

## Nursery Plants, Pollinators and Neonics - Arlene Doran

It is very likely that you have heard of the pesticides called neonicotinoids.

They are used extensively in agriculture and by nurseries and home gardeners. They are very effective pesticides. However they have a downside, and gardeners should be aware of the possible harm they can do while planning your plant shopping.

Neonicotinoids can be applied to a seedling in a nursery and be taken up by the plant, and remain active in the plant for a year or more. That staying power means the chemical is in the pollen and nectar of the flowers the plant produces.

The amount of pesticide in the pollen is not going to directly kill the bee or butterfly that feeds on it, but the insect is weakened, and studies show bees are negatively affected by exposure to these chemicals. Studies in the UK also link declines in butterfly populations to neonicotinoid use.

What to do? Here are the recommendations I found from several articles.

Ask the nursery staff if plants have been treated with neonicotinoids, Some big retailers are going to be labeling plants that have been treated. Look for 'organically grown' label. The recommendation to remove flowers for the first year seems pretty unrealistic, but would work for the very organized.

We have to be careful about what pesticides we are bringing into our gardens, too.

Pesticide containers tell you what you are buying, but only in the small print.

If your pesticide contains one of the following chemicals, it is a neonicotinoid.

Acetamiprid

Clothianidin

Dinotefuran

Imidacloprid

Nitenpyram

Thiocloprid

Thiamethoxam

Most gardeners I know really don't like dealing with chemical lists, we just want to add some beauty and flavor to the world. However, we are living in such an interesting time. Home gardeners are being asked to play a part to help our threatened butterflies, create native habitats and create something lovely and safe for even the insects.

My references: Xerces Society, Texas A&M Agrilife, Royal Society Extension Publishing