



# how to attract bees

**Beneficial insects such as bees and other pollinators are a major part of a garden's ecosystem. They play a key role and without them we would not have fruit and vegetables to eat. Flowers produce nectar, basically a liquid sugar that includes a variety of vitamins, and this is a main food source for bees. When bees feed on the nectar they collect pollen from the flowers on their bodies and this is transferred from one flower to another as bees visit multiple plants. This facilitates pollination, thereby fertilising the plant so it can produce its crop of fruit or vegetables.**



In recent years there has been a decline in bees on a global scale. To help these important insects you need to take an organic approach to your gardening and limit pesticides; instead choose bee friendly products. Another critical factor is what you grow – there are varieties of plants that will help draw bees and other beneficial insects back into your garden.

## Choosing the Right Variety

Plants attract bees through their flower colour and scent. Particular flower colours that bees are attracted to in their visual spectrum are blue, purple, violet, white, yellow and green (bees also 'see' ultraviolet which humans can't).

There are five guidelines for choosing bee attractive plants for your garden.

- 1 Choose flowers with high pollen and nectar content.
- 2 Choose flowers within the bee's visual spectrum.
- 3 Grow a diverse range of plants with flowers of different shapes and sizes. Plant these different varieties so there will be flowers throughout the bee season (from early spring to late autumn).
- 4 Consider whether bees have access to the flowers. When planting your garden, place plants in a nice open situation so bees can see them. When bees are attracted to a particular species it a good idea to plant them in large groups together.
- 5 Bees are very attracted to native varieties, so try and choose plants close to the native species as possible.

## Where to Grow

Plant in sheltered locations and away from strong prevailing winds, as these can affect bees. Choose the sunniest part of the garden; it should receive at least 6-8 hours of sunlight when bees are most active.

## Plants for Bees

Here are a few examples of plants you can grow for bees.

### Annuals

These annuals are also perfect for companion planting in your vegetable garden:

Alyssum  
Calendula  
Cosmos  
Eschscholzia (California poppy)  
Nigella

### Perennials

Achillea  
Anemone  
Dahlias  
Geraniums  
Geums  
Salvias  
Verbenas

### Shrubs

These varieties are commonly grown throughout New Zealand:

Abelia  
Buddleia  
Fuchsia  
Lavenders  
Philadelphus  
Viburnum

### Herbs

Herbs are one of the best groups of plants for bees – some of their favourites are:

Borage  
Calendula  
Lavenders  
Mint  
Oregano  
Rosemary  
Sage  
Thyme

### Fruit Trees

Fruit tree flowers are also a bee favourite:

All citrus  
Apples  
Cherries (Sl)  
Pears  
Plums

### New Zealand Natives

Here in New Zealand we have some lovely natives that bees adore:

Beech  
Kamahi  
Manuka  
Pohutukawa  
Rewarewa



## Planting to Attract Bees

For healthy plants and flowers, what you plant into is very important. For best results prepare your soil a week or two before you plant out any categories of the plants we mentioned above:

- 1 To prepare your garden, remove any dead or old plants and weeds.
- 2 Apply evenly a generous layer of **Daltons Enriched Compost** or **Daltons Organic Compost** approx 40L per 2m<sup>2</sup> and thoroughly work it into the soil. You can also add in **Daltons Premium Garden Mix** or **Goldcote Planting Mix** – depending on your garden type.
- 3 As a guide, try and work it in to one spade depth. This ensures that the soil has been fully aerated and the compost has been mixed thoroughly with the existing soil, improving organic matter, nutrient content and microbial activity.
- 4 If growing in raised planters or gardens, fill up the site with a combination of **Daltons Enriched Compost** and **Daltons Premium Garden Mix**.



## Feeding and Watering

### Feeding

Strong healthy plants produce an abundance of flowers, and will be attractive to bees and less susceptible to pest and diseases. Different categories of plants need different nutrients, and therefore require specific types of fertilisers:

**For all summer annuals and perennials** – apply a side dressing of **Daltons Premium Rose & Flower Fertiliser** every 4-6 weeks during growing season (variety dependent).

**Shrubs** – apply a side dressing of **Daltons Premium Tree & Shrub Fertiliser** every 4-6 weeks during the growing season from late October to December, recommencing in late February till early April.

**Citrus trees** – apply **Daltons Garden Time™ Fruit & Citrus Fertiliser** just outside the 'drip line' of the branches every 4-6 weeks as per shrubs above.

**Fruit trees** – apply **Daltons Garden Time™ Berry Fertiliser** from mid October to early December at 4-6 weekly intervals, recommence in March through to April, applying at the same intervals.

### Watering

Water regularly to keep plants growing healthily; around twice a week until plants are well established and then drop it back to once a week (weather dependent). Avoid overwatering.

### Mulching

Apply a generous layer of **Daltons Mulch & Grow** to improve plant health and soil moisture retention.



## General Maintenance

It's important to have an organic approach when it comes to promoting bees in your garden (see our Daltons Organic Gardening guide for more information). Try and keep pesticides out – but if you do have to treat pests or diseases use low toxic or bee friendly products.

To ensure continuity of flowering, it is worth deadheading your flowers throughout the growing season.

## Gardening Terms Explained

**Annuals** – Only lasts a growing season.

**Deadheading** – The removal of finished flowers to encourage continuous succession flowering.

**Free draining soil** – Soil that is light and well broken up. Water can penetrate the soil and drain without pooling.

**Perennials** – Plants that live more than one growing season, usually two to three years or more.

**Replacement planting / succession planting** – Planting the same plant again as the previous one comes to an end.

**Side dressing** – Means to apply fertiliser to the soil on or around the sides of the plant.

## Professional tips with Xanthe White

**“Bees play such an important part in a garden's ecosystem. Give them a helping hand by avoiding pesticides and planting for year-round flowers.”**



## Products to try

Enriched Compost | Goldcote™ Planting Mix  
Daltons Premium Garden Mix  
Daltons Garden Time™ Fruit & Citrus Fertiliser  
Daltons Garden Time™ Berry Fertiliser  
Daltons Premium Tree & Shrub Fertiliser  
Daltons Premium Rose & Flower Fertiliser

