

Best Nectar Plants For Honeybees



All photos courtesy of Nate Brauner

Knowing what to plant to help honeybees is difficult. This list is built to help you make informed choices. The plants on this list were selected because of the amount of nectar that they produce.

Highly nectariferous plants are beneficial for all pollinators, not just honeybees, and will help you have a more productive pollinator garden. These general rules should also help:

- Honeybees see in a slightly different part of the visual spectrum, so they tend to be attracted more to blue and purple flowers, with yellow and white a second choice. Red flowers less so.
- Native plants are the most beneficial, but introduced species are listed if they are especially valuable to honeybees. Introduced species are listed with a grey background.
- Cultivars generally have less pollen and nectar value than natives and should be avoided.
- Avoid spraying plants with insecticides, fungicides and herbicides. Insecticides kill gathering bees in direct contact, fungicides interfere with pollen to create bee bread and pollen contaminated with herbicides (later converted to royal jelly), contributes to the sterility of queens.

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Flower Color	Bloom Period												Max Height	Nectar	Light	Water Needs
				M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N							
Trees	Red Maple	<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Tiny Red	M	A										40-100'	***	☀	☂-☂☂☂	
	Redbud	<i>Cercis canadensis</i>	Pink	M	A										20-40'	**	☀☂	☂☂	
	Crabapple	<i>Malus floribunda</i>	Pink	M	A										25-30'	****	☀	☂☂	
	American Holly	<i>Ilex opaca</i>	White		A										30-40'	***	☀-☂	☂-☂☂☂	
	Black Tupelo	<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>	Gr/Wht		A										40-60'	****	☀-☂	☂-☂☂☂	
	Persimmon	<i>Diospyros virginiana</i>	Yellow		A	M	J								15-100'	***	☀	☂☂	
	Tulip Poplar	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	Gr/Y/Or		A	M	J								100-150'	*****	☀☀	☂-☂☂☂☂	
	American Basswood	<i>Tilia americana</i>	Yellow		A	M	J	J							60-80'	****	☀-☂	☂-☂☂	
	Black Cherry	<i>Prunus serotina</i>	White			M	J								50-80'	**	☀-☂	☂-☂☂☂	
	Black Locust	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	White			M									40-60'	*****	☀	☂-☂☂☂	
	Stag's Horn Sumac	<i>Rhus copallinum</i>	Ylw/Grn					J	J						10-30'	****	☀☀	☂	
	Sourwood	<i>Oxydenrum arboreum</i>	White							J					30-70'	****	☀☀	☂-☂☂	
	Bee-Bee Tree	<i>Evodia daniellii</i>	White							J	A				25-35'	*****	☀	☂-☂☂	
	Chaste Tree	<i>Vitex agnus castus</i>	Purple					J	J	A	S	O			5-15'	***	☀	☂-☂☂	
	Shrubs	Cotoneaster	<i>Cotoneaster horizontalis</i>	Pink/wht		M	J									2-3'	****	☀☀	☂-☂☂
Oak Leaved Hydrangea		<i>Hydrangea quercifolia</i>	White		M										5-8'	***	☂	☂☂	
Raspberry		<i>Rubus idaeus</i>			M	J									3-7'	****	☀-☂	☂-☂☂	
Inkberry		<i>Ilex glabra</i>	White		M	J									6-10'	****	☀☀	☂-☂☂☂☂	
Winterberry		<i>Ilex verticillata</i>	White		M	J									3-12'	****	☀☀	☂-☂☂☂	
American Beautyberry		<i>Callicarpa americana</i>	Purple				J	J	A						3-6'	****	☀-☂	☂☂	
Buttonbush		<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	White				J	J	A	S					5-12'	***	☀☀	☂☂☂	
Snowberry		<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>	Pink				J	J							1-3'	****	☀-☂	☂-☂☂	
Sweet Pepper Bush	<i>Clethra alnifolia</i>	White					J	A						3-8'	***	☀☀	☂-☂☂☂☂		

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Flower Color	Bloom Period												Max Height	Nectar	Light	Water Needs
				M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N							
Perennials	Hellebore	<i>Helleborus foetidus</i>	Green	M											18-20"	***	☉☀	☹☹	
	Crocus	<i>Crocus spp.</i>	Blue/wht	M									O	N	6-9"	***	☀	☹	
	Virginia Bluebells	<i>Mertensia virginica</i>	Blue	M	A	M									12"	**	☉☀	☹☹	
	Coral Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera sempervirens</i>	Red/Yllw	M	A	M	J								Vine	**	☀	☹☹☹	
	Purple Coneflower	<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	Purple		A	M	J	J	A	S					3-4'	**	☀☉	☹	
	Yorktown Onions	<i>Allium spp.</i>	Purple			M									18-24"	***	☀	☹-☹☹	
	Sage	<i>Salvia spp.</i>	Varies			M	J	J	A	S	O	N			2-3'	***	☀☉☀	☹-☹☹	
	Spiderwort	<i>Tradescantia virginiana</i>	Purple			M	J	J	A						2-3'	***	☀☉☀	☹-☹☹	
	Spearmint	<i>Mentha x spicata</i>	Lt Purple			M	J	J	A	S					12-18"	****	☀☉	☹-☹☹	
	Catmint	<i>Nepeta mussinii</i>	Lavender			M	J	J							18-24"	***	☀☉	☹-☹☹	
	Catnip	<i>Nepeta cataria</i>	White			M	J	J							18-24"	****	☀☉	☹-☹☹	
	Thyme	<i>Thymus spp.</i>	Wht/Blue			M	J	J	A						6-12"	***	☀	☹	
	White Dutch Clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White			M	J	J	A	S					3-4"	****	☀☉	☹-☹☹	
	Butterfly Weed	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	Orange			M	J	J	A						1-3'	***	☀	☹-☹☹	
	Common Milkweed	<i>Asclepias syriaca</i>	Pink			M	J	J							3-5'	***	☀	☹☹	
	Swamp Milkweed	<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	Wht/Pink			M	J	J							3-5'	***	☀☉	☹☹-☹☹☹	
	Walking Verbena	<i>Verbena bonariensis</i>	Purple			M	J	J	A	S	O				4-6'	**			
	Scarlet Bee Balm	<i>Monarda didyma</i>	Red			M	J	J							2-4'	**	☀☉	☹	
	Lemon Bee Balm	<i>Monarda citriodora</i>	Lavender				J	J	A						1-3'	***	☀☉	☹	
	Mountain Mint	<i>Pycnanthemum spp.</i>	White				J	J	A	S					1-2'	***	☀	☹	
	Anise Hyssop	<i>Agastache foeniculum</i>	Lavender				J	J	A	S	O	N			2-4'	****	☀☉☀	☹☹	
	Boneset	<i>Eupatorium perfoliatum</i>	White				J	J	A	S	O				3-6'	**	☀☉	☹☹-☹☹☹	
	Helen's Flower	<i>Helenium autumnale</i>	Yellow					J	A	S	O	N			3-4'	***	☀☉	☹☹☹☹☹	
	Joe Pye Weed	<i>Eutrochium spp.</i>	Pink					J	A	S	O				2-6'	***	☀☉	☹☹☹☹☹	
	Clematis	<i>Clematis virginiana</i>	White					J	A	S	O				Vine	**	☀☉☀	☹-☹☹	
	Culver's Root	<i>Veronicastrum virginicum</i>	White					J	A	S					2-5'	***	☀☉	☹☹	
	Goldenrod	<i>Solidago spp.</i>	Yellow						A	S	O				2-4'	****	☀☉☀	☹-☹☹☹	
	Wingstem	<i>Verbesina alternifolia</i>	Yellow						A	S	O				3-5'	****	☀☉	☹-☹☹☹	
	Maximillian Sunflower	<i>Helianthus maximilliani</i>	Yellow						A	S	O	N			4-6'	**	☀	☹-☹☹	
	Spotted Bee Balm	<i>Monarda punctata</i>	Pink						A	S	O				1-3'	***	☀☉	☹	
	Mistflower	<i>Conoclinium coelestinum</i>	Blue						A	S	O				6-12"	**	☀☉	☹☹	
	Swamp Sunflower	<i>Helianthus angustifolius</i>	Yellow							S	O				4-6'	**	☀☉	☹-☹☹☹	
	Asters	<i>Symphotrichum spp.</i>	Blue/Wht								S	O	N		2-4'	**	☀☉☀	☹-☹☹	

Annuals	Basil	<i>Ocimum basilicum</i>	Wht/Pur			J	J							2'	***	☀☉	☹-☹☹
	Borage	<i>Borago officinalis</i>	Blue			J	J	A	S					18-24"	***	☀☉	☹
	Mexican Sunflower	<i>Tithonia spp.</i>	Orange			J	J	A	S	O	N			4-6'	**	☀	☹
	Sunflowers	<i>Helianthus spp.</i>	Yellow			J	J	A	S	O				Varies	**	☀	☹



Created by the Colonial Beekeepers in partnership with the Virginia Cooperative Extension's Master Gardeners of York County & Poquoson



To learn more, may we suggest:

Key		
☀ Full Sun	☉☀ Part Sun	☀☀☀ Shade
☹ Dry	☹☹ Moist	☹☹☹ Wet

Garden Plants for Honey Bees by Peter Lindtner; Native Plants for Southeast Virginia; Pollinators of Native Plants by Heather Holm



CATNIP

TITHONIA

ASTER

HYSSOP

GOLDENROD

VERBENA