

Get a **BUZZ** from a Bee-friendly garden

Beekeeping is a fantastic hobby, but it is a labor of love and not necessarily for everyone. Happily, there are things that everybody can do to help both native bees and European honey bees – such as planting flowering plants, leaving some bare dirt patches around the garden un-mulched, allowing last season’s leftover stalks to lie, and installing pollinator houses.

European honey bees pollinate a third of our food crops, making a huge contribution to our food supply chain, our economy and the broader ecosystem, so the more we can help them do their thing, the better off everyone is.

European honey bees will collect nectar and pollen from a range of flowering plants, but they do have preferences.

Like humans, bees love herbs. And they’re great to plant as they’re handy in the kitchen and around the house too.

And there are many beautiful flowering shrubs and trees you can plant which will have nearby bees waggle-dancing with joy.

Bees are also attracted to many food plants. The great thing about planting some citrus, strawberries or a passionfruit vine is the symbiotic benefit. The bees get their pollen and nectar, and the plants produce bigger, healthier, better formed fruit in greater abundance.

The thyme is right

Bees loooooove thyme. It’s a one-stop-shop for foragers, providing high yields of both pollen and nectar.

Give it good drainage, and it will prosper in most climates. You can even use it on paths and as a lawn plant. It’s also a delicious culinary herb. Popular throughout the Mediterranean because it makes for super-yummy honey, neighboring beekeepers will love you if you plant this.

Lovely lavender

Bees love blue and violet flowers best, especially the many species of lavender you can grow at home. Like thyme, it produces an abundance of both pollen and nectar.

A beautiful plant to grow, you can use sprigs to scent your home and nothing’s nicer than being downwind from a lavender bush on a sweet, breezy summer day.

Great sage

Planting plenty of sage in your yard or on your balcony is fantastic for the home cook. It also happens to produce flowers that are among the honey bee’s very favorites.

They go crazy for it, and when they find some will do a dance so the rest of the colony knows where the party is.

A close-up photograph of a honey bee on a lavender flower. The bee is positioned on the right side of the frame, facing left towards the purple buds of the flower. The background is a soft, out-of-focus purple. A yellow speech bubble with a white border is located in the upper right quadrant of the image, containing the text 'Bees love herbs!' in black.

**Bees
love
herbs!**



Make a pollinator hotel and watch the insects move in

Look out for native bees in your garden



mason bee



leaf cutter bee



large carpenter bee



bumble bee

Other plants bees love

Herbs Basil • Borage • Chives
 • Comfrey • Coriander • Fennel
 • Lemon Balm • Mustard • Oregano
 • Parsley • Rocket • Rosemary

Fruit Apple • Apricot • Blackberry
 • Blueberry • Citrus • Currants
 • Plum • Strawberries

Vegetables Capsicum • Chilli
 • Cucumber • Pumpkins

Flowers Alyssum • Asters
 • Clover • Cornflower • Cosmos
 • Echinacea • Hollyhocks • Geranium
 • Marigold • Sunflowers • Roses
 • Violets • Zinnias

Natives Red Maple • Common
 Yarrow • Swamp Milkweed
 • Sneezeweed • Bee Balm
 • Black-Eyed Susan • Panicked Aster
 • Blue Vervain

What about native bees?

There are more than 4,000 species of native bees in the US - ranging from larger bumblebees to smaller native bees. Some live in colonies, while many work and live a solitary life. There are both ground and twig nesting varieties.

Not surprisingly, many native bees prefer native plants!

Invite native bees to move in with a pollinator house

Most of the native bees in the US are solitary and they come in all shapes and sizes.

Essentially, a pollinator house is a structure which accommodates solitary-nesting native bees by providing cavities in natural materials for them to live in.

You can make your own, from a very basic design (drilling some holes into a block of wood) to as complex and creative as you like.

Materials Lumber • bamboo • logs
 • recycled cupboards, drawers, crates

Tips for building five-star pollinator accommodation

- Use only natural, solid untreated materials (no chipboard or composites)
- Go for cavities of various depths, but up to 5-6 inches should be plenty.
- Create homes of various widths. US native bees range in diameter from 3/38 inch to 2/5 inch
- Place in a warm but sheltered spot between three to seven feet off the ground
- Ensure the suites in your pollinator house are secure
- Use a sloped roof to keep the everything dry.

Bees' favorite colours are BLUE and YELLOW. Native bees are also particularly attracted to WHITE.

Tips for bee-friendly gardening

- **Plant flowering plants in bountiful clumps** so bees don't have to search far for forage and can work more efficiently
- **Avoid pesticides.** Companion planting is the way to go if you want to control pests. Pesticides are one of the reasons bee populations are in decline
- **Plant several species** to ensure you have **forage for every season**
- Maintain **multiple water sources** around your garden
- **Spread the word among your neighbors, family and friends**

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