

Plants for Honeybees

Common Name	Latin Name	Type	Honey & Pollen Yields in Pounds Per Acre	Nectar / Pollen	Miscellaneous Information
Top Five" Plants for Honeybees			60-160lbs		
Borage	<i>Borago officinalis</i>	Annual herbaceous plant	200 pounds honey; 60-160 pounds pollen	Nectar	Self-seeding, medicinal plant that can over-winter. Young leaves and blue blossoms may be used in salads. Provides spring forage for honeybees, and blooms into the summer.
Echium	<i>Echium vulgare</i> is most widely known, though there are about 60 additional species	Shrub	300 - 1,000 pounds honey, depending on soil. 500-2000 lbs of dark blue pollen.	Nectar; pollen is dark blue in color	In CA, Spring blooming plant with repeat bloom. Fall bloom provides nectar for bees for overwintering. The most unusual feature of <i>Echium vulgare</i> is the protection of the nectar inside the flower from vaporization (when it's hot) or flushing away (when it rains). It is why almost for 2 months this plant is a stable source of nectar for bees. Additionally this plant produces nectar throughout the day unlike most plants which produce nectar for a short period of time. If the bees have a good access to <i>Echium</i> they can collect between 12-20 lbs of nectar a day. The concentration of sugars in the nectar vary 22.6-48.3% depending on the quality of the soil, and not on the amount of rain. The honey is light amber in color and very fragrant with a pleasant taste, and does not crystallize for 9-15 months.
Goldenrod	<i>Solidago</i> , various species; native preferred	Perennial	25 - 50 pounds honey	Mostly for nectar; pollen granules can be too big for honeybees, though will use it if nothing else available	Blooms July through September, and so is important for the timing of a colony preparing for winter. Long bloom period of 25 days; grows anywhere and can be invasive. . Honey is dark amber, strong tasting, rich in protein and high in minerals. Medicinal plant that helps with fungus, especially in urinary tract.

Melissa, also called Lemon Balm	<i>Melissa officinalis</i>	Perennial medicinal herb	150 - 250 pounds honey; 50-120 pounds pollen	Nectar	Prolonged bloom of 45 - 50 days generally in summer, but with repeat blooming in CA. Delicate honey with very light, pinkish color.
Phacelia, Tansy	<i>Phacelia tanacetifolia</i>	Annual	180 - 1,500 pounds honey, depending on soil quality and depth; 300-1000 pounds of pollen.	Nectar and pollen	One of the best spring forage sources for honeybees. Blooms 45-60 days and continuously produces nectar throughout the day. Can be seeded several times per year. Prefers three feet of topsoil.
Honeybee Plants for an Ornamental Garden					
Black Locust	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	Tree, large	800 - 1,200 pounds honey	Nectar	A consistently good nectar source year after year.
Asters	Aster, many varieties	Perennial flowers	30 - 50 pounds honey; 100 pounds pollen	Nectar and pollen	A good plant for late summer and fall, though should be planted in limited amounts. An advantage is that asters will go through frost to 28 degrees. A disadvantage is that honey from asters will crystallize very quickly, making it necessary to feed bees in the winter if the hive has too much honey from this one source.
Barberry	<i>Berberis spp.</i>	Shrub	30 - 35 pounds honey	Nectar	Provides nice color in autumn garden. Used medicinally as an anti-inflammatory. Honey has a golden amber color.
Clover, White Sweet	<i>Melilotus alba</i>	Annual cover crop and honeybee forage; can be perennial	200 - 300 pounds honey	Nectar and pollen	A top honeybee plant. Left alone and watered, can grow to 6 feet tall. Plant around garden border.
Clover, Yellow Sweet	<i>Melilotus officinalis</i>	Annual	300 - 400 pounds honey	Nectar and pollen	A top honeybee plant., which is nice to plant near the hives. Slightly higher nectar yield than white variety.
Coltsfoot	<i>Tussilago farfara</i>	Perennial herb	25-35 pounds honey; 80-300 pounds high quality pollen	Nectar and pollen	Early spring source of pollen and nectar. Medicinally used as a cough suppressant. An important honeybee plant in Russia.
Coriander	<i>Coriandrum sativum</i>	Annual culinary herb	200 - 350 pounds honey; 100 - 150 pounds pollen	Nectar and pollen	An important essential oil plant. Varroa do not like the smell of coriander, so aids bees in ridding themselves of mites.

Cornflower (also called Bachelor's Button)	<i>Centaurea cyanus</i>	Annual flower	100 - 150 pounds honey	Nectar; small amount of white pollen	Attractive garden favorite with blue flower. 'Produces a pinkish-white honey. Petals are used medicinally for the heart.
Elderberry	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Shrub	20 - 60 pounds honey; 600 - 800 pounds pollen per acre	Nectar and excellent pollen source	Blooms for 10 - 15 days. Honeybees love the pollen. The annual variety of elderberry, <i>Sambucus ebulus</i> , is also a good honeybee plant.
Fireweed	<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	Perennial	800 pounds honey	Nectar and pollen	A unique and important, showy medicinal plant. Thrives in wild areas where there is a lot of ash in the soil, and is invasive in these conditions. Short-lived in a garden setting.
Hawthorne	<i>Crataegus</i> spp.	Tree	50 - 100 pounds honey; 200 pounds pollen	Nectar and pollen	Used medicinally for cardiovascular diseases. Honey is distinguished by being very fragrant.
Hazelnut	<i>Corylus</i> spp.	Shrub	200-500 pounds pollen	Pollen	Early spring source of pollen and nectar.
Heather	<i>Erica vulgaris</i> , though many varieties	Shrub	100 - 200 pounds honey	Nectar; the pollen granules can be too large for honeybees.	All varieties are very good. Has long bloom. Heather honey is reddish brown in color. Medicinal shrub.
Lavender	<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i> , and many other species and varieties	Perennial	70 - 120 pounds honey; 250 - 300 pounds pollen.	Nectar and pollen	An important essential oil plant. Varroa do not like the smell of lavender, so aids bees in ridding themselves of mites.
Linden (Lime in Europe)	<i>Tilia</i> spp, especially <i>Tilia cordata</i>	Tree, large	800 - 1,100 pounds honey	Nectar	Produces a high volume of honey on a cycle of every five to eight years, with lower volume of nectar other years.
Milkweed	<i>Asclepias</i> spp. (55 species)	Perennial	120 - 250 pounds honey, depending on soil and if good fertilization	Nectar	All species are great for honeybees. Nectar is so abundant that it is possible to shake the blossom and actually see the nectar fall. <i>Asclepias syriaca</i> has the highest honey yield.
Mint	<i>Mentha piperata</i> , though many species and varieties	Perennial herb	150 - 200 pounds honey; <i>Mentha arvensis</i> has same nectar flow but more pollen, at 250 - 300 pounds	Nectar and pollen	Blooms for one month. An important essential oil plant.

Oak - English Oak, Common Oak ****	Quercus robur	Tree, large	50 - 150 pounds honey; 500 pounds pollen	Nectar, pollen, honeydew	**** Oaks are important trees for beekeepers to know about. They bloom in May or June and the nectar is poisonous for bees; when fed to larvae, the larvae can die. It is important to have other nectar sources for honeybees during the oak nectar flow, such as phacelia and borage. The nectar is not poisonous for humans.
Poppy, Opium	Papaver somniferum	Annual flower	20 - 30 pounds honey; 80 - 120 pounds pollen, which is dark blue in color	Nectar and pollen	Showy garden flowers.
Rose, Wild - specifically "Dog Rose"	Rosa canina	Shrub	20 - 30 pounds honey; 80 pounds pollen	Nectar and pollen	Plant several old roses as a welcome addition to an ornamental garden, though the nectar and pollen are very limited.
Sunflowers	Helianthus spp.	Annual flower	30 - 100 pounds honey; 200 - 250 pounds pollen	Nectar and pollen	Huge range of nectar variations depending on variety. Produce a "tar" which honeybees get stuck in, reducing the number of field bees. Golden to yellowish-white honey, which crystallizes easily due to high glucose content.
Thyme	<i>Thymus serpyllum, a wild creeping thyme, though many additional species and varieties</i>	Perennial herb	50 - 150 pounds honey; 200 - 250 pounds pollen	Nectar and pollen	Plant in rocks around garden.
Tulips - old species	Tulipa spp.	Bulb	20 - 50 pounds honey; 300 - 400 pounds pollen	Nectar (some) and dark, almost black, pollen in old species tulips	Honeybees like old species tulips; pollen grains are too big in modern tulips for honeybees. However, if other botanical sources, honeybees may go to other plants rather than the tulips.
Valerian	Valeriana officinalis	Perennial herb	60 - 70 pounds honey	Nectar	Note, this is the medicinal and not the magenta-colored ornamental.
Veronica	Veronica officinalis	Perennial herb	30 - 35 pounds honey; 150 pounds pollen	Nectar and pollen	Attractive, medicinal plant that is used for many ailments.
Willow	<i>Salix caprea preferred, though many other species</i>	Shrub initially, then becomes slow growing tree	100 - 150 pounds honey; 1,500 pounds pollen	Nectar and pollen	The very highest quality pollen you can find anywhere , with bloom of 10 - 15 days. Messy, as willows drop twigs and flowers.

