

PLANTING A POLLINATOR GARDEN

By Brandy Cowley-Gilbert

It's a great time of the year to plant a pollinator garden. Honey and native bees do the bulk of the pollination in the orchard. If you want full crops of fruit you'll need to help build up the pollinators in your area. Many of the native bees never travel farther than 50 feet to a half mile to find food. Providing habitat and year round food for them will go a long ways in making sure they will be in the orchard when you need them.

CREATE HABITAT There are several factors that make a garden a welcoming place for the bees. It has been found that bees are strongly attracted to gardens that have a wide diversity of bee friendly plants; it's best to have over 10 types. Planting a large patch of one type of bee plant will work better than a patch of mixed varieties. Patches at least 5 foot x 5 foot draw the most pollinators. Try to plant flowers that bloom at different seasons to provide a steady supply of food. Bees also need a source of water, such as a dripping faucet, birdbath, or large- leafed plants that collect rainwater

Many of our best pollinators are native ground dwelling bees; these need open bare ground to nest in. Avoid mulching and tilling, which will increase your chances of having them close at hand to pollinate your orchard. Other native bees live in holes in wood. Leave dead wood and standing snags, drill holes in dead wood, and put out bundles of bamboo twigs for nesting pollinators.

PLANTS THAT WORK There is a wide range of plants that make great bee plants; some are more attractive than others. Natives are by far the best as these are natural forage plants, but many of our colorful ornamental trees, shrubs, annuals and perennials make fantastic bee plants. The exception to the rule is plants that have been hybridized to create double flowers these are hard for the bees to work. Color plays a factor too; blue, purple, violet, yellow and white draw the most bees. Red is great for attracting humming birds, but looks like black to bees, so they are often not looked at as a good food source.

UNDESIRABLE PLANTS **White Titi** (*Cyrilla racemiflora* L.), often called summer titi is undesirable because the nectar and pollen are responsible for a condition known as "purple brood," which kills the brood of honey bees. This plant should not be confused with spring titi which is found in the same areas, but is an excellent honey plant.

Yellow Jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens* (L.) Ait. f.) is a woody vine, which blooms February to March. It is toxic to honey bees and responsible for reducing colony strength.

LEAVE THE WILD PLANTS Many common plants we think of as weeds are great bee forage plants. Be sure to leave wild areas within your garden. Some of these plants are the very plants the bees exist on when the plants in your garden are no longer in bloom.

Here's a list of some of the very best bee attracting plants that will grow well in the southeast.

TYPE	BLOOM SEASON	NATIVE	TREES
Tree	Early Spring	x	American Holly , <i>Ilex opeca</i> ,
Tree	Summer	x	Basswood <i>Tilia</i>
Tree	Summer	x	Cabbage Palm <i>Sabal palmetto</i>
Tree	Spring	x	Carolina Laurelcherry , <i>Prunus caroliniana</i> ,
Tree	Summer		Chaste Tree <i>Vitex negundo</i> L.
Tree	Summer		Crepe Myrtle <i>Lagerstroemia indica</i> ,
Tree	Spring		Fruit Trees citrus, apple, pear, peach, plum, all berries, persimmon, kiwi, mayhaw, loquat
Tree	Spring		Jujuba <i>Ziziphus jujuba</i> Mill
Tree	Summer	x	Native Crabapple <i>Malus angustifolia</i>
Tree	Late Winter	x	Red Maple <i>Acer rubrum</i> L.,
Tree	Spring	x	Redbud <i>Cercis</i>
Tree	Spring	x	Savannah Holly <i>Ilex x attenuata</i> 'Savannah'
Tree	Summer	x	Sourwood <i>Oxydendrum arboreum</i> (L.
Tree	Summer	x	Southern Magnolia , <i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>
Tree	Spring	x	Spring Titi tree <i>Cliftonia monophylla</i>
Tree	Summer	x	Sweetbay Magnolia , <i>Magnolia virginiana</i>
Tree	Spring	x	Tuliptree , <i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>
Tree	Spring	x	White Tupelo <i>Nyssa ogeche</i> Bartr. ex Marsh.,
Tree	Spring	x	Willow <i>Salix caroliniana</i> Michx.

TYPE	BLOOM SEASON	NATIVE	SHRUBS
Shrub	Spring	x	Blueberry <i>Vaccinium</i>
Shrub	Summer		Bush Clovers <i>Lespedeza bicolor</i> and <i>L. thunbergii</i>
Shrub	Spring		Chinese Holly , <i>Ilex cornuta</i> ,
Shrub	Spring	x	Fetterbush <i>Lyonia lucida</i>
Shrub	Spring	x	Gallberry <i>Ilex glabra</i>
Shrub	Summer		Glossy Abelia , <i>Abelia grandiflora</i>
Shrub	Summer	x	Gopher Apple <i>Chrysobalanus oblongifolius</i> Michx.
Shrub	Summer		Privets and Ligustrums , <i>Ligustrum</i> spp
Shrub	Summer	x	Saw Palmetto <i>Serenoa repens</i>
Shrub	Spring	x	Yaupon , <i>Ilex vomitoria</i>

TYPE	BLOOM SEASON	NATIVE	GROUNDCOVERS
Groundcover	Spring		Clover Red and White <i>Trifolium</i>
Groundcover	Summer		Cowpeas <i>Vigna unguiculata</i>
Groundcover	Summer		Cucurbits cucumber, pumkins, squash, watermelon and cantalope
Groundcover	Summer		Garlic Chives <i>Allium</i>
Groundcover	Fall	x	Goldenrod <i>Solidago microcephala</i>
Groundcover	Fall	x	Partridge Pea <i>Cassia fasciculata</i> Michx.
Groundcover	Summer/Fall	x	Spanish Needles <i>Bidens pilosa</i> L.
Groundcover	Winter		Vetches <i>Vicia</i>

TYPE	BLOOM SEASON	NATIVE	VINES
Vine	Summer		Coral Vine <i>Antigonon leptopus</i>

TYPE	BLOOM SEASON	NATIVE	PERENNIALS
Perennial	Fall	x	Aster Symphyotrichum
Perennial	Summer		Basil Ocimum Majoram
Perennial	Summer	x	Beardtongue Penstemon
Perennial	Summer		Bee Balm Monarda didyma
Perennial	Summer	x	Blanketflower Gaillardia
Perennial	Summer/Fall	x	Blazingstar Liatris
Perennial	Summer		Catnip Nepeta
Perennial	Summer/Fall		Cosmos Cosmos
Perennial	Summer/Fall		Giant hyssop Agastache
Perennial	Summer/Fall	x	Giant ironweed Vernonia
Perennial	Fall	x	Goldenrod Solidago
Perennial	Summer		Guara Gaura lindheimeri.
Perennial	Fall	x	Joe pye weed Eupatorium
Perennial	Summer		Mexican Sage Salvia leucantha
Perennial	Summer		Mexican sunflower Tithonia
Perennial	Summer	x	Milkweed Asclepias
Perennial	Summer	x	Mountain mint Pycnanthemum
Perennial	Summer		Oregano Origanum
Perennial	Spring,Summer/Fall		Pincushion flower Scabiosa
Perennial	Summer/Fall		Pineapple Sage Salvia elegan
Perennial	Summer		Purple coneflower Echinacea
Perennial	Summer		Rosemary Rosmarinus
Perennial	Summer	x	Rosinweed Silphium
Perennial	Summer	x	Sunflower Helianthus