

How to Plant Food Plots for Honeybees

The gentle buzzing of bees is the soundtrack of a visit to a garden on a sunny, summer afternoon. If you want to ensure that honeybees visit your bee buffet, provide them with a variety of blooms to choose, give them clean water to drink and go easy on the pesticides.

Choosing Plants

1 Select native plant varieties of your location for your honeybee food plots. Those native plants are familiar to the wild bees in your area, and using them avoids introducing invasive plant species to the landscape. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center's website, wildflower.org, maintains a state-by-state list of native plants.



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2 Choose plants that produce flowers in a variety of colors and shapes. Honeybees eat a varied diet, and bees are especially attracted to blue, purple, violet, white and yellow blooms. Bloom shapes include bell-shaped and composite.

3 Plan your garden so that something is in bloom from spring through fall. Bees visit just about anything that has a flower at some time of the year. Consider planting perennials, shrubs, bushes, herbs and vegetables. Start with species like Michaelmas daisies (*Aster dumosus*), which are hardy in hardiness zones 4 through 8, to provide a steady supply of food for bees.

Planting the Gardens

1 Plant your honeybee food plots in sites that get at least six hours of direct sunlight to sunshine. If a sunny spot is on a deck or balcony, use a raised bed or potting soil in plant containers to set in that spot.

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3 Group flowering plants close together instead of spreading them out through your gardens. Honey bees are more likely to visit clumps of blooms than a flower here and there.

4 Keep the honeybee food plots natural. Pesticides kill beneficial insects, such as honeybees, along with targeted bugs. So use organic gardening practices. If you must use a pesticide, treat the affected plants before their flowers bloom or in evening when bees are not active. Choose a product that breaks down quickly.

Things You Will Need

- Potting soil (optional)
- Plant containers (optional)
- Flowering plant seeds or transplants
- Birdbath or other water source
- Flat stone (optional)

Tip

- Wild honeybees nest in cavities. So leave some hollow logs or standing dead trees in your landscape.

Warning

- Honeybees are generally docile, and they usually leave a person alone if he does not disturb their hive. An occasional honeybee sting is not dangerous for most people. If, however, you or your family members are allergic to bee stings, then consult your physician regarding steps you can take to protect yourself and them.

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- Utah State University Cooperative Extension: Utah Pests Fact Sheet -- Gardening for Native Bees in Utah and Beyond
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- Pennsylvania State University: Agroecology in Practice -- Conserving Wild Bees in Pennsylvania
- Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center: Native Plant Information Network

Resources (2)

- Plants and Planting Plans for a Bee Garden; Maureen Little

About the Author



Maggie Fry began her writing career in 1986. She has written for publications including "Seattle Weekly" and the Rodale Institute's New Farm online magazine. Fry earned a certificate in permaculture design from Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania in 1997. She earned a Master of Fine Arts in creative nonfiction from Goucher College in 2013.

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