



Bee on native bushhoneysuckle

Why Should You Develop a Bee-Friendly Landscape?

Bees are important to nature and to the human diet. In Maine, bees are the most important pollinators of fruits and nuts.

Bees need pollen and nectar from flowers in order to live and reproduce. In urban landscapes, many flowering plants common in native plant communities have been largely replaced by houses, roads, and relatively flower-less landscapes dominated by lawns. This makes it tough for bees.

Trees, shrubs, fruits, vegetables and flower gardens in our landscapes can be important sources of nectar and pollen for the more than 250 species of native Maine bees, and for introduced honey bees.

Bee-friendly landscapes are places where bees can forage, build nests, and rear their young. When they forage for nectar and pollen, they help plants produce seeds and fruits for reproduction. We benefit from this when we eat apples, blueberries, cucumbers, cranberries, pumpkins, squashes and other crops that depend on bees for pollination.

For More Information

How to build bee blocks:

www.umaine.edu/blueberries/factsheets/bees
Factsheet #301

Wild bee conservation:

www.umaine.edu/blueberries/factsheets/bees
Factsheet #630

Bee forage plants for North America:

www.xerces.org/pollinator-conservation-publications



Bee gathering pollen from 'Mary Queen of Scots' rose

This brochure was prepared by horticulturist Dr. Lois Berg Stack, entomologist Dr. Frank Drummond, and botanist Dr. Alison C. Dibble. Support from a Maine Agricultural Center Horticulture Research Grant is gratefully acknowledged.



Published and distributed in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914, by the University of Maine and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Cooperative Extension and other agencies of the USDA provide equal opportunities in programs and employment. 7/13.

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How to Create a Bee-Friendly Landscape



Bumble bee on purple coneflower

A bee-friendly landscape:

- shelters and feeds native bees
- helps support honey bees
- ensures good pollination of your vegetables and fruits
- provides season-long beauty, diversity and interest

It's All About Habitat

1. Bees Need Food: Plant multiple pollen- and nectar-producing plants for each season. Bees need food from early spring through late fall. When possible, plant native plants.

Early-season ... Trees: maples, apples, shadbush, willows, cherries, plums, native honeysuckles
Perennials: blueberries, bugloss, lungwort, pigsqueak, crocus, viola

Midseason ... Shrubs: spirea, rose, summersweet, rosebay rhododendron
Perennials: milkweed, purple coneflower, blazingstar, mint, oregano
Annuals: single-flowered marigold, borage, tickseed, blanketflower

Late season ... Perennials: aster, bottle gentian, phlox, yellow and purple coneflowers, goldenrod
Annuals: cosmos, snapdragon

2. Bees Need Water: Float a piece of wood in a birdbath to provide a landing platform. Change water frequently, both for the bees and the birds.

3. Bees Need Cover: Provide a variety of sites to accommodate a variety of bees.
Leave bare patches of ground for those native bees that build nests in soil.
Bunch grasses might attract bumble bees, which occupy old mouse nests.
Build a nest block (see "For More Information") or hang bundles of dried hollow sunflower stems to attract cavity-nesting native bees.

Design Tips for Your Bee-Friendly Landscape

Bees are attracted to large patches of flowers; plant them in areas of 3 feet x 3 feet, or larger.

Provide plantings that bloom at various times throughout the season, to attract a diversity of bees.

Garden without pesticides.

Focus on sunny sites, as most good bee plants do best in full sun.

Place nest blocks and bundled hollow stems under an overhang to protect from rain and prevent mold.

Reduce the size of your lawn to create space for a more diverse array of plants.

To expand your bee plant list, consider plants in the Sunflower Family ("daisies" such as sunflower, dahlia, echinops, sneezeweed, erigeron) and Mint Family (catmint, basil, lemon balm, beebalm, salvia).

For more plant suggestions, see resources in "For More Information."

Leave a few weeds or "wild spots" at the edges of your landscape. Many weeds offer good bee resources.

Enjoy the bees! Few native bees sting. It's fun to observe and photograph them in action.



Bee nest boxes are decorative and useful.

A Word of Caution

Bees are weakened or killed by chemical applications, especially insecticides. Herbicides and fungicides also weaken bees. Identify problems early, and treat them in alternative ways to avoid the need for these chemicals.

About Our Project

Our 5-year project began in spring 2012. At four Maine sites, we are collecting data about plants that attract native bees and honey bees. Many bee support plants, like those listed at left, are available at Maine greenhouses, garden centers and nurseries. Ask them for pesticide-free plants. Some insecticides, like the widely used neonicotinoids, can impact bee health long after they are applied.

For more information about our project, email Lois Stack at lois.stack@maine.edu