

FORAGING PLANTS FOR BEES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Month	Plant (Common name)	Pollen colour	Pollen	Nectar	Notes
January	Christmas Box		* *	*	Garden plant. No petals for protection. Requires 6 °C for bees to fly.
January	Winter Cherry		* *	*	Garden tree. Flowers in mild spells throughout the winter. Requires 6°C for bees to fly.
January/February	Hazel	Pale, greenish yellow	* *		Worked by bees for pollen only as no nectar secreted. Requires calm still weather for bees to work it. Small pollen loads as difficult to collect.
February	Snowdrops	Bright jaffa orange	* *	*	Plant in the green (with leaves) in the Spring rather than dry bulbs in the Autumn. Single flowered not double.
February	Lenten Rose Christmas Rose		* *	*	Flowers point down protecting pollen and nectar from bad weather, long flowering season.
March	Winter Flowering Shrubby Honeysuckle		* *	*	Sweetly scented garden plant. Long flowering period. Highly attractive to bees.
March	Cherry Plum		* *	* *	First true spring blossom. Valuable source of early pollen and nectar for colony build-up.
March	Willow	Yellow (Bees dusted all over)	* * *	* *	Valuable source of pollen and nectar. Needs dry weather when in flower as easily spoilt by rain. Male trees produce pollen and nectar, female trees produce nectar only
March	Almond Apricot		* *	* *	Early flowering fruit and nut trees. Blossom can be spoilt by late frost. Eagerly worked by bees.

April	Cherry Plum		**	**	As for Almond and Apricot
April	Dandelion	Orange	**	**	Possible honey crop if enough about and good sunny weather. Flowers closed on dull or bad weather. Yellow staining honey.
April/May	Apple		**	***	Possible honey crop if good weather and strong colonies.
April/May	Sycamore		***	***	Possible honey crop of high quality honey. Medium amber with a hint of green. Very thick.
May	Oil Seed Rape	Yellow (Bees dusted all over)	**	***	Warmth and moisture in the soil/air humidity help the honey flow. New varieties do not yield like the old ones. N.B. honey sets very quickly!
May	Hawthorn	Pale cream Large loads	***	***	Does not yield every year. Temperature required for most nectar is around 23°C. Sweet almond scent/taste to the honey.
May	Holly		***	***	Yields for about 2/3 weeks at most. Pollen and nectar from the male trees, nectar only from the female.
May	Horse Chestnut	Brick red	***	**	Flowers late April and May. Useful source of nectar and distinctive colour pollen. Brood larva can sometimes turn pink on a diet rich in this pollen.
May/June	Raspberry		***	***	Yields a high quality honey tasting of raspberries. Bees will work flowers even in poor weather. N.B. Honey granulates quickly.
June	Field Beans	Grey	***	***	Yields a good quality amber honey if plant density is no too high. Extra floral nectarines also found on this plant.

June	Acacia		*	***	Yields high quality pale honey in hot weather (25°C and above). Not at all if cool and cloudy. Flowers best after a hot dry continental-type summer in previous year.
June	Lime			***	Yields best in warm humid sultry weather, with moisture in the soil and overcast skies. The pollen is not generally collected. Yields honeydew in some years if dry and lots of aphids.
July	Blackberry	Slate grey	***	***	Yields pollen and nectar in bright sunny weather. Rain can wash out the pollen and nectar as the flowers point upward.
July	White Clover		**	***	Yields best with moist soil or after heavy dew. Showery weather with good spells of sun suit it best.
July	Sweet Chestnut	Yellow (Bees dusted all over)	***	***	Yields best under hot, dry conditions. Best nectar when temperature is above 27°C. Dark amber honey with bittersweet notes.
July	Rosebay Willow Herb	Blue/purple	***	***	Very pale almost water-white honey. Requires a big stand/area, usually after a fire.
August	Himalayan Balsam	White	**	***	Garden escape waterside plant. Bees get white stripe of pollen down their backs. Yields best when its roots are in/touching water.
August	Purple Loosetrife		**	**	Waterside wildflower, giving a useful supply of pollen and nectar in water meadows.
August	Mint		*	***	Water mint and other mints worked freely for nectar.

August	Heather	Biscuit grey	**	***	Requires rain in the growing season and good weather for the bees when in flower. Very thick/thixotropic strong flavoured bittersweet honey with hints of almonds when fresh (or possibly dark chocolate notes).
August/September	Sunflower		**	**	Nectar secreted most in heatwave conditions, 27°C and above. Requires good weather. Not a reliable honey crop in the UK at the moment.
September	Golden Rod		**	**	Good late source in urban areas. Contributes to the rearing of winter bees.
October	Ivy	Orange-yellow	***	***	Last to flower of the important pollen and nectar plants. Honey sets very quickly in the comb and has to be melted out. Very strong flavour but mellows after 6 months storage. Yields best in warm or mild humid weather with little or no rain.
October	Loquat		***	***	Sweetly scented garden plant. Only flowers after a dry summer.
November	Mahonia		**	**	Sweetly fragrant winter flowering garden shrub. Much worked by bees in urban areas.
December	False Castor oil Plant		**	**	Shrubby ivy relative from Japan. Yields best with shelter of wall, receiving summer shade but winter sun.
December	Winter Heliotrope		**	**	Rampant garden escape with highly scented midwinter flowers. Worked by bees when weather permits (above 6°).