

Pollinators and Pesticides



Protecting honey bees and wild pollinators: What can you do?

Solutions to the loss of bees and human productivity are clearly within our reach if we engage our communities and governmental bodies. A little outrage will help. The shift to organic practices is a necessity that is protective of health and the environment, sustainable and cost effective. The bees should serve as a warning because our very existence depends on theirs.



1. Make your yard or a local park a "Pesticide Free Zone" and take steps to encourage pollinators

Bees are in trouble, and policymakers just aren't acting quickly enough to help them. But backyard gardeners, sideline beekeepers and ordinary people all over the country have been stepping up. There are [several steps](#) you can take to attract these beneficial insects to your garden and protect them and their habitat. Like any other living organism, bees need food, water, and shelter in order to thrive.

- Pledge your yard or park as [Pesticide Free Zone/Honey Bee Haven](#) and mark it on the map!
- Display a [Pesticide Free Zone sign](#) and show your neighbors that pesticide-free spaces are important for health and the environment (download [owner's manual](#)).

2. Become a backyard beekeeper

For those who may be feeling highly motivated, there is also the option of keeping your very own colony of bees in your backyard. Although not all bees live in hives, certain species, notably honeybees, are easily and safely kept in artificial hives for their shelter. This provides a safe haven for the bees while also allowing you the opportunity to harvest the fresh honey!

Aspiring beekeepers must decide which subspecies of honeybee to acquire and purchase protective equipment. If you are interested in keeping honeybees, the American Beekeeping Federation recommends that you find a local bee club in your area. Most clubs either offer courses in basic beekeeping or can direct you to such courses. These are often given at the beginning of the year, in order to prepare people to start their hives in the spring. Be sure to look for those offering organic beekeeping, so that you can be sure that your bees are not being exposed to any harmful substances.

- See our [Backyard Beekeeping factsheet](#).

3. Go Organic

Choosing organic food is not only good for your health, but it also helps protect honey bees and wild pollinators. In addition to serious health questions linked to actual residues of toxic pesticides on the food we eat, our food buying decisions support or reject hazardous agricultural practices, protection of honey bees and wild pollinators, as well as contributing to healthy working conditions and communities for farmworkers and farm families.

- Learn more about [organic food](#) and "[Eating with a Conscience](#)."

4. Urge EPA to act!

EPA's recent decision to deny the petition recognizing that honey bees face "imminent hazard" and requesting the suspension of the pesticide linked to bee die-offs is a blow to beekeepers and over one million citizen petition signatures worldwide. This decision puts beekeepers, rural economies, and our food system at risk. EPA believes the bees are alright, but with hives still averaging losses over 30%, bees are crying out for help. With one in three bites of food reliant on honey bee pollination, it's imperative that EPA act now! [Tell EPA to suspend the use of the bee-killer clothianidin and protect pollinators](#).

5. Urge Congress to act!

Congress has the authority to exercise oversight over federal agencies like EPA. We will continue to pressure EPA to take action on clothianidin, but in the meantime [join our petition urging Congress to step up!](#)