

LET'S BEE FRIENDLY



Wexford Tidy Towns - Biodiversity Campaign

Bees are the most important pollinating insect because they visit flowers to collect food for their larvae, as well as feeding on floral resources as adults. In Ireland crops such as apples, clover, strawberries and oilseed rape all benefit from pollination and a recent study from the Department of the Environment valued this 'ecosystem service' that bees provide at €85m a year to the economy.

2013: Worldwide study shows the decline of wild bees and other pollinators may be an even more alarming threat to crop yields than the loss of Honey Bees, revealing the irreplaceable contribution of wild insects to global food production.

Gardens are extremely important for bees, and vice versa. Bees need flowers for sustenance, and flowers need bees for pollination. The nectar feeds the adult bee, while the pollen is collected to feed the young. It's vital you provide flowers throughout the Bumble Bee's life-cycle, from March to September. It's also a good idea to have at least two nectar or pollen-rich plants in flower at any one time during this period. So 'Let's Bee Friendly' by turning part of your garden into a Bumble Bee haven!

Strawberries

Apples

Plums

Crops That Bees Pollinate

Tomatoes

Raspberries

Carrots

Gardener's Advice For Bees

As a rule of thumb your garden should provide bee-friendly flowers, open cup shaped flowers are the bees' favourite, that are rich in pollen and nectar which bees can easily access from spring until late summer. This will ensure that there is a good supply of pollen at all of the crucial times.

Plants like Pussy Willow and Bluebell are excellent early-year food sources. In early summer Honeysuckle and Thyme are ideal, and in late summer Sunflowers, Sweet Pea and Lavender will provide plenty for bees to forage on.

Flowers clustered into clumps of one species will attract more pollinators than individual plants scattered throughout the habitat patch.

Leave an area of your lawn uncut during summer to allow Clovers and Bird's-foot Trefoil to flower. Also leaving uncut verges or planting wildflower meadows will greatly benefit bees.

Many solitary species nest in south facing banks, so leaving exposed areas of soil at the edges of lawns or creating south facing banks of sandy or clay soil will attract ground nesting species.

Things to Avoid

Certain plants have flower shapes that Bumble Bees cannot use, flowers that have petals that form long tunnels are too long or narrow for the bees to feed from. Similarly, flowers with multiple tightly packed heads offer bees very little accessible food.

Some species are best avoided as they have a habit of escaping from gardens and invading wild habitats nearby, for example, Rhododendron and Himalayan Balsam.

Flowers like Pansies and Double Begonias produce little or no pollen and nectar and offer little for Bumble Bees and other pollinators.

You should avoid using any pesticides in your garden. They are often labelled as 'bug killers' or something similar, but almost all of these can harm Bumble Bees, even if you don't intend to harm them.

Pollinator Friendly Flowers and When to Plant Them

Of the 100 crops that provide 90% of the world's food supply, 71 are pollinated by bees.

Ireland has 101 Bee Species, 1 Honey Bee, 20 Bumble Bee, & the rest are Solitary Bees

Daffodil

Broom

Hawthorn

Spring Flowers

Flowering Currant

Rosemary

Willow

Blue Geranium

Lavender

Cotoneaster

Thyme

Early Summer Flowers

Late Summer Flowers

Chives

Sweet Pea

Honeysuckle

Fuchsia

Marjoram

Rock Rose

Heather

Sunflower

These plants are an excellent food source for bees to forage on while they pollinate our plants.

Pledge your support to help our bees by planting some of these plants in your garden.