

# Your bee-friendly garden may be killing pollinators



Tracy Loew, Statesman Journal

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(Photo: Thomas Patterson /  
Statesman Journal)

Many "bee-friendly" home garden plants sold at major retailers have been treated with pesticides shown to harm and kill bees, a [study \(http://www.foe.org/beeaction\)](http://www.foe.org/beeaction) being released today shows.

Eugene was among 18 cities across the U.S. and Canada where plants were purchased at stores including Lowe's, Home Depot and Walmart, then tested for pesticides.

Overall, 51 percent of the plants contained neonicotinoid pesticides, a key contributor to bee declines, according to the report, which was produced by a coalition of groups including [Friends of the Earth \(http://www.foe.org/\)](http://www.foe.org/) and Eugene's [Beyond Toxics \(http://www.beyondtoxics.org/\)](http://www.beyondtoxics.org/).

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"We are calling on retailers to get neonicotinoid pesticides out of their plants and off their shelves," said Lisa Arkin, executive director of Beyond Toxics. "Until then, gardeners should buy organic plants to ensure the

safety of bees."

Neonicotinoid pesticides are systemic, meaning they spread throughout the plant, including its pollen and nectar.

"Unfortunately these pesticides don't break down quickly so these flowers could be toxic to bees for years to come," said Timothy Brown of the [Pesticide Research Institute \(https://www.pesticideresearch.com/site/\)](https://www.pesticideresearch.com/site/), a co-author of the report.

The report comes on the heels of the release of a comprehensive study of neonicotinoid pesticides undertaken by The Task Force on Systemic Pesticides, formed in 2009 by European scientists concerned by the rapid decline in insects.

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The four-year analysis of 800 peer-reviewed reports, released Tuesday, concluded that neonicotinoids are causing significant damage to a wide range of beneficial invertebrate species and are a key factor in the bee decline.

The analysis, known as the [Worldwide Integrated Assessment \(http://www.tfsp.info/\)](http://www.tfsp.info/), will be published in the journal Environmental Science and Pollution Research.

"We are witnessing a threat to the productivity of our natural and farmed environment equivalent to that posed by organophosphates or DDT," one of the lead authors, Jean-Marc Bonmatin of The National Centre for Scientific Research in France, said in a statement. "Far from protecting food production, the use of neonics is threatening the very infrastructure which enables it, imperiling the pollinators, habitat engineers and natural pest controllers at the heart of a functioning ecosystem."

Bees and other pollinators have been declining worldwide.

Last year, U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore., introduced the ["Saving America's Pollinators Act," \(http://blumenauer.house.gov/images/stories/2013/Save\\_Americas\\_Pollinators\\_One\\_Pager.pdf\)](http://blumenauer.house.gov/images/stories/2013/Save_Americas_Pollinators_One_Pager.pdf) which would suspend the use of neonicotinoids on bee-attractive plants until the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency can review data on its use.

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