks planting gardens in their backyard,” said Director Mike Foster. “Along with this excitement comes a responsibility to look after our state by purchasing seeds from trustworthy sources. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to our Department to ensure that your seeds are safe before planting them.”

Last year, residents in all 50 states received unsolicited “mystery seeds” through the mail that originated in China causing federal and state agencies to urge recipients not to plant them, and to contact their state regulatory officials to submit them for testing or dispose of them instead. Close to 150 seed packages were received in Montana and sent to [USDA’s Animal and Plant Inspection Service](#) (APHIS) for testing. A mix of ornamental, fruit and vegetable, herb and weed species were discovered and fortunately determined not to be severely hazardous. In this case, the unsolicited seeds appear to have been sent as part of a brushing scam designed to boost e-commerce rankings for companies by shipping items to unknowing individuals and then creating false profiles and fabricated positive reviews.

Whether it be as part of a brushing scam or otherwise, planting unknown or unsolicited seeds can introduce harmful pests and/or diseases. To ensure your seeds are safe, please:

- check to confirm the seed species information is printed on the seed package
- do not plant any seeds of unknown species or origin
- verify seed suppliers are licensed in MT at mtplants.mt.gov or call MDA at (406) 444-3144.

The [Federal Seed Act](#) and [Montana Seed Laws](#) require seed sellers and distributors to plainly label their packages. The MDA Seed Program ensures that seeds offered for sale in Montana are truthfully labeled for identity, purity, and viability. To learn more, visit the Montana Department of Agriculture’s web page at agr.mt.gov/SeedProgram.

The Montana Department of Agriculture is serving Montana Agriculture and growing prosperity under the Big Sky. For more information on department programs and services, visit agr.mt.gov.

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