

Promoting and Attracting Bees¹

Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) is a phenomenon that results in the sudden disappearance of most of the bees in a hive. There are not many dead bees present in the hive and there is usually an ample store of honey. The queen may be present, attended by a few younger bees. The older worker bees that forage are missing however, creating a disturbing mystery.

While the cause is not understood, the thinking is that CCD is the result of a '*perfect storm*' of events. Some of the factors involved include importing bees bred for pollination but lacking genetic defenses for mites and diseases, moving hives throughout the year to pollinate mono-culture crops, exposing the bees to an array of chemicals which can be carried back to the hive where they can accumulate in frames that are used for up to 7 years, as well as other possible factors.

Even though many of these problems will require the help of academia and the apiary industry to solve, there are things individuals can do to help.

Improving forage and shelter for bees would be one of the most beneficial things one can do. The easiest way to ensure there are ample pollen sources available is identify and protect plants that already provide pollen from February through November. Increasing the diversity of existing flora will provide plants that bloom at different times with a variety of flower colors and shapes. The following is a list of some native plants with their blooming season.

- Red Flowering Currant - Feb. to March
- Indian Plum - February to March
- Salmonberry –March to May
- Willows - April to May
- Oregon Grape - March to May
- Maples –March to June
- Madrone –March to June
- Serviceberry –March to June
- Golden Currant –April to June
- Bitter Cherry –April to June
- Elderberry –April to June
- Crabapple - April to June
- Twinberry—May to July
- Roses –June to August
- Oceanspray –June to August
- Spirea –June to August

These are just a few suggestions. There are many other native flowering trees and shrubs that work equally well.



Some of the trees listed here, such as Maples, Madrone and Bitter Cherry also provide nesting habitat for native bees. More mature trees with pithy or hollow cavities are the best nesting sites, as well as dead snags. Nesting habitat can be created for solitary wood nesting bees by drilling 3/32" to 5/16" holes into downed, dry wood and stumps. Ground nesting bees need untilled ground for the obvious reasons. Some species spend up to 11 months a year in the ground. The best sites are well drained and sunny.



It is important to consider chemical usage in promoting bee populations. The fewer chemicals used

the better, but some are worse than others. Some active ingredients such as carbaryl are particularly toxic to bees. Some insecticide formulations are also more of a problem than others. Dusts and wettable powders are worse than solutions and granular products. Herbicides are not as bad as insecticides for bees, but can inadvertently eliminate pollen sources.

All things considered, there are some important things individuals can do to help the bees in our regions.

ⁱ WACD Plant Material Center, "Promoting and Attracting Bees," The Seedling June 2009: Volume 1, Issue 8.