

Native Bee Gardening

Native bees are extraordinarily diverse in California. Populations can thrive even in urban environments, given the right conditions. One of the most important ways to have a bee friendly garden is to create a sanctuary with many different foraging resources. Large patches (a meter or more in diameter) of individual plants are much more attractive to bees than are scattered plants of the same variety. Native bees tend to prefer native plants, which they have coevolved with for years. It is best to include at least some native plants in your garden in order to attract native bees.

"CA" denotes California native plants.

Great Bee Plants:

Gaillardia spp	Attracts Melissodes, Megachilids, Halictids, Honeybees. Provides pollen and nectar. Perennial.
Penstemon heterophyllus	Attracts Bombus (Bumble bees), Halictids, Osmia, Anthophorid (digger bees). Provides nectar only. Perennial. CA
Helianthus annuus (Sunflower)	Attracts Megachilids, Melissodes, Honeybees, and Bombus. Provides pollen and nectar. Annual. CA
Helianthus Lemon Queen	Attracts a wide variety of bee species. Provides pollen and nectar. Perennial. Dies back in winter.
Eryngium (Sea Holly)	Attracts Megachilids, Bombus, Honeybees. Provides nectar only.
Ceanothus spp.	Attracts Bombus, Panurginus, Honeybees, Halictids. Provides pollen only. Perennial. CA
Phacelia tanacetifolia	Attracts many species including Bombus, Andrenids, Osmia, and Honeybees. Provides pollen and nectar. Has purple pollen! Annual. CA

Many herbs are great nectar sources as well (provided you allow them to flower).

Salvia chamaedryoides (Germander Sage)	Eriogonum spp. (buckwheat) CA	Coreopsis spp.
Erigeron glaucus Wayne Roderick (Seaside daisy) CA	Mimulus (sticky monkey flower) CA	Wisteria
Carpenteria californica (Bush anemone) CA	Arctostaphylos spp. (manzanita) CA	Cosmos bipinnatus
Rudbeckia hirta (Large flowered varieties are best)	Echinacea purpurea (purple coneflower)	Ribes spp (currant) CA
Echium candicans (Pride of Madeira)	Eschscholzia californica (California poppies) CA	Nepeta
Cucurbits (squash, zucchini, pumpkins, melons)	Linaria purpurea (toadflax) CA	Bidens spp.
Achillea millefolium (yarrow) CA	Lupinus polyphyllus (lupine) CA	Lavandula spp.

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General Tips:

- Avoid using pesticides whenever possible, especially when plants are flowering. Neonicotinoids are particularly harmful. Try to buy plants and seeds organically whenever possible.
- Try not to mulch over areas when soil is fairly sandy. Seventy percent of native bees are solitary ground nesters. They will not build nests under thick layers of mulch.
- Ideal bee gardens will have at least 15-20 varieties of plants that bees love. Ideally, plant patches should be a meter or more in diameter. In small gardens, it's better to reduce patch size over plant diversity.
- Provide homes for cavity-nesting bees. Bundles of old bamboo or brambleberry canes make great bee homes. Blocks of wood with drilled holes of variable diameters make great nest sites for bees as well. Be aware that bees remain dormant in their nests for the majority of the year. Keep all bee homes out of afternoon sun and protected from rain.

Visit www.helpabee.org and www.greatsunflower.org for further information.

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