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## Arkansas Department of Agriculture Collecting Unsolicited Seeds for USDA Testing

**LITTLE ROCK, AR** -- The Arkansas Department of Agriculture has received multiple reports that private citizens in Arkansas have received unsolicited packages containing seeds that appear to have originated from China. The types of seeds in the packages are varied. The packages were sent by mail and may have Chinese writing on them.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) and the Arkansas Department of Agriculture are asking Arkansans who have received these unsolicited packages not to open, plant, or throw the seeds away. The Department encourages anyone who has received unsolicited seeds in the mail that appear to have Chinese origin to place the unopened seed packet in a sealed bag and report the package via the [Unsolicited Seed Reporting Form](#) or to contact the Plant Industries Division at 501-225-1598. The Unsolicited Seed Reporting Form and more information can also be found at [agriculture.arkansas.gov/plant-industries/department-collecting-unsolicited-seeds/](http://agriculture.arkansas.gov/plant-industries/department-collecting-unsolicited-seeds/).

Once the contact information is received, the Department will arrange to have the seeds picked up by a Department employee. The Department will transfer the seeds to the USDA for identification and/or destruction.

Those who have planted the seeds should leave the plants where they are and contact the Department for guidance.

The USDA-APHIS does not have any evidence that this is something other than a "brushing scam" where sellers send unsolicited items to unsuspecting consumers and then post false reviews to boost sales. Based on preliminary analysis of the seed samples the USDA received on July 17, 2020, the seed packets appear to be a mix of horticultural and weed species.

The interception of unidentified seeds in international mail shipments is not uncommon. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) estimates that there were 15,000 interceptions of seeds from all sources worldwide, and 5,000 from China and Hong Kong in 2019.

The Department reminds consumers that online purchases of plants, seeds, and other plant products can be risky because these items can carry a range of invasive pests and diseases. These purchases can also be illegal without proper inspections and paperwork, such as permits or plant health certificates. Before buying seeds or plants online from international vendors, Arkansans should contact the Department's Plant Industry Division at 501-225-1598 to ask if the items need to be inspected or meet other conditions to bring them into the United States legally and without pests.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation. Visit [www.agriculture.arkansas.gov](http://www.agriculture.arkansas.gov).