

# GARDENING FOR BEES

## Some tips and recommended plants



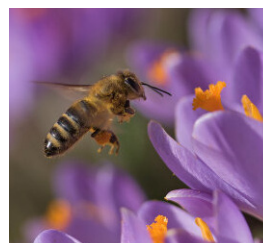
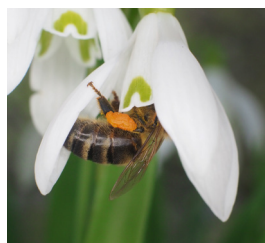
### General rules

Try to provide something with nectar and pollen all year round - particularly spring and autumn  
Avoid hybrid or double flowers which are harder for bees to access and can have less pollen and nectar  
Large groups or drifts of the same flower are better than scatterings of different flowers  
Different shaped flowers will attract bees with different length tongues  
If in doubt go for blue and purple flowers - bees' favourite colours. Red is less visible to them  
Do not spray open flowers with pesticides or herbicides. Better still, garden organically  
Bees and other pollinators sometimes need to drink; having a shallow, boggy pond margin or a shallow water dish filled with stones or moss in a sunny spot will provide a safe source of water.

### Spring essentials

Early spring is the toughest time for bees, and when they are most likely to starve. If you do one thing, fill your garden with early-flowering bulbs - they are cheap and easy to grow, plant a handful every year – even if you have only tubs or windowboxes!

Snowdrops  
Winter aconites  
Spring flowering crocus  
Siberian squil  
Stinking hellebore  
Mahonia  
Sweet box

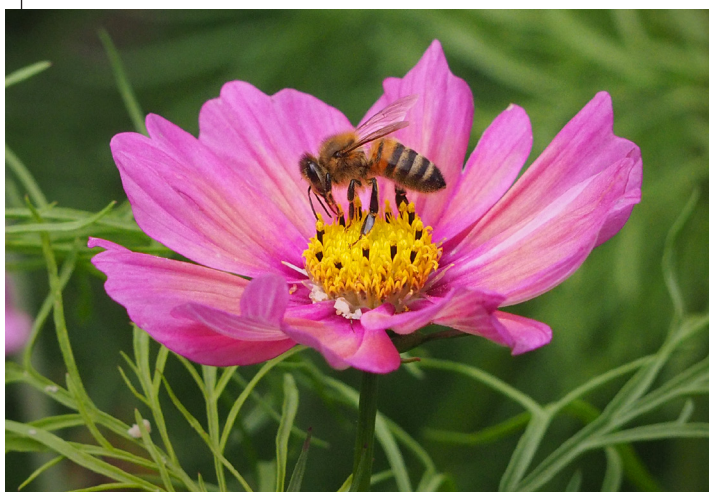


### Summer superstars

The choice of flowers for summer is vast. Anything that flowers in June is helpful as there is often a lull between spring and summer flowers known as the June gap, when bees can starve. My favourite summer plants suitable for bees of all types are:

Asters (Michelmas daisys)  
Buddlejah  
Calendula (common marigold)  
Cosmos  
Dahlias (single)  
Echinacea (coneflowers, rudbeckia)  
Echiums

Eupatorium  
Fuchsia  
Forget-me-not  
Foxglove  
Gaillardia  
Helleniums (sneezeweed)  
Hyssop  
Lambs ears  
Lavender (intemissa Gros bleu especially good)  
Lungwort  
Meadow foam (poached egg plant)  
Nepeta - catmint  
Phacelia (can be used as a green manure)  
Rock rose  
Salvias  
Sedums (stonecrop)  
Sunflowers  
Veronica  
Viper's bugloss  
Virginia creeper/Boston ivy  
Wood anemone



## Trees and shrubs

A tree in flower is like a meadow in the sky and can provide far more food for bees than if the space it takes up were planted with ordinary flowers. Shrubs too provide more than their fair share of food for the space they occupy. If you have a hedge, try to make sure it will flower and contains a number of native species like willow, hawthorne and hazel.

Acers (maple & sycamore)  
Apple (including crab apples)  
Ceanothus (Californian lilac)  
Cherry  
Cotoneaster  
Eucryphia  
False acacia  
Goat willow (*Salix caprea*)

Hawthorne  
Judas tree  
Korean bee tree (*Tetradium danielli*)  
Strawberry tree (*Arbutus*)  
Mountain ash (rowan)  
Plum (including wild varieties, damsons, etc)  
Privet (wild and cultivated types)  
Sweet chesnut

## Herbs

Flowering herbs are tremendously attractive to bees – think of that delicious, dark honey you've had on holiday in the Mediterranean. Herbs need to flower to be useful to bees, so allow them to do so – perhaps cutting different parts back to encourage new growth for you to harvest and letting other parts flower.

Borage	Mints
Chives	Oregano
Fennel	Rosemary
Lemon balm	Sage
Marjoram	Thyme



## The vegetable plot

Some vegetables produce flowers that need to be pollinated in order to produce delicious things for you to eat. More flowers in your garden will encourage more bees - and you'll get better crops. But don't forget that many vegetables flower after they have produced the crop you want. Leaving veg to 'go over' helps support the local bee population, so please let them flower before you dig them up.

### Flowers for pollination

Artichokes (Jerusalem and globe)  
Beans (especially red-flowered runners and broad beans)  
Peas  
Squashes, courgettes and pumpkins  
Tomatoes

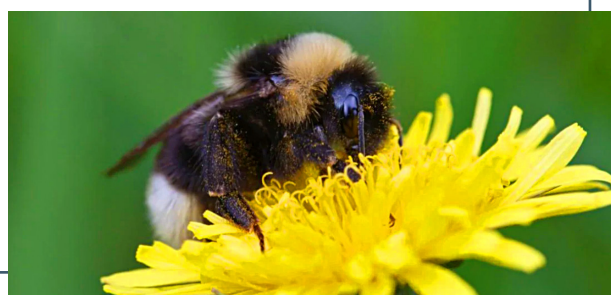
### Leave to go over

Alliums (onions, leeks, garlic)  
Asparagus  
Cabbages, kale and broccoli  
Carrots and parsnips  
Rocket (bees love this)

## Weeds

Many of the plants that grow in and around our gardens unbidden by us provide some of the most valuable flowers for bees. The royal couple of wild flowers are the dandelion and the bramble. Dandelions flower in vast numbers in early spring when bees really need some help – please don't cut them when in flower, and encourage your council to leave verges well alone. Brambles flower from May until September and are a staple for bees, butterflies, hoverflies and wasps (they are important too!).

Dandelions  
Brambles  
Germander speedwell  
Green alkanet  
Ground ivy  
Himalayan balsam (invasive and shouldn't be planted)

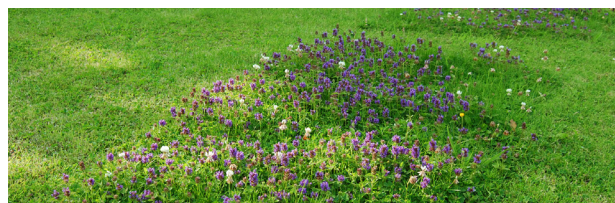




## Lawns

Primped and preened, traditional lawns are lifeless – and take a lot of work. Low-growing wild flowers can turn a lawn into a haven for bees and butterflies. Just think how good it would be if the UK's 2 million acres of lawn became wildflower meadows. Best of all, it saves you work – you don't have to mow as often. If you set the blade high, many of these flowers will learn to stay short and produce many more flowers. If you want a bit of order, mow a path or two through the lawn just to show the wilderness is intentional. Alternatively, just have a patch or two of wilderness. Many of these flowers will appear on their own, but you can buy and sow seeds as well.

Bird's foot trefoil	Dovesfoot geranium
Clover (red and white)	Dandelions
Common knapweed	Lady's bedstraw
Common spotted orchid	Rough hawkbit
Cowslips and primroses	Selfheal
Creeping buttercup	Wild/creeping thyme



## Wildflower meadows

If you have a field, orchard, or a good-sized lawn you can grow a native wildflower meadow that will look glorious from early to mid-summer. They take a bit of work to get going, so it's worth getting a book on the subject. This won't just be for bees, all manner of insects, birds and invertebrates will benefit.

Agrimony	Corn Cockle	Lady's Bedstraw	Pignut
Betony	Corn Marigold	Meadow Buttercup	Ragged Robin
Birds-foot-trefoil	Cornflower	Meadow Cranesbill	Red Clover
Burnet-saxifrage	Devil's-bit Scabious	Meadow Vetchling	Red Poppy
Cat's-ear	Field Scabious	Meadowsweet	Rough Hawkbit
Common Knapweed	Grass Vetchling	Musk Mallow	Salad Burnet
Common Spotted Orchid	Greater Knapweed	Oxeye Daisy	Selfheal
			Scarlet Pimpernel
			Snake's Head Fritillary
			Sneezewort
			Toadflax
			Wild Carrot
			Wild Pansy
			Wild Thyme
			Yarrow
			Yellow Rattle



## And finally ...ivy!

Wonderful ivy – probably the best single thing you can provide for bees and butterflies. And you don't even have to grow it – just avoid chopping it down! Old ivy with thick stems will produce masses of flowers that provide nectar and pollen that will see many pollinators through the winter months. In almost all cases ivy doesn't cause the damage people think it does. So do a bit of research, let it grow, and stand in the autumn sun and watch (and listen) with wonder as the insects appreciate all the hard work you haven't done!



I hope you enjoyed my talk on Gardening for Bees. If so, you might also like my other talk called *Introducing the Amazing Honey Bee!*

Do you know how many eyes a bee has (it's not two!), or which part of its body it uses to taste with (not it's tongue!)? Or how many hundreds of miles of flying it takes to make one teaspoon of honey for your toast? If the answer is no, this talk will inform, amaze and, hopefully, entertain you.

Please email to make a booking: [beesknees1972@gmail.com](mailto:beesknees1972@gmail.com)