



Trees useful to Bees

This leaflet lists a number of trees useful for providing pollen and/or nectar for bees and other pollinating insects. The list includes a wide range of plants suitable for a range of habitats, including small and large gardens and the wild. Brief details are given of the less common species.

Possible sizes are not given as these can vary dramatically according to the situation, soil, altitude, exposure to wind, etc. Check with a good book (see back of leaflet) before buying trees for small gardens. There are many new cultivars which may vary from the usual species.

All of these trees will normally flower in the UK, although some will need a good summer to flower well. In most cases pollen production is relatively reliable, but nectar production is not, being more affected by the location, soil and weather. Lime and hawthorn are especially fickle in their production of nectar, ranging from profuse to nothing! There is an increasing number of species now being grown in the UK which originate from hotter countries and these may be highly variable in flowering and nectar production. Some of the trees listed are not reliably hardy in colder parts of the country but with warmer summers and milder winters they are able to be grown far more widely, and may produce more nectar in good weather, being good sources of honey in their native countries

To find out more about specific plants and their cultural requirements most garden centres and libraries have a reference section with encyclopaedias of garden plants.

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Fruit Trees

All are good sources of pollen and many are also excellent nectar producers.

Almond	<i>Prunus dulcis</i>	
	Earliest to flower. Profuse nectar producer.	
Apple	<i>Malus pumila</i>	
	Can be grown as cordons and 'bush' forms suitable for small gardens. Range of varieties, flowering from early April to late May. Good nectar producers.	
Cherries	<i>Prunus cerasus</i>	
	Large trees, good nectar producers.	
Medlar	<i>Mespilus germanica</i>	May
	Large white flowers.	
Peach & nectarine	<i>Prunus persica</i>	
	Early flowering, good nectar producer.	
Pear	<i>Prunus communis</i>	Mar–Apr
	Weak nectar, rarely collected.	
Plum	<i>Prunus domestica</i>	Early Apr
	Good nectar source.	
Quince	<i>Cydonia oblonga</i>	Spring
	Good nectar source.	

Less Common Trees

These are less widely grown but are not difficult and are good bee trees. Some flower when there is little other nectar available.

Eucryphia	<i>glutinosa, E. nyamansensis</i>	Aug–Sep	NP
	Evergreen. Large, beautiful, single white flowers.		
Snowdrop tree	<i>Halesia carolina</i>	May	NP
	Pretty, small tree. Bunches of flowers along branches.		
Golden Rain tree	<i>Koelreuteria paniculata</i>	Jul–Aug	(N)
	Large, loose panicles yellow flowers.		
Hop tree	<i>Ptelea trifoliata</i>	Jun–Jul	N
	Related to <i>Tetradium</i> . Aromatic leaves, small white flowers, highly scented. Profuse nectar source.		
Pagoda tree	<i>Sophora japonica</i>	Sep	NP
	Creamy flowers		
	<i>S. tetraptera</i>		
	Smaller, needs shelter.	Spring	NP
	Deep yellow bunches of flowers.		
Chinese bee tree	<i>Tetradium (Euodia) danielli, (hupehensis)</i>	Aug–Oct	NP
	Small tree with strongly scented small white flowers. Profuse nectar source.		

Key to lists:

** tender. * not reliably hardy. Spp = species.
 (N) = nectar produced when weather good enough.
 N = nectar collected. P = pollen collected.

**Acacia	<i>A. dealbata</i> , <i>A. longifolia</i>			
	Beautiful, tender, winter flowering trees.	Winter	(N)P	
	Masses of yellow, scented flowers.			
Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>			
	Good very early source of pollen.	Jan–Mar	P	
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>			
	Common wild hedge plant.	Mar–May	(N)P	
	Masses of white flowers. Valuable source of early pollen.			
Cherries				
	Huge group, mainly decorative trees. Avoid double flowered varieties.			
	<i>Prunus avium</i> Gean, wild cherry	Apr	NP	
	<i>P. cerasus</i> Sour cherry, small shrubby tree.	May	NP	
	Profuse flowers.			
	<i>P. cerasifera</i> Myrobalm, Cherry plum.	Mar–Apr	(N)P	
	Wide range of cultivars, some with purple foliage.			
	<i>P. padus</i> Bird cherry. Long racemes of white flowers.	May	NP	
	<i>P. subhirtella autumnalis</i> Attractive small tree.	Winter	P	
	<i>P. x yeodoensis</i> Joshino cherry. Small, beautiful.	Mar–Apr	NP	
Chestnuts, Horse chestnuts	Large, attractive trees.		NP	
	<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i> White flowers.	Apr–May		
	<i>A. carnea</i> Red flowers,	slightly later.	May	
	<i>A. indica</i> Indian horse chestnut. Pink flowers.	May–Jun		
	<i>A. californica</i> Buckeye. White/pink flowers.		Jul–Aug	
Chestnut, Sweet or Spanish				
	<i>Castanea sativa</i>	Jul	(N)P	
Crab Apples	Beautiful medium sized trees.	Spring	NP	
	<i>Malus</i> spp & hybrids. Many named varieties: John Downie, Profusion, Golden Hornet.			
Eucalyptus spp.	Evergreen, aromatic foliage. Some hardy in the UK. Late summer (N)			
	<i>E. gunnii</i> , <i>E. niphophila</i> , <i>E. parviflora</i> .			
False Acacia				
	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i> Fragrant white flowers.		Jun	
	NP			
	<i>R. viscosa</i> Clammy locust.	Late Jun	NP	
	<i>R. hispida</i> Rose acacia.	May-Jun	NP	
Hawthorns	Common, wild, small, shrubby trees	May	NP	
	Erratic, but can be profuse producers of nectar.			
	<i>Crataegus oxycantha</i> , <i>C. monogyna</i> <i>C. prunifolia</i> , <i>C. crus-galli</i> , and many other species.			
Hazels	Early catkins a valuable source of pollen.	Mar–Apr	P	
	<i>Corylus avellana</i> , <i>C. maxima</i>			

Hollies	Evergreen, tiny flowers, attractive to bees.	May-Jun	NP	
	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i> , <i>I. opaca</i> and spp.			
Honey Locust	Long branched spines on trunk, scented flowers. (N)			
	<i>Gleditsia tricanthos</i>			
Indian Bean Tree	Magnificent, spreading trees with panicles of scented, fox-glove-like, speckled flowers.	Jul–Aug	NP	
	<i>Catalpa bignonioides</i> , <i>C. fargesii</i> , <i>C. ovata</i>			
Judas Tree	Pretty small tree, purple pea-flowers on bare stems.	Apr–May		
	NP			
	<i>Cercis siliquastrum</i>			
June Berry , Snowy mespilus.		Spring	(N)P	
	Beautiful tree, masses of white flowers in spring, edible fruits in June.			
	<i>Amelanchier lamarckii</i>			
Lime	Can supply large quantities of nectar when conditions are right but can be erratic. Aphids on some species produce honey-dew. (N)			
	<i>Tilia cordata</i> Small leaved lime.	Late Jul		
	§ <i>T. x euclora</i> Crimea lime. No honeydew.	Jul–Aug		
	<i>T. x europaea</i> Common lime.	Jun–Jul		
	<i>T. maximowicziana</i> Japanese lime.	Jun		
	§ <i>T. x orbicularis</i> Hybrid lime.	Jul–Aug		
	<i>T. petiolaris</i> Weeping silver lime.	Jul–Aug		
	<i>T. platyphyllos</i> Broad leaved lime.	Jun–Jul		
	<i>T. tomentosa</i> Silver lime.	Jul		
	§ Nectar in these species can stupefy bees.			
Maples	The decorative Japanese maples rarely flower in the UK, but the larger species are all excellent bee plants.	Spring	(N)P	
	<i>Acer campestre</i> Field maple, native tree.			
	<i>A. macrophyllum</i> Oregon maple.			
	<i>A. negundo</i> Box elder.			
	<i>A. opalus</i> Italian maple.			
	<i>A. platanoides</i> Norway maple.			
Mountain Ash				
	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Spring	NP	
	Many other cultivated species.			
Sweet Gum				
	<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i> and hybrids.	Spring	(N)	
Sycamore	Valuable nectar source.	May	NP	
	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>			
Tree of Heaven	Large town tree.	Jul–Aug	N	
	<i>Ailanthus altissima</i>			
Tulip Tree	Large tulip-like flowers.	Jun–Jul	(N)	
	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>			
Whitebeam				
	<i>Sorbus aria</i> Common whitebeam.	May–Jun	NP	
	<i>S. intermedia</i> Swedish whitebeam.	Jun	NP	