

Bees at risk

In the last few decades, honey bees have been having some serious problems.

Varroa mites are a parasite that lives on bees, and can kill off the bees. Varroa mites must be managed by the beekeeper, using a variety of techniques.

Colony Collapse Disorder has also been killing millions or billions of bees. Colony Collapse Disorder, or CCD, is a complicated condition. It is linked to bee's immune systems being damaged by exposure to certain kinds of pesticides.

Neonicotinoids are insecticides that are safe for humans, but toxic to insects. Bees can contact residue on plants, or eat contaminated pollen or nectar. Even very small amounts of neonicotinoids can reduce the ability of bees to fly, navigate and forage. These bees have less resistance to other bee diseases and parasites, and the whole hive may die.

To protect honey and native bees, avoid using products containing Neonicotinoids. Check the labels for imidacloprid, acetamiprid, dinotefuran, clothianidin, or thiamethoxam. Even very small amounts are dangerous.

Avoid spraying any kind of pesticide or herbicide on plants while they are flowering and bees are present. If you must spray, spray before the plants start flowering, or at night; use rowcover to prevent the bees from reaching the flowers.

Helping bees in your garden

You can help bees by growing flowering plants. Bees love wildflowers, flowering herbs, berries and flowering fruits and vegetables. Honeybee favorites include:

- apple, cherry, peach, and other fruit trees
- mint, sage, thyme, lavender, and other flowering herbs
- borage
- buckwheat (cover crop)
- strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries
- flowering broccoli, kale, and other brassicas
- sunflowers
- dandelions, clovers, and other flowering weeds
- maple and linden trees

Become a beekeeper

Beekeeping is no more difficult or expensive than growing a vegetable garden. You'll need a place to put the hive, some equipment, and of course, the bees.

There are skills you will need to learn to manage your bees. Bee Schools are offered in Corvallis and Salem, or you can learn much of what you need from books and videos.

Anyone is welcome at the Linn Benton Beekeepers Association monthly meeting, in Corvallis. For more information, see their website www.lbba.us

Within Lebanon, the city rules are the same for bees as for chickens, a permit is required (the process is currently under review).

Bee, wasp, or yellowjacket?

Many people are concerned about being stung by honeybees. However, it's often some other striped, flying insect that is bothering people, and honeybees are unfairly blamed.



Since honeybees die after they sting, they prefer not to sting. They will only sting if necessary to defend their hive.

Wasps and hornets are more aggressive. They do not die after stinging, so they have no reason not to sting, and they can sting multiple times.

Still, do not disturb honeybees or get too close to a beehive; they may get defensive within 10-20 feet of the hive. When visiting bees, avoid dark clothing and perfumes. Watch where you step if you are barefoot.

If a swarm of bees shows up at your house, a beekeeper may be willing to collect them for you. Don't spray the bees - try to find them a better home! Beekeepers will not collect yellow jackets or wasps.

Honey

Honeys differ in color and flavor depending on what blossoms the honeybees visit in search of nectar. Honey color ranges from pale gold to dark amber brown and its flavor varies from mild to strong.

Store honey at room temperature; your kitchen counter or pantry shelf is ideal. Storing honey in the refrigerator accelerates the honey's crystallization.

If your honey crystallizes, just place the honey jar in warm water and stir until the crystals dissolve.

When substituting honey for sugar in baked goods:

- Reduce the liquid in the recipe by 1/4 cup for each cup of honey used.
- Add about 1/2 teaspoon baking soda for each cup of honey used.
- Reduce oven temperature by 25 degrees to prevent over browning.

For easy measuring and cleanup, coat measuring cup or spoon with cooking spray before adding honey.



Never feed honey to babies under 1 year of age

Honey may contain spores that are harmless to children and adults, but that can't be handled by an infant's immature digestive system.

Bee Trivia

- To make one pound of honey, the bees in the colony must visit 2 million flowers, fly over 55,000 miles and will be the lifetime work of approximately 768 bees.
- A single honeybee will only produce approximately 1/12 teaspoon of honey in her lifetime.
- Honeybees travel up to about 3 miles from their hive.
- Honeybees fly 15 miles per hour.
- A single honeybee will visit 50-100 flowers on a single trip out of the hive.
- There are three types of bees in the hive; Queen, Worker, and Drone.
- The queen bee can live for several years. Worker bees live for 6 weeks during the busy summer, and for 4-9 months during the winter months.
- A populous colony may contain 40,000 to 60,000 bees during the late spring or early summer.
- Bees communicate with each other by dancing and by using pheromones (scents).
- The queen may lay 600-800 or even 1,500 eggs each day during her 3 or 4 year lifetime.
- On average, each person in the U.S. consumes about 1.3 pounds per year.
- Honey never spoils.
- Beekeeping and honey collection started in the stone age, as shown by cave paintings.

Honey and Honeybees



Honeybees produce honey, the delicious natural sweetener, and beeswax for candles and many other uses.

More importantly, perhaps, honeybees do 80% of the pollination for many important fruits and vegetables, fiber crops such as cotton, and plants eaten by cattle, such as alfalfa.

Without honeybees, we would have fewer foods, and we wouldn't have some of the most delicious less healthy foods.

Honeybees are not aggressive by nature, and will not sting unless they need to protect their hive from an intruder, or if they are provoked.