

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, a rooftop garden or community garden, 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, although bees don't generally forage closer than twenty feet from hive.

It is best to plant in masses, as single plants may not attract honeybees, since they visit only one plant type per foraging trip. Honeybee friendly flowering bushes and trees are a great value in your landscape. 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 (straw-like tongue) is not as long, and they 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, which we usually 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 hybrid plants lack the pollen and nectar bees need, if these traits have been bred out of the plants. This can be seen in 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)

Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)

Viburnum x bodnantense 'Dawn' and 'Charles Lamont'

Flowering Quince (*Chaenomeles speciosa*) - *Chaenomeles japonica 'Cameo'*

Spring

Flowering fruit trees and berry bushes

Early - Mid Summer

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*)

Japanese Pagoda Tree

PERENNIALS AND ANNUALS

Late Winter - Early Spring

Hellebore

Crocus

Glory of the Snow (*Chionodoxa*)

Spring

Leopard's Bane (*Doronicum*)

Jacob's Ladder (*Polemonium caeruleum*)

Bleeding Heart

Dandelions

Basket-of-Gold (*Aurinia saxatilis*)

Oriental Poppy (*Papaver orientale*)

Early – Mid Summer

Mountain Bluet (*Centaurea montana*)

Thymes

Sage and Salvias

Chives

Catnip (*Nepeta*)

Lavender

Cosmos (annual)

White Dutch Clover

Crimson Clover (annual - can reseed if happy)

Scented Geranium

Late Summer

Milkweed and Butterfly Weed

Short-toothed Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*)

Joe-Pye Weed

Sea Holly

Coneflower (*Echinacea*)

Sunflower (choose heirloom varieties, not fancy pollen-less varieties)

Lacy Phacelia (*Phacelia tanacetifolia*) can be used as crop cover or on edges of farms - great nectar source

Flowering Herbs, including oregano, rosemary, marjoram – (hold basil for autumn bloom.)

Anise Hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*) - (choose the blue columnar types not those with deep throats)

Borage (draws honeybees into vegetable garden)

Boltonia asteroids

Mints

Perovskia (Russian Sage)

Golden Rods

Garlic Chives

Caryopteris (Blue Mist Spirea) - Longwood Blue blooms first, Dark Knight blooms later

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)

Other thoughts - Buckwheat (grows fast, good to enrich soil as green manure. Turn under just after flowering– fragile with frost), Heathers and Heaths (There are winter blooming varieties, as well as thru the normal season), *Densa* Inkberry, *Ilex glabra* ‘*Densa*’ (Please considering planting these evergreen bushes instead of boxwood)

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