

Medicinal Herbs for Bees and Bee Lovers...

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Bees are the greatest of all herbalists. One could learn a lot about the medicinal qualities of plants from observing these magnificent creatures and the flora they favor. In the words of the great herbalist Juliette de Bairclay-Levi “Bees are instinctive and highly skilled herbalists”.

Knowledge of Herbs and blooming plants are a great asset for Bee Lovers and keepers worldwide! Almost all the most important Bee plants Native or otherwise are valuable for human health as well. This kinship between People Plants and Pollinators is beautifully expressed in our common goals of Habitat, health and wellbeing. By exploring our common threads in the web of life we can directly impact the healing and nourishment of ALL! As beekeepers we are in a special position to observe and regenerate the ecosystem through our stewardship of Bees and the Plant life they need for nourishment and key life processes. As co-evolutionary partners we too immensely benefit from the plant life that sustains them.

Interestingly many aromatic herbs loved by the bees repel flies, moths and other Insect pests. The chemical constituent of many aromatic herbs is citral a terpene that gives these herbs a lemony scent. These herbs are shown to increase honey production and brood vitality while simultaneously deterring virus and bacteria within colonies with their antiviral/antibacterial properties. Many herbs are very high in Citrals such Lemon Balm, Bee Balm, Pineapple Sage, Lemon Verbena, and of course Lemon Grass. Lemon Grass essential oil is used as a swarm lure as its mimics the Queen Pheromones which are high in Citrals.

Scientists at the University of Jerusalem published a study in 2015 that showed that Bees will alter their foraging habits to balance nutritional deficiencies as well as deter pests. They found that low floral density and biodiversity greatly reduced life expectancy of bees. Here in Oregon at the Oregon State University Honey Bee lab Dr. Priyadarshini Chakrabarti Basu has done extensive research on plant sterols which are only found in Natural pollen sources. Many Medicinal Herbs are reliably high in Plant sterols. These sterols are responsible for Pupating Bees to metamorphosis into adults. This key life process is dependent on Natural diverse Pollen sources and cannot be reliably

replicated in a lab. These Studies highlight the need for Bees to have unlimited access to biodiverse forage and landscapes. As we know Bees can detect the nectar content of certain plants, science is proving they can also detect the medicinal qualities of plant life needed to heal themselves.

The following Medicinal Herbs are not only important Bee centered Plants but also Important Herbal Allies for Human Health and wellbeing!

“We no longer have the luxury of being passive spectators at a feast where we are the honored guest”.

Michael Pollan- Botany of Desire

Lemon Balm- *Melissa officinalis* Aromatic perennial blooms profusely April-September Carries the Nomenclature “melissa” which is the Greek word for honeybee. Calming tea that nourishes the nervous system, the digestive system and warms the heart. Antiviral/antibacterial

Oregon Grape Root- *Mahonia aquifolium* Early Spring blooming Evergreen shrub a staple for PNW honey bee diet. One of the Native copacia plants. The root is one of the greatest herbal antiviral, and antibiotic plant allies available. Known for its effective treatment of colds and flus.

Yarrow- *Achillea millefolium* White umbrel perennial flowers bloom profusely spring to Fall. Used as a supreme wound cleanser to stop bleeding, improve circulation, regulate the menstrual cycle, Reduce Fevers, and as a decongestant.

Holy Tulsi Basil- *Ocimum tenuiflorum* This Aromatic and sweet Basil is the most beloved herb in Ayurvedic Medicine. The Mother of Healing lends its blue violet profuse blooms as the ultimate bee feast, very high in nectar, and used for a millennia in India as a favorite tea tonic for the nervous system, digestion, spiritual upliftment, stress and depression. It's also known as a energizing relaxant releasing pent up energy and emotions.

California Poppy- *Eschscholzia californica* Native Golden Orange Poppies bloom early and throughout the year offering much needed nectar in the dearth times. This whole plant medicine and herbal ally provides a gentle pain killer, subtle euphoric, sedative, and antispasmodic that is gentle enough for use with children and elders. Used to treat Pain, Insomnia, toothache, and developmental delays in children and adults.

Marshmallow- *Althaea officinalis* Beautiful hollyhock like flowers adorn this most useful herb. High in nectar the purplish flowers attract pollinators of all kinds. Humans find all parts of this plant edible and useful especially cold infused tea made from the roots. The pleasantly sweet mucilaginous tea is a specific for soothing the membranes of ear, nose and throat colds, coating the the stomach lining as an antacid alternative for sour stomach, heartburn, and ulcers. All while being of of the most nutritive and nourishing nervous system tonics. A great asset to a beekeeper with a hot hive! :)

Lavender- *Lavandula spica* Very aromatic Purple flowers are a honey bee favorite. Used as an ancient perfume, flavoring, incense, tea and wash. Also relevant in beekeeping for use in the smoker as an excellent fuel. This cold smoke creates a calming effect on the honey bees.

Wild Bergamot “bee balm” - *Monarda fistulosa* A bee favorite for its continuous nectar flow. If this plant is in bloom it will be covered in pollinators. It's said to make exceptional tasting honey with medicinal principles calming and nourishing. Also the flavoring for earl grey tea.

Anise-Hyssop- *Agastache foeniculum* This plant is known as the wonder honey plant by sideline beekeepers everywhere. Known to replenish its nectar content faster and more consistent than most plants. Beekeepers have found by doing large plantings of this licorice Mint you will increase your honey harvest noticeably! Used as a flavorful, soothing and relaxing tea or syrup for sore throats, coughing and sneezing.

Dandelion- *Taraxacum officinale* This lil Sunshine appears heralding in early spring from March thru May providing much needed food for brood growth and strength in the colony. Simultaneously, the greens of this nutrient dense ancient food are traditionally used as spring bitters served with fats like butter, oils or lard gently cleansing the liver and digestive system. High in Beta Carotene, Iron, Magnesium, Phosphorus and even Vitamin D Dandelion nourishes our deepest mineral needs. The Root tincture is a specific for balancing the Liver, Insulin levels, Blood pressure, and Inflammation.