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Introduction - Why Make Yours A Bee Garden?

What types of bees do you see in your garden? At first glance you may observe some honeybees ducking in and out of flowers, perhaps a bumblebee or two. Did you know that there are actually 81 known species of bees in urban Berkeley alone? Take a better look; you may see bright green bees, small black bees, striped and fuzzy bees. These busy little creatures are responsible for pollinating a large variety of fruits, flowers, and vegetables. They are an important and vital part of our ecosystem.



Our lab at UC Berkeley observes native bees and their favorite flowers. Native bees are different from the honeybee you are familiar with. They do not live in hives and do not produce honey but they have equally important roles in gardens and natural ecosystems. We created this website to familiarize you with the diversity of native bees in urban areas, their habits, and to instruct you on how to create bee-friendly gardens.

Want a quick jump-start into bee gardening? Have a look at our new comprehensive [Seasonal Recommended Bee Plants](#) lists. Everything you need to start gardening - all in one place!

Bees: The World's Star Pollinators



For thousands of years, humans have known the value of bees in agriculture. As the most effective pollinators in the world, bees are an invaluable resource to ag productivity. Anybody who's driven past an orchard has seen the dozens of white wooden boxes containing the farmer's most valuable tool. Though we've known the power of bees in our agriculture for centuries, we are just beginning to realize their power in our humble residential gardens. Just as they are used to dramatically increase fruit and vegetable production, these seemingly insignificant little creatures can be used to dramatically bolster the health and productivity of your home garden. You need only do a few simple things to enlist the

help of bees in your pursuit of a more beautiful and healthy garden; This website was created to let you in on these simple secrets.

Creating A Great Bee Garden

There are many factors that make a garden attractive to bees other than the flowers it contains. Our research has shown that bees are more strongly attracted to gardens with a greater *diversity* of bee-friendly flowers. In addition, simple things like the layout and light exposure of your garden can have a huge effect on the number and variety of bees it attracts. Continue on to learn more about the non-planting-related things you can do to make your garden a veritable bee Mecca.

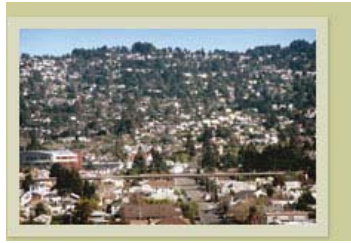


Mulch Madness, One More Deterrent To Beeing Successful

You happen to be one of the many ground-nesting bees that looks for garden sites for digging small tunnels where you will lay your eggs in individually-made brood cells that you will provision with pollen and some nectar. But something has happened in recent years to those favored bare dirt sites that makes your task much harder and oftentimes impossible. MULCH MADNESS has arrived and has become a highly promoted

["Weeds"](#)

"eco-friendly" method for suppressing weeds, conserving water, and unknowingly discouraging ground-nesting bees! [Read on](#) to learn more...

[Flowering Season Vs. Bee Season](#)[Where Do Bees Nest In the City?](#)

When people envision the home of a bee, they most frequently think of a honeycomb or a bee box, the likes of which we see in orchards around California. However, unlike honey bees, most native California bees are non-social in habit, meaning they make individual nests. Limited knowledge exists about where these bees nest in urban environments, however, three general nesting habits are known of solitary native bees: The most common is the ground nesting habit, and probably 85% or more of species build their nests in some type of soil. Another nest type is the preexisting cavity, which can be found in dead tree branches (for example, in old oak trees) or holes in human structures of wood, metal, or masonry blocks. The third, more uncommon, type is wood frames and paneling that large carpenter bees may use to bore out holes for their nests - often to the great displeasure of urbanites! To learn more about these types of nests, read on.

[A Guide To Closer Bee Observations](#)[Stinging: Facts Vs. Fears](#)[A Guide To Closer Bee Observations](#)

With the exception of a few species such as the relatively slow-moving honey bees or bumble bees, it can be quite difficult to observe your garden visitors at close range while they're on the move. The trick to getting a good look is slowing them down. It can be fun and educational to examine bees up close, studying the fine details of their bodies. If you want to give it a try, it's really quite easy. All you'll need is a few simple pieces of equipment, a roomy refrigerator, and a little patience. This can be a great activity for science teachers or for summer camps. Click the link to read a fully detailed set of instructions, plus a complete list of the equipment you'll need.

[FAQ](#)[Researcher Biographies](#)[References](#)[Bees & "Weeds" In Your Garden](#)

Humans tend to distinguish between the plants *we* put in our gardens and those that show up uninvited. The latter we call "weeds." Insects and other wild animals make no such distinction. From the perspective of a bee, any plant that provides quality pollen and nectar is attractive. For the short period they are in bloom, weeds such as dandelions and white clover provide bees with good sources of pollen and nectar. If your aim is to attract ample numbers of bees to improve the health of your garden, you might consider leaving those plants we consider intruders long enough for them to be useful in attracting helpful bees. There is always plenty of time to remove these weeds once their flowers are spent, but before they've gone to seed. For more information about plants commonly considered to be weeds, and their relationship to bees, read on.

[Flowering Season Vs. Bee Season](#)

Ornamental plants have predictable flowering seasons such that we can expect certain plants to bloom in Spring, Summer, and/or early Fall in the San Francisco Bay Area. Many gardeners know this and plan their gardening schedules around this predictable flowering information. What many people *don't* know, is that urban bees *also* have predictable flight/nesting seasons. For example, in the Spring we can expect to see several bee groups that only are found during early months. One of these groups is the bumble bee, which is very common at this time, with some individuals lingering on in low numbers into Summer. On the other hand large leaf cutter bees and fuzzy *anthophorid* bees start to become common in Summer. One reason many people aren't



aware of bee seasons is that the highly visible honey bees are found on urban flowers most of the year (assuming the weather is favorable). Learning a what to look for and when can dramatically improve your bee-watching experiences, all the info you need is a click away.

Natives Vs. Exotics



Depending on what your goals are, the use of California native or exotic plants can be one of the most critical factors you will have to consider when planning your garden. If your priority is a healthy garden, it makes good ecological sense to consider your plants' bee-attractiveness, rather than focusing exclusively on whether one hundred percent of your plants are natives. Even if your priority is to have a native garden, it can be highly advantageous to include even just a couple exotic plants on the basis of their bee attractiveness. The

bees they attract will help your natives to thrive. Our [Garden Builder Tool](#) is particularly useful for finding out which plants (even if they are exotic themselves) will attract native bees that will enjoy your native garden. We have evaluated many plants that bees like and present these results in two ways. First, we have one [long list](#) that contains all of our bee-plant evaluations. Second, we give only our *most recommended* plants in the Garden Builder Tool. These are the easiest, most attractive plants to grow, in the shortest time period. Both resources will provide you with plenty of options based on your gardening goals. In *our* experimental gardens, we use native California plants whenever possible in order to attract local native California bees. Using our information, you should be able to make your own informed decisions about native plants, and ensure the best results possible for your garden.

Solitary Bees?

The majority of native bees live a solitary lifestyle. After mating, female bees being the task of building and provisioning their nest. They make their nests by digging out sandy soils or by lining pre-existing cavities with leaves or flower petals. Once the nest cavity is complete the female bee will make multiple foraging trips, collecting pollen and some nectar. When enough of a food source has been collected she will lay a single egg and seal the chamber. The eggs are left to hatch and develop without any parental care. A female bee will make many nests in her lifetime, but will die before any of her offspring hatch.

Stinging: Facts Vs. Fears

If there's one big reason people might be reluctant to attract bees to their gardens, it can probably be summed up in one word: Ouch! We all have memories, as a child or as an adult, of getting stung by a bee. It's never a fond memory. As a result, understandably, a lot of people are afraid of being stung again. However, there are a lot of myths and unfounded fears surrounding bee stings. For example, did you know that only female honeybees have stingers? The people on our bee research team that have been working with bees for decades, and none of us has ever once been stung on the job! We have no secret pact with the bees, stinging is simply not as common as many people think. We've included here a lot of information about bees and stinging; when and why they do it, and how to avoid it. With a little understanding to ease your fear, the garden can be a much more friendly and enjoyable place to be.



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