EIGHT EASY WAYS
TO CREATE A BEE-UTIFUL GARDEN!

HOW CAN I HELP NATIVE BEES?

Luckily, bees are not big creatures and even small changes in your yard can help increase their chances of survival! There are over 800 species of native bees in Canada, each with specific habitat requirements. Below you will find some general tips that can help many of our native species.

1. KEEP EXISTING HABITAT IN YOUR YARD

In other words "let it bee". Leave dead stems on plants in fall so solitary bees can use them as nesting habitat. Where possible, leave cavities in the ground (left by rodents) or in trees for our only native social bees—bumblebees—to nest in. These cavities also provide a good place for bees to hide during storms.

2. REMOVE WEEDS BY HAND ONLY

Avoid mechanical disturbance of the soil (like ro-to-tilling or digging) where bees may be nesting, and only remove invasive plants. Keep everything else! Dandelions and clover, for example, provide extra sources of nutrition for bees.

3. LEAVE SOME DIRT

Sunny areas of undisturbed soil are great nesting habitat for bees. Leave some uncovered and un-mulched areas of your yard so that bees can dig into the soil. Mud patches also provide a source of hydration and habitat building material for solitary bees.

4. AVOID SPRINKLER IRRIGATION

Bees can perceive imminent rain and will find protection in their nests. Sprinkler irrigation offers no warning cues and can alter visual landmarks and entrances to nests. Use trickle or drip irrigation.

5. CONSIDER THE TIMING & LOCATION OF FOOD

Design your garden so that there is a continuous succession of nectar- and pollen-producing plants flowering from spring through fall. Try to plant the flowers in clusters for efficiency. Additional food sources in the fall include fermenting fruit, so leaving some of your fallen apples, pears, etc. can be a nice gift for the bees!

6. STAY AWAY FROM PESTICIDES

Avoid buying plants that have been pre-treated with synthetic pesticides - as noted above, neonic-otinoids and other systemic pesticides can be very harmful to bees. Ask your nursery or plant supplier to confirm their plants are neonicotinoid-free.

7. MIX IT UP

Plant different flower colours, shapes and heights. Native bees are generally attracted to white, yellow, blue and purple flowers. Tongue length in different native bee species also determine their preference for certain plants. Different plant heights will attract different bee species.

8. PLANT A TREE OR SHRUB!

If you have the room, consider planting one of the many tree or shrub species that provide a reliable source of nectar for native bees.

LET IT BEE

www.LetItBee.com

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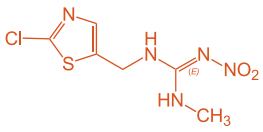
WHY CARE ABOUT NATIVE BEES?

It has been estimated that about one out of every three bites of food we eat has been directly or indirectly pollinated by animals including bees. While it is well known that introduced European honey bees are economically important, Ontario is also home to many lesser known but very important native bee species that contribute important pollination for Ontario's plants, shrubs, trees and crops each year! In addition to their significant role in food security, bees -- particularly the native ones -- are important pollinators of our native plants, including trees. Many of our native plants have co-evolved with certain native bee species and rely on them to reproduce.

WHY ARE NATIVE BEES IN TROUBLE?

Many of Ontario's bee populations are declining. The loss of these pollinators is a serious problem that requires immediate action to protect our biodiversity, our native plants and our food security. There are several threats that our native bees are facing, including:



NEONICOTINOIDS

These pesticides may be harmful to beneficial insects like bees and have been linked to bee population declines. They are systemic, meaning they spread throughout plants, and persistent, meaning they take a long time to break down.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Because many bee species have co-evolved with specific plant species, they are highly susceptible to changes in flowering seasons. They also depend on temperature cues to know when to lay their eggs, and one cold day following a warm spell can be disastrous to exposed eggs.

HABITAT LOSS

There is a continuing loss of woodlots and other natural areas. In addition, manicured lawns and paved areas are not bee-friendly and contribute to population declines.

DISEASE AND PESTS

Native bees that are already stressed are more susceptible to pests and diseases. Poorly managed European honey bee colonies can also increase the risk of disease for native bees. Honey bees are often kept in large populations and transported over long distances, allowing diseases to spread quickly. Many of these diseases can then be passed from honey bees to native bees when the pollinators visit the same flower.

MORE WAYS TO HELP!

FRIENDS OF THE EARTH

Check out Friends of the Earth's Bee Cause Campaign for more information including how to plant your own Bee&Bee in your garden or a Bee World at your work or facility. You can be a citizen scientist and help to count bumble bees especially in June for The Great Canadian Bumble Bee Count.

Visit www.foecanada.org

LEAF

If you live in Ajax, Toronto, or York Region, you can purchase a Native Bee Garden Kit to easily create bee-friendly habitat in your yard! These kits contain a variety native shrubs and perennials to support bees, and come with plans to assist you with garden design and planting.

LEAF also offers a variety of native trees and shrubs that support native bees through the Backyard Tree Planting Program. To learn more or place your order, visit www.yourleaf.org or call 1-888-453-6504.