You don’t have to be a beekeeper to help improve the current crisis in honeybee and native bee population declines. If you have a yard, the choices you make in your plantings of trees, shrubs and flowers can support the wellbeing of bees as well as other beneficial insects that keep our world a vibrant, healthy place. And, if you are a fruit/vegetable gardener, attracting honeybees to your garden will help the productivity of your plants through the pollination service they provide.

Plan your garden to provide pollen and nectar sources over the entire growing year. Keep in mind that even on a warmish, late winter day honeybees need pollen sources to feed their young brood in the hive. The largest early pollen sources are Acer maples, willows, winterhazels and witchhazels. Do your best to plant forage for this purpose in relative proximity to your hives.

It is best to plant in masses, as single plants may not attract honeybees, which tend to visit only one plant type per foraging trip. Also, single blossoms tend to be easier for honeybees to access than double blossom types. Deep-throated blossoms may attract bumblebees and hummingbirds, however a honeybee’s proboscis is not as long, and visit flowers better suited to them.

Bees are attracted to flowers that are colorful, contrast well with their background, or have an ultraviolet coloration that serves as a nectar guide. This is especially true in the case of red flowers, which bees don't see unless they contain some ultraviolet light pattern, which we don't see. Purple and blue are bees' favorite colors, followed by yellow and orange. Many newer cultivars of flowers, especially annuals that have been highly bred, are deceptive to bees. Even though they may have attractive colors, many lack the pollen and nectar bees like, because these traits having been bred out. This can be seen in the newer, pollen-less sunflowers meant for cutting.

This is by no means a comprehensive list, and one of the many joys in the combination of honeybees and gardens is watching their activity among your plants, and of course the seemingly miraculous experience of savoring the taste of your own garden in the honey.

**TREES AND SHRUBS**

**Late Winter - Early Spring**
- Acer Maple
- Winterhazel (Corylopsis spicata)
- Witchhazel
- Hazel Alder (Alnus serrulata, Alnus rugosa)
- Salix - Willows (choose willows with the biggest catkins)
- Poplar
- Viburnum x bodnantense 'Dawn' and 'Charles Lamont'
- Flowering Quince (Chaenomeles speciosa) - *Chaenomeles japonica 'Cameo'*

**Spring**
- Flowering fruit trees and berry bushes

**Early – Mid Summer**
- American Basswood - Linden
- Black Locust
- European Chestnut
- Yellow or Tulip Poplar
- Catalpa (Indian Bean Tree)
- Densa Inkberry, *Ilex glabra ‘Densa’* (plant instead of Boxwood for evergreen shrub)
- Enkianthus campanulatus - *Nichols*
- Sweet pepperbush (Clethra spp.)
- Sumac
- Sourwood Tree (Oxydendrum arboreum) Only to zone 5
- Golden Rain Tree (Koelreuteria paniculata) Only to zone 5

**Late Summer**
- Beebee tree, Korean Evodia (Tetradium glabrifolium)
PERRENIALS AND ANNUALS

**Late Winter - Early Spring**
Hellebore
Crocus
Glory of the Snow (Chionodoxa)

**Spring**
Leopard's Bane (Doronicum)
Ajugas
Jacob’s Ladder (Polemonium caeruleum)
Bleeding Heart
Dandelions
Basket-of-Gold (Aurinia saxatilis)
Oriental Poppy (Papaver orientale)

**Early and Mid Summer**
Mountain Bluet (Centaurea montana)
Thymes (cut back for re-bloom)
Sage and Salvias
Chives (cut back for re-bloom)
Catnip (Nepeta) (not heavy visitation)
Milkweed family, including Butterflyweed
Lavender
Cosmos
White Clover
Globe Thistle
Bee Balm (limited attraction to honeybees)
Scented Geranium

**Late Summer**
Joe-Pye Weed
Coneflower (Echinecea)
Sunflower (choose heirloom varieties, not fancy pollen-less varieties)
Purple Loosestrife
Flowering Herbs, including oregano and rosemary – (hold basil for late autumn bloom.)
Anise Hyssop (Agastache foeniculum) - (choose the columnar type, not those with deep throats – Giant Hyssop)
Borage
Boltonia asteroids
Mints
Perovskia (Russian Sage)
Golden Rod

**Autumn**
Asters (*October Glory* or Octendgloren are very late blooming)
Sedums (*Autumn Joy* is wonderful)
Dendranthemum (Hardy Chrysanthemum “Sheffield”)
Sweet Autumn Clematis - vine
Autumn blooming Crocus (simple variety)

**Almost anytime**
Buckwheat (grows fast, harvest just after flowering, good for soil – fragile with frost)
Heathers and Heaths (There are winter blooming varieties, as well as thru the normal season)
Densa Inkberry, *Ilex glabra ‘Densa’* (This was listed above, however I want to encourage people to plant these evergreen bushes instead of boxwood, the bees loved the tiny white flowers in July)

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HoneybeeLives teaches Organic Beekeeping and provides apiary services with Bee Doctor Chris Harp.