Feature

Plants to Attract Honey Bees
By Tina Stricklen

Whether you are a gardener or a background beekeeper, incorporating plants vital to honey bees is essential. Honeybees, both native and non-native, facilitate the pollination process. Simply put, without bees (and other pollinators) our gardens would not flourish.

You will want to include plants that provide both nectar and pollen. Nectar is the bee’s main source of energy. Pollen, a good source of protein and fats, is used to feed their brood. Plants that have been hybridized or bred for different characteristics are often rendered sterile and are no longer attractive to bees. Gardening with native as well as heirloom plants that provide a succession of blooms throughout each season will ensure a successful bee-friendly garden. Planting the same plant in large groups makes them easy for the bee to find. Make sure to plant them in a sunny area that isn’t prone to wind gusts. The following is a short list of perennials, annuals, herbs, trees, and shrubs that will work well in our region:

**Perennials** - Hyssop, Bee Balm, Aster, Clematis, Yarrow, Echinacea, Foxglove, Sedum

**Annuals** - Marigold, Sunflower, Geraniums, Zinnias, Poppies, Cosmos, Celosia, Daisy

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**Herbs** - Mint, Basil, Rosemary, Germander, Tansy, Lavendar, Thyme, Sage

**Trees** - Ironwood, Privet, American Holly, Black Gum, Cottonwood, Sassafras, Apple, Cherry

**Shrubs** - Buckeye, Butterfly Bush, Serviceberry, Virginia Sweetspire, Blueberry, Abelia, Fothergilla, Witchhazel

This is a short list of plant suggestions. To see a more comprehensive list of honey plants, please visit the following link: [http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/chatham/ag/SustAg/BeePlantsMay2010.pdf](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/chatham/ag/SustAg/BeePlantsMay2010.pdf). Here you will find relevant information from our close neighbors in Chatham County.

If you are interested in keeping bees, then you might want to check out one of the local beekeeping associations or attend the Beginning Beekeeping Workshop. The Johnston County Beekeepers’ Association meets the 3rd Monday of every month at 7:00 pm at the Johnston County Agricultural Center. (2736 NC Highway 210, Smithfield, NC 27577) The 5 County Beekeeper’s Association meets every 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Zebulon community Center. (301 South Arendell Ave, Zebulon, NC 27597) For further information on local chapters go to: [http://www.ncbeekeepers.org/chapters.htm](http://www.ncbeekeepers.org/chapters.htm). Also a Beginning Beekeeping Workshop will start on April 12th and continue for 8 weeks on Thursday nights from 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm. More information for those of you wishing to participate, can be found here: [http://johnston.ces.ncsu.edu/index.php?page=events&event_id=24039](http://johnston.ces.ncsu.edu/index.php?page=events&event_id=24039).

Pictures provided by: Tina Stricklen

**FEATURE PLANT**

**Blue False Indigo**

*Baptisia australis*

A native plant to the Eastern half of North America for Canada down to Georgia and west to the Mississippi river. The beautiful blue flowers have been used to make a blue dye comparable to the dye made from the flowers of indigo. It is also a welcome addition to a butterfly garden where it provides nectar for butterflies and is a host plant for wild indigo duskywing caterpillars as well as several others.

Blue false indigo is a member of the legume family. It can grow to be over three feet tall and two feet wide. It produces 1 inch blue flowers on 10 to 12 inch flower spikes in late spring or early summer. It grows best in full sun to part shade but tends to get a little floppy when it doesn’t get a minimum of six hours of direct sunlight.
The best way to propagate this plant is to collect seeds in late summer as soon as they mature and sow them directly where you want them to grow. Cuttings taken in April or May will also root fairly easily if they are taken while the growth is still soft. If seeds are not collected the gray-black seedpods will persist on the plant through fall and into winter.

Resources:
Clemson University website on Baptisia: http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/landscape/flowers/hgic1184.html


Picture:

Side View picture from Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptisia_australis

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 14 – Plant Clinic at Lowe’s Home Improvement in Garner @40/42. Master Gardeners will be there to answer your gardening questions from 10am until 2pm. Get boxes and forms to take a soil sample.

April 28 – Household Hazardous Waste Disposal Day from 8am - 1pm at the Johnston County Livestock Arena, 520 County Home Road, Smithfield NC 27577 (next to the landfill). For more information, please view "Frequently Asked Questions" document at www.johnstonnc.com/recycling/dispose.cfm#hazhouse, or contact the Johnston County Landfill at 919-938-4750

May 5 – Rain Barrel Workshop from 9:00am until 12:00pm. Sessions will begin every half hour. Learn how to make a rain barrel by watching a short video, then take what you learn and make a rain barrel to take home. Call to reserve your slot. Cost for the workshop will be $35.00 paid in advance. Location Johnston County Agriculture Center 2736 NC Highway 210, Smithfield, NC 27577. More information http://johnston.ces.ncsu.edu/content/rbworkshop or 989-5380.

May 5 – Master Gardener Plant Sale and Gardening Seminars. Plant sale begins at 8:00am and goes until 12:00pm. Plants offered are grown and propagated by Johnston County Extension Master Gardener Volunteers. Proceeds from this sell help to provide supplies for garden projects. This year we will have informational seminars starting at 9:00, 10:00 and 11:00 for more information call 919 989-5380.

April 12 – June7, Beginning Beekeeping Course meets every Thursday evening from 6:00pm until 9:00pm. Learn what you need to know to become a beekeeper. Registration for the class is $35.00. For more information contact Amie Newsome at 919 989-5380 or amie_newsome@ncsu.edu.

For any of the above events presented by Cooperative Extension: For accommodations for persons with disabilities, contact Bryant Spivey at 919 989-5380 no later than five business days before the event.

Events at Johnston Community College – These events have a $15 fee, and people interested in attending these events should pre-register on their website or by calling 919 209-2052.
Tuesday, April 3 - *Trip to Larry's Beans and NC Solar House* from 9:00am – 4:00pm

*Saturday, April 21 – Plant Sale-A-Bration* from 9:00am – 2:00pm

Propagation with Minda Daughtry - $15.00 – Wednesday, April 25 – 6:30pm – 8:30pm

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**YARD VILLAIN**

*Fire Blight*

*Erwina amylovora*

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This is one of the few bacterial diseases that occur in the landscape. This one is particularly bad because it will get into the conductive tissues of the plant and work it’s way down into the trunk. It will kill the entire plant by plugging up the water conductive tissues, thus preventing water from reaching the leaves of the plant.

Insects may spread the bacteria as they move from flower to flower pollinating. Splashing water and strong winds may also spread it. The bacteria most often infect plants through the flower, but can enter through any open wounds. The bacteria spend the winter months in the wood of infected plants. In the spring when the sap starts flowing the bacteria may be pushed out of the bark where insects land and pick up the bacteria.

The plants most often affected by fire blight are apple, pear, quince, cotoneaster, hawthorn, and firethorn (pyracantha), but any plant in the Rosaceae family of plants may be affected with this bacterial disease. Other common plants that may possibly become infected with fire blight include, serviceberry, loquat, pearbush, strawberry, Kerria, photinia, rose, raspberry, blackberry, and spirea.

Some ways to control this disease are:

Select varieties that are more resistant to the disease. Remove all infection from the source by pruning out the damaged wood several inches to a foot below the obvious damage (be sure to sterilize pruning equipment between cuts) as soon as it is seen. Control insects such as aphids, which might carry the disease. During bloom streptomycin sprays can be used on the tree to control the bacteria without harming bees. Use cultural practices such as removing water sprouts and suckers early in the season and don’t over fertilize the trees.

Resources:


Disease that Affect Trees and Shrubs

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**WHAT'S IN SEASON**

*Romanesco Broccoli*

*Brassica oleracea*

Here is one of those vegetables you may want to grow just for the aesthetic value it will add to the dinner table. Romanesco has self-repeating spirals that may remind one of a forest from the imagination of Dr. Seuss.

Not only is the pattern fascinating and a little distracting, but not even the experts can agree
on where this plant fits into the food chain. Some experts say it is a broccoli, other say it's a cauliflower, and still other say it's a cabbage. Call it what you will, it is still a cool season crop in the Cole crop family.

To grow this plant you will need to start seeds in seed trays and transplant them when they are about 3 to 5 inches tall. They produce best if they are transplanted into the garden in August where they will have about 3 months of growth before the flower head (the part that is eaten) is produced. It can also be transplanted into the garden in late February to early April for a spring crop. Unlike true broccoli, romanesco will not produce side shots when the main head is removed.

The green color is akin to that of broccoli and the nutty flavor is closer to that of cauliflower. It is delicious when eaten raw in salads or vegetable trays. Other ways to prepare it include steaming, boiling, and roasting.

Reference:

Specialty Produce website: http://www.specialtyproduce.com/produce/Broccoli_Romanesco_5687.php

Pictures are from the website: Fractal Foods: Self-Similarity on the Supermarket Shelf http://www.fourmilab.ch/images/Romanesco/

APRIL GARDEN TASKS

LAWN CARE

- Grass clippings are a great source of nitrogen. Practice grasscycling, a recycling practice where you leave the grass clippings on the lawn to return nutrients to the soil. This could reduce the amount of nitrogen needed in fertilizer for the year by 25%. Clippings may also be composted (they're a great nitrogen source), or sprinkled onto flowerbeds as long as they're not allowed to mat together.

- Warm season lawn seed may be planted toward the end of the month. Call us for a copy of 'Carolina Lawns' which tells you exactly when and how much seed to plant.

TREES, SHRUBS & ORNAMENTALS

- Renew mulch around trees, shrubs, and in garden beds. Make sure mulch does not touch the bark of trees or shrubs and extends to the drip line of young trees.

- If rambunctious perennials have reproduced too freely, remove and pot the excess plants. Pass them along to friends and family. New gardeners will be thrilled to receive free plants.

- Don’t overfeed azaleas and camellias. These shallow-rooted plants are not heavy feeders, and can be damaged by over-fertilizing. Submit a soil sample
to be tested (it's free) to determine if fertilizer is needed. Use a slow-release, balanced fertilizer immediately after blooming. Apply it around the drip line of the shrub, according to label directions.

- **Special fertilizers for 'acid-loving plants' are not necessary:** our soils are sufficiently acid naturally.
- **Watch for black spot and powdery mildew** on roses - common problems in our humid climate. Although these diseases make the foliage look bad, the plants generally do well anyway. [http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/pp/notes/Ornamental/odin002/odin002.htm](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/pp/notes/Ornamental/odin002/odin002.htm)

- **Watch for lace bugs,** the most common pest on azaleas. Look for whitish, stippled leaves with shiny dark flecks on the undersides of the leaves. If found, treat with horticultural oil (an insecticide). Be sure the spray reaches all parts of the leaves and stems, including the undersides of leaves. [http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/O&T/shrubs/ort039e/ort039e.htm](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/O&T/shrubs/ort039e/ort039e.htm)

- **Annual flowers such as zinnas, moonflowers, cleome, gloriosa daisies and sunflowers can be seeded in mid April.**

- **Let spring bulbs die down naturally.** Remove flower heads after the petals fade, and allow the foliage to die down naturally. Do not fold, twist or braid foliage. Once the foliage falls over, it can be removed. Leafy companion plants can hide yellowing bulb foliage. Tender bulbs such as ranunculus and anemone can be dug and stored when their foliage begins to yellow.

- **At the end of the month, plant summer bulbs like caladiums, lilies, gladioli, dahlia, and elephant ears.**

- **Prepare new flower beds** by loosening and amending the soil. All plants perform better when their roots can spread in loose, organic soil. Till the soil and incorporate organic matter, lime and fertilizer - according to soil test results (free kits available at this office) Plant perennials now so they can become established before hot weather sets in.

**VEGETABLES & FRUITS**

- **Check tender shoots** of vegetables and emerging perennials for aphids. If found, spray off with water.

- **Watch out for and control firelight** on apple, blackberries and pear trees (including ornamental varieties). Affected branches look like they’ve been burned with a blowtorch. Control this bacterial disease by pruning diseased limbs back to 1 foot beyond the diseased area. Be careful not to let infected foliage touch healthy foliage (yes, it’s that contagious), and disinfect tools between cuts to avoid spreading the disease. Discard rather than compost the infected limbs. [http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/pp/notes/oldnotes/fd3.htm](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/pp/notes/oldnotes/fd3.htm)

- **Plant turnips before April 15.** Plant pole beans, carrots, and winter squash after April 15.

- **Cucumbers, corn, pumpkins, snap beans, watermelon, and cantaloupe may be safely planted at the end of the month.**

- **Thin cool weather crops** that were seeded last month.

- **Pick off blossoms of strawberries planted this season.** Let