

Bee & Insect Friendly Plants

Over the past 6 years the Laboratory of Apiculture & Social Insects (LASI) at the University of Sussex has been carrying out research to help bees. One area of this research is on garden plants with flowers.

The research shows that garden flowers vary greatly in how many bees and insects they attract. The best attract 100 times more than the worst.

Gardeners and park managers can help bees at no cost by choosing good plants. Bee friendly plants are just as cheap, easy to grow, and attractive to humans.

But which plants? Here we have set up some examples of bee and insect friendly plants that you may like to grow in your garden.

You can see that they attract more insects than the “Not Good For Bees & Insects” varieties planted for comparison.

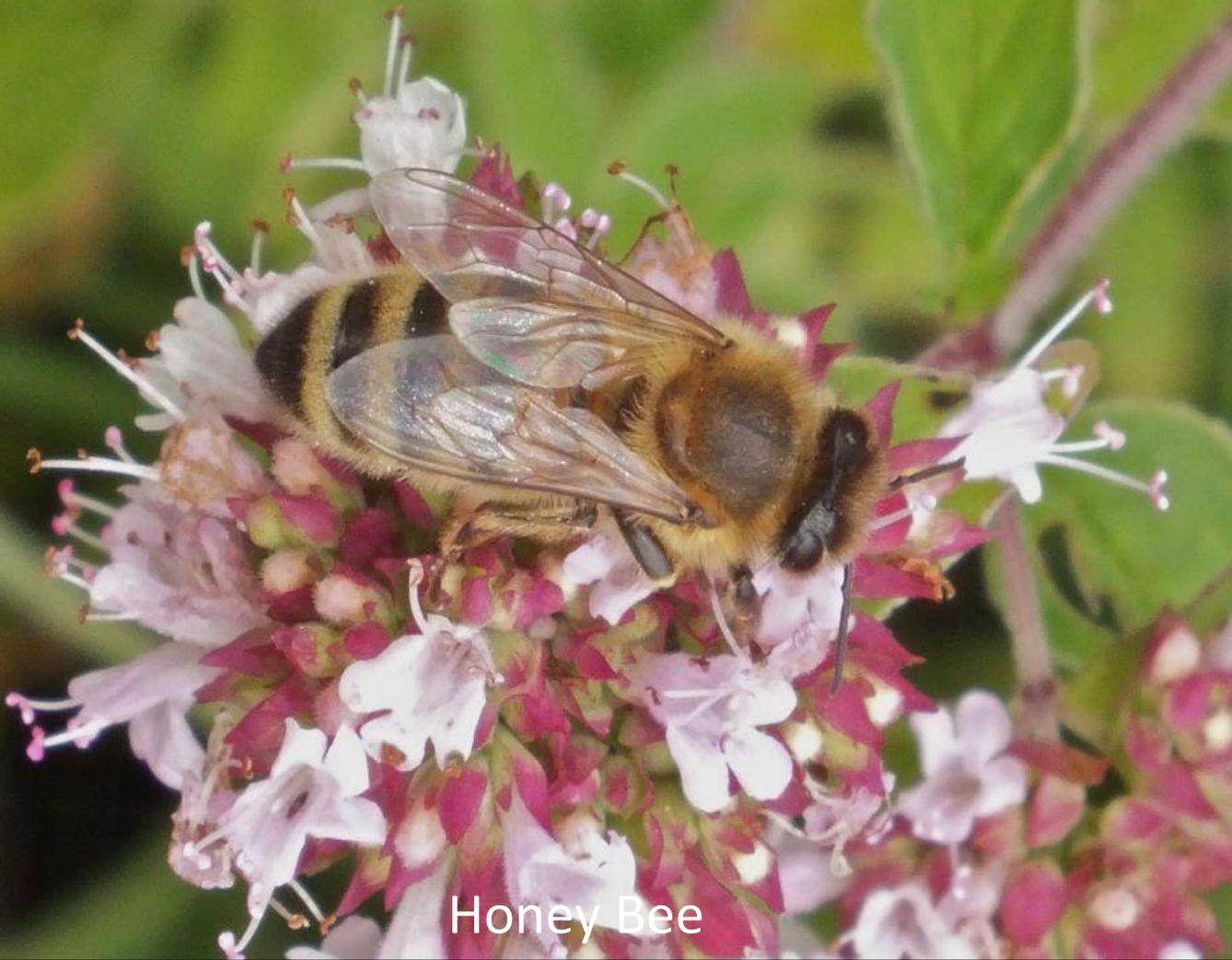
Anyone can count insects on flowers on a sunny day to compare how good they are for insects.

Different varieties attract different insects. Some attract more bumble bees than honey bees, for example. Some are especially attractive to butterflies.

www.sussex.ac.uk/lasi

<https://www.youtube.com/user/LASIBeeResearch>

Marjoram



Honey Bee



Bumble Bee



Small Copper Butterfly

Marjoram, *Oreganum vulgare*, is a native British species and is common on chalk downland. It is one of the very best garden plants for attracting insects as it attracts both large numbers and a good mix, including honey bees, bumble bees, wild bees, hover flies and butterflies. It is a perennial herb which spreads slowly and smothers weeds. It is easily propagated by division in spring.

Wallflower Bowles Mauve



Painted Lady Butterflies



Osmia Solitary Bee



Bumble Bee

Bowles Mauve, *Erysimum*, is a type of wallflower. It is one of the best garden flowers for butterflies, and also attracts honey bees, bumble bees, other bees, and hover flies. It is a small shrub that lives for about 2 years, and can be propagated via cuttings. It is unable to set seed and so has an exceptionally long bloom period, from April to November.

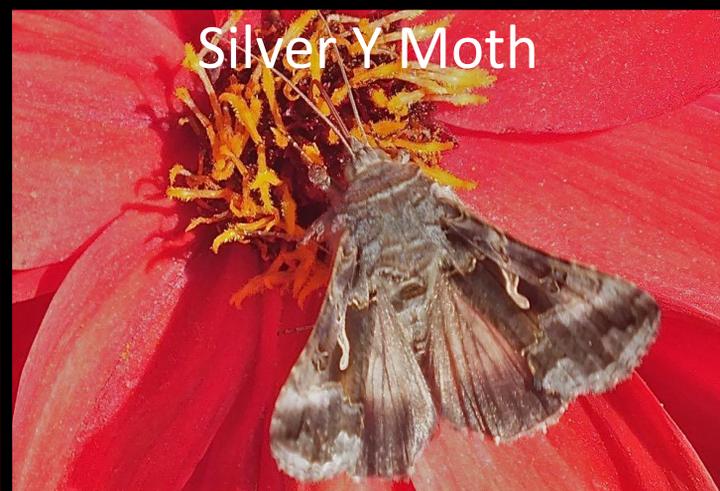
Dahlia: Bishop of Llandaff



Honey Bee



Megachilid Bee



Silver Y Moth

Many varieties of Dahlia, including Bishop of Llandaff, have open flowers and attract many bees and other insects as their pollen and nectar are easily accessible and produced in large amounts. Bishop of Llandaff attracts mainly bumble bees but also honey bees, and a few butterflies and other insects. Dahlias are from Mexico and grow from tubers, which are normally lifted after the first frosts and replanted next year.

Fleabane



Hover Fly, *Episyrphus balteatus*



Solitary Bee



Brown Argus Butterfly

Fleabane, *Pulicaria dysenterica*, is a common native British wildflower. It spreads via underground rhizomes and is easily dug up and divided in spring. It attracts a wide variety of insects including bees, hover flies, other flies, and butterflies. It can produce a mass of yellow flowers when planted in rough grassland or can be grown in a flower bed. It is a wildflower that could well be more used in gardens.

Verbena



Large White Butterfly



Hover Fly, *Rhingia*



Comma Butterfly

Verbena bonariensis is from Argentina. It is one of the best garden plants for butterflies, but also attracts many other insects especially hover flies and other types of flies. It is easily propagated by making cuttings and via seed. It will usually survive the British winter outdoors. It is a tall, elegant plant that grows rapidly.

Buddleia

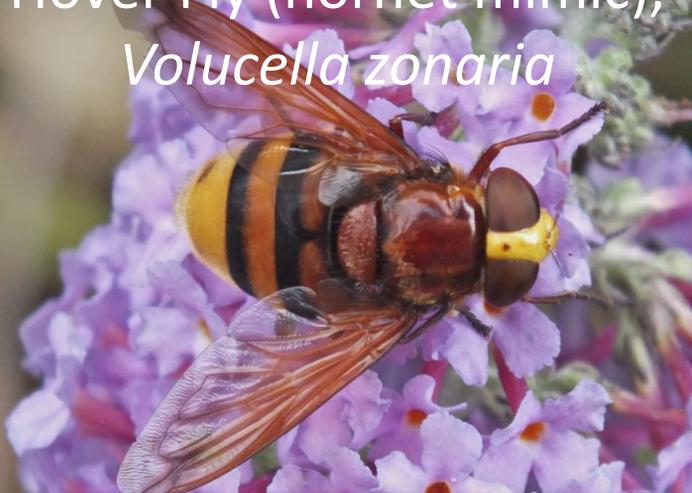


Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly

Large White Butterfly



Hover Fly (hornet mimic),
Volucella zonaria



Buddleja davidii is from China. It is very attractive to Large White, Comma, Red Admiral, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell and Painted Lady butterflies. It also attracts some other insects, but is not very attractive to bees. It is a fast growing bush. If kept low, the blooms will also attract other butterfly species that prefer to forage near the ground.

Lavender



Bumble Bee



Honey Bee



Common Blue Butterfly

The variety being grown is *Lavandula x intermedia* var. Grosso, a hybrid lavender. Hybrid lavenders grow into larger plants and attract more insects than the species lavenders *Lavandula angustifolia* and *Lavandula stoechas*. Lavender flowers attract mainly bumble bees but also honey bees, other bees, butterflies, and hover flies. Lavender is a small shrub that lives many years and is easy to look after.

Borage



Honey Bee

Holly Blue Butterfly

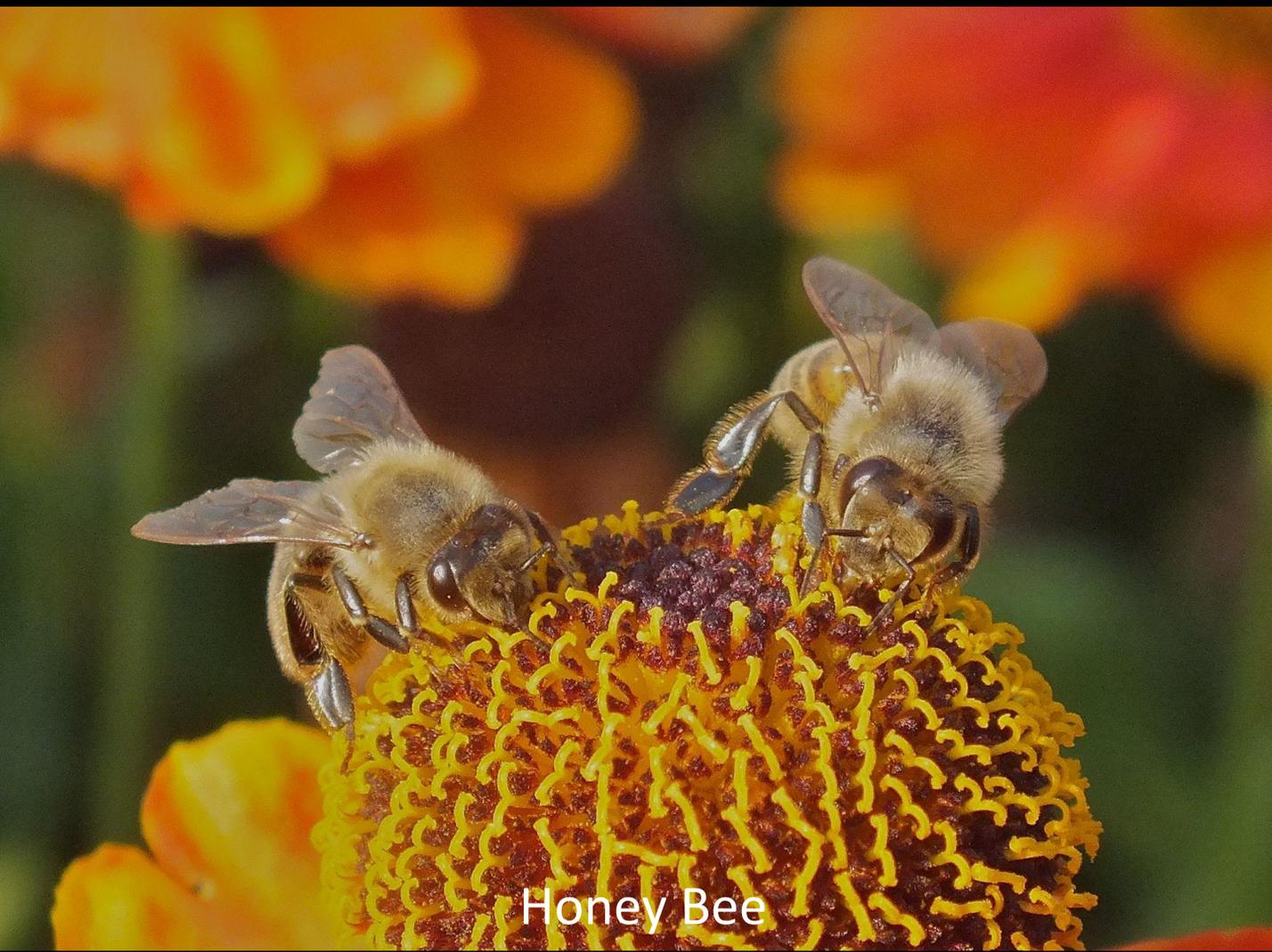


Bumble Bee



Borage, *Borago officinalis*, is an annual plant which grows very quickly from seed. It also reseeds and so can easily be grown the next year simply by allowing the seedlings to grow, or they can be transplanted. Borage is especially attractive to honey bees but attracts bumble bees and some other insects, such as butterflies and wild bees.

Helenium



Honey Bee



Small Copper Butterfly



Bumble Bee

There are many varieties of Helenium all of which have the same basic flower shape. The variety being grown is Sahin's Early Flowerer. Helenium is visited by a wide variety of insects including honey bees, bumble bees, wild bees, hover flies and butterflies. It is a herbaceous perennial which is normally able to survive the winter in the ground.

Lamb's Ear



Male Wool Carder Bee, *Anthidium manicatum*

Female Wool Carder Bee



Photo: M. Garbuzov

Bumble Bee



Lamb's Ear, *Stachys byzantia*, is from the Turkey and Iran. It is grown for ground cover due to its silver-haired leaves but also has attractive flowers. These are visited by many types of bee. One bee species that is very often seen on Lamb's Ear in summer is the wool carder bee. Males form a territory on a patch. They are large and aggressive and chase off other bees and mate with the females who forage on their patch.

Catmint



Comma Butterfly



Bumble Bee



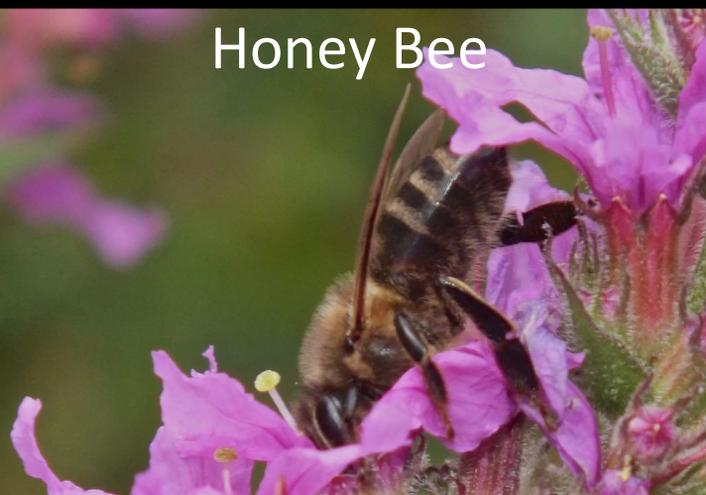
Hover Fly, *Rhingia*

From a distance Catmint, *Nepeta*, looks like Lavender. It attracts mainly bumble bees but also some butterflies and moths. It is little visited by honey bees as the flower tube is a bit long for the honey bee's tongue to reach. Catmint is a perennial herb. It is very easy to grow and to propagate by division and like Marjoram can smother out weeds. It has a long bloom period from late spring to the end of summer.

Purple Loosestrife



Small White Butterfly



Honey Bee



Hover Fly (bumble bee mimic),
Eristalis intricaria

Purple loosestrife, *Lythrum salicaria*, is a native British wildflower usually found in damp areas, but will grow well in gardens even if not in a wet area. It attracts honey bees, but also other insects including hover flies and white butterflies. It is a perennial herb that can be propagated by division in autumn. It is easy to grow and produces masses of flowers.

Hemp Agrimony



Peacock Butterfly

Hover Fly *Eristalis*



Meadow Brown Butterfly



Hemp Agrimony, *Eupatorium cannabinum*, is a native British species. It is one of the best garden plants for butterflies, and attracts a wide range of butterfly species. It also attracts many other insects including hover flies, other flies, and honey bees. It is a perennial herb and is easy to grow and to propagate in spring by division. The flowers are unusual in their colour and appearance.

Helianthus



Hover Fly *Helophilus pendulus*



Small Copper Butterfly



Honey Bee

Helianthus are sunflowers. The variety being grown is Lemon Queen. This blooms for several months starting in August. It is easily propagated by dividing in spring. It attracts a wide range of insects including bees, hover flies and butterflies. It is one of the easiest and most impressive garden plants, growing 2 metres high and with a mass of flowers and attractive foliage.

Not Good For Bees & Insects



Pelargonium



Semi-Cactus Dahlia



Pom Pom Dahlia

Many garden plants have flowers that are not attractive to bees or other insects. Among these are the Pelargoniums, and several types of Dahlia. Dahlias with “Cactus” and “Pom Pom” flowers produce little or no pollen and nectar, or produce it in a way that is not accessible to insects. Look at these plants and you will quickly see how few bees or other insects visit them. Bee and insect friendly flowers are just as cheap and pretty.