



## CROW WING COUNTY MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

# Ask the Master Gardener

JULY 2016 COLUMN

**Dear Master Gardener:**

**I have read about the decline of the bee population. What can I do to attract bees to my yard?**

In light of growing concern over the recent loss and disappearance of bees and bee colonies many backyard enthusiasts are rediscovering a relatively simple and fun way to assist these essential pollinators. Attracting and keeping bees in your backyard can be easy, especially if you already enjoy gardening.

Bees are like you and me; they need food and water to survive. Bees rely on flowers to supply them with the food they need to survive. There are hundreds of different bee species in Minnesota. Different types of bees prefer different flowers.

Bees are attracted to most flowering plants, and are especially fond of blue and yellow flowers. Other colors such as purple, white and pink also serve to attract bees. Make sure there are plants that will flower during different parts of the season to keep your garden flourishing throughout the summer and well into fall. This serves to provide a steady supply of nectar and pollen for bees. A diversity of flowers planted in close proximity to each other strongly attracts bees. Gardens with 10 or more species of flowering plants attract the greatest number of bees. The best plants are those native annual and perennial wildflowers, which naturally grow in your region.

For a list of bee friendly plants that can be easily integrated into most landscapes visit the University of Minnesota Bee Lab website [www.beelab.umn.edu](http://www.beelab.umn.edu)

Water can be provided in very shallow birdbaths or by adding a quarter inch of sand to a large saucer, such as those designed to fit beneath clay flower pots. Fill the saucer so that the water rises about a quarter inch above the sand. Add a few flat stones, some should rise above the water and some should just touch the surface. These stones will allow bees and other insects to drink without drowning. To avoid creating a mosquito breeding site, be sure to change the water at least twice a week.

**Dear Master Gardener:**

**We enjoy having dinner in the evening on our patio, so I would like to plant some nocturnal blooming flowers. What do you recommend?**

Most nocturnal blooms are white or yellow. *Hosta plantaginea* is a nocturnal blooming species of hosta that begins blooming around 4:00 p.m., rather than 7:00 a.m. like most other hostas. Because of its beautiful, white, fragrant, trumpet-shaped flowers it needs ample sun to bloom. Some of the more familiar cultivars that are derived from *Hosta plantaginea* are ‘August Moon’, ‘Aphrodite’, ‘Avocado’,

'Fragrant Bouquet', 'Grandiflora', 'Guacamole', 'Honeybells', 'So Sweet', and 'Sum and Substance'. There are nocturnal blooming *Hemerocallis* (daylily). Nocturnal daylilies open in the late afternoon, stay open throughout the night, then close in the morning. Grass-leaf daylily blooms in spring and its flowers open in the afternoon and last longer than a day. Thunberg daylily flowers open at night and close during the early part of the day. Some other nocturnal blooming daylilies are:

'Beauty to Behold' (glistening lemon yellow flowers)

'Bitsy' (miniature, bright yellow)

'Brocaded Gown' (creamy yellow with green throat)

'Jolyene Nichole' (rose pink)

'Marion Vaughn' (star-shaped, very fragrant, clear lemon-yellow)

'Meadow Sprite' (magenta-lilac with purple eyes, bright green throat, black anthers)

'Millie Schlumpf' (glistening, pale pink, light green throat, fragrant)

Nocturnal blooming annuals include *Datura* (Angel's Trumpet), Four O' Clocks, Moonflower, *Nicotiana*, and *Oenothera* (Evening Primrose).

### **Dear Master Gardener:**

#### **I love hydrangeas! Which ones perform best in our area?**

What's not to love about hydrangeas! They have showy summer blooms and many landscape uses. There are several cultivars of *Hydrangea arborescens* that do well in our climate. 'Annabelle' has white flowers and gets 5'x5', Endless Summer® Bella Anna is dark pink and gets 3'x3' and Bounty, which is white gets 3'x3'. There are at least sixteen *Hydrangea paniculata* cultivars that are hardy here. Some highly recommended ones include 'Limelight' (white to lime green matures to 8'x7'), 'Pinky Winky' (ivory matures to 9'x9'), 'Quick Fire' (white turning pink matures to 7'x7'), 'Tardiva' (ivory matures to 9'x9'), 'Unique' (ivory matures to 10'x10'), First Editions® 'Vanilla Strawberry' (white to red matures to 6'x5') and First Editions® White Diamonds® (white to green matures to 4'x5').

### **July Garden Tips**

- Be on the lookout for garden problems, including pest infestation, signs of overwatering or under watering, and diseases.
- Stop harvesting asparagus and rhubarb now to ensure productivity next year.
- Water evergreens well during hot dry weather. Heavy watering in autumn will not make up for inadequate moisture in summer.
- Deadhead flowers so they don't mature and set seeds. Removing faded flowers helps keep annuals blooming longer and can result in secondary blooms on some perennials.
- As soon as tomatoes set fruit, begin to monitor lower leaves for *Septoria* leaf spot. Remove infected foliage and spray plants with a registered protective fungicide if disease is severe. Mulching around the plants may help prevent disease organisms from splashing up from the soil.
- It's important to control weeds in lawns and gardens because they compete for moisture and nutrients and often harbor damaging insects. In the lawn, weeds typically grow rapidly, spreading while desirable grasses languish in the heat. Don't spray herbicides once the weather is hot. Spray and fumes can drift and damage non-targeted plants. Concentrate on mulching garden plants and digging tough weeds manually.

University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardeners are trained and certified volunteers for the University of Minnesota Extension Service. All information given in this column is based on university research. To ask a question, call the Master Gardener Help Line at 218-454-GROW (4769) and leave a recorded message. A Master Gardener will return your call.



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