

BEES IN YOUR GARDEN

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Plants for wild and honeybee food sources

Food crops

Tree fruits – apples, pears, plums, cherries

Berries – blueberries, raspberries, cranberries, blackberries, logan berries, etc

Vegetables – pumpkin, (tomatoes), cucumber, peppers, squash, broccoli, kale

Forage and seed crops

Alfalfa, clover, canola

Herbs

Lavender, hyssop, borage, thyme

Flowering plants

Crocus, snowdrops, tulips,

Shrubs and trees

Maple, hazelnut,

Improving the Attractiveness of Plantings for Bees

Massing and spacing

Annuals and perennials in massed plantings are more attractive due to abundant scent, added energetic economy for foragers to visit larger groups of same-source pollen or nectar, but providing adequate space for light and growth

Trees and shrubs in avenues or groups provide easier flight paths from nest to floral source

Dead-heading

Annual flowers and some shrubs will be encouraged to maintain bloom, extending the nectar and pollen flow for foragers

Fertilizers

Can be beneficial, but in excess can produce vegetative growth but due to abundance of nitrogen, can reduce nectar production. Soil that has been tested and then balanced by optimal fertilizing will produce healthy plantings with abundant bloom, nectar production and pollen.

Pruning

Pinching back annuals and some later biennial and perennial flowers (not shrubs) will encourage branching, more flowers, and more attractive beds with and even spread of bloom

Colour or scent

Colours bees are most attracted to are yellow, blue-green to blue, mauve, purple and red containing ultraviolet. Scent serves as an important close-range guide for bees, but secondary to colour for initially attracting them.

Continuous bloom

A garden plan combining a mix of early, mid-season, summer and autumn bloom will provide a nectar and pollen source for all stages of development of bees and other pollinating insects.

Bloom and Bee Schedules

Early spring (when salmonberries begin to bloom) the first bumblebees emerge to forage and find nesting sites

Honeybees are flying on warm days, searching for the first pollen sources, orienting to the hive site, and taking cleansing flights

March and April will be warm enough for osmia bees to emerge, mate and seek nesting sites. Honeybees will be seeking nectar and pollen for development of the brood. More bumblebees emerge from winter shelter and begin their annual cycle of nesting and rearing brood. There will be some hummingbirds arriving, visiting feeders and completing their migration.

May through August are the months when other solitary bees such as leafcutters will be producing brood, and butterflies will be seen visiting flowers. Some hummingbirds may remain and nest, although without supplemental feeding stations, many leave for higher altitude floral sources at the foot of glaciers and in sub-alpine wild flower meadows.

September may be warm enough for late annuals and perennials, but herb gardens, vegetable plants left to blossom and some wild flowers, asters and weeds such as purple loosestrife may be the only remaining floral sources for bees.

See handouts for lists of plants and period of bloom

Honey bees in the City

Bylaws – Vancouver, Richmond, New Westminster, Burnaby, N. Vancouver, Delta

Clubs – Richmond, Langley, Maple Ridge

Courses – BCMAL, Honeybee Centre, Bee Masters (UBC 2012)

For further information, check the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands website:

<http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/apiculture>