

weed eradication. For example, two-and-a-half million dollars were allocated to weed eradication projects in the 2009-2011 biennium. The majority of these projects rely on herbicides like picloram, and \$2.5 million buys a lot of poison.

The poisoning near La Pine took place over 7 days at a cost of over \$8,000, which included \$677 per day for two workers, hazardous chemicals, and transportation. Roughly the same amount of money could have been used to hire five restoration workers at \$15/hour/day to pull the weeds. More jobs, zero toxics.

There is a problem when the state authorizes grant money to spray carcinogens around people's front yards in a manner that violates the law. Beyond Toxics has a solution, starting with a state policy which would protect people and the environment as the first priority.

We recommend instituting an integrated pest management plan, which affirms "pesticides as the last resort." We call it the Safe Public Places Act, and we intend to introduce it in the 2013 legislative session. If Safe Public Places had been the law, Denare's home, family, her dog, her chickens, and her neighbors wouldn't have been poisoned.

See the video by Douglas McGowan starting December 13th: [www.BeyondToxics.org](http://www.BeyondToxics.org).



arger of La Pine, Oregon was forced to remove many his property after excess pesticide spraying killed them.

Photo by Douglas McGowan



# Last Flight: Bees in Peril

Photo by Bev Vealis

by Lisa Arkin, Beyond Toxics Executive Director

**T**hey fell out of the sky like grisly hail until the ground was cloaked in a shroud of yellow and black. They kept falling, wounded beyond repair, unable to fly, paralyzed by something in their midst. They fell not by the hundreds, or even the thousands, but by the hundreds of thousands. No one knows exactly how many bees died that day, but a conservative estimate places the number at over 7 million.

They died on Jim Doan's land, but not by his hand. Doan runs a bee farm, and last year 145 of his hives collapsed. He had tended those hives with skill, offering care and shelter in return for honey. But now millions of the bees were dead, and while mass die-offs are not unheard of in nature, Doan suspected other sources.

He took a sampling of dead bees, along with honey from the hives, and submitted them for toxicological testing. The results found high concentrations of clothianidan, a pesticide in the Neonicotinoid class. Neonicotinoids, or "neonics" for short, are poisons used in the industrial farming of corn and cotton. They are also used on lawns, rose bushes, and other ornamental plants. In fact, neonics, are some of the most widely used insecticides in the world. They kill by attacking the central nervous system of the insect. Doan didn't have to look further than the corn field planted adjacent to his property. Neonics, the pesticide of choice used in the planting, had drifted onto his property.

The bees died for corn.

## BLASTING POISONS INTO A BEE'S WORLD

The corn seeds were impregnated with clothianidan before they were even planted. Once saturated with the pesticide, the seeds are loaded into a machine that shoots them into the ground under intense air pressure. The soil disturbance and the agitation of the seeds chafing against each other create a cloud of insecticide residue dust. It migrates on the breeze and settles onto meadows and fields where it contaminates the pollen and nectar consumed by pollinators such as bees and butterflies. If the concentration is high enough, the poison does what it was designed to do. It quickly kills the insect. Lesser amounts may kill over time as the pesticide contaminates the hive and the honey and pollen inside.

Neonics loiter in the environment. According to the EPA, they can persist in soil for as long as three years, during which time fresh generations of untreated plants absorb the chemical residue lingering in the soil.

But beyond farming applications, neonics are also marketed to unsuspecting homeowners. Local stores sell them for use in gardens and lawns. (Our website has the names of common home garden products to avoid which contain neonics.)

Local Lane County beekeepers are so concerned that they plan to circulate a plea to homeowners and local retailers asking them to shun any gardening chemicals with neonicotinoids. A joint project with Beyond Toxics, "Healthy Gardens Equal Healthy Bees" encourages neighborhoods, block by block, to pledge to be pesticide free. In return, beekeepers promise fresh, healthy honey harvested from neighboring hives.

The bee die-off is not confined to the United States. According to a recent National Academy of Sciences report, we are seeing a global collapse of honey bee and native bumblebee populations. Concerns have led to partial bans on the use of some neonicotinoids for specific crops in several European countries, including France, Germany, and Italy. But such bans, while welcome, are always partial, inadequate, and late, preceded by the death of millions of bees.

## ARE WE TAKING BEES FOR GRANTED?

We consider pollination services to be free and, in the natural scheme of things, they are. Much of our agriculture depends on what bees have been doing, without help or interference, for millions of years. But, if we insist on overriding nature, we must do our part to keep bees and their hives healthy by decreasing the use of poisons upon the land. If bees disappear, a chain of events would be set in motion leading to plant extinctions, crop failures, and famine.

Before picking up a can of "Bug-Be-Gone" consider that you might just get what you wish for. Besides exercising personal accountability, what can be done to protect these delicate pollinators? We need public policy based on the precautionary principle, "when in doubt, do no harm." The fate of bees and humans is inextricably linked. As bees go, so do we.

For more background on the issue of pesticides and the plight of our honey bees, see our web site: [www.FriendsOfHealthyBees.org](http://www.FriendsOfHealthyBees.org)

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## Beyond Toxics Mission

Beyond Toxics works to guarantee environmental protections and health for all communities. We challenge causes of toxic pollution and help communities find effective, lasting solutions.



Beyond Toxics is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and all contributions are fully tax-deductible.