

BUYING BEE-SAFE PLANTS IN WEST METRO DENVER - 2021



We now know that many greenhouse plants have been pre-treated with neonicotinoid systemic insecticides (neonics) which are toxic to pollinators and remain in plants for months if not years. In 2014, over 50% of bee-attracting plants at big box stores tested positive for neonicotinoids. However, in 2021, many growers have moved away from using these pesticides. This list reflects the self-reporting and policies of many local retailers and wholesalers...and it's still always best – and very important - to ask a manager or a long-term employee about their pesticide use and how to identify bee-safe plants. And, please do say THANK YOU for growing bee-safe!

RETAILERS COMMITTED TO BEE-SAFE PLANTS!

We love these guys! Committed to 100% neonic-free plants!

Al's Pine Nursery

6815 W. 44th Ave, Wheat Ridge, CO 80033

A great local mom and pop nursery, Al's only uses natural pesticides on houseplants as needed. (Note that they do not grow the bare root plants like grapes, raspberries, currants, etc so they cannot guarantee them). Bring cash or check, as they do not take credit cards.

No Phone or Website (but a Facebook page!)

Harlequin Gardens

4795 N. 26th St, Boulder, CO 80301

100% pesticide and chemical-input free! What a great place to go buy plants - an adventure complete with chickens, ducks, and big views! They specialize in native perennials and have a selection of shrubs and trees and some herb and vegetable starts, but not a lot of annual flowers. They are so committed to organic, that they won't even stock plants or trees that are known to have insect problems and might be sprayed later on!

www.harlequinsgardens.com

(303) 939-9403

McGuckin's Hardware

2525 Arapahoe Ave, Boulder, CO 80302

Full-service nursery carrying a complete line of annuals and perennials throughout the growing season, all untreated and bee-safe. They have also eliminated glyphosate (Roundup) from their shelves!

www.mcguckin.com

(303) 443-1822

Sage Thymes

8550 W. Ohio Place, Lakewood CO 80226

A small but well-stocked seasonal nursery right in Lakewood! Chris opens up a self-serve shop on her porch sometime in April and sells through the summer. She specializes in herbs and vegetables but also has flowers and seeds. Everything is raised without pesticides. Contact Chris for more information. Cash or checks only.

www.sagethymes.com

(720) 480-1017

Southwest Gardens

4114 Harlan Street, Wheat Ridge, CO 80033

www.southwestgardensco.com

(303) 423-5606

Specializes in cactus, succulents, perennials and annuals grown in their greenhouse without systemic pesticides. They do re-stock with plants from Giambrocco & Sons by mid-summer if they get low on plants so you might want to doublecheck if shopping late in the season.

Local Farmer's Markets & Plant Sales

Various

Most plants started by small growers/farmers are safe and they are right there to ask!

High Country Gardens

www.highcountrygardens.com

Online/Phone Order Only

(800) 925-9387

This famous nursery in Santa Fe, NM specializes in xeric/native plants and is a leader in the bee-safe movement! They have eliminated 100% of neonics in their plants and seeds. They are still working on flower bulbs. (Currently wholesalers in the Netherlands do not use neonics, but some are grown in previously contaminated ground - I love that they are so careful to specify!) They have recently eliminated their catalog in order to save resources, but have expanded their website to include detailed planting guides and videos.

Center for ReSource Conservation

www.conservationcenter.org/gardens

These folks have unique "Gardens in a Box" for sale each spring with complete instructions and plants for a small garden space. You must order early in the year because they will sell out. All plants are neonic-free and gardens range from xeric to pollinator-attracting to themed vegetable combinations. You select a date and location for pick up in the metro area. Prices range from \$80-\$180 and that is a great deal for 15-30+ plants! This year they have added a manual turf-removal service making it easier than ever to convert lawn to garden.

(MOSTLY) LOCAL WHOLESALE BRANDS THAT ARE BEE-SAFE

These growers do not use neonicotinoids in their greenhouses, with certain noted exceptions.

Look for labels on the tag/pot or ask a store manager! This is not a complete list, as others may be bee-safe.

BONNIE PLANTS

HARDY BOY (except for 10" pots and larger)

BOTANY LANE ("Just Dig It" & "Proven Winners")

GULLEY GREENHOUSE

BROWN'S GREENHOUSE (neonic-free but unlabeled)

KIYOTA GREENHOUSE

CALABRESE GREENHOUSE

LAPORTE AVENUE NURSERY

FORT COLLINS WHOLESALE NURSERY

LITTLE VALLEY WHOLESALE (old liners may contain residues)

RETAIL NURSERIES THAT GROW THEIR OWN BEE-SAFE PLANTS

These nurseries grow a significant portion of their inventory using only beneficial insects or natural products and have primarily neonic-free wholesalers as well. Always ask how to identify the plants grown on-site and look, or ask, for the above safe wholesale brands!

City Floral Greenhouse

www.cityfloralgreenhouse.com

1440 Kearney St, Denver, CO 80220

(303) 399-1177

Although this is in east Denver, I listed it because the plant manager there was very responsive to my questions and concerned for the bees.

Echter's Garden Center

5150 Garrison St, Arvada, CO 80002

www.echters.com

(303) 424-7979

Echter's grows many of their own plants and admit that they sometimes might use neonicotinoids if there is a severe infestation, and the only way to know if they have is to ask Production Manager, Joy Knox, who will be upfront about any use. This does make shopping at Echter's more challenging but their honesty is appreciated. Plants grown onsite will often be in a burgundy pot that says "Plant for Success". Most flower baskets and 6-pack annuals are also grown there. As in many nurseries, houseplants and tropicals are more likely to be treated.

Giambrocco & Sons Garden Center

14005 W. 64th Ave, Arvada, CO 80004

(303) 421-7228

Giambrocco says they do not use neonics on their own plants, which is 90% of their inventory. Please ask the owners for more details.

Jared's Nursery

10500 W. Bowles Ave, Littleton, CO 80127

www.jaredsgarden.com

(303) 979-6022

They don't use neonics in their greenhouse and use primarily neonic-free growers such as Botany Lane, Brown's and Hardy Boy. However, they say that hanging baskets #1 and #2 and pots larger than 4" may be treated with neonics. Always ask!

Novacek's Greenhouse

2635 Youngfield St, Golden, CO 80401

www.novacekgreenhouse.com

(303) 237-3572

They grow most of their plants onsite and do not use neonics in general. They may use neonicotinoids in some of the hanging baskets and some of the geraniums. Ask owner, Gerald Novacek, for specifics on these.

Tagawa Gardens

7711 S. Parker Road, Centennial, CO 80016

www.tagawagardens.com

(303) 690-4722

Retail Manager, Beth Zwinak, says that they only use beneficial insects and no insecticides in their greenhouses. Their in-house plants can be identified by a "Tagawa(R) Own" or "Grey Kitty(R) Purr-furred" labels on plants. They seek out other growers that are neonic-free and you can ask a department head or Beth about any plants from outside growers.

Young's Market & Garden Center

9400 W. 44th Ave, Wheat Ridge, CO 80033

www.youngsmarketandgardencenter.com

(303) 422-8408

They do not use neonics in their greenhouse and primarily use neonic-free wholesalers like Kiyoto, Botany Lane and Brown's.

*****This list was compiled to the best of my ability based on self-reporting of nurseries and growers. To receive any updated information or a pdf version of this document, please e-mail me at kellimlin@gmail.com***

RETAIL NURSERIES THAT DO NOT GROW THEIR OWN PLANTS

These are the trickiest places to shop because they do not grow any plants on site and often even managers don't understand the complexities of quarantines across state lines that can result in treated plants. Even so, do your best to ask a manager directly for the best information.

Abner's Garden Center

12880 W. 44th Ave, Wheat Ridge, CO 80033

www.abnersgardencenter.com

(303) 424-0180

Abner's does not grow plants onsite but carries plants from a variety of local wholesalers including some that are bee safe. Ask Reed or Nancy for more information.

Jensen's Flower & Garden

845 Wadsworth Blvd, Lakewood CO 80215

www.jensensflowerandgarden.com

(303) 237-5545

Even though Jensen's grows many of their own vegetables, perennials and annuals and report not using systemics, they do not label them and so neither you or most of the staff know what is treated or not.

O'Toole's Garden Center

1404 Quail St, Lakewood, CO 80215 (+ other locations)

www.otoolesgardencenter.com

(303) 232-6868

O'Toole's does not grow any of their own plants and has been a difficult place to shop bee-safe in the past because of it. However, they are now getting the vast majority of perennials and annuals from local growers including Botany Lane, Hardy Boy, and Brown's Greenhouse, which are primarily neonic-free (Note the exceptions in wholesaler section of this document). However, shrubs and trees come from many other places, including out of state. The very helpful Lakewood store manager, Nancy Szilagyi, suggests that concerned shoppers ask her or the department manager for more information. If any staff there tell you that ALL their plants are neonic-free and safe, please ask for a manager as this is not the case anywhere providing wholesale plants, especially from out of state.

BIG BOX STORES: NOT YOUR BEST CHOICE, BUT GETTING A LITTLE BETTER

Home Depot, Lowe's, Costco, True Value, Ace Hardware and Walmart , etc...

When neonicotinoid pesticides were first found to be pervasive in bedding plants in big box stores in 2014, consumer and activist pressure forced many chains to commit to eliminating these chemicals. Home Depot committed to eliminating these systemic pesticides by 2018, Lowe's by 2019, and others followed suit. However there has not been any clear information from the corporate level on whether these commitments have been met. And it is nearly impossible for the local store managers or nursery employees to do anything but guess. Some have "reverse label" tags that tell you that a plant IS treated - "This plant is protected from white flies, aphids, etc, by neonicotinoid pesticides" - but nothing definitive labeling those that are not treated.

We wish there was a clearer guideline on shopping big box! Since Ace Hardware and True Value are franchises, speaking directly with the store management could get you more information than at the large chains. Asking always helps our cause!