

# National Bee Unit

## FAQ 43

# 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 and for our future survival. 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 old fashioned simple flowers rather than multi-floral types.

### **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 sugar and water often results in a miracle cure! Please do not use a honey and water solution as honey often contains spores of a bacterial disease, which is fatal to honeybee 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 honeybees 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 bee keeping. If honeybees are in the fabric of your house you will need expert advise 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 situation or manage a hive which you own. 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 associations can be found on the Internet - [www.britishbee.org.uk](http://www.britishbee.org.uk)

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

Nest boxes and tubes can be purchased commercially or home made. Setting up and populating them can be fun but difficult. However there are many booklets available to help and advise. They often contain plans to make your own.

*PTO.*

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### **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. It is important that we encourage wild bees so in our own gardens or land we can grow suitable flowers and encourage others to follow our choices.

The following flower species are inviting to bees. There are many more.

Comfrey	<i>Symphytum spp.</i>
Yellow archangel	<i>Galeobdolon luteum</i>
White deadnettle	<i>Lamium album</i>
Red deadnettle	<i>Lamium purpureum</i>
Sages	<i>Salvia spp.</i>
Thymes	<i>Thymus spp.</i>
Marjoram	<i>Origanum vulgare</i>
Rosemary	<i>Rosmarinum officinale</i>
Lavenders	<i>Lavendula spp.</i>
Lambs Ears	<i>Stachys lanata</i>
Skull Caps	<i>Scutellaria spp.</i>
Bugles	<i>Ajuga spp.</i>
Geraniums	<i>Geranium spp.</i>
Snapdragons	<i>Anthirrinum spp.</i>
Toad Flaxes	<i>Linum spp.</i>
Sweet Peas	<i>Lathyrus spp.</i>
Buddleia	<i>Buddleja davidii</i>
Foxglove	<i>Digitalis purpurea.</i>

Fruit and vegetable plants are inviting including

- Blackberry
- Red currants
- Black currants
- Raspberries
- Strawberries
- Apples
- Pears
- Broad beans
- Runner beans
- Peas

Meadow type wild flower seed mixes are also very beneficial.

The importance of trees as a food source cannot be over empathised. Willows in particular represent a good source of pollen early in the spring.

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