

Plant and Share Month



Bee Kind



Many bee species are in decline due to climate change, habitat loss, invasive species and pesticide use. Seven bee species are listed as critically endangered on the European Red List of Bees and a further 46 are endangered. These include Red-tailed Bumblebee and the Early Bumblebee which we learned to spot in the Identifying Bees resource.



As you can read in the Identifying Bees resource bees are responsible for one third of our food so without them there would be no strawberry jam, no pumpkins, no tomato ketchup, no grain to feed animals.

Added to the threats of invasive species such as predatory asian hornets affecting native colonies and increasing incidence of bee diseases, it is a worrying time for our clever bees.

Climate change has led to warmer and wetter winters and shifts in seasons which means there are fewer bees around to pollinate when things like apple blossom is in bloom.

The honey bee does a brilliant job in creating honey and pollinates around 34% of our food but wild bees and other pollinators do the rest so we need to look after them.



But there is a lot we can do! Here are some of the practical ways you can help the bees where you live.

- Plant bee friendly flowers, plants and veggies
- Be puddle friendly – bees need shallow water so have some puddles or a shallow plate or water with pebbles
- Make a bee hotel – bees need shelter and a few logs or you can get creative and build your own bespoke five star bee hotel!
- Provide more flowers, shrubs and trees that provide nectar and pollen throughout the year.
- Use organic and natural ways to deal with pests and weeds in the garden. Don't use pesticides and chemicals.
- Leave patches of land to grow wild. Weeds like stinging nettles and dandelions provide food, while dead wood and hollow winter stems are excellent breeding places
- Cut the grass less often. Make sure your lawn is full of many different plants such as clover and speedwell, and allow them to flower. Native flowering plants and weeds in grassy areas such as corners, verges and edges and support lots of different bees



For instance, primroses and crocuses in spring; lavender, meadow cranesbill and ox-eye daisies in summer; ivy and hebe in autumn; and mahonia, witch hazel and cyclamen in winter.

- Take part in **No Mow May**
- Celebrate **World Bee Day** and maybe have a waggle dance party, make some bee hotels or cook some honey recipes!





Fun Facts - Bee Clever

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1. Bees have 5 eyes!
 2. A worker bee can fly up to 3 miles at a time collecting nectar
 3. A bee can visit 100 flowers in one trip
 4. A single worker bee produces 1/12th of a teaspoon of honey in its lifetime
 5. It takes 2 million flowers to produce a large jar of honey!
 6. Bees do a waggle dance to tell other bees where they have found a good nectar source.
 7. If you are unlucky enough to be stung, the female releases an odour called an alarm pheromone, which smells a bit like bananas and alerts other bees to a danger.
 8. Bees have been creating honey for over one hundred and fifty million years
 9. Not all bees sting, of those that do it is only the females which do
 10. Bees have smelly feet according to the University of Bristol! It is so they can smell if they or another bee has already visited a flower.



How to help a struggling bee

You might spot a bee on the ground and assume it is struggling. It isn't always the case. When the Queens emerge in March and April they often source pollen from groundcover plants and also may need a rest. It is best to leave the bee for 10 or 15 minutes before trying to help, if you do think the bee needs some help:

Safely put the bee somewhere warm – if it got wet in the rain or its temperature dropped then it won't be able to fly

Feed the bee – ideally put it on some bee friendly flowers but if it is groggy and likely to fall or there are no flowers then mix a teaspoon of white sugar and water and leave in a milk bottle lid or similar

Give it some shelter – place it somewhere warm and dry and outside, like a plant pot on its side, so it can rest and hopefully fly away

Never feed a bee honey as this can lead to infection.

You're now all set to be kind, why not check out the **bee identification resource** and learn more about bees?



About this resource:

Got the gardening bug? Why not take part in our **Worm Hunt** next, or learn about more **bee-friendly flowers** and herbs, how to build a **DIY insect home**, and how to **fight climate change and biodiversity loss** – from home! Want another Plant & Share challenge? Try growing our bee-friendly strawberry wellies

foodforlife.org.uk/gettogethers

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