

Nectar Sources for Honey Bees

(reference: <http://www.douglasfarm.com/honeynectarinfo.htm>)

The nectar source in a given area depends on the type of vegetation present and the length of their bloom period. What type of vegetation will grow in an area depends on soil texture, soil pH, soil drainage, daily maximum and minimum temperatures, precipitation, extreme minimum winter temperature, and growing degree days. The plants listed below are plants that would grow in USDA Hardiness zone 5.

The classification in major or minor nectar source is very dependent on the agricultural use of the land. Agricultural crops like canola and alfalfa may be a major or minor source depending on local plantings.

Spring

Trees and shrubs

Common name	Latin name	Blooming months	Availability	Source for honey bees
Maple	<i>Acer</i>	Feb - Apr	feral	major but temperature usually too cold
Red Maple	<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Feb - Apr	feral	major but temperature usually too cold for bees to fly
Shadbush	<i>Amelanchier arborea</i>	Apr - May	feral	minor
Red Chokeberry	<i>Aronia arbutifolia</i> , <i>Photinia pyrifolia</i>	May - Jun	feral	minor
Black Chokeberry	<i>Aronia melanocarpa</i>	May - Jun	feral	minor
Ohio Buckeye	<i>Aesculus glabra</i>	Apr - May	feral	minor
Common Hackberry	<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>	Apr - May	feral	minor
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus</i>	Apr - May	feral	minor
Honey Locust	<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>	May - Jun	feral	minor
American Holly	<i>Ilex opaca</i>	Apr - Jun	feral	minor, important in southeastern US
Tulip-tree	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	May - Jun	feral	major in southern Appalachians and piedmont
Apple	<i>Malus domestica</i>	Apr - May	cultivated	minor
Crab Apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	Mar - Jun	ornamental	minor
Cherry	<i>Prunus cerasus</i>	Apr - May	feral, cultivated	minor
Pear	<i>Pyrus communis</i>	Apr - May	cultivated	minor
Black Cherry	<i>Prunus serotina</i>	Apr - May	feral, cultivated	minor
Plum	<i>Prunus</i>	Apr - May	feral, cultivated	minor
Common Buckthorn	<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i>	May - Jun	feral	minor
Black Locust	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	May - Jun	feral	major
Raspberry	<i>Rubus</i>	May - Jun	feral, cultivated	major in some areas
Blackberry	<i>Rubus</i>	May - Jun	feral, cultivated	major in some areas
Willow	<i>Salix</i>	Feb - Apr	feral, ornamental	major but temperature usually too cold for bees to fly
Pussy Willow	<i>Salix discolor</i>	Mar - Apr	feral, ornamental	major but temperature usually too cold for bees to fly
American Elm	<i>Ulmus americana</i>	Feb - Apr	feral	minor
Blueberry	<i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i>	May - Jun	cultivated	Minor

Presented By: Carroll County Beekeepers Association

<http://www.carrollcountybeekeepers.org/>

Spring

Flowers and annual crop plants

Common name	Latin name	Blooming months	Availability	Source for honey bees
Chives	<i>Allium schoenoprasum</i>	May - Sep	cultivated	minor
Asparagus	<i>Asparagus officinalis</i>	May - Jun	cultivated	minor
Milk Vetch	<i>Astragalus</i> spp.	May - Jun	feral	minor
Mustard	<i>Brassica arvensis</i> (L.)	Apr - May	cultivated	minor?
Oilseed Rape (Canola)	<i>Brassica napus</i> L., <i>Brassica rapa</i>	May - Jun	cultivated	major
Mountain Bluet	<i>Centaurea Montana</i> (Knapweed)	May	feral	major
Leopardsbane	<i>Doronicum cordatum</i>	Apr - May	feral	minor
Henbit/Deadnettle	<i>Lamium</i> sp	Mar - May	feral	minor but valuable due to earliness/frost hardiness
White Sweet Clover	<i>Melilotus alba</i>	May - Aug	feral, cultivated	major
Yellow Sweet Clover	<i>Melilotus officinalis</i>	May - Aug	feral, cultivated	major
Lungwort	<i>Pulmonaria</i> spp.	May	feral	minor
Woundwort	<i>Stachys byzantina</i>	May	feral	minor
Chickweed	<i>Stellaria Media</i>	Apr - Jul	feral	minor
Dandelion	<i>Taraxicum officinale</i>	Apr - May	feral	major
Speedwell	<i>Veronica spicata</i>	June	feral	minor
Blackhaw	<i>Viburnum prunifolium</i>	May - Jun	feral	minor

Source: [Spring flowers](#) Master beekeeper program, [Cornell University](#) Dyce Laboratory (web accessed Nov 2006)

Summer

Trees and shrubs

Common name	Latin name	Blooming months	Availability	Source for honey bees
Devils-walkingstick	<i>Aralia spinosa</i>	Jul - Aug	feral	minor
Catalpa	<i>Catalpa speciosa</i>	Jun - Jul	feral, ornamental	minor
Sumac	<i>Rhus glabra</i>	Jun - Jul	feral	major
Bee bee tree	<i>Tetradium</i>	July - Sept	ornamental	major
Basswood	<i>Tilia americana</i>	June - July	feral, ornamental	major

See also: [Honeydew source](#)

Summer

Flowers and annual crop plants

Common name	Latin name	Blooming months	Availability	Source for honeybees
Anise hyssop	<i>Agastache foeniculum</i>	Jul-Frost	feral	minor
Chives	<i>Allium schoenoprasum</i>	May - Sep	feral, cultivated	minor
Garlic chives	<i>Allium tuberosa</i>	Aug - Sep	cultivated	minor
Leadwort	<i>Amorpha fruticosa</i>	Jun - Jul	feral	minor
Milkweed	<i>Asclepias</i> spp.	Jul - Aug	feral	major
Butterfly Weed	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	Jul - Aug	feral	minor
Aster	<i>Asteraceae</i> spp.	Aug - Sep	feral, ornamental	can be major
Borage	<i>Borago officinalis</i>	Jun - Frost	feral, ornamental	minor, but can be major on cultivated area
Marigold	<i>Calendula officinalis</i>	Jun - Sep	ornamental	minor
Thistle	<i>Centaurea</i> spp.	Jul - Sep	feral	minor
Creeping thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Jul - Sep	feral (invasive in North America)	
Clethra Summersweet	<i>Clethra alnifolia</i>	Jul - Aug	feral	minor
Cucumber	<i>Cucumis</i> spp.		cultivated	minor
Melon	<i>Cucumis melo</i>	Jun-Frost	cultivated	minor
Pumpkin	<i>Cucurbita pepo</i>	Jun-Frost	cultivated	minor
Wild Carrot	<i>Daucus carota</i>	Aug - Sep	feral	minor
Blue thistle, Viper's bugloss Blue weed	<i>Echium vulgare</i>	Jun - Aug	feral	minor
Globe Thistle	<i>Echinops ritro</i>	August	feral	major
Fireweed	<i>Epilobium angustifolium</i>	Jun - Sep	feral	major
Joe-Pye weed	<i>Eutrochium</i> spp.	Aug - Sep	feral	minor
Buckwheat	<i>Fagopyrum esculentum</i>	Jul - Aug	cultivated	minor
Blue vine	<i>Gonolobus laevis</i>		feral	minor
Soybean	<i>Glycine soja</i>	Jul - Oct	cultivated	major
Sunflower	<i>Helianthus annuus</i>	Jun - Sep	feral, cultivated	minor
Basil	<i>Koellia</i>		no	minor
Lavender	<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>	Jun - Sep	cultivated	minor
Birdsfoot trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Jun - Aug	feral	minor
Alfalfa	<i>Medicago sativa</i>	July - Aug	feral, cultivated	major
Clover	<i>Melilotus</i> spp. and <i>Trifolium</i> spp.	May - Aug	feral, cultivated	major
White Sweet Clover	<i>Melilotus alba</i>		feral, cultivated	major
Yellow Sweet Clover	<i>Melilotus officinalis</i>		feral, cultivated	major
Catnip	<i>Nepeta mussinii</i>	Jun - Sep	feral, ornamental	minor
Oregano	<i>Origanum vulgare</i>	Jun - Sep	cultivated?	minor
Russian Sage	<i>Perovskia atriplicifolia</i>	Jul - Sep	ornamental	minor
Smartweed	<i>Polygonum</i> spp.	Aug - Sep	feral	major
Selfheal	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Jul - Aug	feral	minor
Mountain Mint	<i>Pycnanthemum flexuosum</i>	Aug-Frost	feral	minor
Azalea	<i>Rhododendron</i> spp.	Jun - Aug	ornamental	minor
Scrophularia	<i>Scrophularia</i> spp.	July	feral	minor
Chick weed	<i>Stellaria media</i>	Apr - Jul	feral	minor
Korean euodia	<i>Tetradium daniellii</i>	Aug - Sep	feral	minor
Germander, Thyme	<i>Teucrium canadense</i>	Jul - Aug	feral	minor
Thyme	<i>Thymus pulegioides</i>	Jun - Jul	feral, cultivated	minor
Red-Flowering Thyme	<i>Thymus praecox</i>	Jun - Jul	feral?	major

Alsike Clover	<i>Trifolium hybridum</i>		feral, cultivated	major
Crimson clover	<i>Trifolium incarnatum</i>		feral, cultivated	major
Red Clover	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Jun - Jul	feral, cultivated	major
White Clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>	Jun - Jul	feral, cultivated	major
Blue Vervain	<i>Verbena hastata L.</i>	Jul - Aug	ornamental?	minor
Tall Ironweed	<i>Vernonia altissima</i>	Aug - Sep	feral	minor
Tufted Vetch	<i>Vicia cracca</i>	Jul - Aug	feral	minor
Common Vetch	<i>Vicia sativa</i>	Jul - Aug	feral	minor

Source: [Summer flowers](#) Master beekeeper program, [Cornell University](#) Dyce Laboratory (web accessed Nov 2006)

Fall

Trees and shrubs

Common name	Latin name	Blooming months	Availability	Source for honey bees
Bee bee tree	Tetradium	July - Sept	ornamental	major

Fall

Flowers and annual crop plants

Common name	Latin name	Blooming months	Availability	Source for honey bees
Anise hyssop	<i>Agastache foeniculum</i>	Jul-Frost	feral	minor
Aster	<i>Aster</i> spp.	Sep-Frost	feral, ornamental	major
Borage	<i>Borago officinalis</i>	Jun - Frost		minor
Sweet Autumn Clematis	Clematis terniflora	Sep	ornamental	minor
Melons	<i>Cucumis melo</i>	Jun-Frost	cultivated	minor
Pumpkin	<i>Cucurbita pepo</i>	Jun-Frost	cultivated	minor
Soybean	<i>Glycine soja</i>	Jul - Oct	cultivated	minor
Appalachian Mountain Mint	<i>Pycnanthemum flexuosum</i>	Aug-Frost		minor
Goldenrod	<i>Solidago</i> spp.	Sep - Oct	feral	major
Tall Ironweed	<i>Vernonia altissima, Vernonia gigantea</i>	Aug - Oct	feral	minor

Source: [Fall flowers](#) Master beekeeper program, [Cornell University](#) Dyce Laboratory (web accessed Nov 2006)

References

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- Tew, James; Beekeeping Consultant for [Auburn University](#), Associate Professor, [Entomology, Nectar and Pollen Producing Plants of Alabama](#) A Guide for Beekeepers, Ohio State University, 1998, accessed Mar 2006
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