A honey bee on melon

Honey bees are the most common managed crop pollinator. They and native bees are vital for ensuring the diversity of our food supply, yet we are still losing an unsustainable percentage of bees. Farmers and beekeepers can work with USDA conservation staff to protect and enhance pollen and nectar resources to support healthy habitats on farms.

A green sweat bee on onion

Photos: Nancy Adamson, Xerces Society

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

Alabama USDA NRCS
http://www.al.nrcs.usda.gov

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
http://www.alabamabeekeepers.com/

Alabama Extension
http://www.aces.edu/

The Longleaf Alliance
http://www.longleafalliance.org/

Alabama Wildflower Society
http://www.alwildflowers.org/

Alabama Wildlife Federation
http://www.alabamawildlife.org/

The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation
www.xerces.org

NOTE: It is illegal to bring honey bees into Alabama. As a "closed state," bees must be obtained from within Alabama.

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Alabama NRCS

Honey Bees & USDA Farm Bill Programs | *Supporting Farmland Conservation & Pollinators*

"Alabama Apiary - Pot O' Gold"

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff work with private landowners to support conservation in agriculture and forestry.

This brochure highlights conservation practices to support honey bee apiaries and other pollinators on farms.

http://www.al.nrcs.usda.gov

HONEY BEES & OTHER POLLINATORS NEED

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

A honey bee on spiderwort (*Tradescantia*)

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

GOOD BEE FORAGE

(See *Nectar and Pollen Producing Plants of Alabama: A Guide for Beekeepers* (https://store.aces.edu/)

- **Wildflowers** (native perennials and annuals)—verbena, horsemint, sunflower, goldenrod, aster, mountain mint
- **Flowering shrubs**—gallberry, blueberry, blackberry, plum, sumac
- **Flowering trees**—willow, maple, redbud, hawthorn, tupelo, palmetto
- **Cover crops and pasture forage**—buckwheat, alfalfa, clover, sweetclover
- **Non-invasive weeds** (esp. winter-blooming)—dandelion, purslane, henbit
- **Crops**—peach, cotton, soybean, corn
- **Crops when allowed to flower**—collards, kale, mustard, onion

…***and many other flowering plants***

A honey bee on blackberry

Photos: Nancy Adamson, Xerces Society

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 more
- 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