



Habitats For Honeybees



Golf is a sport that likes to give back and, that being the case, golf now has a chance to give back in a big way.

It's about bees.

In recent years, honeybee keepers have been faced with significant hive losses. No single cause has been isolated for this decline in the bee population. Honeybee losses have been attributed to numerous threats including variable weather patterns, pests such as Varroa mite, diseases, reduced habitat, lack of nutrition and exposure to some pesticides.

Commercial beekeepers, the people who provide bees to large farms, are challenged by high annual loss rates. Beekeepers who responded to a recent [survey](#) reported losing 44 percent of their hives from April 2015 to April 2016.

This gives you the first part of a concerning equation.

Here's the second part: bees pollinate a significant portion of the nation's vegetables, fruits and nuts.

Golf can't replenish the bee population alone, but golf can help.

First, a disclaimer: I know nothing about bees or wildflowers, except to stay away from the former and to admire the latter. But something seems fundamental enough to me.

There are some 15,000 golf courses in the U.S. and the majority of them probably have some unused land somewhere on the property where not even the highest handicapper hits their ball.

Golf courses can plant wildflowers on this unused land to help attract bees.



It's like the guy said in the movie: "If you build it, they will come."

These wildflower areas will provide the habitats for honeybees and native bees that also pollinate plants.

Here are some primary considerations:

1. The amount of land needed for creating habitat areas can be as little or as much as your facility has available.
2. Creating habitat is straightforward in many cases. Clearing away any weeds or undesirable plants growing in unused areas is critical. Where difficult to control plants exist, establishing habitat will be more challenging. Working with knowledgeable local conservations groups can help you find wildflower mixtures best suited for your area and determine the best planting methods. Local or state extension specialists and master gardeners can also be valuable resources.
3. The cost of labor plus the cost of wildflower seeds and some topsoil is often minimal.
4. The danger of bee stings always exists. However, golfers probably come close to bees around the clubhouse and on the course when near flower beds, flowering shrubs and trees. Creating bee habitats that are well out of the way should not substantially increase the risk of stings.
5. Wildflower areas require varied levels of maintenance depending upon the species, location, etc. Controlling weeds is the most common form of maintenance these areas require.

Planting wildflowers to create honeybee habitat is a chance for golf courses to give back.

Many golf courses throughout the U.S. and Canada have established honeybee habitats. Some even have their own beehives, allowing the facility to harvest their own honey. Golf may not be able to completely replenish the recent decline in the bee population, but creating wildflower areas to increase honeybee habitat is something that most courses can do to help.