

June 4, 2012



PARK PICKS
by

FRIENDS OF THE ALLENTOWN PARKS



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Bird Riddles

1. There is a bird whose name tells if he flies fast or slow.



2. There is one that a farmer in harvest would use;



3. And one you can easily fool if you choose.



4. Which bird wears a bit of sky in its dress?

5. What bird have we with us in eating and drinking?



6. Which bird is a scoffer, a scornor, a jest?



7. From a high wind in evening one name is inferred.



8. Guess these and you're wise as Minerva's own bird.



Certain "Eco-Friendly" Garden Insecticides are Harmful to Pollinators

By Marten Edwards—Professor, Muhlenberg College

Scientists have recently issued a note of concern about the use by homeowners of a class of very popular garden insecticides which are commonly marketed as "eco-friendly". I would like to pass this information along to **Friends of the Allentown Parks**, who share a vested interest in the local natural environment. Technically called **neonicotinoids**, they are listed on the package with a variety of unpronounceable names (e.g. imidacloprid), but rarely as "neonicotinoid". Neonicotinoids are much less toxic to humans and other vertebrate animals than most of the other chemical insecticides that are available on the market. They are actually chemical mimics of nicotine, a natural insecticide found in tobacco. Neonicotinoids are taken up into plant fluids including nectar, making the plant itself toxic to insects that feed on them. When properly used by professional arborists under specific circumstances, neonicotinoids can provide an effective and relatively safe (compared to other insecticides) chemical treatment for some tough pests, like hemlock wooly adelgids.

It is very difficult, if not impossible for homeowners to apply appropriate dosages of these insecticides, since they can be long-lived and are taken up into a variety of different plants. Even when trying to follow the instructions on the label, homeowners typically apply insecticides to their gardens at hundreds of times the concentrations that would be allowable for agriculture. Since neonicotinoids enter plant fluids, they can build up to alarmingly high concentrations in the flowers of some ornamental shrubs and trees. In plant nectar, they have been found in high doses that have proven to be lethal to many pollinators, including bees and butterflies. Solid research into the environmental effects of neonicotinoids in the home & garden setting is urgently needed. Meanwhile, their routine use around the lawn and garden should be avoided until they have been properly evaluated and appropriate regulations have been established.



If you can't tell if a product contains neonicotinoids, please ask the store manager to help you figure it out, or try calling the phone number on the package. If you are at all inclined to use insecticides in your back yard (after consulting with the fireflies, bees and butterflies who will also be affected), please read this article before heading off to the local hardware store.

<http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2012/04/neonicotinoids-gardens/#more-106221>

<http://www.xerces.org/neonicotinoids-and-bees/>

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