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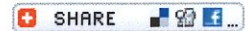
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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N.C. residents warned not to plant unsolicited foreign seed sent to them

RALEIGH – North Carolina residents who have received seed shipments that they did not order from China or other foreign sources are advised not to plant these seeds because they could be a pathway for introduction of invasive species, insects and plant diseases.

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has been contacted by numerous people who have received the seeds, which are likely the product of an international internet scam known as “brushing.” “According to the Better Business Bureau, foreign, third-party sellers use your address and Amazon information to generate a fake sale and positive review to boost their product ratings,” said Phil Wilson, director of the Plant Industry Division.

“Seeds are just one of the items used in this scam, however, you could receive other inexpensive items such as rubber bands, plastic toys, or empty bags.” This type of international shipment of plant material is unlawful and NCDA&CS asks anyone who received one of these unsolicited foreign shipments to save the contents along with all shipping labels and contact the Plant Industry Division toll free at 800-206-9333 or email at newpest@ncagr.gov. Plant Industry staff will contact you to gather information and pick up the package.

North Carolina residents are not in violation of any regulations if they received these shipments, but they are the key to identifying and stopping future shipments.

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