



Bee Squad

Bee Lab

# PLANTS FOR MINNESOTA BEES

Bees rely on flowers to supply them with the food they need to survive. Some flowers (e.g. tomatoes) provide only pollen, the main source of protein for bees. Other flowers (e.g. clovers) provide both nectar and pollen, thus providing both protein and carbohydrates.

There are hundreds of different bee species in Minnesota. Different types of bees prefer different flowers. Some of these preferences are due to the physical size or shape of the bees and the flowers. Some flowers have long tubes with nectar at the bottom. Long-tongued bees are the only bees able to reach the nectar. Other preferences are based on nutritional needs. Some bees are only able to raise their young with pollen from particular plants. These bees are called “specialists”. Other bees are “generalists” and will collect pollen from a wide range of plants.

There are also seasonal differences in the activity of different bee species. Many bee species forage as adults for only a few weeks out of the year, with different species emerging throughout the spring and summer, into early fall. The rest of the year, the young are developing in nests that are underground or in cavities. Each bee was provided with a pollen ball, a mixture of pollen and nectar, left there by their mother. They will emerge the following season. Many other bee species, including honey bees and bumble bees, are present through the entire spring, summer and early fall.

**Providing a diverse array of plants will help ensure that you support a diverse array of bee species. Do your best to provide blooming flowers from April to September.**



*Agapostemon metallica* on *Symphytotrichum* sp.  
Photo by Karl Foord




*Apis mellifera* on *Dalea purpurea*  
Photo by Heather Holm



*Bombus auricomus* on *Monarda fistulosa*  
Photo by Karl Foord

This list is not inclusive of all plants that bees will visit in Minnesota. These are flowers that are particularly attractive to bees and can be easily integrated into most landscapes.

 = Tree    = Herbaceous plant    = Shrub    = Full sun    = Part-shade    = Shade

Early=March to May   Mid=June to July   Late=August to September

Scientific name	Common name	Habit	Sun	Native	Bloom time	Honey bees	Other bees
<i>Crataegus crus-galli</i>	Hawthorn			X	Early	X	X
<i>Geranium maculatum</i>	Wild geranium		 	X	Early		X
<i>Penstemon grandiflorus</i>	Large beardtounge			X	Early		X
<i>Salix discolor</i>	Pussy willow			X	Early	X	X
<i>Coreopsis lanceolata</i>	Lanceleaf coreopsis		  	X	Early to Mid	X	X
<i>Hydrophyllum virginianum</i>	Virginia waterleaf		  	X	Early to Mid	X	X
<i>Lupinus perennis</i>	Wild lupine		 	X	Early to Mid		X
<i>Aruncus dioecus</i>	Goatsbeard		  	X	Mid	X	X
<i>Echinacea angustifolia</i>	Purple coneflower			X	Mid	X	X
<i>Lobelia siphilitica</i>	Blue lobelia		 	X	Mid		X
<i>Pycnanthemum tenuifolium</i>	Slender mountain mint			X	Mid	X	X
<i>Agastache foeniculum</i>	Anise hyssop		 	X	Mid to Late	X	X
<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	Swamp milkweed		 	X	Mid to Late	X	X
<i>Borago officinalis</i>	Borage		 		Mid to Late	X	X
<i>Chamaecrista fasciculata</i>	Partridge pea			X	Mid to Late	X	X
<i>Cirsium discolor</i>	Bicolor thistle			X	Mid to Late	X	X
<i>Dalea purpurea</i>	Purple prairie clover			X	Mid to Late	X	X
<i>Eupatorium maculatum</i>	Joe-pye weed		 	X	Mid to Late	X	X
<i>Eupatorium perfoliatum</i>	Common boneset		 	X	Mid to Late	X	X
<i>Helianthus spp.</i>	Sunflowers		  	X	Mid to Late	X	X
<i>Hylotelephium telephium</i>	Autumn joy sedum		 		Mid to Late	X	X
<i>Impatiens capensis</i>	Jewelweed			X	Mid to Late	X	X
<i>Liatris aspera</i>	Rough blazingstar		 	X	Mid to Late	X	X
<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	Beebalm			X	Mid to Late	X	X
<i>Nepeta x faassenii</i>	Catmint		 		Mid to Late	X	X
<i>Origanum vulgare</i>	Oregano		 		Mid to Late	X	X
<i>Ratibida pinnata</i>	Yellow coneflower			X	Mid to Late		X
<i>Silphium perfoliatum</i>	Cup plant			X	Mid to Late	X	X
<i>Trifolium hybridum</i>	Alsike clover		 		Mid to Late	X	X
<i>Vernonia fasciculata</i>	Ironweed			X	Mid to Late	X	X
<i>Veronicastrum virginicum</i>	Culver's root		 	X	Mid to Late		X
<i>Solidago rigida</i>	Stiff goldenrod		 	X	Late	X	X
<i>Symphotrichum lateriflorum</i>	Calico aster			X	Late	X	