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gardeners to over-apply pesticides and other chemicals in their home gardens.

"There's always this thought of 'more is better,' and it really isn't," she said.

Code said a recent Xerces Society study revealed that even when people follow the directions on the label, they may be using too much.

"What we found," she said, "was that because of the way pesticide labels are written, the application rate could be significantly higher on an ornamental tree in a backyard in comparison to what can be applied in an agricultural setting. So not only are these chemicals a concern by themselves, but all of a sudden we might be allowing people to use much higher levels than what we expected because of the way a backyard is so different from an agricultural field."

Vollmer and Xerces Society staff joined a long list of scientists, researchers and pollinator fans – some came dressed as bees and butterflies – at a March 27 public

hearing in Salem testifying in support of the bills that would regulate neonicotinoids.

The European Union has already placed restrictions on neonicotinoids, and in California and Colorado, lawmakers are also considering bills that are similar to the one passed in Maryland.

The causes of bee decline are not pesticides alone. Code said climate change, disease and loss of habitat are also to blame.

"This is part of the solution. It's not all of it, but it's part of it," she said of the bill.

"What I really want to see is a transformation in how we think about agriculture and how we manage our yards."

Oregonians for Food and Shelter, which represents the agricultural industry, opposes both of the bills. Its policy director, Scott Dahlman, told lawmakers in Salem that if neonicotinoids are taken off the market, people will simply reach for alternative pesticides that also pose problems, and can also be toxic to fish and pollinators.

Arkin called this a "side-stepping" argument.

"They are all toxic, and the reason neonicotinoids need to come off the market is because of their bio-persistence and systemic nature," Arkin said. "This is a chemical that is known to contaminate surface water and kill aquatic insects for years after the initial application. We're talking about disrupting the food chain at its most basic level."

As of press time, the neonicotinoid-restricting bill was scheduled for a work session on April 13, which could be postponed, or if it goes forward, the bill could either pass a committee vote or die. (Check news.streetroots.org for updates.)

If it moves forward, it will go to a vote in the Senate.

"It's so important to push these bigger policy changes, but we also really need to know what we can do in our own yard," Code said.

Vollmer said planting a variety of native species that will provide pollinators with blooms throughout the seasons is key.



She offers natural pest control products at her nursery, but at home, she said, she usually just blasts aphids with water because once they are knocked off the plant, they can't get back up.

Code said that while "organic does not mean pollinator friendly," because they are shorter lived, "the window for exposure is really small, whereas neonicotinoids we could have ongoing exposure over days and weeks, and lead to much greater harm."

Vollmer recommends using a natural dormant oil on trees during the winter, which will coat the pest eggs and keep them from hatching. She said there are also bacteria-based sprays for lettuce and cabbage that will kill pest caterpillars, but not butterfly larvae.

But both Vollmer and Code agree: Healthy plants will, for the most part, protect themselves against pests.

"You have to take care of your plants, and not try to grow things where they shouldn't be grown, and that's why natives are great," Vollmer said. "Stressed plants get hurt by

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