

the plight of the honeybee

Bees pollinate a significant majority of the world's food. Of the 100 crop species that provide 90% of the world's food, over 70 are pollinated by bees. In North America alone, honey bees pollinate nearly 95 kinds of fruits, including almonds, avocados, cranberries and apples.

Bees have been disappearing at an alarming rate.



The mysterious disappearance of honeybee populations around the world since 2006 is called Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). Bee colonies affected by CCD can appear healthy prior to collapse. But suddenly the adult bees disappear from the colonies, leaving behind a box full of honey, pollen, capped brood (developing larvae), a queen, and maybe a few worker bees. Dead adult bees are often found some distance away from the hive. Since 2007, USDA data shows that 21 to 33% of honey bee colonies are dying each winter, and that there has been a marked increase in summer mortality when bees should be thriving. Previously, beekeepers would anticipate losing less than 10% of their bees each year.

The likely culprit: pesticides

Shortly after the EPA approved the use of neonicotinoid insecticides, or *neonics*, bee colonies began disappearing in the US. The insecticides weaken a bee's immune system. Forager bees bring pesticide-laden pollen and nectar back to the hive, and six months later the bees fall prey to natural bee infections. Many pathogens, such as Varroa mites, Nosema, and viral, fungal and bacterial infections, are found in large amounts in honey bee hives on the verge of collapse. Neonics also act as a nerve poison, causing disorientation and damaging the bee's homing ability, which it needs to find its way back to the hive.

Neonicotinoids are primarily used as an insecticidal seed treatment. Over 90% of GMO corn and canola seed is treated with these systemic pesticides, as well as 50% of GMO soybean seed. Many factors likely contribute to CCD, including other toxic pesticides, such as glyphosate, the main ingredient in the herbicide Roundup.



Resources and more information:

organicconsumers.org/bees.cfm

You Can Help Protect Bees

Choose Organic Food

Your daily food choices can help give bees and all living things a safer place to live.

Plant a bee-friendly garden

Use native plants and staggered blooming times to provide food year round. Provide a clean water source and some undisturbed wooded areas for wild bees to nest in. orgcns.org/1r2Mhtp

Use organic growing methods

To control pests safely, use homemade solutions and bio-controls, such as ladybugs, instead of toxic pesticides. orgcns.org/1i98m1R

Purchase bee-friendly products

Look for organically grown and neonicotinoid-free flowers, trees and shrubs.

Sign the Petition

Tell Home Depot and Lowe's: stop selling bee-killing plants!
orgcns.org/1gaanAV



Plant bee-friendly plants with seed bombs!

Mix three parts clay or clay soil, three parts compost and one part wildflower seeds.



Moisten enough to form into small balls. Set out to dry in the sun. Toss your seed bombs into a nearby abandoned lot or field and watch your bee-friendly plants grow!

Stay Informed!

Visit organicconsumers.org and subscribe to *Organic Bytes*, our weekly email newsletter.

organicconsumers.org/bees.cfm