



As the Garden Grows

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What is a Neonicotinoid?

(Submitted by Fran Saliger)

From: Insects in the City

<https://citybugs.tamu.edu>

A recent Facebook posting resulted in someone asking me about Neonicotinoids. In the past some of the plants found at area stores would have a tag in the plant that said “These plants have been treated with neonicotinoids”.



Neonicotinoids are especially effective against sap-feeding insects like aphids.

What does this mean?

Neonicotinoids are a new class of insecticides chemically related to nicotine. The name literally means “new nicotine-like insecticides”. Like nicotine, the neonicotinoids act on certain kinds of receptors in the nerve synapse. They are much more toxic to invertebrates, like insects, than they are to mammals, birds and other higher organisms.

One thing that has made neonicotinoid insecticides popular in pest control is their water solubility, which allows them to be applied to soil and be taken up by plants. Soil insecticide applications reduce the risks for insecticide drift from the target site, and for at least some beneficial insects on plants.

There are several different kinds of neonicotinoid insecticides. The first neonicotinoid to reach the market was imidacloprid, a common ingredient in Bayer Advanced Garden insecticides. This product can be sprayed on the plant, but is often more effective (especially on sucking insects) when applied to the soil. Dinotefuran (Safari) is another, more highly water-soluble, neonicotinoid that is especially good on sap-feeding insects.

To find out whether an insecticide you see on the shelf of your hardware, pest control supply or garden center is a neonicotinoid, look on the list of active ingredients. If you see one of the following names listed, the insecticide includes a neonicotinoid:

- Acetamiprid
- Clothianidin
- Dinotefuran
- Imidacloprid
- Nitenpyram
- Thiacloprid
- Thiamethoxam

In addition to being effective against sap-feeding pests, neonicotinoids provide good control against certain beetles (like white grub larvae in lawns), fleas (Advantage flea control products, and nitenpyram pills for pets), certain wood boring pests, flies (fly baits), cockroaches and others.

Environmental concerns

Initially neonicotinoids were praised for their low-toxicity to many beneficial insects, including bees; however recently this claim has come into question. New research points to potential toxicity to bees and other beneficial insects through low level contamination of nectar and pollen with neonicotinoid insecticides used in agriculture. Although these low level exposures do not normally kill bees directly, they may impact some bees' ability to foraging for nectar, learn and remember where flowers are located, and possibly impair their ability to find their way home to the nest or hive. Despite the controlled studies completed to date, the actual impact of neonicotinoid insecticides on honey bees in the field are difficult to measure. It is still not known whether these effects explain bee colony collapse disorder, or have had any effect in agriculture or, especially, in urban areas.

The relative infrequency with which bees are expected to encounter neonicotinoid insecticides in urban landscapes suggest that the impact of these insecticides in backyard gardens, when used appropriately, is probably minor. To keep risk to bees and other beneficial insects low, however, a few simple steps should be taken: (1) follow the label directions carefully, (2) restrict neonicotinoid applications to the soil, or during times when bees are not foraging (e.g., in the evening), and (3) treat only those individual plants which need treatment for a known pest infestation.

Do You Want More Bees and Butterflies in your Garden?

- To encourage plant pollinators like bees and butterflies, plant flowers that attract these insects. The following is just a few of the many plants that can be grown here to attract pollinators: Butterfly Weed, calendula, lavender, rosemary, sage, oregano, chives, mint, thyme, coneflower, sunflowers, redbud trees, catnip, lamb's ears, verbena, black-eyed Susan, aster, yarrow and many of our Texas native plants.



- Provide plants that bloom from early spring to late winter and even into winter in milder climates. This provides the insects with a consistent food source all season long.
- Include diverse flower colors, fragrances and shapes. Honeybees particularly like yellow, blue and purple flowers.
- Plants planted in full sun are best.
- Provide a water source. Bees need rocks or pebbles resting in shallow water so that they can fly off once they quench their thirst. Butterflies like puddles or puddlers. Most butterflies feed only on nectar from flowers. However, butterflies also need water for hydration and other nutrients, like salts and minerals, which nectar can't provide. Landing on or close to a lake or stream is pretty risky, so butterflies land on a patch of muddy or sandy ground (puddles or puddlers) and drink the water there in relative comfort and safety.



First Graders at the Gardens

On February 26, the first grade students from East Avenue planted their vegetable seeds in their very own raised garden beds. The children get so excited about planting their seeds. They reach out their little hands for the seeds reminding me of baby birds in the nest waiting for food from their mommas.



Spring Plant Sale

The annual spring Plant Sale is almost here. **The date is set for March 24, 2018 on Texas Heroes Square in downtown Gonzales.** Team members have really worked hard to grow the vegetables and herbs you are looking for. There will be Celebrity, Sunbrite, Black Krim, Purple Cherokee and many other varieties of tomatoes to purchase. Squash, eggplant and peppers will also be available. We have a greenhouse full of all kinds of plants including, roses, succulents, annuals and native plants and so much more. The Easter Bunny will be at the sale so bring your camera for some great photo opportunities. New this year will be a Plant Give Away starting at 11 am and every ½ hour until we close at 1:00 pm. You must be present to win.

If you have not already volunteered to work the event, please call Fran.

Gonzales Annual Spring Plant Sale

On Texas Heroes Square-Downtown Gonzales

Saturday March 24th

8:30am – 1:00pm

Presented by Gonzales Master Gardeners

- Annuals
- Perennials
- Adaptive Native plants
- Silent Auction
- Children's Booth
- Vegetables
- Herbs
- Roses
- Succulents

Plant information available!

Accepting Cash, Checks or Credit Cards

Plant Give Away Every ½ hour Starting at 11 am. Must be Present to Win!

New Gonzales Master Gardener class starting in September 2018

Area Events

Seguin: March Monthly Meeting. **Thursday, March 15, 2018** at 7:00pm. Phytonutrient Gardening Presented by Joe Ulbach. Everyone is welcome, and it's Free! Monthly meetings start with a Social at 6:15, Speaker at 7:00, and a Business Meeting at 8:00. Meetings are held in the Guadalupe County AgriLife Extension Building, 210 East Live Oak, Seguin. Public is welcome.

Round Top: The 23rd Annual Plant and Gift Sale of the Herb Society of America - Pioneer Unit will take place 9 a.m.-5 p.m., **March 16**, and 8:00 a.m.-5 p.m., **March 17**, at Festival Hill Institute, 248 Jaster Road, just north of Round Top off Hwy 237. Replace plants and refresh beds that were freeze-damaged from the great selection of bedding plants, herbs, shrubs, roses, succulents, and trees. Attendees will find new varieties and old favorites in the Plant Sale, as well as lovely garden gifts and food items in the Thyme Well Spent Shop. Credit cards, cash, and checks accepted. There is no admission fee. Proceeds from the sale are used to provide support for the gardens at Festival Hill as well as the Sensory Garden at Brenham Elementary. For additional information, visit www.herbsocietypioneer.org or email henryf@festivalhill.org.

Seguin: Guadalupe County MG Spring Plant Sale, **March 17**. Rain date is March 24. We will be in the parking lot of the Silver Center from 8:00 AM until 2:00 PM or until sold out. Find your Vegetables, Ornamentals, Native and Adapted Plants. There will be a special emphasis on pepper varieties from sweet to the very hot. For more information, visit <https://guadalupecountymastergardeners.org>

Cibolo: Monarch Workshop "Train the Trainer". **March 17 @ 9:00 am - 4:00 pm**
6 CEUs. Fee: \$30. Space is limited. Bring a sack lunch. For more information, visit www.Cibolo.org or call 830-249-4616. Class will meet in the CNC auditorium.

Register online at <https://ciboloorg.presencehost.net/experience/events/calendar.html/event-form/monarch-workshop-train-the-trainer/27709/tickets>

Learn to speak publicly with confidence to diverse groups on the topics of Monarch conservation and Monarch habitat at a one-day intensive workshop. Each participant will receive a travel drive (a portable USB thumb drive) loaded with a PowerPoint presentation, supporting handouts and resources.

Presenters: Cathy Downs, Monarch Watch Conservation Specialist and Hill Country Master Naturalist; Dr. Kip Kiphart, Monarch Watch Conservation Specialist, Monarch Educator since 2002, Texas Master Naturalist, and member of Bring Back the Monarchs to Texas Committee; Craig Hensley, Park Interpreter/Resource Specialist at Guadalupe State Park and Honey Creek State Natural Area

Ft. Worth: March 22-23: Plant Propagation Specialist Course, Tarrant County Master Gardener Association, Fort Worth. Fee \$225. Registration is limited to two MGs per county. The registration form, schedule and hotel information are available on the Texas Master Garden website, www.txmg.org. Registration Deadline February 26, 2018.

Tyler: The Smith County A&M AgriLife Extension Office will host a private landscape tour Tuesday, **March 27**, from 9:00-noon in the beautiful garden of Guy and Joan Pyron, located in the Azalea District, 212 W. Dobbs St. Tyler, Texas. The personally guided tour will be led by current Smith County horticulturist and *Texas Gardener* Contributing Editor Greg Grant, and retired Smith County horticulturist Keith Hansen. Both are professional horticulturists and garden writers with

master's degrees in horticulture and many years of gardening experience. This one-of-a-kind walking tour will not only showcase the Pyron's spectacular spring garden but will also include specific information focusing on plants of East Texas along with their requirements and care. Pre-registration is required with attendance limited to 30 people due to the size of the garden. Cost of the tour is \$15 and is payable in advance at the Smith County Extension office or the day of the tour. Parking is available at the First Presbyterian Church parking lot or on the street. The tour is sponsored by the Smith County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Environmental Education Committee. To register or for more information contact the Smith County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office at 903-590-2980.

College Station: April 4 – 6: Texas Master Gardener Annual Conference, Texas A&M, College Station.

Schertz: Schertz Lunch & Learns. **Monday, April 9, 2018.** "House Plants that Clean Contaminants From Indoor Air" presented by Marvin Borth Master Gardener. Guadalupe County Annex Building, 1101 Elbel Road, Schertz, Texas. All Programs are from 12-1 PM. Free to the Public. Bring your own lunch

Victoria: Lunch and Learn with the Masters. Once again this year, certified master gardeners and the Victoria County Extension Agent will present programs on the second Monday of the month (except in May - on the first Monday) from noon to 1 p.m. at the Dr. Pattie Dodson Public Health Center, 2805 N. Navarro St., in Victoria. Bring a lunch and drink if you wish.

- **April 9** - Lupe Cook will present "Plant Propagation." Lupe has been instrumental in growing new plants in the VEG greenhouse for our plant sales for several years and has been a propagation instructor for several of the master gardener training classes. She will share some specialized techniques she has experienced in her years of plant propagation, especially the "what-to-dos" and "what-not-to-dos."

Check out www.txmg.org for events around the state

New Braunfels area: <http://txmg.org/comal/events>

Austin Area: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/travis/>

San Antonio, Texas- <http://www.bexarcounnymastergardeners.org>



DATES TO REMEMBER: (Check elsewhere in newsletter for details)

**Unless otherwise noted, all meetings/classes are at
623 N. Fair Street (Plantatarium: A Center for Exploration-aka PACE)**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
MARCH 11	12 GISD Spring Break week	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20 MG Class 8:30-12:30 GH Workday 9 am	21 GH Workday 9 am	22	23 SPS Set Up 8:30 till finished	24 SPS 8:30 am- 1:00 pm
25	26	27	28	29 Board Mtg. 9:30 am	30	31 Volunteer hours due
April 1 	2	3 MG Class 8:30-12:30	4	5 Noon MG Lunch Mtg	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17 MG Class-Trip to Wildflower Center Austin, TX	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26 Board Mtg. 9:30 am	27	28
29	30 Volunteer hours due	May 1 MG class 8:30 to 12:30	2	3 Noon MG Lunch Mtg.	4	5

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