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## Summer Bloomers for Honeybee Stewards

A beautiful spring is here with all sorts of flowers eagerly waiting for the waves of pollinators who have been hibernating through the winter. There is plenty of pollen and nectar to go around in the spring, but soon, many perennials will close up their flowers, make their seeds and fruit, and prepare for the hot summer to come. A hot, dry summer is not ideal for beekeeping, or really any native bee either. For many years, there has been a slump in honey production between the clovers of spring and the sunflowers of fall. The heat and dryness of the summer make it hard for flowers to be pollinated, so most species simply choose not to bloom during these months. Honey production can slow considerably during this time. Honeybees spend more time collecting water to cool down the hive and have to visit more of a dwindling flower supply to bring home a load of nectar and pollen. While there are a few annual and perennial flowers that bloom in the summer's heat, these often require maintenance, reseeding, or space limitations. Fortunately, there are a limited few trees and bush selections that do bloom during the summer. Having some of these in a landscape can provide a bolstered food supply to not only honeybees but also the great number of other pollinators that might struggle in the summer.

Great sources for tree and bush selection information can be found at [Kansasnativeplants.com](http://Kansasnativeplants.com), K-State's Horticulture Info Center, and Kansas Forest Service websites. The included chart is most certainly not all the options but a list of possible ideas to get you thinking. An attempt was made to put them in chronological bloom order and adjust for this area. Of course, plants will bloom sooner or later depending on the weather of the season.

One of my favorite trees for pollinators is the Linden Tree, also known as Basswood. There is actually a whole family of lindens within the genus *Tilia*. Native in the U.S., we have the American Linden (*Tilia americana*), but some European lindens grow well here too, like the Large Leaf Linden (*Tilia platyphyllos*) or the Little Leaf Linden (*Tilia cordata*). There are all kinds of crosses and named varieties, and all of them are great for pollinators. Most should bloom in June and July around here when other nectar sources start to run out. Note one native, the Carolina basswood (*Tilia via Caroliniana*), might not survive this far north.

There are a few lindens in the urban landscape, but it is odd that there aren't considerably more. They are a fairly long-lived tree with a fantastic shape and look. They do well in most yard and park landscapes without much care. The basswood fruit is small and unobtrusive. When these trees bloom, expect a sweet scent and a great buzzing of pollinators of all types.



Another favorite of mine is the buttonbush. I can personally attest to the coolness of the buttonbush, having planted a row of them at my parent's farm, and we have some new ones planted at the Girard Extension office. They take a couple of years to get started but then quickly grow to big spreading bushes in just a few years. Their flowers are fluffy white, perfectly spherical, inch-diameter balls that grow in bunches. Technically, it's a composite flower, but like no other. Buttonbushes are native, growing along streambanks and marshes, and prefer moist locations. It will flower best in full sun but grows in some shade as well. Note that over time, this will become a multi-stemmed bush that can get 12' tall or more. Buttonbushes are available from the Kansas Forest Service in their spring sale.



There are plenty of other summer blooming options. Soapberry is good for some locations, but it prefers drier, rockier areas that are more common in the draws of native prairies. The silk tree or mimosa tree (*Albizia julibrissin*) is a commoner in eastern Kansas due to its puffy pink blooms. It's only excluded from the list because the blooms are better shaped for butterflies and hummingbirds and more difficult for bees, though they do try. Lead plants are among a number of species that could technically be considered a bush of the native prairie that blooms in the summer. However, it, like many prairie species, is acclimated to fire, is fairly low growing, and comes back from the crown each year. Other common bee-friendly summer bloomers you likely know about are crepe Myrtles, Magnolias, and Tulip Trees. The golden rain tree and salt cedar (not a cedar or a conifer, even) are both considered invasive by many.

As you likely already know, the Callery pear is another included tree that is considered invasive. Soon, these will be banned from being sold in garden centers, and I don't think honeybees really like them anyway. While salt cedar grows in the alkaline soils of western Kansas, golden rain trees can be found as an unintentional invader to woodlots around urban areas in eastern Kansas. For more information on trees, bushes, or any flowering plant, please give us a call at your local extension office. Also, check out [Kansasforests.org](http://Kansasforests.org) for Kansas Forest Service information.

Trees		March	April	May	June	July
Maples	Many					
Pear	Callery & Others					
Redbud						
Ash	Green & White					
Crabapple	Many					
Cherry	Black & Others					
Locust	Honey & Black					
Paw Paw						
Oak	Many					
Catalpa						
Mulberry	White & Red					
Golden Rain						
Silk Tree	Mimosa					
Basswood	Linden					
Soapberry	Western					

Bushes		March	April	May	June	July
False Indigo						
Dogwood						
Plum	Shrub Types					
Cherry	Choke					
Sumac	Many					
Rose	Wild (Multiflora)					
Elderberry						
Buttonbush						
Lead Plant						
Salt Cedar	Shrub: Invasive					

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