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Summer Bloomers for Honeybee Stewards

A hot, dry summer is not ideal for beekeeping enthusiast. Many years, there is a slump of honey production between the clovers of spring and the sunflowers of fall. The heat and dry 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, often these require maintenance, reseeding, or have space limitations. Fortunately, there are a limited few tree and bush selections that also 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.

Kansas Foresters Thad Rhodes and Ashley Belt's Summer Bloomer Picks:

Kansas Forest Service's Thad Rhodes and Ashley Belt have a couple of suggestions for summer bloomers; the basswood tree and the button bush. Many might not realize the usefulness and beauty of the basswood tree (otherwise known as Linden) or the uniqueness of the button bush. Table 1 describes the approximate bloom dates for trees in southeast Kansas and the surrounding area while table 2 describes the same for bushes. This information from the charts were obtained from Kansasnativeplants.com, K-State's Horticulture Info Center, and Kansas Forest Service websites, and then adjusted some for this area. An attempt was made to put them in chorological bloom order as well. Of course plants will bloom sooner or later depending on the weather of the season.

Basswood- Linden Tree

The basswood tree is commonly called American Linden and there are a couple of named varieties within the species. There are a few of these 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. The preferred habitat is eastern Kansas in moist soils. 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.



Flowering Period: June into July
Tree Height: Average 60' but can get taller
Origin: Native
Growth: Fast
Wood: Somewhat soft. Decent firewood but not lumber.

Buttonbush

I can personally attest to the coolness of the buttonbush, having planted a row of them at my parent's farm. They took a couple years to get started but then quickly grew to big spreading bushes in just a few years. Their flowers are fluffy white, perfectly spherical, inch diameter balls that grow in bunches. Technically a composite flower but like no other. Buttonbushes are native, growing along streambanks and marshes. They prefer the moist to wetland soils that are easy to find in southeast Kansas. Also buttonbushes are available from Kansas Forest Service in their spring sale.



Flower Period: July
Bush Height: Up to 15'
Origin: Native
Growth: Fast once established

In table 1 and 2 there are a few other summer blooming options. Soapberry is a good for some locations but it prefers drier, rocker areas that are more common in the draws of native prairies. Silk tree or mimosa tree (*Albizia julibrissin*) is a commoner to eastern Kansas with its puffy pink blooms. It's only excluded from the list because the blooms are better shaped for butterflies and

hummingbirds and difficult for bees. The golden rain tree and salt cedar (not a cedar or a conifer even) are both considered invasive by many. While salt cedar grows in the alkaline soils of western Kansas, golden rain trees can be found an unintentional invader to woodlots around urban areas in eastern Kansas. Lead plant is among a number of species that could technically be considered, as a bush of the native prairie that blooms in the summer. However it, like many prairie species, are acclimated to fire, are fairly low growing, and come back from the crown each year.

If you've read this article this far, then you're likely be interested to know that the Kansas Forest Service will be hosting a Fall Forestry Day just outside of Erie on October 13th. Topics include tree shelters, pecan groves, native species, and invasive pests. We'll have the official flyers out soon on the Kansas Forest Service and K-State Research and Extension websites, or call us for more details.

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 for Kansas Forest Service information.

Chart 1. Tree Blooming Months

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					

Chart 2. Bush Blooming Months

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	Shurb: Invasive					

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