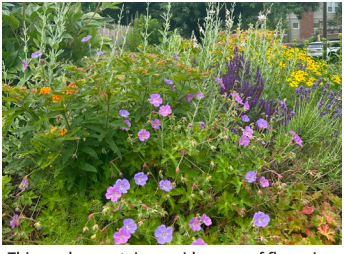
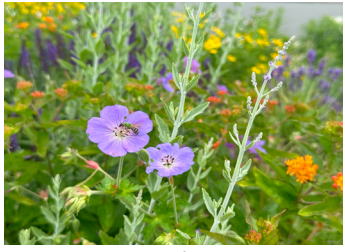
UMassAmherst | Extension Agriculture Program

BEES & FLORAL RESOURCES

Floral resources are a critical component to wild bee conservation. Bees rely on them for food, nesting materials, and beyond. Gardens, parks, hedgerows, and other green spaces have the potential to contribute to the success of bee species.



This garden contains a wide array of flowering plant species, most of which are native.



An *Agapostemon* sp. forages on a native geranium (*Geranium maculatum*).

RESOURCES BEES COLLECT FROM FLOWERS:

Pollen serves as the primary protein source for bees, particularly developing offspring. Most female bees forage for pollen; males do not.

Nectar is the main carbohydrate source for bees, including to power adult flight.

Resins are collected to use in nest construction, their microbial properties, and more.

Leaves & petals are collected by leafcutter bees (and trichomes by wool carder bees) for nest construction.

Floral oils are used by some bee species (*Macropis* sp.) to provision their offspring, in place of nectar.

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANTING FOR BEES:

Variety. This includes a variety in flowering plant species, flower height and shape, as well as a mix of annuals, perennials, and woody trees & shrubs.

Bloom time. Different bee species are active during different times of the year. To support bee species richness, aim to have something in bloom from early spring through fall.

Native status. Native flowering plant species are important for both native bee species, as well as conservation. Ornamental species can also provide forage, but may not be as well suited to all native bee species.

Site suitability. Factors like sun, shade, soil texture, climate, aspect, drought tolerance, and beyond will impact the success of flowering plant species and the subsequent availability of resources for bees. In addition, young plants may need cages if they are favored by bunnies and/or deer.

Milkweed (*Asclepias* sp.) in an urban garden. A variety of bees visit this plant to forage for nectar.

A bee forages inside of a native penstemon.

All photos in this brief by Nicole Bell.

LEARN MORE

Follow us on Instagram! **@umass_pollinators**

Visit our website *(see below)* for educational content, upcoming events, and more!

UMassAmherst

Extension Agriculture Program

ag.umass.edu/pollinators

Authored by Nicole Bell (V1; June 2024).