

# National Bee Unit

## Helping Bees

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**We are all aware of the declining population of bees not only in the UK but also throughout the World. Bees are a major plant pollinating force and a significant element in our food production. All of us can 'do our bit' to help them.**

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### What can we do to help?

Planting bee friendly plants is something that can be done by most people even if it is only planting suitable flowers in window boxes and on flat balconies.

### What plants are suitable?

A list of some is given on the reverse of this sheet. Broadly speaking, old fashioned and simple flowers rather than multi-floral types are often best.

### What should I do if I see a lethargic bee in my garden or home?

These bees are usually exhausted or starving and feeding them with a solution of pure white cane sugar and water often results in a miracle cure! The exact measurements are 1300ml of water to 1kg of sugar during the summer and 650ml of water to 1kg of sugar during autumn. Please do not use a honey and water solution as honey often contains traces of harmful pathogens, which are fatal to honey bee brood. These spores do not affect humans in any way.

### What should I do if they nest in my house or garden?

If at all possible leave bumblebee and solitary bee nest sites alone. If you do not disturb them they will leave you alone. If a swarm of honey bees settles contact a local beekeeper or the local beekeeping association who will be delighted to collect them, hive them and perhaps get you involved in the delightful craft of beekeeping. If honey bees are in the fabric of your house you will need expert advice tailored to the circumstances.

### I would like a hive of honeybees in my garden. What should I do?

If you do not wish to take up the craft many beekeepers would be delighted to place a hive in a suitable garden. If you wish to take up the craft or just want to see if it would interest you then local beekeeping associations would be delighted to help you. Details of where your local association is can be found on the British Beekeepers Association's (BBKA) website:

[http://www.bbka.org.uk/about/local\\_associations/find\\_an\\_association.php](http://www.bbka.org.uk/about/local_associations/find_an_association.php)

#### National Bee Unit

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March 2017

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## How can I encourage bumblebees and solitary bees to nest in my garden?

Nest boxes and tubes can be purchased commercially or homemade. Setting up and populating them can be fun but difficult. The bee house is a great way of doing this, especially for attracting solitary bees that will use the holes to over winter their young larvae in. There are many ways to ensure that you will attract bees to the garden and buying a bee house is a great first step. To increase the chances of this happening, hang your bee house in a sheltered place and at least three feet off of the ground with the holes (entrances) facing South or East in order to catch the morning sun. When the holes are covered up then you know you have developing bees in, so it is best to leave them alone.

## Growing Suitable Garden Flowers

With changing farming methods, the loss of hedgerows and other bee friendly habitat a large decline in all bee species and numbers has taken place over probably 250 years though it has accelerated in the last half century. There are many ways in which we can encourage wild bees into our gardens or land, the most simplest of these being to grow suitable flowers.

### The following are examples of flower species that are inviting to bees:

Comfrey, *Symphytum spp.*

Yellow archangel, *Galeobdolon luteum*

White deadnettle, *Lamium album*

Red deadnettle, *Lamium purpureum*

Sages, *Salvia spp.*

Thymes, *Thymus spp.*

Marjoram, *Origanum vulgare*

Rosemary, *Rosmarinum officinale*

Lavenders, *Lavendula spp.*

Lambs Ears, *Stachys lanata*

Skull Caps, *Scutellaria spp.*

Bugles, *Ajuga spp.*

Geraniums, *Geranium spp.*

Snapdragons, *Antirrhinum spp.*

Toad Flaxes, *Linum spp.*

Sweet Peas, *Lathyrus spp.*

Buddleia, *Buddleja davidii*

Foxglove, *Digitalis purpurea.*

### Fruit and vegetable plants are inviting including

Blackberry

Redcurrants

Blackcurrants

Raspberries

Strawberries

Apples

Pears

Broad beans

Runner beans

Peas

Meadow type wild flower seed mixes are also very beneficial and the importance of trees as a food source cannot be over emphasised. Willows in particular represent a good source of pollen early in the spring.

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