

This was posted on a blog and from part of it the post was written in UK. I've added my own notes in [Blue](#)

# Top 30 Flowers For Bees

AUGUST 5, 2013

[Article via [naturalcuresnotmedicine.com](http://naturalcuresnotmedicine.com) / Photo by [HoneyLove.org](http://HoneyLove.org)]

Bees are vital. Without them, pollination of crops doesn't occur. Bees work tirelessly to provide us with our food, but are struggling in the wild. In recent years it has become apparent that bees, not just the honeybee, are under threat and some have already gone extinct. Find out on this lens which flowers to grow for pollen and nectar that will feed them and help them to increase their numbers. **Insects and plants must now be taken care of by gardeners if they are to survive.** The private garden is now a better place than the countryside for wildlife, since much agricultural land is now devoid of the diversity of flowers insects need to give them their 'five a day'. It is now thought by scientists in the field that insects need as much variety in their food as we do to get all the trace minerals and vitamins to keep them healthy, so go on, plant flowers for the bees!

HA= Hardy annual

HHA =Half hardy annual

P = Perennial

HB= Hardy biennial

HS= Hardy shrub

.1

**Cosmos** (HHA) is an annual flower easily raised from seed. It's also one of the very best for the bee. Grow it in groups, making the collection of pollen easier for the bees, who won't have to fly as far to find their food. Cosmos grows 2-5ft tall, the majority reaching about 2ft. It's from Mexico, so a half hardy annual. Plant out after all danger of frost has passed, and deadhead to keep them flowering continuously through the summer. These open, flat flowers will delight you as well as giving the bees a feast. [Can be invasive because of massive seeding.. To control it cut flowers off before they totally go to seed and pull up any extra plants in the spring.](#)

.2

**Aster** (HHA) 'Compostion' or Michaelmass Daisies. Many modern hybrids have little or no pollen. [\(what this doesn't say is it provides nectar\)](#) easy to grow, colorful and late summer to autumn flowering, they provide food late in the season. Important if honeybees are to be well fed to get through the winter months.

.3

**Sunflowers** (HA) are a great choice, available in many heights and colours to suit your garden space. Choose yellow or orange over red, which bees don't like. [\(One thing I read says they can't see red\)](#) Varieties exist now for the allergic gardener, containing no pollen. Obviously avoid these when wishing to attract bees.

.4

**Calendulas** or **marigolds** (HA) are great for bees, especially the original single flowered pot marigold. Dead head regularly for a longer flowering period. [\(Marigolds seem to keep](#)

blooming whether dead-headed or not and are usually the last flowers to be killed by the frost. Collect the seeds and toss them around you beds between other flowers.)

.5

**Primulas**. (HP) The native primrose, (*primula vulgaris*), primulas of all kinds, even the drumstick ones are great early food for bees. Cowslips (*primula veris*) are also good members of this extensive family of perennial plants. (i'm not sure what this is.)

.6

**Rudbekia** (HHA) are an extensive group of cone flowers from the aster family. A wide variety of heights, mostly available in yellows and oranges, sure to brighten your border and feed bees. There are also a few hardy perennial ones, of which 'Goldsturn' is my personal favorite. All are easy to grow from seed.

.7

**Scabious** or **cornflowers** (HA), another aster family member, are mostly blue flowered and bees adore them. Dead-headed regularly, they'll flower all summer long. (Now I'm in trouble because others want seeds and deadheading before they really go to seed is probably best. I have a blue variety that is rather short and a tall white one that bees love.)

.8

**Lavender** (HHS) There are plenty of lavenders to choose from, all needing plenty of sun and well drained soil, but they'll reward you with plenty of fragrant flowers for cutting and drying. Just watch them get smothered in bees when they come into flower. (There seems to be more than a few varieties. I have one that has to be cut back to the ground each year and others that don't and the flowers are different)

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**Bluebells** (bulb) Another early food supply. Just a note of caution for UK growers. The native English bluebell is now under threat from the Spanish bluebell, which outcompetes and crosses with it. So please ensure you are planting the native bluebell to ensure you don't endanger a bluebell woodland near you. (I don't think we have these...think there is a bluebell that is common in TX?)

.10

**Hellebores** (HP) The Christmas rose! A lovely flower to have in your garden from late winter to early spring, this plant will tolerate some shade and moist conditions, though not wet. When bees emerge from hibernation they need food fast. This one gives them a snack when there's little else around.

.11

**Clematis** (Perennial climber) The majority of clematis will provide pollen, and I've watched bees happily moving from flower to flower gathering their crop. Always plant clematis deeper than they were in the container, as this gives more protection against clematis wilt. These plants are hungry and thirsty, so add good compost to the planting hole. They also like their roots in the cool and heads in the sun, so once planted I place either a thick mulch or a pile of stones or gravel around their roots, keeping them cool and conserving moisture. (Ok, just learned something new...mulch coming up)

.12

**Crocus** (bulb) Early flowering, plenty to choose from, and planted in the autumn to flower year after year. These are great value and cheer me up as well as the bees!

.13

**Mint** (HP), especially water mint, is loved by bees. It's great in your cooking, too. Easy to grow, it can be a bit of a thug, so either grow it in a container or prevent its escape around the garden by burying a bucket (with holes in the bottom for drainage) and plant your mint into that. (control mint? HA!)

·14

**Rosemary** (HHS) A mediterranean herb, rosemary likes well drained solid and full sun. It flowers around April/May. A great culinary herb, bees will take advantage of the pollen as long as you prune it correctly. This is best done straight after flowering, as most of the flowers will appear on new wood. Don't prune rosemary back to old, bare wood as these are not likely to regrow. Depending on where you live and soil conditions, rosemary can be short lived, so take some cuttings each year so you can replace the old plant should it die or become too leggy. (Ok, something else to learn how to do. Make cuttings?)

·15

**Thyme** (H to HHS)) There are now quite a few varieties available, tasting slightly different to each other i.e. lemon thyme. However, I've noticed that the wild thyme (thymus serpyllum) attracts a lot of bee visitors and tends to flower more profusely. But they are all worth growing. Give them the same growing conditions as rosemary and lavender. (we have mother of thyme and elfin thyme that I planted and something else that looks like a cross between two kinds and I have no idea where it came from but it can stay.)

·16

**Hebe** (HH-HS) This extensive group of shrubs have wonderful flowers for bees. Plenty of pollen, all on one flower and plenty of flowers on one shrub. They vary in height, are mostly blue or pink and tolerate most soils. They dislike too much wet, so a well drained soil is best. Water well, though, until established. (Native to New Zealand and S. America... might do well here since it likes drier conditions. Have to research where to get them)

·17

**Borage**, the bee herb. (HA) Borage is blue flowered, simple to grow and in fact one type grows wild in the UK, though originally from Syria. Easy, prolific and the bees love it. (Syria? Does that mean it likes a dry hot climate? I've got one plant that was given to me... planted it in the strawberry bed as it is supposed to be a good companion plant...but if it likes a dry situation and strawberries prefer more moisture then what ?)

·18

**Echinacea**, the cone flower. (HP) Now available in a variety of colours, all of which will attract bees. Echinacea Tennesseeensis will attract birds, bees and butterflies. (I found them hard to grow from seeds, came up slowly and were sluggish growers...however, in the garden they seems to come up with some regularity on their own.)

·19

**Mignotette**. There are HA, HHA and Perennial members of this family. They are sweetly scented and will attract and feed your bees, especially Reseda lutea. (Mignonette Machet (Reseda Odorata Machet) - Grow Mignonette seeds for this old-fashioned Victorian favorite. This Mignonette flower was introduced in 1889 and is lovely in the mixed border. The small white spikes of fringed, red flowers possess a wonderful sweet ambrosia-like fragrance with a hint of raspberry. The Reseda Odorata flower is great for cutting, and it's sweet fragrance is used in perfumes.

Season: Annual

USDA Zones: 3 – 11

Height: 12 inches

Bloom Season: Late spring to early fall

Bloom Color: White w/ red tinge

## Environment: Full sun to partial shade

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**Thrift**, or **Sea Pink** (HP) is a great plant for a rock garden, trough or wall. Holding its bright pink flowers well above the grass-like foliage, it will cheer your garden and make the bees come back for more! Give it well drained conditions and lots of sun.

·21

**Sedums** are also excellent plants for rock gardens and walls... Biting stonecrop and English stonecrop (sedums acre and anglicum) are natives, and great for bees. (great variety and bees seem to like all the flowers. My favorite is Autumn Joy Sedum.)

·22

**Sweet Williams** (*Dianthus barbatus*) (HB) are fantastic flowers for bees. An old cottage garden favourite, bees are attracted to the pink or white flowers and we love the perfume! They are members of the dianthus family, as are Pinks and Carnations, all of which are good for the bees.

·23

**Monarda** (Bergamot) (HP) This is the herb that flavours Earl Grey tea, but the bees love its flowers for pollen and nectar. Its folk name in the UK is bee balm. It likes a moist but not wet soil and can cope with a bit of shade. Share it with the bees! Bergamot tea is a herbal treat in itself. Just pour boiling water on the leaves and allow about ten minutes before drinking.

·24

**Cornflower** (HA) Easy to grow, cheap and cheerful, cornflowers are another cottage garden favourite. Their blue flowers act like a bee magnet. Grow in as large a group as you have the space for. This makes it easier for the bees to spot them and saves them flying around more than necessary. It's easy to save seed from one year to the next, too. (Extremely susceptible to aphids. I've mostly dug them out.)

·25

**Poppies** (HA-HP) All poppies are attractive to bees, and are laden with pollen in nice open flowers. Very easy to grow, especially the annual kinds, and easy to save seeds to sow next year. Enjoy their delicate petals while your bees enjoy a feast.

·26

**Verbena Bonariensis** (HP) a tall, delicate looking perennial with purple/mauve flowers that add a tropical feel to your borders. This is easy to grow from seed and sown early enough will flower in its first year. One not to do without!

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**Snapdragons** (*Antirrhinum*) (HHA) Plenty of choice in heights and colours. Have you ever watched a bee enter and leave a snapdragon? Their weight pulls the lower part of the petal down so they can get inside for their food, and you can hear them buzzing while they are in there. Lovely to watch. (here they seem to overwinter in areas that are warmer such as next to sidewalks. And they come back from seeds each year.)

·28

**Ageratum** (HHA) Easy to grow, with heads of blue flowers and another member of the compositae family, so lots of food on one flower head. This is one of my favorite annuals in the garden. Just don't plant out until all danger of frost has passed and dead head for more flowers. (Ageratum is a genus of 40 to 60 tropical and warm temperate flowering annuals and perennials from the family Asteraceae, tribe Eupatorieae. Most species are native to Central America and Mexico but four are native to the United States. )

.29

**Echinops** (globe thistle) (HP) This lovely blue thistle is very ornamental, even when not in flower, standing about 36" tall. Bees and butterflies love the flowers which provide plenty of nectar. Easy to grow from seed and will come back year after year. (Echinops are not thistles despite their common name, Globe Thistle. Provides carefree late summer color. Does well in any soil. Provides good color and contrast in the perennial border, especially toward the back, or in the cut flower garden. They are spiny however )

.30

**Digitalis** (foxglove) (HB) Foxgloves make great food for bees. As they are poisonous, protect children from them and handle wearing gloves. As long as these precautions are taken these are wonderful plants for the garden and the bees. A woodland plant, they're useful for a shady spot. (maybe not then.)