

# HoneybeeLives

## HONEYBEE PLANT LIST FOR NORTHEAST

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 (*Echinacea*)

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,s not those with deep throats – Giant Hyssop)

Borage

*Boltonia asteroides*

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)

[Compiled by Grai St. Clair Rice, HoneybeeLives.org](http://HoneybeeLives.org)

[HoneybeeLives teaches Organic Beekeeping and provides apiary services with Bee Doctor Chris Harp.](http://HoneybeeLives.org)