



**Save Our Cypress Campaign  
Action Manual:**

**April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009 Day of Action**

**[www.saveourcypress.org](http://www.saveourcypress.org)**

**[www.healthygulf.org](http://www.healthygulf.org)**



**SAVE OUR CYPRESS  
COALITION** [WWW.SAVEOURCYPRESS.ORG](http://WWW.SAVEOURCYPRESS.ORG)



## *The Save Our Cypress Campaign*

The Gulf Restoration Network and Save Our Cypress Coalition continue to call on Home Depot, Lowe's, and Wal-Mart to stop selling unsustainable cypress mulch in order to live up to their own environmental commitments.

The nationwide grassroots efforts are paying off! Gulf Restoration Network and the Save Our Cypress Coalition have successfully saved tens of thousands of acres of cypress forests in Louisiana, and we are working to expand protection to all Gulf states. All three companies must do more to uphold their corporate environmental policies as they pertain to endangered cypress forests, and it's up to you to make sure they hear the public's discontent with the continued destruction of our cypress forests for mulch.

Cypress forests contain incredible ecological value, and they defend communities from storms and flooding. Unfortunately, these beautiful swamps are being clear-cut solely to produce garden mulch. You can help stop the rapid loss of endangered cypress forests, and this Action Packet will provide the tools you need to successfully organize your own Save Our Cypress Campaign and a great event for the Saturday, April 25th Save Our Cypress Day of Action..

For more background information on cypress forests, mulch, and the on-going campaign, please visit [www.saveourcypress.org](http://www.saveourcypress.org) and check out the Save Our Cypress General Action Manual and the Louisiana Cypress Fact Sheet at [www.healthygulf.org/save-our-cypress/cypress-resources.html](http://www.healthygulf.org/save-our-cypress/cypress-resources.html).

## **Save Our Cypress Day of Action**

Few people connect the cypress mulch at Home Depot, Wal-Mart, and Lowe's to forest destruction. As activists and engaged citizens, we can portray that story in ways that engage the hearts and minds of the public, and a Day of Action is the perfect opportunity to draw the public's attention to the dangers of cypress mulch.

On Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009, people all over the Gulf and the country will descend upon Lowe's, Home Depot, and Wal-Mart stores to demand an end to the sale of unsustainable cypress mulch. Whether you come with friends for a huge event or you stop by a store to drop off a letter to the manager, everyone can participate. Our combined effort will have a huge impact in moving these companies toward real sustainability for the Gulf Coast.



**Effective store actions show people (including the manager and employees) the destructive nature of cypress mulch as well as engaging them to take concrete action.** They are also fun and entertaining both to create and to watch. The key is to be creative, have fun, and share your successes. If you have good ideas pass them along so others can use it as well.

**The overall goal of these actions is to convey to the manager and employees of the store that selling cypress mulch is unacceptable and have them relay the message to decision-makers in the corporate office.** Generally, there are two ways to do that.

- 1.) **Tell the manager and employees.** Take a moment to talk to the manager of the store, give him or her a letter outlining your complaint (sample letters at the end of this packet), and ask the manager to tell his or her corporate bosses to stop selling unsustainable cypress mulch. Make sure to get a commitment from the manager that the complaint will be passed on to higher levels of management. Managers are top priority, but don't forget to inform other employees of the problem at their store. Most of them just don't know, and they won't be happy about it. Unhappy workers mean an unproductive company, and corporate executives don't want that.
- 2.) **Educate the customers at the store, and then tell the manager what you're up to and why.** The most effective way to get a store's attention is to disrupt their customers' shopping experience. There are a whole variety of ways you can do that—from handing out photos of cypress clear-cuts to waiving banners to holding street theatre demonstrations. It's crucial that the message "Lowe's (or Wal-Mart or Home Depot) Cypress Mulch Destroys the Gulf" gets across to customers. Then you can ask them to take action by not buying cypress mulch and by asking the store manager to stop selling it. Even when you're doing a more aggressive action, make sure to tell the manager your reasons for being there and leave him or her with a letter.

**Photos are crucial!!** Whatever you do, make sure to photograph it, **a lot**. If the manager doesn't deliver the message to corporate headquarters, we can send the pictures directly.



**Action Suggestions:** Many of these ideas can be combined. These are meant to get the wheels turning, any and all ideas are welcome. Please share!

### Store Deliveries

**Deliver letters to local store managers.** [Store](#) managers have an important voice in deciding what products they carry. Outline your concerns about cypress mulch and formally ask them to stop selling it in a letter, then personally deliver the letter to the manager.

- Personalize and print off your letter. Samples are available below and at [healthygulf.org](http://healthygulf.org).
- Head to Lowe's, Home Depot, or Wal-Mart. Tell the customer service desk that you'd like to please speak with the manager. Wait for the store manager to come.
- Once the manager arrives, politely explain the problems with cypress mulch and how the store can play a helpful role in preserving the Gulf and the planet by no longer carrying unsustainable cypress mulch. Hand off the letter.

**Get the facts to the store manager.** Print off our fact sheet, the first pages of the Save Our Cypress Action Manual, and any pictures from the website. Anything you find necessary to convey the extent of the destruction to store managers. Deliver the information to them personally.



Women of the Magnolia Garden Club delivering information packets to local managers. Beaumont, TX.

### Fliering and postcarding

The goal is to **visually connect forest destruction with Lowe's, Home Depot and Wal-Mart**. Slip pictures of clear-cuts into stacks of mulch, or onto shelves. Pass out fliers with pictures of the destruction to customers and employees at your local Lowe's, Home Depot, or Wal-Mart. A flier template is available at <http://www.healthygulf.org/save-our-cypress/cypress-resources.html>. There are also postcards on the website that you can print up to use. Have passerby and customers sign them to get engaged and show their support!

## Demonstrations and Disruptions

**Hold a classic demonstration.** Have signs (one big is better than lots of small), chants, and lots of fliers to hand out. You can also **do a street theatre performance in front of a store.** Perform a story of forest destruction and loss of natural storm defenses. Have a script, practice, have props and costumes. This can be a lot of fun!

**Hang a big banner:** Make it big, colorful and on message, i.e. “Lowe’s Cypress Mulch Destroys the Gulf”. Get it in a perfect spot for the media and for pictures!

**Perform gardening demonstrations.** Show onlookers how to use sustainable mulches and explain why cypress mulch is not an option. Bring a red wagon and demonstrate how to plant a cypress sapling in it and use pine straw mulch around the newly planted tree.

**In-Store Returns.** Fill shopping carts with cypress mulch and bring it to the counter. As you are unloading it, ask the clerk if the mulch comes from endangered forests. If they don’t know, have them call the manager. Tell them you don’t want to buy forest destruction and end the sale. If they say “no”, ask them to prove it. It is completely impossible for them to do that, so end the sale.

## Organize a Demonstration



## Action Tips:

- **Spectacle=message.** Everything about your action should convey your message that Wal-Mart's, Home Depot's, and Lowe's cypress mulch destroys the Gulf. Any skit, sign, or action should connect to the message so observers can see the action and understand why you're demonstrating.
- **Take lots of pictures!**
- **Make it fun and interactive for everyone.** All demonstrators should have a role and/or activity. Whether its handing out fliers, leading chants, or simply chanting, get everyone engaged. Create excitement so a crowd gathers. Create settings and a tone that welcome people into your event. Recruit passersby to take action by joining you or talking to the manager.
- **Visuals should be colorful and big.** One huge banner is a much better visual than dozens of smaller signs. Also, regardless of the size of your groups, clump them together rather than spreading people out. Remember the frozen image created by photography.
- **Record your event!** Make sure to take pictures and even video to show the impact of your actions. Please share your photos with us, it's inspiring to see you out there, and it helps build the network. Tell us what you do so we can give ideas to others and track our progress. We will also show corporate executives the campaign activities.

## Roles to fill for day of Action:

- **Liaison** with store manager: deliver the letter, interact with employees
- **Leader of chants, director of skits**
- **Fliers**—1 person point on this, everyone working on it
- **Postcards**—1 person point on this, everyone working on it
- **Photographer/Videographer**
- **Police Liaison-** Someone calm and articulate who can communicate with security and/or police, if necessary, and relay the message to the rest of the crew.

## Ideas for Banners/Signs

*Get creative. You can mix and match the phrases below to get started.*

Home Depot: Cypress Mulch Threatens Habitats and Homes

Lowe's Cypress Mulch Destroys the Gulf

Wal-Mart's Cypress Mulch Destroys Endangered Forests

Don't Clear-Cut the Gulf Coast: Stop Selling Cypress Mulch

Cypress Mulch Destroys the Coast



## **Appendix: Organizing Materials**

Sample Letter to Lowe's Store Manager

Sample Letter to Home Depot Store Manager

Sample Letter to Wal-Mart Store Manager

Day of Action Fliers

## Letter to Lowe's Store Managers

Your address  
City, State, Zip  
Date

Lowe's  
Address  
City, State, Zip

Dear Store Manager,

I am here today to ask your store and Lowe's Companies, Inc. to uphold your commitments to the environment by **discontinuing the sale of unsustainable cypress mulch in favor of sustainable mulch alternatives**. Small steps taken by Lowe's Companies, Inc. have not been sufficient to ensure protection of cypress forests, and **the corporation is still lagging behind Wal-Mart on addressing this issue**.

Cypress forests have incredible ecological value and provide valuable natural flood protection for communities. Unfortunately, they are being clear-cut throughout the Southeast solely to produce cypress garden mulch, which is widely sold in your stores. This violates the spirit and commitment of the Lowe's "Policy on the Wood Contained in its Products".

**Fortunately, as a store manager, you can help:**

- **Stock large quantities of sustainable mulch alternatives**, like pine bark nuggets, pine straw, eucalyptus mulch or melaleuca mulch, and ask employees to recommend them to customers in lieu of cypress mulch.
- **Do not carry cypress mulch in your store.**
- **Ask Lowe's Companies, Inc. executives to abide by stated corporate policies concerning the environment** and cease the sale of unsustainable cypress mulch in all retail outlets.

It's your company, and this is your planet. **Please use your substantial influence within the company to help Lowe's Companies, Inc. do the right thing and become an industry leader for protecting cypress swamps.** For more information, you can visit [www.saveourcypress.org](http://www.saveourcypress.org), [www.healthygulf.org](http://www.healthygulf.org), or contact Dan Favre, Campaign Organizer with the Gulf Restoration Network, at [dan@healthygulf.org](mailto:dan@healthygulf.org) and 504-525-1528 ext 209.

Thank you,

Add your name, signature and, if desired, contact info

## Letter to Home Depot Store Managers

*Your address*  
*City, State, Zip*  
*Date*

*Home Depot*  
*Address*  
*City, State, Zip*

Dear Store Manager,

I am here today to ask your store and The Home Depot, Inc. to uphold your commitments to the environment by **discontinuing the sale of unsustainable cypress mulch in favor of sustainable mulch alternatives**. Small steps taken by The Home Depot, Inc. have not been sufficient to ensure protection of cypress forests, and **the company is lagging behind Wal-Mart and Lowe's on addressing this issue**. Even in Home Depot's home state of Georgia, cypress trees are being ground into mulch.

Cypress forests have incredible ecological value and provide valuable natural flood protection for communities. Unfortunately, they are being clear-cut throughout the Southeast solely to produce cypress garden mulch, which is widely sold in your stores. This violates the spirit and commitment of the Home Depot Wood Purchasing Policy.

**Fortunately, as a store manager, you can help:**

- **Stock large quantities of sustainable mulch alternatives**, like pine bark nuggets, pine straw, eucalyptus mulch or melaleuca mulch, and ask employees to recommend them to customers in lieu of cypress mulch.
- **Do not carry cypress mulch in your store.**
- **Ask The Home Depot, Inc. executives to abide by stated corporate policies concerning the environment** and cease the sale of unsustainable cypress mulch in all retail outlets.

It's your company, and this is your planet. **Please use your substantial influence within the company to help The Home Depot, Inc. do the right thing and become an industry leader for the cypress swamps.** For more information, you can visit [www.saveourcypress.org](http://www.saveourcypress.org), [www.healthygulf.org](http://www.healthygulf.org), or contact Dan Favre, Campaign Organizer with the Gulf Restoration Network, at [dan@healthygulf.org](mailto:dan@healthygulf.org) and 504-525-1528 ext 209.

Thank you,

*Add your name, signature and, if desired, contact info*

## Letter to Wal-Mart Store Managers

*Your address*  
*City, State, Zip*  
*Date*

*Wal-Mart*  
*Address*  
*City, State, Zip*

Dear Store Manager,

I am here today to ask your store and Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. to uphold your commitments to the environment by **discontinuing the sale of unsustainable cypress mulch, no matter where it is logged, in favor of sustainable mulch alternatives**. Thank you for your commitment to protecting cypress forests in Louisiana. Please maintain your position as the leader on this issue by expanding that protection to all endangered cypress forests.

Cypress forests have incredible ecological value and provide valuable natural flood protection for communities. Unfortunately, they are being clear-cut throughout the Southeast solely to produce cypress garden mulch, which is widely sold in your stores. This violates the spirit and commitment of the Sustainability 360 Initiative.

**Fortunately, as a store manager, you can help:**

- **Stock large quantities of sustainable mulch alternatives**, like pine bark nuggets, pine straw, eucalyptus mulch or melaleuca mulch, and ask employees to recommend them to customers in lieu of cypress mulch.
- **Do not carry cypress mulch in your store.**
- **Ask Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. executives to abide by stated corporate policies concerning the environment** and cease the sale of unsustainable cypress mulch in all retail outlets.

It's your company, and this is your planet. **Please use your substantial influence within the company to help Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. do the right thing and remain an industry leader for protecting cypress swamps.** For more information, you can visit [www.saveourcypress.org](http://www.saveourcypress.org), [www.healthygulf.org](http://www.healthygulf.org), or contact Dan Favre, Campaign Organizer with the Gulf Restoration Network, at [dan@healthygulf.org](mailto:dan@healthygulf.org) and 504-525-1528 ext 209.

Thank you,

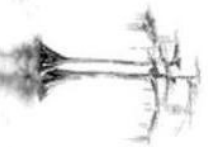
*Add your name, signature and, if desired, contact info*

# Cypress Mulch at Lowe's, Home Depot, and Wal-Mart Is Destroying the Gulf Coast



**SAVE OUR CYPRESS**

**COALITION** [WWW.SAVEOURCYPRESS.ORG](http://WWW.SAVEOURCYPRESS.ORG)



**[www.saveourcypress.org](http://www.saveourcypress.org)**

Cypress forests provide some of the best natural storm and flood protection for communities on the Gulf Coast. They also provide important wildlife habitat, water filtration, and eco-tourism opportunities.

Unfortunately, cypress swamps are being clear-cut and whole trees are being used solely to produce cypress mulch. Turning cypress forests into mulch is like shredding the Constitution to make post-it notes. It just doesn't make sense.

To live up to their stated policies of sustainability, Lowe's, Home Depot, and Wal-Mart need to stop selling all unsustainable cypress mulch.

You can use sustainable alternatives, like pine straw and melaleuca mulch, in your garden at home. Also, visit our website at [www.saveourcypress.org](http://www.saveourcypress.org) to send a message to the CEO's of the companies asking them to stop selling this unsustainable product.