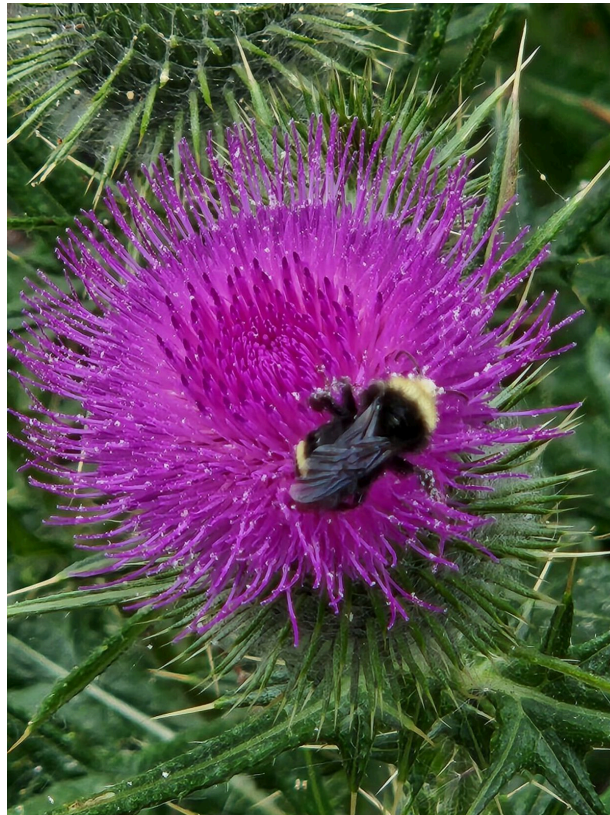


Plan your garden to attract bees

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According to research, there is estimated to be close to some 20,000 different species of bees in the world, all of which have been, and still are, in serious decline. More recent investigation shows that this large group of insects is primarily attracted to plants that produce blue, purple, violet, white or yellow flowers, except for most members of the chrysanthemum family.

While the decline in bees can be attributed to many factors including pesticides, mites, virus's, etc., one of the major players is the loss of native plants due to encroachment by agriculture, and urbanization into habitats that once supported myriads of wildflowers. You can help in no small way by planting some bee friendly plants in your yard and garden each and every year.

Here are some helpful hints for attracting bees to your garden:

- A. Use local native plants if you can. Research suggests that native plants are four times more attractive to native bees than exotic plants.
- B. Choose different colors of flowers.

C. Use flowers of different shapes and sizes. Bees come in different sizes, have different tongue lengths, and will feed on different sizes and shapes of flowers that are suited to their particular characteristics.

D. Plant bee-friendly plants that flower at different times of the year to keep the little guys coming around.

E. Plant flowers in clusters of the same variety to attract more bees. Four feet, or more, in diameter, per cluster, is recommended.

Two of the best trees for attracting a multitude of bees are black cherry and apple trees. There are close to 7,500 apple trees currently grown world wide, and some 100 varieties are grown commercially in the U.S. When shopping make sure the variety you chose does well in your climate zone as their growing habits differ greatly.

Three of the best bee attracting annuals are Borage, Calendula and the violet family. All have edible flowers and leaves, and all are classified as herbs. All three prefer full sun, but violets will need shady areas in hot climates, and all three prefer well drained soil high in organic mater. Violets and Borage prefer to be kept moist, while Calendula's only need occasional watering to do their best once established.

Some of the best bee friendly perennials are asters, milk weed, bee balm and Lantana. Asters prefer full sun and tolerate most soils, and the flowers and leaves are edible, but more commonly used added to tea blends. Most are native to North America. Once established give them a deep soak once or twice a week for best results. Milkweeds are all time favorites of bees and will ditch other flowering plants for them. They are native to North America. Swamp milkweed thrives in moist conditions. Plant milkweed in the sunniest part of your garden, and parts of the plant are edible if cooked. Eaten raw, however, they are poisonous, so be careful and, yes, they are the mainstay of our declining Monarch butterfly populations.

Bee balm is also native to North America and prefers well drained and rich soil. Leaves are edible cooked or raw, and make a great aromatic tea. Lantana is a flowering ground cover that does well on slopes and elsewhere.

So why bother planting bee friendly plants? As an example, except for a few cherry trees, the majority of these fruit trees require another variety of cherry to cross pollinate, or they will not set fruit. So, in a nutshell, there would be no cherry's without bees to cross pollinate the trees, or many other kinds of fruits or vegetables either. According to research, bees pollinate around 84% of mankind's crops, and, according to others, among them world renowned physicist Albert Einstein, predict that mankind would only survive another four years if all of our bees disappeared. So, to help avert this calamity, be sure to plant some bee friendly plants around your yards and/or in your garden every year. As of this date it is estimated that there are around 250,000 flowering plants in the world that attract bees, so get busy!

If you want to get started helping to keep our bees around, and help save our world, my best selling herb book, "The Beginner's Guide to Growing Herbs And Their Culinary, Medicinal and Mystical Properties" contains some six pages of bee friendly plants, among many other things. Check out my website at garycarterbooksherbs.com for more information.

