

Bees

To attract the most bee diversity, plant your garden in the sunniest area, and include plants that have a continuous succession of bloom from February through October. In California, we are lucky to have bees in the garden for most of the year. Having flowers for most of the year, will insure a good food source for the many species of bees that nest throughout the year, and often, multiple times during the year. Bees are natural searchers, and will soon find what you have planted. Experiments show, that even in the most urban gardens, bee diversity can increase dramatically if flowering plants are added. Plants in the Asteraceae, Lamiaceae, Rosaceae, Polygonaceae, Malvaceae, and Papaveraceae are particularly attractive for bees. Bees gather pollen and nectar, but not necessarily from the same plant. Some plants have only nectar-bearing flowers, while others have only pollen-bearing, and a few plants have both. Pollen is used to provision the nest as food source for bee larvae, and nectar is food for adult bees. A broad assortment of flowering plants will provide something for many different species. Plant in large patches of at least 2 square meters, so bees can easily locate the flowers. Flowers in blues, whites, and yellows attract the most bees.

While native plants are certainly important for feeding and nesting bees, non-natives fill an important role, as they bloom in the summer, when many natives are dormant. It is exciting to garden for wildlife! I hope that you develop “bee eyes” so you can start to discover the bounty of bees in your own backyard.

Best Bee Plants

Phacelia
California Poppies
Lupines
Clarkia
Herbs
Sunflowers
Calylophus drummondianus (Sundrops)
Frangula californica (Coffeeberry)
Berberis nevadensis
Ceanothus
Cercis occidentalis (Western Redbud)
Gaillardia x grandiflora (Blanket Flower)
Eriogonum (Buckwheat)
Arctostaphylos (Manzanita)
Leucophyllum
Scrophularia californica
Acmispon glaber

Butterflies

Need nectar plants AND Host plants
Hot-colored flowers with daisy-like flowers or brushy flowers
Plant in warm sunny areas
Add flat rocks in sunny areas
Have a muddy puddle in the sun

Plants for nectar

Pentas
Lantana
Aster
Gaillardia
Tithonia (Mexican Sunflower)
Encelia
Butterfly Bush
Yarrow
Verbena lilacina
Grindelia

Host Plants

Milkweed
Passionflower vine
Senna
Parsley
Pipevine
Fennel

Hummingbirds

Need nectar plants AND insects
Insects make up to 80% of their diet
Tubular flowers in hot colors
Brushy flowers like Grevillea
Nectar, change frequently. Only use C&H Pure Cane Sugar. 1 cup sugar to 4 cups water
Don't use pesticides

Plants for nectar

Honeysuckle
Salvia
Iochroma
Penstemon
Grevillea
Salvia spathacea
Epilobium
Scrophularia californica
Calliandra californica
Aloe