



New Jersey Butterfly Club: [www.njbutterflies.org](http://www.njbutterflies.org)

## **Make Sure Your Plants are HELPING Pollinators— Not KILLING Them!**

We are all becoming aware that pollinators (and other insects!) are seriously declining worldwide. Many of us are trying to help in our own little corner of the planet by providing flowers and foliage to support these “little things that run the world.”

But be careful—the plants in your garden, hanging basket, or deck container may actually be poisoning the insects you are trying to help!

The problem is neonicotinoid pesticides—“neonics” for short. This family of pesticides is widely used by growers to produce plants that are highly resistant to insect damage. Plants take up neonics into ALL their tissues—including pollen and nectar—and the pesticide remains there PERMANENTLY. Insects that feed on the pollen, nectar, or foliage of treated plants ingest a poison that attacks their nervous system. If they are not paralyzed and killed outright, their ability to perform vital foraging and other behaviors is greatly weakened. Neonics are believed to be one of the factors in Colony Collapse Disorder that has decimated honeybee populations. It likely has similar effects on wild bees, butterflies, and the numerous other insects that are attracted to your beautiful plants.

### **WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE SURE YOUR GARDEN IS A PARADISE FOR INSECTS AND NOT A DEATHTRAP?**

***Ask the manager of every garden center you patronize whether their plants have been treated with neonics.*** Unless they grow their own plants, they probably won’t know—so before you buy, ask them to find out. If it’s not neonic-free, don’t buy it, don’t plant it!

***Patronize local native-plant nurseries.*** These are much less likely than ordinary growers to use neonics, and native plants are better for pollinators.

***Don’t use neonics in your own garden!*** If you MUST use an insecticide, avoid those that contain Acetamiprid, Clothianidin, Dinotefuran, Imidacloprid, Nitenpyram, Nithiazine, Thiocloprid, or Thiamethoxam. In home-use products, these neonics may be 30 times more concentrated than those for agricultural use!

***Plant seeds! Garden organically!*** It’s much easier to find a wide variety of untreated seed (usually marked “organic”) to use in your pollinator garden than it is to find neonic-free plants. You can find information on organic gardening from a variety of books and online sources, or from your local Extension Agent.

Here is a fairly comprehensive (and easily printable!) list of neonic-containing garden products to **avoid**:

[http://www.beyondpesticides.org/pollinators/documents/pesticide\\_list\\_final.pdf](http://www.beyondpesticides.org/pollinators/documents/pesticide_list_final.pdf)

And here you can download a list of **neonic-free** pest-control products:

<https://mdpestnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Neonic-free-alternatives-products-chart.pdf>

Some lists of **neonic-free** growers:

<https://thegardendiaries.blog/2016/10/12/pesticide-free-nurseries/>

<https://www.beyondpesticides.org/programs/bee-protective-pollinators-and-pesticides/what-can-you-do/pollinator-friendly-seed-directory>

Retail purveyors of native plants in New Jersey:

<https://npsnj.org/native-plants/where-to-buy-natives/>

This handout, with live internet links, can also be found on the NJ Butterfly Gardening page of the New Jersey Butterfly Club website at:

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