

Encouraging Pollinators in your Orchard

Most people have heard the news that honeybees are in trouble in this country. If you've planted fruit trees in your garden, you have even more to worry about- who is going to pollinate those flowers so you get the bounty of fruit you were anticipating? What can you do to encourage pollinators, including honeybees, to visit your orchard?

The first and most important thing you can do is to be very careful with pesticides when pollinators are active. Even organic pesticides can be toxic to bees and other pollinators, so if you must spray, spray when they are not foraging (early morning or late evening).

To attract some of the native pollinators to your orchard, providing suitable nesting sites or shelter is effective. The Mason bee or Blue Orchard bee, *Osmia lignaria*, is the most well-known of these native pollinators. This solitary bee nests in holes plugged by mud. Bundles of straws, drilled blocks of wood, or bundles of hollow reeds can all provide suitable nest holes for these pollinators. The tubes or holes should be 5/16"-3/8" in diameter and at least 5" deep. Blocks or straw boxes should be mounted on south or east facing areas out of rainfall. These small bluish black bees are most active late March through mid-April and are especially good pollinators for early blooming fruit like plums and cherries. Other pollinators include the numerous species of bumblebees, *Bombus sp.*, native to our area (more than 30 species!) These colony nesting bees are active from February through late fall, so providing pollen and nectar sources as well as nesting sites can help encourage them. They nest in abandoned mouse nests or clumps of old grass. You can also buy bumblebee nest boxes, or build them from readily available plans. These furry pollinators are especially effective for blueberries and tomatoes. An advantage of both mason bees and bumblebees is that they rarely sting (although they are capable).



Another easy way to encourage pollinators is to add plants to your orchard or surrounding garden that are attractive to them. You've already planted fruit trees. So while the trees are in bloom, April to early May, you have provided a nectar and pollen source for the pollinators. What you do NOT want to do is to plant more sources that bloom at exactly the same time as your fruit trees! One note to remember when planting pollinator attracting plants, is that while native bees and other pollinators will visit a variety of plants on the same trip, honeybees tend to visit one type of plant per trip.

Plan for a full year's bloom to support local pollinators over the long term. This will especially help wild hives of honeybees, which do not go dormant in winter. Bees do rely on 'wild' areas and many weedy species as well as those we plant. A diverse selection of perennial and woody plants, along with annuals in the summer, can help not just the honeybees, but other pollinators and beneficial insects.

December-February

Plant botanical name	Common name	Shrub/Tree, Perennial, Annual	Native?
<i>Viburnum b. 'Dawn', Viburnum farreri</i>	Fragrant Winter Viburnum	Shrub	No
<i>Corylus sp.</i>	Hazelnut	Tree	Some
<i>Mahonia intermedia</i>	Hybrid Mahonia	Shrub	No
<i>Helleborus niger, hybridus</i>	Hellebore, Lenten Rose	Perennial	No
<i>Alnus rubra</i>	Red Alder	Tree	Yes
<i>Salix sp.</i>	Pussy Willow	Shrub/Tree	Some
<i>Arctostaphylos sp.</i>	Manzanita	Shrub	Yes
<i>Erica x darlyensis</i>	Winter Heather	Low shrub	No
<i>Crocus species & hybrids</i>	Crocus	Perennial bulb	No

March-May This includes the period that your fruit trees will be blooming; try to plant more of plants that do not bloom with your trees, but before and after.

Plant botanical name	Common name	Shrub/Tree, Perennial, Annual	Native?
<i>Ribes sanguinum</i>	Red Flowering Currant	Shrub	Yes
<i>Acer species</i>	Maples	Tree	Some
<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>	Oregon Grape	Shrub	Yes
<i>Populus species</i>	Cottonwood, Aspen	Tree	Yes
<i>Sambucus racemosa</i>	Red Elderberry	Shrub	Yes
<i>Taraxacum officianale</i>	Dandelion	Perennial	No
<i>Rosemarinus officianalus</i>	Rosemary	Shrub	No
<i>Vaccinium species</i>	Blueberry, Huckleberry, cranberry	Shrub	Some
<i>Amelanchier species</i>	Serviceberry	Shrub	Some
<i>Rubus species</i>	Blackberry, Raspberry	Shrub	Some

May-August This is when your plantings are most important to pollinators other than honeybees: bumblebees, syrphid flies, some solitary bees

Plant botanical name	Common name	Shrub/Tree, Perennial, Annual	Native?
<i>Arbutus menzesii</i>	Madrone	Tree	Yes
Brassica family	Annuals such as kale, broccoli	Annual	No
<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>	Snowberry	Shrub	Yes
<i>Herbs</i>	Lavender, Thyme, Oregano, Mint	Shrub, perennial	No
<i>Agastache species</i>	Hyssop	Perennial	No
<i>Penstemon species</i>	Penstemon, beardtongue	Perennial	Some
<i>Salvia species</i>	Sage	Perennial	No
<i>Epilobium species</i>	Fireweed, others	Annual	Some
<i>Trifolium species</i>	Clover	Perennial, annual	Some
<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	Scotch Heath	Low shrub	No
<i>Achiellia millifolium</i>	Yarrow	perennial	Some
<i>Borago officinalis</i>	Borage	Annual	No
<i>Lobularia maritima</i>	Sweet Alyssum	Annual	No
<i>Coriandrum sativum</i>	Coriander, Cilantro	Annual	No
<i>Cosmos binpinnatus</i>	Cosmos	Annual	No
<i>Phacelia tanaecitifolia</i>	Bee's Friend	Annual	No

September-November

Plant botanical name	Common name	Shrub/Tree, Perennial, Annual	Native?
<i>Aster species</i>	Aster	Perennial	Some
<i>Solidago species</i>	Goldenrod	Annual	Yes
<i>Chrysanthemum hybrids</i>	Chrysanthemum (single)	Perennial	No
<i>Heptacodium micanoides</i>	Seven Son Tree	Large shrub	No
<i>Helianthus species</i>	Sunflower	Annual or perennial	No