



honey bee on blackberry



honey bee on cantaloupe ↑



squash bees on squash ↑



small carpenter bee on cantaloupe ↑



bumble bee on squash ↑

# Alabama NRCS Honey Bees & USDA Farm Bill Programs *Supporting Farmland Conservation & Pollinators*

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff work with private landowners to support conservation in agriculture and forestry. This flier highlights conservation practices to support honey bee apiaries and other pollinators on farms. <http://www.al.nrcs.usda.gov>

Honey bees are the most common managed crop pollinator. They and native bees are vital for ensuring the diversity of our food supply and need our stewardship to thrive. Farmers and beekeepers can work with USDA conservation staff to protect and enhance pollen and nectar resources to support healthy habitats on farms.

## HONEY BEES & OTHER POLLINATORS NEED

- Food through the growing season—abundant nectar and pollen
- Protection from harmful chemicals
- Access to fresh water

## HOW USDA CAN HELP

- Provide technical assistance on habitat enhancement for pollinators (planting, thinning, prescribed fire...)
- Provide financial assistance to enhance habitat through Farm Bill conservation programs such as CRP, EQIP, and CSP—all USDA conservation programs allow landowners to host apiaries
- Provide information to landowners on the threats facing honey bees and other pollinators

## A FEW CONSERVATION PRACTICES TO CONSIDER

- **Field borders**—*if applying pesticides in adjacent crops when bees are active, you may need to mow field borders if in flower to avoid harming bees*
- **Conservation cover**—*permanent plantings that may include wildflowers, shrubs, and trees*
- **Prescribed fire or forest thinning**—*opening the canopy and fire help increase flowering*
- **Riparian buffers**—*these can be especially important for pollinators during times of drought*

**Note:** It is illegal to bring honey bees into Alabama. As a “closed state,” bees must be obtained from within Alabama. *USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.*

## WHAT BEEKEEPERS CAN DO

- Talk with your apiary hosts about USDA programs for enhancing bee habitat
- Register colonies & brands
- Locate or provide a clean water source
- Post contact info on hives
- Notify occupants, landowner, and pesticide applicators of when, where, and how long hives will be on site

## WHAT LANDOWNERS CAN DO

- Consult with USDA NRCS to learn ways to support pollinators
- Consider hosting apiaries
- Reduce mowing and allow plants to go fallow whenever possible
- Plant to ensure blooms through the season and when flowering crops are not blooming (cover crops, field borders, diverse hedgerows)
- In pastures, seed flowering plants in addition to grasses, and reduce grazing periods to support healthier forage
- In forests, reduce canopy cover to encourage greater floral diversity
- Communicate pesticide applications and avoid daytime applications
- Remember native bees are also important crop pollinators—they nest in the ground and in cavities, and cannot be moved

Bees collect pollen from some crops like corn that do not need pollinators, so it is important farmers know to avoid spraying corn when bees are active.





"Alabama Apiary - Pot O' Gold"

# Alabama NRCS

## Honey Bees & USDA Farm Bill Programs

### Supporting Farmland Conservation & Pollinators (page 2)

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff work with private landowners to support conservation in agriculture and forestry. This page highlights good bee habitat and forage that can be enhanced with conservation practices to support honey bees and native pollinators such as bumble bees and orchard bees on farms.

### MORE INFORMATION

Alabama USDA NRCS

[www.al.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.al.nrcs.usda.gov)

- Contact the District Conservationist for your county

USDA NRCS Service Center locator

<http://offices.usda.gov>

USDA NRCS Insects & Pollinators

<http://tinyurl.com/insects-pollinators>

FSA Pollinator Information

<http://tinyurl.com/FSA-Pollinators>

Alabama Beekeepers Association

[www.alabamabeekeepers.com](http://www.alabamabeekeepers.com)

Alabama Extension

[www.aces.edu](http://www.aces.edu)

- *Nectar & Pollen Producing Plants of Alabama: A Guide for Beekeepers*

AL Sustainable Agriculture Network

[www.asanonline.org](http://www.asanonline.org)

- Biodiversity benefits farm production

The Longleaf Alliance

[www.longleafalliance.org](http://www.longleafalliance.org)

- Resources for longleaf restoration and enhancing understory diversity

Alabama Wildlife Federation

[www.alabamawildlife.org/](http://www.alabamawildlife.org/)

- Land stewardship assistance

Alabama Wildflower Society

[www.alwildflowers.org](http://www.alwildflowers.org)

The Xerces Society

for Invertebrate Conservation

[www.xerces.org](http://www.xerces.org)

- Pollinator Conservation & Citizen Science Resources

### GOOD BEE FORAGE

**Wildflowers** (native perennials and annuals)—verbena, beardtongue, horsemint, milkweed, sunflower, mountain mint, spiderwort, thistle, Joe-pye weed, goldenrod, aster

**Flowering shrubs**—willow, gallberry\*, blueberry\*, blackberry, plum, sumac, buttonbush, serviceberry, sweet pepperbush, summersweet, shrubby St. Johnswort, clematis (vine)

**Flowering trees**—willow, maple, redbud, hawthorn, tupelo, sourwood\*

**Cover crops and pasture forage**—buckwheat, alfalfa, clover, sweetclover, vetch, phacelia, pea, canola

**Herbs**—lavendar, basil, mint, rosemary, borage, oregano, sage, catnip, thyme, calendula, marigold

**Non-invasive weeds** (esp. winter-blooming)—dandelion, veronica, ajuga, purple deadnettle, henbit, purslane, buttonweed, various grasses

**Crops**—peach, nectarine, apple, strawberry, raspberry, blueberry, blackberry, squash, watermelon, melon, cotton, cucumber, kenaf, pumpkin, soybean, corn, Mayhaw, scuppernong, passionfruit, citrus, tomato\*, eggplant\*, pepper\*

**Crops when allowed to flower**—collards, kale, mustard, onion, chives,

**...and many other flowering plants**

\*Heath & nightshade crops are buzz pollinated by native bees

Native wildflowers, shrubs, and trees also support many other beneficial insects that reduce crop pest populations (predators, parasitoids) such as ladybugs and wasps.



honey bee on spiderwort ↑



honey bee on spiderwort ↑



bumble bee on blueberry ↑



green sweat bee on sunflower ↑



ladybird beetle (ladybug) on milkweed ↑

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