

Make Your Garden a Fall Honey Bee Haven

As fall approaches, it's important to prepare our homes for the change in temperature which is unavoidable. The most vulnerable feature of our home to the effects of fall and winter is our garden. For gardeners who do not want to be left with a garden ravaged by the fall and winter months, there is much we can do to prepare and prevent weather-induced damage. It's important that we not only consider our plants, but also the pollinating honey bees that are so invaluable to foliage, when conducting our fall garden prep.



(Photo via [Pixabay](#))

First, Prepare the Garden

Before we discuss the ideal plants and vegetation that will bloom during fall and winter, there are more fundamental changes we can make to help ensure those plants' blooming success. Begin with the foundation of what allows plants to sprout in the first place: the soil.

According to the DIY Network, there are [several alterations](#) that can be made to equip our soil for the cool months. Preparing soil before the fall will help avoid a hard, infertile patch of planting ground when spring arrives. The primary soil-related tasks we can complete in the fall are removing pesky weeds like morning glory and adding nutrient-rich soil heavy in manure and/or compost.

Popular Mechanics [points out](#) that the fall days offer a shorter span of sunlight. For these reasons, plant new seedlings in locations spread apart from other plants that will be competing for sun and nutrients. They also recommend adding mulch and cold frames – more details on those [here](#) – to allow plants to soak up as much water as possible.

With these fairly basic garden prep tasks taken care of, you should consider which species of plant will continue to attract the pollinators during the fall and winter months.

Ideal Fall and Winter Bloomers

Sunset offers some [suggestions](#) for those looking to maintain a bright visual aesthetic even as the weather chills. Certain plants, such as [Hydrangeas, Pagoda dogwood and Ninebarks](#), look good year-round, so keeping these sort of consistently-blooming flowers in your garden is never a bad idea.

But for the sake of attracting pollinating honey bees, some species are better than others. Savvy Gardening lays out some of their favorite late-blooming pollinating flowers, which will keep the bees coming back for the sweet, sweet nectar. Culver's root and purple top vervain are just a couple of their [five recommendations](#).

The Garden Buzz [adds](#) to the list of fall pollinators that are particularly attractive to honey bees. Their recommended species include purple aster, helenium, gaillardia, and anise hyssop, all of which are attractive in addition to their utility as bee-attractors.

Even in the winter months, bees will need a water source. Because the cold weather may freeze water, this is something that the gardener must remain vigilant toward. Replace a dish or other water source before it freezes, as this will increase the chances of attracting those valuable honey bees.

Conclusion

There are many misconceptions about both bees and fall and winter gardening. Bees are seen by many as a nuisance whose stings pose a threat to humans. The truth is that without them, much of the world's crops would fail. Similarly, many people believe that fall and winter gardening is near-impossible. The truth of that matter is, with some preparation and wise seed selection, your garden can remain viable year-round. Part of that strategic seed choice is the planting of pollinators that will keep bees around, in turn improving the chances of a given plants' sustenance through the cool months.