



Gardening for Bees

Gardens can be havens for bees and other insects, providing abundant nectar and pollen throughout spring, summer and autumn. Many species of bumblebees are now more common in gardens than in the countryside. Here are some suggestions to help make your garden more bee-friendly.

BUILD A WOODPILE

Leave some dead wood, leaf litter and twigs in a pile in a quiet corner of the garden. This will make a good place to hibernate for over-wintering bees.

NESTING PLACES

Earth banks, fences and old walls make great nesting habitat for bumblebees.

Planting

Most garden flowers are good for bees, but not the 'double' varieties, as they don't produce nectar.



Fruit trees such as apples, cherries and plums flower early in spring - much needed after the winter!



Fruit bushes like blackcurrants, raspberries and gooseberries flower in late spring.



Herbs such as thyme, fennel and feverfew are loved by many insects, including bees.



The popular Buddleja or 'butterfly bush' has a brief summer flowering period but attracts many insects. Avoid *Buddleja davidii* which itself can be invasive - there are many other varieties available.

Further Information

The Bumblebee Conservation Trust website has lots of information about gardening and land management for bees: www.bumblebeeconservation.org

The British Beekeepers Association has released a statement on Himalayan balsam which can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/buvx667>

Make your own bee nest by following this online guide: www.buglife.org.uk/getinvolved/gardening/beenestsforgardeners

The Lancashire Invasive Species Project Website: www.lancashireinvasives.org



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Lancashire,
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Managing Himalayan Balsam & Conserving Bees



Credit: Phil Gates

Himalayan balsam, also known as 'Policeman's helmet', is a rich source of nectar and pollen for honey bees and other pollinating insects. Because it flowers late in the summer, it is widely loved by beekeepers.

However, this plant is also an invasive non-native species, which has negative effects on other aspects of biodiversity. This leaflet explains how bees can be protected and conserved, and at the same time, keep the Himalayan balsam under control.

Himalayan balsam

The pros & cons

PROS

- Provides a rich source of nectar and pollen for bees in late summer when other sources are limited.

CONS

- Grows in dense stands along river banks, shading out other flowers and reducing plant diversity.
- Dies back in winter to leave areas of bare ground vulnerable to erosion and sediment runoff into streams.
- Competes with other flowers for pollinating insects, reducing their ability to produce seeds.

In Lancashire, Himalayan balsam is very widespread and abundant.

The **Lancashire Invasive Species Project** is working to remove Himalayan balsam on the headwaters of selected streams in order to benefit water quality and the surrounding habitat.

The project is replacing the balsam with a range of wildflowers and trees that will provide a more diverse source of pollen and nectar. Below are a few of the native flowers which are brilliant for bees.



The **Ribble Rivers Trust** carries out riverside habitat schemes which protect the river bank from farm animals and creates rich riparian habitats with trees and wildflowers.

The **Lancashire Wildlife Trust** is restoring threatened lowland grassland meadows through its *Forever Meadows* project. This will benefit bees, butterflies and many other insects.

Alternatives to balsam

There are lots of native plants which also provide great pollen and nectar sources. These are much better alternatives to Himalayan balsam in natural and semi-natural habitats.



Foxglove



Ragged Robin



Knapweed



Yarrow



Crab apple



Red deadnettle



Purple loosestrife



White clover



Harebell



Scabious



Bird's foot trefoil



Willow



Ivy



Betony