

To my Favorite Nursery and Garden Centers By Sami Aaron

As a gardener and longtime customer of yours who is concerned about the widespread use of neonicotinoids, including their use on annuals and perennials, I've found myself hesitant and even fearful of purchasing plants from your nurseries as I don't know whether they have been grown using this class of insecticides.



In numerous studies, neonicotinoids have been shown to be the cause of declines in populations of honey bees and many other native bees and insects. Here are a few important documents that explain the problem:

- 🌱 http://www.tfsp.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/8_ESPR_11356_2014_3229_OnlinePDF.pdf
- 🌱 <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/press-releases/study-strengthens-link-between-neonicotinoids-and-collapse-of-honey-bee-colonies/>
- 🌱 <http://ento.psu.edu/publications/are-neonicotinoids-killing-bees>

A study by the Friends of the Earth relates directly to Garden Center stores like yours:

"Friends of the Earth conducted a pilot study to determine the extent of neonicotinoid contamination of common nursery plants purchased at retail garden centers in cities across the U.S. This is the first investigation of neonicotinoid insecticide concentrations in "bee-friendly" nursery plants sold to consumers at garden centers in cities across America. The findings indicate that bee-friendly nursery plants sold at U.S. retailers may contain systemic pesticides at levels that are high enough to cause adverse effects on bees and other pollinators — with no warning to consumers. "

http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/93/3c/e/3115/Gardeners_beware_report.pdf

Many people are aware of the decline in honey bees and of Colony Collapse Disorder, but here is a small list of some of the other beneficial pollinators that neonicotinoids, other pesticides, and habitat loss are impacting negatively:

- 🌱 Populations of monarch butterflies are on the 10 most threatened species to watch on the World Wildlife Fund's list of threatened species. www.monarchwatch.org.
- 🌱 According to the National Audubon Society, The population of Rufous Hummingbirds has dropped 60% since 1967. <http://birds.audubon.org/species/rufhum2>.
- 🌱 Neonicotinoids have been linked in declines of songbirds in this article from National Geographic <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/07/140709-birds-insects-pesticides-insecticides-neonicotinoids-silent-spring/>
- 🌱 Four species of native bumble bees have fallen up to 96% in the last 20 years. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2011/01/110104-bumblebees-bees-decline-fungus-mystery-science-animals/>

I'm asking you to become an active partner in restoring the populations of insects to our area by following these steps:

- ☼ **Pull insecticides and fertilizers that contain neonicotinoids from shelves** and instruct your staff to not use them. A short list of common products can be found at <http://www.xerces.org/wings-magazine/neonicotinoids-in-your-garden/>
- ☼ **Purchase seeds, seedlings and plants only from growers who have not used neonicotinoids** during any phase of production. This includes growers of vegetables as well as perennials and annuals. Request that your growers provide you with written statements that the seeds they used were not coated with or treated with neonicotinoids, nor were they applied during any phase of growth.
- ☼ **Educate all your staff about the severe reduction in all insect life** due to the use of this class of insecticides. This includes reduction in populations of monarch butterflies, honey bees, native bees and bumblebees. <http://ento.psu.edu/publications/are-neonicotinoids-killing-bees>
<http://www.xerces.org/beyond-the-birds-and-the-bees/>
- ☼ **Post signs around the store indicating which plants have been grown without the use of chemicals** – so that customers like me can feel confident that the plants we purchase will not negatively affect butterflies, honey bees, and native bees.
- ☼ **Increase the quantity of organically grown plants and organic soils, fertilizers, insecticides and other products** on your shelves.
- ☼ **Include statements in all your advertising and marketing materials** that indicate the same. This educates customers about the hazards of these chemicals and assures them that your company cares.
- ☼ **Educate your staff about the benefits of growing native plants** and expand your inventory of plants that are native to our area, especially milkweeds and other plants that are vital to providing food and habitat for native pollinators. <http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/southcentral-plants-for-bees-xerces5.pdf> Consider milkweed plants or seed ball giveaways as you plan upcoming events in your stores.

Your company has an amazing opportunity to give a huge boost to the health of our pollinators – and to ourselves – by making a strong commitment to eliminating neonicotinoids from the plants you sell and from the products on your shelves.

And I promise to give you my deep gratitude as I promote and publicize your efforts in every way I can.



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With gratitude to *The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation* www.xerces.org