



# Pollinator Conservation Information

## California Plants for Bees

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Native bees are a vital part of our environment. They ensure healthy wildflower communities and harvests of fruit and vegetables. Bees are suffering from the fragmentation and loss of their habitat and extensive use of pesticides.

Bees require two essential components in their habitat, somewhere to nest and flowers from which to gather nectar and pollen. Native plants are undoubtedly the best source of food for bees, because the plants and their pollinators have co-evolved. There are also some garden plants that are great for pollinators.

In many landscapes, flowers have been pushed to the margins, surviving on roadsides and field edges, as well as in wild areas and gardens. Providing patches of flowers is something that we all can do to improve our environment for these important insects. One of the great things about creating foraging habitat is that not only will it help bees (and other pollinators) but it also makes a beautiful place for people.



Flower-rich areas provide good foraging for bees and other pollinator insects.

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### Choosing the Right Flowers

To help bees and other pollinator insects—like butterflies—you should provide a range of plants that will offer a succession of flowers, and thus pollen and nectar, through the whole growing season. Patches of foraging habitat can be created in many different locations, from backyards and school grounds to golf courses and city parks. Even a small area planted with good flowers will be beneficial for local bees, because each patch will add to the mosaic of habitat available to bees and other pollinators.

Native plants are usually best for native bees, and can be used in both wild areas and gardens. There are also many garden plants—particularly older, heirloom varieties of perennials and herbs—that are good sources of nectar or pollen. Together with native plants, these will make a garden attractive to both pollinators and people.

In such a short information sheet it is not possible to give detailed lists of suitable plants for all areas. On the back are two lists of good bee plants, the first of native plants and the second of garden plants. These lists, combined

**For complete information on bee-friendly plants, buy the *Pollinator Conservation Handbook* from the Xerces Society. The *Handbook* also has details of nesting sites and pupation and overwintering sites for bees, butterflies, flies, and beetles, and some education ideas. Contact us at the address on the back or via our website [www.xerces.org](http://www.xerces.org).**

with the notes below, will help you choose the right plants for your area. A field guide will tell you which species from these lists are local to you. Your local chapter of the Native Plant Society and native plant nurseries are worthwhile contacts for advice on choosing, obtaining, and caring for local plant species.

**Use local native plants.** Research suggests native plants are four times more attractive to native bees than exotic flowers. They are also usually well adapted to your growing conditions and can thrive with minimum attention. In gardens, heirloom varieties of herbs and perennials can also provide good foraging.

**Choose several colors of flowers.** Bees have good color vision to help them find flowers and the nectar and pollen they offer. Flower colors that particularly attract bees are blue, purple, violet, white, and yellow.

**Plant flowers in clumps.** Flowers clustered into clumps of one species will attract more pollinators than individual plants scattered through the habitat patch. Where space allows, make the clumps four feet or more in diameter.

**Include flowers of different shapes.** There are nearly eight hundred different bee species in California, and they are all different sizes, have different tongue lengths, and will feed on different shaped flowers. Consequently, providing a range of flower shapes means more bees can benefit.

**Have a diversity of plants flowering all season.** Most bee species are generalists, feeding on a range of plants through their life cycle. By having several plant species flowering at once, and a sequence of plants flowering through spring, summer, and fall, you can support a range of bee species that fly at different times of the season.

## Native plants for bees

Native plants should be your first choice to help our native bees. Listed below are some plants that are good sources of nectar or pollen for bees. Both the common and Latin names of the plant genus are given.

This list is not exhaustive; there are many other plants good for bees. Individual species have not been included because we hope the list will be useful throughout California. Not all of these genera will have species in your local area, but they do represent plants that will grow in a variety of environments. Use a wildflower guide or contact local nurseries to find your local species.

Button bush	<i>Cephalanthus</i>
California redbud	<i>Cercis</i>
California wild rose	<i>Rosa</i>
California yerba santa	<i>Eriodictyon</i>
Chamise	<i>Adenostoma</i>
Common deerweed	<i>Lotus</i>
Common sunflower	<i>Helianthus</i>
Hayfield tarweed	<i>Hemizonia</i>
Horkelia	<i>Horkelia</i>
Ithurial's spear	<i>Triteleia</i>
Lilac	<i>Ceanothus</i>
Lupine	<i>Lupinus</i>
Mint	<i>Stachys</i>
Mule's fat	<i>Baccharis</i>
Ocean spray	<i>Holodiscus</i>
Phacelia	<i>Phacelia</i>
Poppy	<i>Eschscholzia</i>
Rod wirelettuce	<i>Stephanomeria</i>
Western rosinweed	<i>Calycadenia</i>
Toyon	<i>Heteromeles</i>
Vinegar weed	<i>Trichostema</i>
Western dogwood	<i>Cornus sericea</i>
Whiteleaf manzanita	<i>Arctostaphylos</i>
Willow	<i>Salix</i>



Bumble bees are regular visitors to lupines.  
(Photograph by Jeff Owens)

## Garden plants for bees

Flower beds in gardens, business campuses, and parks are great places to have bee-friendly plants. Native plants will create a beautiful garden but some people prefer “garden” plants. Many garden plants are varieties of native plants, so this list only includes plants from other countries—“exotic” plants—and should be used as a supplement to the native plant list. As with the native plants, this list is not exhaustive.

Black-eyed Susan	<i>Rudbeckia</i>
Cosmos	<i>Cosmos</i>
Tickseed	<i>Coreopsis</i>
English lavender	<i>Lavandula</i>
Purple toadflax	<i>Linaria</i>
Marjoram	<i>Origanum</i>
Hyssop	<i>Hyssopus</i>
Basil	<i>Ocimum</i>
Globe thistle	<i>Echinops</i>
Rosemary	<i>Rosmarinus</i>

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