

# HOME & GARDEN

## Trees that will bring the bees in droves

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Recorder Columnist

I planned to resume my beekeeping career this spring and it was with sweet hopes that we set up two hives in the backyard. We chose a sheltered spot about 50 feet from the house that we thought would be safe from marauding wildlife. In due time our two three-pound packages of bees arrived complete with queens and were installed in their new homes. All went well and the bees industriously pollinated the apple trees and berry bushes while I anticipated a heavy crop of fruit and some surplus honey that we could remove from each hive.

However, my hopes were dashed about a month or so ago when I went out to feed the poultry and saw that the hives had been torn apart and plundered. A bear had come for dinner. My husband had been hearing strange hooting noises in the woods that he said were bears. I was skeptical but he was right.

We have since been regaled with schemes for protecting our bees from bears and other wildlife which ranged from enclosing them with a good electric fence to setting out an AM radio and leaving it on. Next spring we will probably try everything and start over again.

In the meantime I have been thinking about the life of those bees that do survive. The bee population is declining, but there is something we can all do to encourage and sustain the important bee in our gardens and yards. Farmers can choose to plant white clover in their fields instead of other types of clover which are not as beneficial to the bee and the commuter can look at the acres of goldenrod, milkweed and loose

### BETWEEN THE ROWS

strife that line the roadways and fill abandoned meadows as valuable bee plants, not as noxious weeds.

The average homeowner won't want to let his precious acres run to goldenrod, but even a suburban yard can aid in feeding the beleaguered honey bee while still providing all that is useful and attractive. Trees are an important source of nectar and pollen for bees, especially since many of them bloom in the very early spring when garden flowers are still just a dream.

Tree blossoms are not always very noticeable, but for me spring is finally on the way when the maple sap stops running and the tiny red maple blossoms inconspicuously appear, but seeming to tinge the whole tree with their deep subtle color. Surely there is no argument that a sugar maple is one of the most desirable shade trees to have in a yard. Though they do not grow fast, they are extremely long-lived and will reach a height of 125 feet. In the fall there is nothing to match the spectacular and vivid coloring that has made New England so famous.

The tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) is a fast grower and will put out as much as 50 feet in 15 years. It will eventually grow to a height of 120 feet and it is particularly good in the yard because the branches are high making a very light shade that will not kill the grass growing below. Again, the greenish tulip-shaped flowers that grow toward the top of the tree are not particularly noticeable, but they are much visited by bees.

Sometimes a tree has to be planted that is sturdy enough to survive a city environment. The honey locust is one tree that is not necessarily discouraged by city traffic fumes and soot. When I lived on Grinnell Street a number of years ago, the town was replacing the diseased elms that had been taken down and we chose a honey locust because it was so attractive to bees and its fine textured foliage was so pleasing to us. It will reach a height of 80-100 feet and is not very demanding of the soil.

The flowering dogwood blooms very early in the spring and these small trees are covered with creamy white blossoms before the leaves come out and they make a lovely specimen tree in the yard. Dogwood is not only beautiful in the early spring; in the fall the leaves turn a deep crimson and the branches are full of tight scarlet fruits that are attractive to birds and that will last into the winter.

There is nothing as graceful as a weeping willow. It obviously will tolerate a damp location and it is very fast growing. This spring our neighbor cut a 20 foot limb off his weeping willow and gave it to us. We cut off a number of branches and stuck them in the ground around our pond without much ceremony, including the large limb. The weather was dry and we thought they had died but on a recent pondside walk we discovered that almost all of them were putting out a lot of new growth. One caveat: Don't plant willows where the roots could possibly get near any kind of water pipes.

These are only a few of the trees that are valuable for their nectar and pollen. Poplars, linden trees, russian olive and of course, all fruit trees are also important to bees. In addition, they can provide windbreaks, fruit or shade or be ornamental in the suburban yard.

# Farmers Market

## Harvest Dinner

SUNDAY AUG. 23

from 2:30 - 4:30 pm

5:30 - 7:30 pm

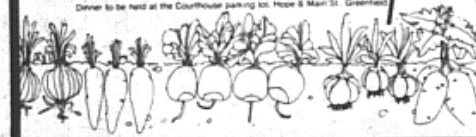
Join the feast and fun!  
TURKEY, CORN, VEGETABLES,  
SALAD BAR, BREAD AND  
DESSERT!

A sit down dinner with live music!

All food raised, grown or produced in Franklin County.  
TICKETS ADULTS - \$5.00  
UNDER 12 - \$2.50

Proceeds to benefit the Farmers Market.

Driver to be held at the Courthouse parking lot, Hope & Main St., Greenfield.



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