



HENDERSON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION (HCMG)

WEEKLY NEWS ARTICLE

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Suspicious Seeds Arrive in US Mailboxes

By Sherry Sorrell, Master Gardener

What first seemed like a smattering of surprise seeds, started arriving last week mailed to people in three states and marked as jewelry. U.S. residents in all 50 states report receiving the suspicious packages. Information on the packages indicates they allegedly originated in China, and some seem to be from Uzbekistan.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is working with Customs and Border Protection as well as state partners to investigate these incidents. The USDA says they have no

evidence this is anything more than a “brushing” scam. The Better Business Bureau reports brushing occurs when a foreign, third-party seller uses your Amazon information to generate a fake sale. They send unsolicited items to customers in order to post false positive reviews thereby increasing their sales. The USDA advises anyone receiving the seed packets to contact their state agriculture department and hold onto the packets for proper disposal instructions. Do not plant seeds from unknown origins.

Texas Department of Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller issued a warning on July 27 advising residents not to open or plant the seeds as they could be harmful invasive species. He said, “An invasive plant species may not sound threatening, but these small invaders could destroy Texas agriculture.” He also indicated his department is working closely with the USDA to analyze the seeds.

Henderson County Agriculture Extension Agent Spencer Perkins advises to not open the seed packets and to keep the seeds and the original mailing envelope. Contact the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) via email to the USDA-APHIS-PPQ State Operations Coordinator Carol Motloch



at carol.m.motloch@usda.gov Your email should include your contact email and phone number. A description or a photo of the package label and seeds would be helpful as well. If you do not have email access, their phone number is 512-916-5241.

Once again, please note: do not plant the seeds. Commissioner Miller says he is urging folks to take this matter seriously.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com, or visit txmq.org/hendersonmq