Get a BUZZ from a Bee-Friendly garden

Beekeeping is a fantastic hobby, but it is a labour of love and not necessarily for everybody. Happily, there are things that everybody can do to help both native bees and European honey bees – such as planting flowering plants, leaving some bare dirt patches around the garden un-mulched, allowing last season’s leftover stalks to lie, and installing pollinator houses.

European honey bees pollinate a third of our food crops, making a huge contribution to our food supply chain, our economy and the broader ecosystem, so the more we can help them do their thing, the better off everyone is.

European honey bees will collect nectar and pollen from a range of flowering plants, but they do have preferences. Like humans, bees love herbs. And they’re great to plant as they’re handy in the kitchen and around the house too.

And there are many beautiful flowering shrubs and trees you can plant which will have nearby bees waggle-dancing with joy.

Bees are also attracted to many food plants. The great thing about planting some citrus, some strawberries or a passionfruit vine is the symbiotic benefit. The bees get their pollen and nectar, and the plants produce bigger, healthier, better formed fruit in greater abundance.

**The thyme is right**

Bees loooove thyme. It’s a one-stop-shop for foragers, providing high yields of both pollen and nectar.

Give it good drainage, and it will prosper in most climates. You can even use it on paths and as a lawn plant. It’s also a delicious culinary herb. Popular throughout the Mediterranean because it makes for super-yummy honey, neighbouring beekeepers will love you if you plant this.

**Lovely lavender**

Bees love blue and violet flowers best, especially the many species of lavender you can grow at home. Like thyme, it produces an abundance of both pollen and nectar.

A beautiful plant to grow, you can use sprigs to scent your home and nothing’s nicer than being downwind from a lavender bush on a sweet, breezy summer day.

**Great sage**

Sage costs a fortune at the shops, so planting plenty of it in your yard or on your balcony is fantastic for the home cook. It also happens to produce flowers that are among the honey bee’s very favourites.

They go crazy for it, and when they find some will do a dance so the rest of the colony knows where the party is.

www.honeyflow.com
Flow Pollinator House

The Flow Pollinator House provides a cozy home for solitary pollinators in your garden, and supports habitat protection.

Our beautiful Western Red Cedar Houses are created from repurposed Flow Hive lumber offcuts and sustainably sourced bamboo. Each Pollinator House is totally unique!

By reducing waste we lessen the impact on the environment, which is good news for our pollinators.

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Other plants bees love
Herbs  Basil • Borage • Chives • Comfrey • Coriander • Fennel • Lemon Balm • Mustard • Oregano • Parsley • Rocket • Rosemary

Fruit  Apple • Apricot • Blackberry • Blueberry • Citrus • Currants • Plum • Strawberries

Veges  Capsicum • Chilli • Cucumber • Pumpkins

Flowers  Alyssum • Asters • Clover • Cornflower • Cosmos • Echinacea • Hollyhocks • Geranium • Marigold • Sunflowers • Roses • Violets • Zinnias

Natives  Red Maple • Common Yarrow • Swamp Milkweed • Sneezeweed • Bee Balm • Black-Eyed Susan • Panicled Aster • Blue Vervain

What about native bees?
In the US we have more than 4,000 species of native bees. There are both larger bumblebees and smaller native bees. Some live in colonies, while many work & live a solitary life. There are both ground and twig nesting varieties.

Not surprisingly many native bees prefer native plants. In fact, European honey bees pollinate just 5 percent of native plants, but collect 90 percent of the available nectar and pollen.

Invite native bees to move in with a pollinator house

Most of the native bees we have in the US are solitary and they come in all shapes and sizes. Essentially, a pollinator house is a structure which accommodates solitary-nesting native bees by providing cavities in natural materials for them to live in.

You can make your own, from a very basic design (drilling some holes into a block of wood) to as complex and creative as you like.

Materials  Lumber • Bamboo • Logs • Recycled cupboards, drawers, crates

Tips for building five-star pollinator accommodation
• Use only natural, solid untreated materials (no chipboard or composites)
• Go for cavities of various depths, but up to 5-6 inches should be plenty.
• Create homes of various widths. US native bees range in diameter from 3/38 inch to 2/5 inch
• Place in a warm but sheltered spot between one and two metres off the ground
• Ensure the suites in your pollinator house are secure
• Use a sloped roof to keep the everything dry.

Look out for native bees in your garden

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Tips for bee-friendly gardening
• Plant flowering plants in bountiful clumps so bees don’t have to search far for forage and can work more efficiently
• Avoid pesticides. Companion planting is the way to go if you want to control pests. Pesticides are one of the reasons bee populations are in decline
• Plant several species to ensure you have forage for every season
• Maintain multiple water sources around your garden
• Spread the word among your neighbours, family and friends

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Fall in love with bees on Instagram @flowhive
YouTube.com /flowhive
Tweet stuff at @flowhive

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