

About Gardening for Bees

The **Sonoma County Beekeepers Association** (SCBA) is a 501(c)3 charitable organization whose mission is to have a thriving and sustainable bee population in Sonoma County. We strive to improve honey bee habitat, educate the community on the importance of pollinators, and practice sustainable beekeeping in our area. This informational brochure is a product of the **Gardening Program** wherein our members engage in propagation workshops, instructional talks, and field trips, and dedicate countless hours to providing forage for all pollinators. We thank you for your interest in helping the bees and welcome your participation!

Please visit www.sonomabees.org for more information.

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PO Box 98, Santa Rosa, CA 95402



Five Favorite Bee-Friendly Plants for Each Season

Cool-season bloomers (late winter to early spring)

- Borage (*Borago officinalis*)
- California Lilac (*Ceanothus*)
- Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos*)
- Rosemary (*Rosmarinus*)
- California wildflowers



Warm-season bloomers (late spring to summer)

- Buckwheat, all species (*Eriogonum*)
- Lavender (*Lavendula*)
- Oregano (*Origanum*)
- Calamint (*Calamintha nepeta*)
- Multibranched Sunflowers (*Helianthus*) such as 'Autumn Beauty' and 'Lemon Queen'

Fall bloomers (late summer to early winter)

- New England Aster (*Aster novae-angliae*)
- Stonecrop (*Sedum* 'Autumn Joy')
- Coyote Bush (*Baccharis pilularis*)
- Maximilian sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*)
- Mexican Marigold (*Tagetes lemmonii*)



Plant a Garden.

Feed the Bees.

Pollinate the Future.

We all share a stake in the survival of honey bees. Whether we are concerned about our food supply, drinking water, air quality, the safety of our environment, or the intensity of climate events, each of us has reason to ask,

How can I make a difference?



10 Gardening Habits to Help Feed the Bees:

1. Maintain a variety of plants that will bloom every season, all year. See our list of favorite bee-friendly plants on the back of this flyer or visit the [Gardening for Bees](http://www.sonomabees.org) page of the SCBA website www.sonomabees.org for more detailed information.
2. Choose primarily plants that feed pollinators. Bees need pollen, nectar, and resins. As agriculture and land development eliminate wild forage, your plantings create much-needed pollinator food sources.
3. Plant in groupings. Honey bees collect from one type of plant at a time. Groupings of five or more of the same plant help bees forage efficiently, reducing distances they must fly.
4. Plant a diverse selection of flowers, vines, shrubs, and trees. Make every choice work double-duty: a beautiful plant plus forage and habitat for pollinators. A variety of heights, shapes, and colors will attract a variety of bees, butterflies, and birds.
5. Keep soil healthy. Healthy soil is rich in living microorganisms that feed plant roots with moisture and minerals. Soil is alive and needs water, mulch to hold moisture, minimal soil disruption (think no-till), and the regular addition of natural fertilizers like composted yard waste and manure.

6. Avoid using pesticides. Chemical pesticides—herbicides, insecticides, bactericides, and fungicides—kill beneficial insects and organisms above ground as well as essential bacteria, molds, and fungi in the soil. An alternative strategy, **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)**, focuses on long-term prevention of pests based on an understanding of the pest's life cycle. Armed with this information, you can create conditions that are unfavorable for the pest. No pesticides required!

7. If you do decide to apply pesticides, minimize risk and collateral damage. Read the label, including seasonal appropriateness and dosage amounts. Find alternative and non-toxic garden solutions and use the least-toxic pesticide available. Neem oil, insecticidal oils and soaps, and organic dormant sprays may be useful in some situations. Try our recipe below—it's easy, effective, and cheap. Let neighbors know you'll be spraying in advance. Spray early morning or at dusk, before or after pollinators are out foraging. To prevent drift, spray only when there is no wind.

Bee-Friendly Weed Eliminator Herbicide

(makes about one quart)

- 4 cups distilled white vinegar (10% vinegar gives best results)
- ½ cup Epsom salts (magnesium sulfate crystals, not table salt)
- 1 tablespoon Dawn Ultra Original Blue dish soap

Use protective gear—gloves and safety glasses. Mix the three ingredients together until dissolved. Pour into a spray bottle. Apply in early morning or at dusk to unwanted plants. Works best on warm days. Repeat applications may be necessary.

8. Provide adequate water. Both bees and plants need water. Bees drown easily. A shallow source of water with rocks, floating wood, or wine corks enable bees safe access. Water your garden in early morning or late evening when the bees are not foraging, or use drip irrigation.

9. Ask questions and vote with your pocketbook. Don't be shy, ask whether the plants have been grown using "neonics" (systemic neonicotinoid pesticides). When purchasing plants, choose a nursery or garden center that offers organically grown, locally adapted stock.

10. Practice organic gardening habits. Avoid all synthetic fertilizers and genetically modified seeds or plants. Consider weed control via soil solarization (smother weeds with black plastic), mulch with layers of newspaper or cardboard, or flame weeds with a propane torch—take necessary fire precautions, of course. Deadhead flowers or cut plants back after bloom to encourage more rounds of blooms. Let vegetables and herbs like lettuce, kale, mint, and parsley bloom and go to seed. Finally, keep native bees in mind and resist the urge to be too tidy—many nest in hollow stems and bare, unmulched ground. ✨

