

For Immediate Release

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## **Horticultural Pollinator Research Investments Bearing Fruit** *Horticultural Research Institute Continues Work on a Key Industry Initiative*

WASHINGTON, DC and COLUMBUS, OH—May 20, 2016—Bees and bee health are still making headlines, and sorely needed research results are finally starting to emerge. In early May, Horticultural Research Institute participated in a research symposium at Penn State University where early results from several research projects relevant to pollinator health were shared.

The Center for Pollinator Research at Penn State is comprised of a group of 25 faculty members dedicated to studying pollinator health and conservation. The Center's research projects are diverse and comprehensive, varying from a project using beehives to mitigate crop damage by elephants in Kenya to developing a pollinator garden at the Flight 93 memorial site.

Several research projects impact the green industry more directly, including one on honey bee exposure to pesticides and one on honey bee nutrition. Horticultural Research Institute funded portions of this research through its Grow Wise, Bee Smart™ initiative.

Dr. Nancy Ostiguy, Penn State University, leads a nationwide study evaluating pesticide exposure to honey bees. In the first four years of collections, fungicides were most commonly detected, as compared with insecticides and herbicides. Azoxystrobin and propiconazole were among the top three fungicides most frequently found.

Pollen is a major source of protein and nutrients for honey bees. Like the food we eat, not all pollen is created equal in terms of nutrition. For example, Buddleia, or butterfly bush, is wildly attractive to pollinators, but it is virtually devoid of nutritional value. Thusly, a large collaboration with several state researchers will determine the nutritional value of plants attractive to bees. The research is in the early phases. Dr. Harland Patch, Penn State University, is charged with leading the research team in Pennsylvania.

This information comes close on the heels of the newly released, preliminary annual bee loss report from the Bee Informed Partnership. Winter and summer colony losses in 2015/2016 were higher than 2014/2015 but still (just barely) below the ten year average. Winter loss was estimated around 28%, with total colony loss around 44%. Poor varroa mite control was implicated, with poor nutrition and pesticides listed as possible contributing factors. These numbers are based on a survey of over 5,700 US beekeepers, funded by USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

Horticultural Research Institute's Grow Wise, Bee Smart™ initiative was established with the primary goal of identifying and funding research to answer key science questions and fill gaps needed to inform, design, and refine an industry stewardship program. HRI's focus on research is a key component in establishing a clearer understanding of horticulture's impact on pollinators.

HRI's association partner, AmericanHort, serves on the Center for Pollinator Research stakeholder advisory board. AmericanHort, in conjunction with other interested organizations such as the Society of American Florists, supported additional funding of pollinator research through the Farm Bill Section 10007.

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The Horticultural Research Institute (HRI), the research affiliate of AmericanHort, has provided over \$7 million in funds since 1962 to research projects covering a broad range of production, environmental, and business issues important to the green industry. Over \$11 million is committed to the endowment by individuals, corporations, and associations. For more information about HRI, its grant-funded research, scholarships, or programming, visit [www.hriresearch.org](http://www.hriresearch.org) or contact Jennifer Gray at 614.884.1155.