

to the welfare of all bees by creating much needed new habitats. Whenever you see flowers on your trees, perennials and annuals smothered in bees, it's a pretty welcoming sight, and it's nice to know you are helping out one of nature's most critical allies.



For an comprehensive list of bee friendly plants for your garden, visit the Earthwise Society at [feedthebees.org](http://feedthebees.org).

**Winterizing Mason Bees** from 'Crown Bees' Harvesting your cocoons in the fall will help your bees thrive, not just survive. Leaving them outdoors leaves them unprotected from pests and weather. Harvesting means opening up your tubes to separate cocoons from pests. Not doing this may result in losing your mason bees to pests.

To harvest, open the tubes and separate cocoons from debris and from pests, by hand. There is no need to wash the cocoons or clean them with sand. Should you find chalkbrood or lots of pollen mites, however, you may want to wash the cocoons vigorously in cold water and rinse. Now that you've finished harvesting your cocoons, you will want to keep them in outside ambient temps for about 3 weeks (then place them in the fridge). Keep them protected! Your bees will transition from absorbing carbohydrates for nutrition to absorbing stored fats. If the bees are placed too quickly into your refrigerator, they may emerge slower than you'd like in the spring. Store cocoons in a cool environment (35-37°F, 4°C) for winter. Your fridge crisper drawer is the best location (not a wine cooler!), but beware of storing cocoons in a garage refrigerator with fruits that ripen (such as apples, melons, bananas). Ripening fruits create ethylene gas, and can kill mason bees. No need to worry, simply open the refrigerator the door occasionally.

For much more detailed information, images, and instructional videos, visit [www.crownbees.com](http://www.crownbees.com)

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## Remember the Birds!

From fall to spring, birds and hummingbirds could also use some extra help in the garden.

The **Anna's hummingbird** is the only one of the four Pacific Northwest hummingbirds to stay this far north during the winter months. The best winter blooming shrubs and perennials to provide natural nectar for them are:

- Mahonia media
- Sasanqua camellia
- Ribes sanguineum
- Hellebores
- Winter Jasmine nudiflorum

These little wonders also forage for insects, so if you are hanging feeders, hang them near plants in order to provide them with protection and possibly protein (in the form of any insects still out and about on said plants).

Generally, native species are preferred by **overwintering birds**, but the following trees, shrubs and perennials are all good options to provide winter food and/or shelter:

- **Trees**
  - Black Hawthorn, Sitka Mountain Ask, Thuja occidentalis, Blue Spruce (picea pungens), Hemlock
- **Shrubs**
  - Saskatoon Berry, Nootka Rose, Red Elderberry, Thimbleberry (Rubus parviflorus), Mahonia aquifolium and nervosa, Shrubby Dogwoods (cornus species), Cranberry (Viburnum trilobum), Callicarpa, Barberry (Berberis), Pyracantha coccinea, Boxwood, Sumac, Red and Black chokeberry, Serviceberry, Holly, Winteberry (Ilex verticillata)
- **Perennials**
  - Kinnikinnick
- **Vines**
  - Bittersweet (Celastrus)

References: [birdsandblooms.com](http://birdsandblooms.com), Habitat Acquisition Trust



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## Bee Friendly Gardening With Brian Minter

It's of worldwide concern that the populations of all bees, in particular honeybees (*Apis mellifera*), are under multiple threats for survival. It is a very complex issue and one that will require a multi-pronged approach to find a solution. The loss of natural habitat, stress, the lack of nutrition, the use of neonicotinoid insecticides, a parasitic mite (*Varroa destructor*) and many bacterial and viral diseases seem to be the prime causes of decline in all bee species. This problem is not only about the loss of these valuable pollinators, it is also about the fact that approximately 1/3 of the food we eat today would not be in stores and markets without these invaluable allies.

The big question then is how can we, as a gardening community, help out. While there's no one simple solution, here are a few things we should make a thoughtful commitment to:

- Keep gardens free of harmful chemicals
- Provide alternate habitats to help replace the ones lost. Bees are very resourceful and can adapt to a number of situations, even in urbanized areas.
- Plant bee-friendly plants that will provide both pollen and nectar over long, continuous periods of time to accommodate all bees. On the West Coast this could be from January through December, depending upon the length and severity of the winter weather.
- Plant a variety of annuals, perennials, trees

and shrubs. Bees are attracted to many different types of plants. Native plants are obviously the most preferred, but there are many great new perennials that have longer flowering periods, starting earlier and finishing later.

- Habitat diversity is also a key issue. Try to provide habitat necessities i.e. water to drink and old tree stumps or other bee nesting areas.
- Remember: Birds are natural bee predators so don't put bird feeders and houses near bee habitat areas.

Honeybees prefer flowers with more nectar while Mason bees tend to prefer flowers with more pollen. To our knowledge, there is not a great deal of research on which flowers provide the most nectar or the most pollen and in what proportions. This is why a very diverse planting makes such a huge difference. Providing *both* nectar and pollen is essential for the well being of multiple types of bees.

The following lists provide suggestions on what to plant to help feed the bees year round. There are many flowers that provide both pollen and nectar during the main growing season from April through September, but it is more difficult to find earlier and later flowering sources. Keep in mind that the types of flowers you select for your garden will depend upon your hardiness zone (we are zone 6 in Chilliwack).

### Early Season (January-March)

- Helleborus nigers (Christmas Roses) - New varieties, like 'Jacob' and 'Josef Lemper' flower in early December in zone 6 and somewhat later in zone 5 depending upon the severity of the winter.
- Helleborus orientalis (zone 5) - fabulous attractors February -March
- Winter Heather
- Many early season bulbs like aconites, crocus, snowdrops, chionodoxa and scillas are valuable pollinators



*Helleborus niger*  
Photo: file

### Main Season (April-September)

- Agastache (zone 4) - North American native plant that is very disease resistant, drought tolerant and blooms all summer long. Agastache 'Blue Boa' is my favourite.
- Armeria maritimas (zone 3) - looks like small flowering chives
- Ceanothus 'Victoria' (tender zone 6) - flowering shrub that blooms heavily in June then sporadically all summer
- Centaurea 'Caramia' (zone 3) - has frilly mauve flowers loaded with pollen all summer long. 'Caramia' is perhaps the longest flowering centaurea there is.
- Columbines or Aquilegia vulgaris (zone 2)
- Coreopsis verticillata (zone 5) - has high visitations all summer!
- Cranesbill or Geranium macrorrhizum (zone 4) - native perennial
- Echinacea purpurea (zone 4) - North American native that most bees love
- Foxgloves or Digitalis purpurea (zone 4)
- Lavender (English lavender is zone 4) - one of the best summer attractions for bees
- Lupines (zone 3) - especially the native form Lupinus polyphyllum
- Monarda (zone 3) AKA Bergamot or Bee-Balm. attracts butterflies and hummingbirds too!
- Rudbeckia 'Goldsturm' (zone 4) - blooms from June through September
- Sea Holly or Eryngium planum (zone 4)
- Sedum 'Autumn Joy' (zone 3) - has one of the longest blooming periods
- Sedum spathulifolium (zone 5)
- Scabiosas (zone 4) - long time bee favourite. The new mildew resistant variety S. 'Vivid Violet' blooms late spring through until frost.
- Solidago canadensis (zone 5) - another native that carries well into fall



*Ceanothus*  
Photo: file



*Echinacea purpurea*  
Photo: file

### Late Season (October-December)

- Michaelmas Daisy/Aster and Aster novi-belgii (zone 3) - both of these old time favourites are very hardy natives of eastern North America
- Rudbeckia nitida 'Herbstsonne' (zone 2) and other very late blooming rudbeckias push pollen and nectar until late October
- Heliopsis 'Table Mountain' (zone 4) - is the very latest blooming perennial I know of, often blooming in late October through November
- Erica carneas or winter flowering heathers - mostly flower from November through April in zone 6. In late January, in our region, they are often smothered with bees.
- Mahonia media 'Charity' and 'Winter Sun' (zone 6) - start to flower in late December/January through to April and provide nectar and pollen for both bees and Anna's hummingbirds. Mahonia aquifolium (zone 5) is the hardiest variety is ideal for colder areas and blooms in April and May.



*Rudbeckia n. Herbstsonne*  
Photo: file

Observation is the key. When you see any flower that is attracting a wide range of bees, make note and add it to your collection! We've added a record sheet on the back page to help you.

Today there are also custom flower seed mixes designed for attracting bees with a diversity of pollen and nectar over a longer period of time. All you do is rake them in when we get day time soil temperatures of 10°C, keep them moist and watch these dual purpose mixes make a beautiful addition to your garden. Make sure the seeds are not treated with fungicides that can be potentially harmful to bees.



*'Pacific Wildflower Blend'*  
Premier Pacific Seed Photo: file

With so many small and larger gardens across our country, the gardening community can make a significant contribution