

# WILDFLOWERS FOR ALBERTA'S WILD BEES

## FOOD RESOURCES

One of the easiest things you can do to help native bees is to plant flowers that provide a food source and in some cases, provide nesting habitat. Native plants are ideal because native bees evolved with our native plant species.

- Use this guide to select a variety of flowers that have different bloom periods, so that there are plants that are flowering all season long. Include flowers of different shapes and colours to accommodate our native bees, which also come in different shapes, sizes and colours! While we recommend selecting flowers that are native to your area (or Natural Region) if possible, any of the plants listed can be expected to grow well in a garden setting anywhere in Alberta.
- Native plant species, once established, are very low maintenance. However, initial establishment can be tricky. We recommend starting small and using a combination of native plant plugs and seeds.
- Planting clumps of native plant species together (3-8 individuals minimum/clump) to mimic natural settings. This will draw pollinators into your garden and provide efficient foraging opportunities for native bees.
- Some native bee species are called 'generalist' species because they will collect pollen and nectar from many different plant species. Other species are much more fussy, and are called 'specialists'. Some specialist species will primarily forage on a single native plant species — for example, the little black sweat bee (*Dufourea maura*) is almost completely reliant on common harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*) for food. It's important that we incorporate diverse native plants into pollinator habitat to provide food for all our native bees.
- This guide is not comprehensive. There are many other native and non-native ornamental plant species that will provide a good food source for native bees. Take time to 'bee-watch' in your yard to learn what plants you already have that bees will visit.

## NESTING HABITAT

In addition to plentiful food resources, high-quality native pollinator habitat also includes diverse sites for pollinators to build their nests in. Consider the following recommendations when designing native pollinator habitat:

- Plant species with hollow stems (inside diameter between 1 and 10mm) such as goldenrod, raspberry, and bee balm provide nesting habitat for stem nesting bees such as leaf cutter (*Megachile*), mason (*Osmia*) and small carpenter bees (*Ceratina*). Leave dead hollow-stemmed species standing, as these bee species may be hibernating inside of them — some bee species may not emerge from hibernation until spring or summer of the following year! If a spring clean-up is necessary, bundle any hollow stems and place in a pile to decompose naturally in an unused area of your yard. Alternatively, hollow stems can be inspected for signs of stem nesting bees, those with no signs of bees, can be discarded.
- Leave small patches of undisturbed bare soil in areas where the soil is sandy or compacted to provide nesting habitat for ground-nesting bees. Many of these bee species are unable to access the soil when it is covered with thick lawn grass, landscaping fabric or large pieces of mulch.
- Include dead and decaying pieces of wood in flower beds or other areas of your yard. Many bees are able to excavate tunnels in soft wood or can utilize existing beetle galleries as nesting sites.
- Build a bumble bee box or set aside a wood or branch pile that provides protected cavities where bumble bees can nest.

While all of this may seem like a lot to remember, at the end of the day the best way to support native pollinators is to have diversity in your landscaping. Using different flower species and other features (e.g., decaying logs, branch piles) will promote healthy and diverse pollinator populations in your yard!



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Species Common Name	Species Scientific Name	Type	Bloom Period	Flower Type	Flower Colour	Natural Region <i>B= Boreal</i> <i>P=Parkland</i> <i>R= Rocky Mountain</i> <i>F=Foothills</i> <i>G=Grassland</i>	Height	Sun <i>F= Full</i> <i>P=Partial</i> <i>S=Shade</i>	Moisture <i>D=Dry</i> <i>A=Average</i> <i>M=Moist</i> <i>W=Wet</i>	Spread <i>S=Slow</i> <i>M=Moderate</i> <i>F=Fast</i> <i>A=Aggressive</i>	Hollow Stems for cavity nesting bees?
Giant Hyssop	<i>Agastache foeniculum</i>	Forb	July	Deep	Purple	B, F, P	Tall	F, P	D	M, F	Y
Common Harebell	<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>	Forb	June - August	Deep	Purple	All	Medium	F, P	D, A, M	M	N
Blanket Flower	<i>Gaillardia aristata</i>	Forb	June	Shallow	Yellow	P, G, R, F	Medium	F	D, A	M, F	N
Prairie Goldenrod	<i>Solidago missouriensis</i>	Forb	August	Shallow	Yellow	P, G, B	Medium	F	D, A	F, A	Y
Cylindrical Alumroot	<i>Heuchera cylindrica</i>	Forb	July - September	Shallow	Yellow	R	Medium	F, P	A, M	M	Y
Wild Bergamot	<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	Forb	July	Deep	Pink	All	Tall	F, P	D, A, M	M, F	Y
Smooth Blue Beardtongue	<i>Penstemon nitidus</i>	Forb	June - July	Deep	Blue	G, R	Short	F	D	M	Y
Silky Scorpion Weed	<i>Phacelia sericea</i>	Forb	May - August	Deep	Purple	R	Medium	F, P	D	M, F	N
Saskatoon	<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>	Shrub	May	Shallow	White	All	Very Tall	F, P	M, A	M	N
Bearberry/ Kinnikinnick	<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	Shrub	April - June	Deep	Pink	All	Short	F, P	D, A, M	S	N
Cut-leaved Anemone	<i>Anemone multifida</i>	Forb	May - August	Shallow	Multi	All	Medium	P	D	M	N
Nodding onion	<i>Allium cernuum</i>	Forb	July - August	Shallow	White/ cream/ pink	G, R, F	Short	F, P	D, A	M	N