



Ahh – To Grow A Garden – So Get Up and Get Growing –Taylorsville City - Tree Of The Month Article – September 2010 - Attracting Bees, To Your Garden - For reference Taylorsville City is USDA Hardiness zone 7A.

So you want to plant a bee garden and attract many of the native bees that occur in our area of the United States (US). The first thing you should know is that by planting bee-attracting plants, you can attract a diverse array of other wildlife as well. Butterflies, wasps, flies, hummingbirds and other pollinators will give you a bountiful harvest of fruits, vegetables, and seeds and provide you with many hours of outdoor entertainment. You will be providing pesticide-free safe havens for all pollinators. Are bees as wildlife worth watching, you might ask? Don't worry, nearly all species of bees are gentle and will not sting you. They are simply searching for food, pollen and nectar, to feed themselves and their young. All bees need the same few basic requirements in order to thrive. Nectar, pollen, water, nesting materials and open ground -- combine these ingredients and your collaboration with nature should result in some larger and tastier fruits and vegetables in just a season or two from now. It may surprise you to learn that nearly 5,000 species of bees live in the US. Almost all lead solitary lives and construct their homes (nests) underground, in pithy twigs, in abandoned beetle burrows, or in dead tree branches. Keep the following in mind when planning and planting your bee friendly garden.

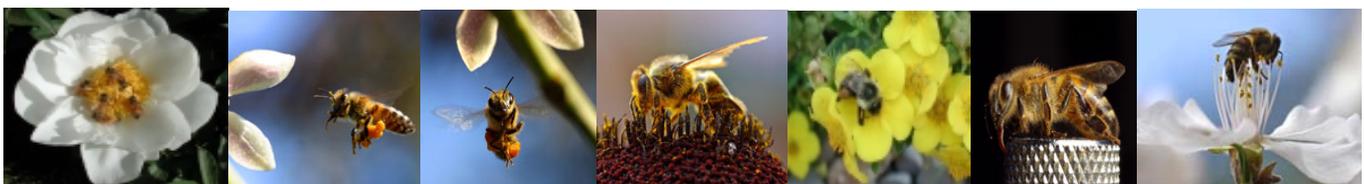
You probably have already taken the first important step in providing what the bees ordered for dinner - you have planted flowers. Bees won't chew up your prize specimens. Instead, they will take away pollen and nectar, leaving a pollination path of luscious fruits, vegetables, and seeds in their wake. Remember, they aren't intentionally trying to be helpful to flowering plants by moving the pollen from flower to flower. They are in search of a quick sip of nectar, some tasty pollen, and maybe some building materials to transport back to their nests. The bees pollinate blossoms leading to fertilization and the formation of fruits. By selecting the best bee-rewarding plants, you can attract beneficial pollinating bees and other creatures to your flower and vegetable gardens or backyard fruit orchard.

Don't use pesticides. Most pesticides are not selective. You are killing off the beneficial bugs along with the pests. If you must use a pesticide, start with the least toxic one and follow the label instructions to the letter. The number of organic farms and gardens has been increasing over the past several years due to the increasing concern of consumers for buying safe produce at the supermarket. At home, you too can practice integrated pest management by purchasing beneficial insects such as lady bugs, green lacewings, or praying mantis. If you can't avoid not using some insecticides, try to use less persistent ones which have been proven safer for bees and other pollinators. Also, remember to follow the application instructions on the label and apply these materials after dark or when pollinators like bees are safe within their nests. The biggest and tastiest fruits are the direct result of flowers pollinated by bees. Over a third of all the fruits and vegetables we eat are the result of bee visits to blossoms in our farms and gardens.

Use local native plants. Research suggests native plants are four times more attractive to native bees than exotic flowers. They are also usually well adapted to your growing conditions and can thrive with minimum attention. In gardens, heirloom varieties of herbs and perennials can also provide good foraging. The most important consideration is how to use a maximum of native annual and perennial wildflowers which naturally grow in our region. These plants have evolved and are adapted to the growing season, local climate and soils. They often require less water, fertilizer, and pesticides than showy exotics and fancy hybrids. The native wildflowers will also provide your bee visitors with more nutritious pollen and nectar.

Chose several colors of flowers. Bees have good color vision to help them find flowers and the nectar and pollen they offer. Flower colors that particularly attract bees are blue, purple, violet, white, and yellow.

Plant flowers in clumps. Flowers clustered into clumps of one species will attract more pollinators than individual plants scattered through the habitat patch. Where space allows, make the clumps four feet or more in diameter.





Include flowers of different shapes. There are five thousand different species of bees in North America, and they are all different sizes, have different tongue lengths, and will feed on different shaped flowers. Consequently, providing a range of flower shapes means more bees can benefit.

Have a diversity of plants flowering all season. Most bee species are generalists, feeding on a range of plants through their life cycle. By having several plant species flowering at once, and a sequence of plants flowering through spring, summer, and fall, you can support a range of bee species that fly at different times of the season.

Plant where bees will visit. Bees favor sunny spots over shade and need require some shelter from strong winds.

Provide water, bees also need sources of water, which can be provided from a dripping faucet, pond, bird bath, waterfall, water garden, fish ponds, or water fountains. Honey Bees need to drink and clean themselves off. So they visit a water feature at least once a day. Some types of water features aren't easy for tiny bees to drink out of. So, it is better for you to have more than one water feature for bees to choose from in your yard. Making the chances higher, the bees will find a suitable water source that they trust, prefer, even like. Some bees also require mud as a building material for their nests. If you are lucky enough to have Mason Bees, encourage them by providing some mud. Create a one foot tall conical mound of soil near your garden. Allow some water to seep up from a pan at the base. The eager Mason Bees will collect balls of mud from the wet soil at the proper height and reward you by sticking around and increasing in numbers.

Provide habitat, bees in the large family of leafcutter bees, nest in the ground or more typically in abandoned beetle burrows or in dead wood. Most of them require small leaf pieces which they cut then fashion into the natal cells for their young. They may also collect downy plant fibers or small pebbles and plant resins to complete the job. Allow these fascinating leafcutters to cut a few elliptical holes from leaves of some of your garden plants. They will pollinate your fruits and vegetables as they go about their house building and grocery shopping to provide for their hidden pantries and bee nurseries. In creating a bee garden, it is important to remember that you should leave a small patch of bare ground somewhere in or around your garden in which bees can establish their underground nests. Very few bees can nest in manicured grass lawns. Similarly, if you, or your neighbors, can tolerate a dead tree, or at least some dead branches, these will prove invaluable as nesting sites for many Leafcutter and Mason Bees. Tie some dead branches up against your garden shed or other building to create some enticing holey bee real estate. The more beetle burrows the better for the bees.

Provide food, the garden plants with flowers that attract bees are: Aster, Basil, Black-eyed Susan, Boneset, Blazing Star, Butterfly Bush, Brazilian Verbena, Broccoli flowers (bees **LOVE** these yellow flowers), Caltrop, Common Dandelion, Common Milkweed, Coneflower, Cosmos, Creeping Wood Sorrel, Common Tansy, Dame's Rocket, English lavender, Garlic Chives, Globe Thistle, Goldenrod, Ice Plant, Joe-Pye weed, Lilies, Lobelia, Lupine, Marigolds, Marjoram, Mustards, Oregano, Penstemon, Peppers, Phlox, Purple Coneflower, Rabbit-brush, Radish, Red Clover, Rosemary, Sage, Salvia, Sedum, Scorpion-weed, Snowberry, Sedum, Strawberries, Sunflower, Wallflower, White Clover, Wild Buckwheat, Wild-lilac, Vetch, and Zinnia. Trees, Shrubs and vines who's flowers attract bees are: Abelia, Apple, Apricot, Butterfly Bush, Broom, Cherries, Chokecherry, Cotoneaster, Cranberry, Creosote bush, Currants and Gooseberry, Eastern Redbud, Elder, Giant Hyssop, Hazelnut tree, Honeysuckle, Huckleberry, Oregon Grape, Peaches, Pear, Plums, Privet, Roses (other member or the rose family of strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries), Rose of Sharon, Rhododendron, Walnut Tree, and Willow. The plants that seem to bring in the most bees into my yard are the Rose of Sharon, Honeysuckle, Privet, White Lace Vine, Onion, and Butterfly Bushes.

By creating small patches of pesticide-free safe havens for all pollinators, you can play a small but vital role in reversing the dramatic pollinator declines which have occurred during the past few years. It may not seem like much, but magnified across our state and country, these gardens can serve a vital role by feeding and protecting many threatened animals that pollinate wildflowers and our crop plants. This is especially true for migratory pollinators (animals like nectar-feeding bats or Monarch butterflies) which travel long distances across state and international boundaries. Along these nectar corridors the migratory pollinators can take a much needed nectar break within your newly-constructed pollinator garden. Part of this article it from the <http://www.enature.com/articles>, part from <http://www.pollinatorparadise.com/Solitary>, and part from [Bees/beegarden.htm](http://www.beegarden.htm).

