



All The Buzz:

Creating an Urban Garden Friendly to Native Bees

WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT NATIVE BEES? Every third bite of food that we eat is brought to us courtesy of bees and their pollination services. By planting for bees, gardeners can increase their yield of their own backyard fruits and vegetables, plus they can assist in the pollination of the food crops that feed everyone. And native bees are more efficient pollinators than honeybees.

Did you know that about 100 native bee species occur in the residential gardens of Albany, Berkeley and Oakland? Urban gardens can and do serve as important habitat islands for diverse bee species, particularly if gardeners make some small accommodations to provide sufficient pesticide-free forage and nesting habitat for these essential creatures. And native bees are very unlikely to sting because, unlike honeybees, they do not have hives to protect.

The best bee gardens include a diversity of bee-friendly plants to ensure adequate pollen and nectar sources throughout the spring, summer and fall (and winter in temperate zones). In selecting plant varieties for our Native Bee Pollinator Garden, we included quite a few California natives, as these species are very attractive to our native bees. Native plants also often exhibit superior drought tolerance and hardiness. We also have some exotics that are attractive to the bees. You will notice that each variety has been planted in a cluster since bees are more attracted to clumps of flowers, and will often overlook a small individual plant, even if it is a preferred species.

Since approximately 70% of our native bees make nests in the ground, and the remaining 30% are wood-nesting, we have provisioned our pollinator area with several bee nesting blocks and suitable ground nesting sites, which consist of relatively soft, bare dirt, free of grass and mulch.

We can recommend the following plants that we are growing for you to consider for your own garden. Not only are they highly attractive to native bees, but also they are lovely and are low-water.

- Aster x frikartii (Monch) - long blooming exotic
- Echinacea purpurea (Purple Coneflower) - exotic
- Encelia californica (Bush Sunflower) – CA native
- Eriogonum grande rubescens (Red flower buckwheat) - CA native
- Erigeron glaucus (Seaside Daisy) – ‘Bountiful’, ‘Wayne Roderick’ (best) – CA native
- Eschscholzia californica (California Poppy) – CA native
- Gaillardia (Blanketflower – ‘Oranges & Lemons’, ‘Arizona Sun’ are best) - exotic
- Grindelia hirsutula (Gumplant) – CA native
- Lavandula (Lavendar – ‘Provence’, ‘Spanish’ best) – exotic
- Penstemon heterophyllus ‘Blue Springs’ – CA native
- Phacelia tancetifolia (Tansy Phacelia); highly attractive spring annual – CA native
- Salvia chamaedryoides (Germander sage) - exotic
- Salvia uliginosa (Bog sage) - exotic
- Solidago californica (California goldenrod) – CA native



Green Sweat Bee
(Agapostemon)