

# How Can You Promote & Conserve Native Bees?



Promoting native bee pollinators within your orchard depends on two main factors; food plant sources, and nesting site availability. Bees are very diverse and have diverse life history requirements. By providing habitat that promotes high biodiversity you can maintain a healthy ecosystem and optimize your fruit yield. Use of chemicals for agriculture should also be done in a responsible manner to reduce losses of pollinators.

## Provide floral resources.

Haskap is an early blooming crop, but to ensure high bee populations in subsequent years there must be forage available for them all summer long. This is especially important for bumble bees; since most Haskap pollination is performed by queens, high populations of queens emerging in the spring will result in high levels of pollination for your crop. However, new queens are only produced in late summer or in the fall, long after Haskap has finished blooming. To ensure healthy colonies all year

round, and thereby promote lots of queens the following year, floral resources must be abundant throughout the summer and into the early fall. You can do this by growing other crops with different flowering times, allowing wild trees and shrubs to grow around your property, allowing flowering plants (or weeds) to grow on lawns and in surrounding ditches, and by planting a home garden or seeding native areas around the orchard. When growing an ornamental garden, note that not all flowers are equal in terms of providing food for bees. Examples of good bee plants would include

members of the sunflower family (Asteraceae) and the pea family (Fabaceae), but remember that variety is key. Lots of plants that are commonly considered weeds, such as the dandelion, make great resources for bees, so consider this before you take measures to get rid of them.

## Provide good nesting sites.

For mining bees, provide bare, uncompacted areas of sandy soil where they can build their nests. Bees will also nest in semi-natural wooded areas around the crop, such as in shelter-belts, as well as in old buildings, and you can provide artificial nest boxes for mason bees. Nesting materials are also important; for example, mason bees need a source of mud available to build partitions between the cells of their nests. This could mean a nearby stream or pond, puddles formed by rain, or artificial muddy areas that you maintain during their active period.

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