

28 January 2003  
Hawaiian Ecosystems at Risk project (HEAR)  
P.O. Box 1272  
Puunene, HI 96784

Seeds of Change  
P.O. Box 15700  
Santa Fe, NM 87506-5700

To whom it may concern:

It has come to my attention that your company sells seeds of *Hypericum perforatum* ("St. John's wort"). This species has been declared a **noxious weed** in six U.S. states\* and is listed as a "weed" in twenty-one (21) countries around the world.\*\* This species has caused untold millions of dollars in lost agricultural productivity in those and other states in the U.S. because of its toxicity to livestock. In fact, it was once considered "the leading [cause] of economic loss to California."\*\*\*

*Hypericum perforatum* is considered "naturalized" throughout much of the continental United States;\*\*\*\* however, it has yet to become a known problem in Hawaii, undoubtedly only due to its not having been planted here (otherwise, it's due only to the fact that it hasn't yet had time to spread to places that it has been discovered). (More information about this species as a harmful weed is available online; search for "*Hypericum perforatum*" at <http://www.hear.org/AlienSpeciesInHawaii/InfoIndexPlants.htm>.) Additionally, the reason the species is not on more states' noxious weed lists is likely bureaucratic rather than the fact that the species is not significantly problematic (or potentially so) in that state; certainly that is the case in Hawaii.

Although the species is touted for claimed medicinal properties, the problem is that once introduced--even as plantings as an ornamental plant or for harvest--even with the best of intentions, it is **impossible** to prevent the spread to other areas.

Indeed, seeds of *Hypericum perforatum* are "seeds of change": but to the inevitable *detriment* of agricultural and natural communities.

Your company's sale of "certified organic" products and your stated policy of a mission to "preserve biodiversity" implies that you have some concern for the impacts of your products on the environment. I hope this concern extends to the long-term impact of introduction of noxious weeds to agriculture and natural communities where your products are sold (because sale of such products potentially *decreases* biodiversity, especially in places such as Hawaii, where the species you sell may endanger endemic and/or endangered species).

On behalf of the Hawaiian Ecosystems at Risk project (HEAR; <http://www.hear.org>), I ask you to consider removing *Hypericum perforatum* (as well as any other species known to be weeds) from your product line. At the very least, I implore you to *not* send such seeds to Hawaii. Continuing to send such seeds to Hawaii means that your company will be party to what may be a severe blow to Hawaii's economy (RE: livestock) and/or Hawaii's remaining natural communities.

Others voluntarily cooperate with this type of efforts to curtail new invasive species introductions into Hawaii. In fact, it was recently found to be for sale at a store on Maui, and when apprised of the dangers of this species to Hawaii, both the store and the supplying nursery agreed to voluntarily remove the species from sale. This is the kind of cooperation we hope for from Seeds of Change.

Please consider our request to be responsible corporate citizens of "planet Earth"--and particularly of Hawaii--by removing seeds of potentially harmful species from your product line.

Thank you.

Aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip A. Thomas', is written over a vertical line that extends downwards from the end of the signature.

Philip A. Thomas  
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Hawaiian Ecosystems at Risk project (HEAR)  
<http://www.hear.org>

cc: Hawaii State Department of Agriculture  
Hawaii State Department of Land & Natural Resources/Division of Forestry & Wildlife  
The Nature Conservancy of Hawaii  
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council  
Maui Cattlemen's Association  
Coordinating Group for Alien Pest Species (CGAPS)  
Maui Invasive Species Committee  
[http://www.hear.org/species/hypericum\\_perforatum/pdfs/20030128\\_open\\_letter\\_to\\_soc\\_re\\_hypper.pdf](http://www.hear.org/species/hypericum_perforatum/pdfs/20030128_open_letter_to_soc_re_hypper.pdf)

\*USDA/APHIS: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/npb/statenw.html>

\*\*Western Australia Dept. of Agriculture:  
[http://www.wa.gov/agr/weedboard/weed\\_info/stjohnswort.html](http://www.wa.gov/agr/weedboard/weed_info/stjohnswort.html)

\*\*\*Turner, N. and A. Szczawinski. 1991. Common Poisonous Plants and Mushrooms of North America. Timber Press, Portland, OR. Pp 24, 136-137; and Mitich, L. 1994. Common St. Johnswort. Weed Technology, 1994. Vol. 8, Issue 3:658-661. No. 46 of the series "Intriguing World of Weeds"; per [http://www.wa.gov/agr/weedboard/weed\\_info/stjohnswort.html](http://www.wa.gov/agr/weedboard/weed_info/stjohnswort.html)

\*\*\*\*Kingsbury, J. 1964. Poisonous Plants of the United States and Canada. Prentice-Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, NJ. Pp. 52-57 and 171-175;; per [http://www.wa.gov/agr/weedboard/weed\\_info/stjohnswort.html](http://www.wa.gov/agr/weedboard/weed_info/stjohnswort.html)