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Save the bees—one flower at a time

Ask B4 U Buy!

by Patricia Hauser

In the early '90's a new family of insecticides, neonicotinoids, was registered with the EPA. These insecticides have a chemical structure similar to nicotine and are found under many different, equally hard to pronounce names, such as imidacloprid (the most used insecticide in the world today), clothianidin, acetamiprid, dinotefuran, thiamethoxam. Many people are now referring to them as "neonics."

These "neonics" have become both ubiquitous and implicated as *one* of the key factors of CCD or Colony Collapse Disorder of honey bees world-wide. They've also been linked to harming native bees, other beneficial insects, and pollinators. In addition, there is growing concern that neonics harm birds and aquatic life.

The European Union has put a two-year moratorium on some uses of some members of this insecticide family while they study it. In the U.S. the EPA plans to study it until 2018 while leaving it on the market.

Unfortunately, many nursery and garden center plants come pre-treated with these systemic pesticides. *Systemic* means that the whole plant—root, stem, leaves, pollen, nectar—become poisonous on a lethal or sub-lethal level. In some cases the poison may last up to years in the soil.

You should not assume that the plant will be labeled as containing neonicotinoids. For an extensive list of the brand names of pesticides from the neonic family that you should avoid, go to the Center for Food Safety. The list will be on a PDF under the link regarding pollinators and pesticides fact sheets.

Ask B4U Buy! This includes annuals and perennials that you buy anywhere: grocery stores, hardware stores,

farmer's markets, garden centers, etc.). If the vendor doesn't know whether or not the plant is neonicotinoid-free (or neonic-free), don't buy! Go elsewhere, go organic, or go without.

Some nurseries and garden centers have either been pesticide-free from the beginning or are now talking with their growers and suppliers about the history of the plants they are buying; however, it is not easy to find neonic-free plants, and sometimes it is impossible. It's hardest to determine the history of bulbs and cutting-grown plants because they come from all over the world and often have gone through multiple growers before arriving in the U.S.

Some vendors are refusing to buy plants (annuals and perennials) that have been treated with neonics, and some are planting their own organic seeds and refusing to use any neonics on them during the growing process; however, many are still accepting and selling plants that have been treated with neonics and in some cases are still using neonics on their own plants or some of their plants.



Know that if an insecticide (neonic or not) is a systemic, it's in the whole plant. The whole plant is a poison factory!

Ask B4 U buy. Most all are affected by this serious issue.

For more information through video, DVDs, short articles and research articles, go to www.hummingforbees.org and click on Resources. Click on Planting Sources to find an incomplete (but growing) list of neonic-free plant sources.

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