

How to Be a Friend to the Bees



Image via [Pixabay](#)

They've interrupted your conversations before. You and the person you're talking to see a streak of yellow and hear the telltale buzz of a bee, and one or both of you shrieks and runs to safety, especially if one of you has an allergy.

While it's easy for people to fear them due to their stingers and uncanny resemblance to wasps and hornets, bees are extremely important to the environment and our food production. Instead of bolting from bees, it's time to befriend them!

[The Park People](#) offers these simple steps you can take to help the bees.

Why are bees important?

[Bees are one of the planet's pollinators](#), which means they carry pollen and seeds from flower to flower, fertilizing plants so they grow properly and can multiply. Bees pollinate on a mass scale, which means they play a vital role in the crops that end up on your dinner table. Life & Thyme explains how your food (and your food's food) is [dependent on pollination](#). It's estimated that about one-third of the food we eat is thanks to the honeybee population.

Without bees, you wouldn't be able to enjoy a variety of vegetables, fruits, nuts, teas and coffees. Cotton would also become obsolete. Bees not only pollinate your food but food for the livestock you eat, as well as for other animals that keep the ecosystem in balance. Plants like clover and alfalfa need to be pollinated and are commonly used as feed for cattle, which makes bees important to the availability of meat and dairy products. They also help provide flourishing habitats for animals that eat the seeds and fruits from plants that are pollinated by bees.

Bee Culture points out that [colony Collapse Disorder](#), pesticides and climate change are some of the reasons for the rapid decrease in our bee population. In 2017, one species of [bumblebee](#) was added to the endangered list for the first time ever, and several other types of bees have already made the list.

What Can You Do to Help?

With the dwindling bee population, there are a few simple steps anyone can take to help ensure our pollinating friends don't continue disappearing on us.

Plant a bee-friendly garden

If you've been looking for motivation to start your own garden, what better reason than to help a disappearing pollinator? And if you're a beginner gardener, a bee-friendly garden will be easy to manage since bees are attracted to groups of the same plants. The good news? You only need to learn how to [plant a small variety of bee-attracting plants](#). Skipping the pesticides or herbicides, which are harmful to bees, means less cost for you and more health and vitality for the bees in your garden. Take note, if the space you want to use overlaps with a neighbor's or nearby community, it's wise to get a quick property survey to confirm boundary lines.

Even if you don't own your property or have your own yard, you can help bees by planting bee-friendly flowers and plants on your balcony. Using window boxes or planters can create a wonderful environment where bees can forage. You can also put out a small bath with fresh water that won't take up too much space, since bees need to drink and bathe, too.

Make sure your garden has something blooming almost all year round. If you plant a variety of flowers that bloom during different seasons, the bees will have a food source throughout the year and you'll be able to enjoy a mix of seasonal blooms.

Call a local beekeeper

If you have a beehive on your property or see one that could be compromised, call a local beekeeper instead of a pest removal service. [A beekeeper](#) will be able to safely move the hive without hurting the bees inside. A pest service will typically treat the hive with chemicals, which will kill the bees inside, thus affecting the bee population for the worse.

Another way to support bees is by purchasing local honey at farmer's markets, in addition to buying different types of produce for sale. By supporting local farmers and beekeepers, you are also supporting the local bee population.

Learn to be a beekeeper

Consider becoming a beekeeper yourself. You can start by educating yourself as to what keeping bees entails. There are several considerations before setting up a beehive. [Use this handy guide from the PerfectBee](#) to lay out your reasons and what beekeeping entails. Use the winter and fall to study up on beekeeping and order small, the \$200 setup at first, and then progress to more expensive options if you so desire after starting up in spring. If you find yourself loving the practice, you can decide to become a beekeeping entrepreneur and start selling honey. Start by reading this [easy guide on starting a new business](#).

While some may find it hard to get over the stigma attached to anything black and yellow with a stinger, keep in mind how important bees are to our planet. In order to keep the ecosystem balanced and keep food on your plate, these steps need to be taken to support the world's greatest pollinators. By doing your part to help the bees, whether through gardening or supporting your local farmers and beekeepers, you're helping sustain their world and ours.

[The Park People](#) educates the public about the importance of public parks with programs and initiatives that focus on the revitalization of these precious spaces. Connect with us to find out more! 414-273-PARK (7275)