

THE BEE GARDEN.

The Bee garden takes the shape of a hexagon, which echoes the cells of a honeycomb. Bees are valued for their ability to produce honey, but also have an essential part to play in the garden as pollinators for fruit and vegetable crops.

All the flowers in the Bee garden are attractive to bees by providing either pollen or nectar to both. Especially important to bees are those plants that flower early or late in the season, when the majority of plants are not in flower. Many of the plants here have other uses too; look out for the shrubby aromatic herbs and many members of the mint family.



Bees in Britain are adapted to feed on native plants but will also happily feed on many exotic flowers grown in many gardens today. Single flowered cultivars are more useful than highly bred double flowers, which provide little or no nectar.

The small structure in the centre of the garden is home to an observation hive, which is on display during the summer months.

Bees also visit the garden from the hives in the apiary behind the Soft Fruit Garden. Honey from these hives is harvested and is available for sale in the shop.

Favourite bee plants

- Alyssum
- Apple
- Blackberry
- Crimson clover
- Heather
- Mustard
- Phacelia tanacetifolia
- Rosebay willowherb

There are more than 250 species of bee in the UK. A quarter of these are listed on the CITIES Red Data list for Endangered and threatened species.



Honey Through the Ages

Honey is as old as written history, dating back to 2100 B.C. where it was mentioned in Sumerian and Babylonian cuneiform writings, the Hittite code, and the sacred writings of India and Egypt. It is presumably even older than that.

Its name comes from the English *hunig*, and it was the first and most widespread sweetener used by man. Legend has it that Cupid dipped his love arrows in honey before aiming at unsuspecting lovers.



In the Old Testament of the Bible, Israel was often referred to as "the land of milk and honey." Mead, an alcoholic drink made from honey was called "nectar of the gods," high praise indeed.

Honey was valued highly and often used as a form of currency, tribute, or offering. In the 11th century A.D., German peasants paid their feudal lords in honey and beeswax.

Although experts argue whether the honeybee is native to the Americas, conquering Spaniards in 1600 A.D. found native Mexicans and Central Americans had already developed beekeeping

methods to produce honey.

In days of old, honey has been used not only in food and beverages, but also to make cement, in furniture polishes and varnishes, and for medicinal purposes.

And, of course, bees perform the vital service of pollinating fruits, legumes, vegetables and other types of food-producing plants in the course of their business of honey production.

Honey trivia

- Honeybees must tap over two million flowers to make one pound of honey, flying a distance equal to more than three times around the world.
- The average worker bee will make only one-twelfth of a teaspoon of honey during its lifetime.
- The famous Scottish liqueur Drambuie is made with honey.

Further Information

Garden Organic Fact sheets

- GG31 – Bumblebee nest boxes
- GG30 - Creating a wildflower meadow
- GG40 – Flowers for the wildlife garden
- GG42 – Shrubs and climbers for the wildlife garden
- GG44 – Attracting beneficial insects

The Bumblebee Conservation Trust - www.bumblebeeconservation.org.uk - they produce 2 very helpful Information Sheets

- About bumblebees
- Gardening for bumblebees

Buglife - www.buglife.org.uk

Field Studies Council - www.field-studies-council.org produce a very informative Guide to the Bees of Britain (REF OPI19)

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