

## Mace's Top Picks: Bee-Friendly Plant Recommendations

Mace Vaughn, Sabin resident and Pollinator Program Director at the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, shares his thoughts on top plants for pollinators. The **bolded** ones are particularly good for bees.

**Edibles:** The great thing about edible plants for pollinators is that you get the bonus of fruits, as well as habitat for bees. If you want a garden that helps bees from April through early July, you can combine all of these together (listed in the order of their bloom):

- apple
- crab-apple
- cherry (native or fruit)
- blueberries
- raspberries
- blackberries

**Native Shrubs:** Natives are great because once they are established you hardly have to do anything, but keep them trimmed to a reasonable size.

- Native willows - Ask for male plants because these produce pollen, which bumble bee queens and mining bees want. You can take cuttings from male plants or ask a nursery to pick out and set aside male plants for next year)
- **Oregon grape**
- Native maples - big leaf and vine, but plant the vine maple in as much sun as possible to improve visitation
- Native Hawthorne
- Red Currant - OK, but just OK. Visitation seems to depend upon variety, location, timing, etc. Although, it is always nice to see the hummingbirds that visit them!
- **Ceanothus** - This plant is awesome and especially amazing last summer
- **Huckleberry** - Just great and can cope with shady areas
- Kinnick kinnick - a great ground cover
- Spirea - for small bees, not honey bees, but lots of them
- **Ninebark** - indestructible and covered in sweat bees
- Native roses - do not plant ornamentals and expect abundant bees
- Mock orange - Visitation seems to depend upon the day/year. Mine saw nothing for years, then one day it was covered with bees, but only mining bees
- Snowberry
- **Cascara** - Totally boring looking flowers, but I know of at least one beekeeper in the valley who is planting a whole hedgerow of these!
- **Ocean Spray** - great and the latest blooming shrub in the region
- Mountain Ash
- **Golden Currant** - not a Westside species, but great!

### Native Wildflowers:

- *Gilia capitata* (Globe Gilia)
- *Grindelia integrifolia* (Gumweed)
- *Lomatium nudicaule* (Biscuitroot)
- **Lupinus Polyphyllus (Bigleaf Lupine)**
- *Lupinus rivularis* (Riverbank Lupine)
- *Plagiobothrys figuratus* (Popcorn Flower)
- *Potentilla gracilis* (Slender Cinquefoil)
- **Prunella vulgaris ssp. lanceolata (Common Selfheal)**
- *Ranunculus occidentalis* var. *occidentalis* (Western Buttercup)
- **Gaillardia artistat (perennial blanket flower)**
- *Sisyrinchium idahoense* (Blue Eyed Grass)
- **Euthamia occidentalis (Western Goldentop)**
- *Sidalcea campestris* (Meadow Checkerbloom)
- *Coreopsis tinctoria* ssp. *atkinsoniana*
- **Solidago canadensis (Canada Goldenrod)**
- **Symphotrichum subspicatum (Douglas Aster)**
- Showy Milkweed (*Asclepius speciosa*)

### Non-Natives:

- Lavenders - just for honey bees and short tongued bumble bees...but lots of them!
- Hyssop and Agastache - These are great plants often used for insectary plantings and they will be covered with bees...as will spearmint, but people don't like its weediness in the garden. It is also great for other beneficial insects.
- For late blooming pretty annual flowers, cosmos or sunflowers - do not pick double petaled varieties...go for simple/large sunflowers. Lemon Queen gets used a lot. With the way things dry out in Portland, having these late flowering plants means you will always see honey bees, bumble bees and long-horned bees on them...not to mention a variety of sweat bees.
- **Monarda fistulosa (Wild bergamot)** - This species is found from the Rockies to the Atlantic coast (but most seed is grown outside of Salem...odd, eh?). It is amazing and much, much better than any other available Monarda. For example, *M. didyma* is the common garden ornamental (red)...also OK, but *fistulosa* is worlds apart.
- Echinacea also is a good ornamental. But black-eyed Susans are not worth it at all.
- Similarly, the Oregon native Oregon sunshine is also touted as a great pollinator plant. Oregon sunshine has lots of flies on it, but almost never any bees. Same with yarrow: not worth it if creating a bee garden, but fine if you want to support flies/wasps for pest management. Both of these are good insectary plants for pest control.
- *Phacelia tanacetifolia* is fantastic! Plant it!
- Crimson clover, buckwheat or red clover are nice cover crops if allowed to bloom. Lots of people suggest borage as a cover. It is fine, but it is silly to choose it over phacelia. Phacelia is far superior and looks similar (i.e. not that interesting...pretty cool to me and the bees though).

- Lots of people also seem to like planting calendula. I will concede that it blooms forever, but all bees will choose these other species over the calendula flowers. I only see bees and other visitors to calendula when they are desperate (see cosmos and sunflower for better options).

Here is a link to the PNW pollinator plant list from the Xerces Society (which includes species from both east and west of the cascades).

<http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/pacificnw-plants-for-bees-xerces4.pdf>