



## BWARS

### Featuring:

- Information on Spring species
- Food sources
- Nesting

### Suggested Flowers for Spring

**Snowdrop** (*Galanthus*)

**Grape hyacinth**  
(*Muscari botryoides*)

**Lungwort** (*Pulmonaria* sp.)

**Primrose** (*Primula vulgaris*)

**Rosemary**  
(*Rosmarinus officinalis*)

**Aubretia** (*Aubretia*)

**Flowering currant**  
(*Ribes sanguineum*)

**Bluebell** (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*)

**Forget-me-not**  
(*Myosotis arvensis*)

**Willow** (*Salix* sp.)

**Broom** (*Cytisus praecox*)

**Fruit Trees** (*Malus*, *Pyrus*, *Prunus*)

**Spring-flowering heathers** (*Erica*)

**Cotoneaster**  
(*Cotoneaster* sp.)

**Yellow Archangel**  
(*Lamium galeobdolon*)

**Columbine** (*Aquilegia*)



# Information Sheet

## Gardening for Bees - Spring

Louise Hislop

### Bees in Spring

Bees are essential for pollination in our gardens. Bumblebee queens (*Bombus* spp.) come out of hibernation and a new generation of solitary bees (various species) emerge from their nests from Feb/March onwards. They are all looking urgently for two things; a reliable food source and a suitable nest site in which to raise the next generation.

#### Food Sources

All bees need both nectar and pollen on which to feed their young. As they gather food, bees unintentionally pollinate flowers by transferring pollen from one flower to another on their hairy bodies. Unlike honeybees (*Apis mellifera*), other bees can fly in cool or damp weather so ensuring pollination of our essential food crops, especially fruit trees in spring.

Bees of different species have different lengths of tongue and so require different types of flower to forage from. Long-tongued bees feed on tubular flowers such as *Penstemon*, while short-tongued bees use flat, open flowers such as Geranium and Daisy. Gardeners can encourage bees by providing a wide variety of flowers from the list suggested here, especially if grown in a sheltered spot. Many modern highly cultivated double-flowered forms produce no pollen or nectar and so are of no use to bees or other wildlife.

Bees are particularly sensitive to chemicals so the use of pesticides and herbicides should be avoided. If essential, spray in the late evening when bees are less active and use only those based on fatty acids or plant oils and extracts where possible.

#### Nesting

Bumblebees nest at ground level in tussocky grass and below ground in pre-existing holes. Gardeners can help by not cutting back and tidying up everywhere; leave some warm, sheltered areas of rough grass and moss for the bees. Occasionally bumblebees nest in unusual places such as bird boxes, compost heaps or under sheds. Artificial nests can be provided, but are rarely successful.

Solitary bees make their own burrows in loose soil, old walls or use holes in wood, depending on the species. Artificial nests can be provided for some and are generally very successful.

- \* Make your garden a bee friendly zone
- \* Colourful plantings
- \* Continuity of forage
- \* Benefits to the gardener
- \* **Do your bit for the conservation of bees**



A queen *Bombus pratorum* at *Clematis alpina*



A female *Andrena fulva* foraging at Crab Apple



*Anthophora plumipes* mating on a *Pulmonaria* plant

Hymettus Ltd is the premier source of advice on the conservation of bees, wasps and ants within Great Britain and Ireland.

<http://hymettus.org.uk/>

**BWARS, The Bees Wasps & Ants Recording Society** is the national recording scheme which provides the only source of fully validated data on the UK bee, wasp & ant fauna.

<http://www.bwars.com/>

For further information:

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**Photos: Louise Hislop, Nico Vereecken & Nigel Jones**