

Walmart announces new pollinator policy & Chicago parks go organic



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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Earth Day Conundrum
Walmart's New Policy
Chicago Parks Go Organic
Organic Sales Up 9%
Local Matters



Earth Day News Cycle

Happy Earth Day, everyone. I always find this a mildly conflicting day. On the one hand, I'm psyched to see so many companies and individuals celebrating the ways in which they help the environment. It's all noteworthy. On the other hand, this surge in attention is often followed by a lull, and perhaps the notion that it's something you pay attention to only once a year. And you know the saying ... Earth Day is every day.

It's no coincidence that Walmart, Stonyfield and PepsiCo rolled out their recent announcements this month. However, all of their plans are long-term projects that will take several years to reach completion.





PepsiCo made news when they **pledged** to bring regenerative practices to 7 million acres of U.S. farmland by 2030. (Two years ago, General Mills said they're work on putting 1 million acres in regenerative agriculture. And last year, Cargill said they'd put 10 million acres into regenerative practices by 2030.) That adds up to a lot of acres.

As for Walmart and Stonyfield, keep on reading below.



Walmart Gets Tough on Pollinator Health

Walmart just **announced** a new pollinator health policy for the U.S. that puts some hefty expectations in place, particularly for those supplying the retail giant with produce, plants or flowers.



What does it include?

1. In the produce department, Walmart will source 100% of their fresh produce and floral from suppliers that adopt integrated pest management practices, verified by a third party, by 2025. That includes Bee Better Certified, Equitable Food Initiative, Sustainably Grown (SCS Global Services), USDA Organic, Global G.A.P., and several others.
2. They're encouraging suppliers to phase out the use of chlorpyrifos and nitroguanidine neonicotinoids where applicable, and to avoid products with a level 1 bee precaution rating.
3. Encouraging fresh produce suppliers to protect, restore or establish pollinator habitats on at

least 3% of the land they own, operate or invest in by 2025.

4. Encouraging live-plant suppliers to label pollinator-friendly plants (plants grown without neonicotinoids, flupyradifurone and sulfoxaflor) for sale in their retail stores.
5. Avoid selling invasive plant species.
6. Educate customers about pollinator plants for home gardens. (Check out [this article](#) on sourcing plants.)
7. Incorporate pollinator habitat at Walmart locations or in local communities.

So, what's the impact? We'll have to see. But if it's any indication, Friends of the Earth, which went as far as giving Walmart an "F" on their Bee-Friendly Retailer Scorecard, said that retailer's announcement moved them into first place on the scorecard and [called it a "landmark" policy](#).

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Chicago Parks Converting to Organic

A yogurt company is converting two of Chicago's parks into organic grounds. Stonyfield Organic, one of the leading organic yogurt companies in the U.S., announced that the Windy City's Grant Park and Sherman Park will start transitioning to organic this month.



This is part of Stonyfield's [#PlayFree](#) program, which has put more than \$2 million towards converting 35-plus parks to organic and "pesticide free" over the last three years.



Organic Sales Increase 9% in Q1

According to the [Q1 2021 Organic Product Performance report](#), fresh organic produce sales increased by 9.3% in the first quarter of 2021, compared to the same period in 2020. The report, released by the Organic Produce Network, noted that conventional produce only grew by 2.9% during that same period.

Packaged salads made up the largest portion of organic sales, at 17%. The Organic Produce Network does predict that this growth will slow as consumers return to pre-COVID behaviors, assuming they will eat at home less.

National Gardening Survey: Local Matters

The National Gardening Survey is out and chock full of encouraging news on gardening behavior. The U.S. is encountering a more diverse population of gardeners, and 88% of those surveyed intended to increase or maintain their level of gardening activity in 2021. Plus, the data indicate that the growth of flower gardening is catching up with the surge in food gardening.

Slow Flowers Journal [sponsored](#) a new series of questions on cut flowers in the survey this year. A few fun facts from that:

- 41% of adults reported spending some money on cut flowers in 2020 (average of \$62.63).
- 57% of adults said that it was very or somewhat important to them that the cut flowers were grown in the U.S.
- 58% said that it was very or somewhat important that the flowers they purchased were locally grown.



The data above is just the tip of the iceberg. The National Gardening Association sells the full reports online, separately or as a bundle:

[National Gardening Survey](#)

What Gardeners Think

Until next time,



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