



Alamosa Landscapes

Save the Bees with Flowers – P 2

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Save the bees with flowers – part 2

In the last column I discussed the sad health of bees in many places around the world including our country. I listed what bees need and said that one thing we can do to help them is to plant flowers. Since bees need flower blooms throughout the season, I listed flowers that do well in Alamosa in early spring and through May. Before I continue with later season blooms, I want to write about a plant I omitted last time whose blooms are just now popping. It's the Arnolds red bush honeysuckle (*Lonicera tatarian* 'Arnolds Red') that has a very compact growth habit (not a vine) and actually puts on lovely green leaves before the flowers open up in early spring. It's very hardy, rated down to zone 2. I highly recommend it.

I know it's early May, but in this column I'll discuss flowers for June and July -- it's time to decide your needs and to purchase plants and/or seeds!

I also make suggestions for flowers bees avoid. You might have an allergy or have had a bad experience with bees. Or you might want to discourage bees from hanging around your outside dining area. Visit AlamosaFlowers.net and AlamosaTrees.net to see photos and specific information regarding most of these flowers.

Mid-June to mid-July is the time the widest variety of flowers bloom in our yard. I focus on perennials, shrubs, and annuals that reseed themselves. My June perennial and shrub favorites include columbine (*Aquilegia species* – Rocky Mountain blue columbine is Colorado's state flower), yellow Harrison shrub roses (*Rosa* 'Harrison yellow') and red wild shrub roses (*Rosa* ?), white snowball bush (*Viburnum x carlcephalum*), Cheyenne white mock orange (*Philadelphus lewisii* 'Cheyenne'), purple Veronica (*Veronica gentianoides*?), red Oriental poppies (*Papaver oriental*), yellow and orange Icelandic poppies (*Papaver nudicaule*), and annual orangey California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica* – California's state flower). All of these have done well for many years with little tending except for watering and occasional fertilizing during the growing season as well as cutting back in late fall or early spring.

I love some very hardy, easy care, low-water perennials such as purple Rocky Mountain

penstemon (*Penstemon strictus*), red and pink yarrow (*Achillea 'Paprika'*), low golden rod (*Solidago*), yellow-orange-red blanket flower (*Gaillardia*), and creeping purple Veronica (*Veronica oltensis* –does very well in rock gardens).

Perhaps you'd like to NOT attract bees to parts of your garden. Don't want them to interfere with your BBQ? Here are several guidelines: 1) choose red blooms – bees can't see red, it appears black to them. Red specimens of poppies, zinnias, and peonies are good options; 2) avoid highly scented flowers – instead select buttercups (*Ranunculus*), dahlias (*Dahlia* -- remember, they have to be dug up each fall and stored in a cool dark location over the winter), and hybrid roses with no scent (*Rosa* various), and 3) avoid violet, blue and yellow flowers.

You might also want to consider 4) opting for trumpet shaped flowers – that shape makes many bees work harder to get to the nectar so they are less appealing – daffodil (*Narcissus*), some honeysuckle (*Lonicera*), and buttercups (*Ranunculus*); 5) peppermint – the scent drives them away; and 6) plant a tub of cucumber – the acid is unpleasant to them – some even suggest you peel a cucumber and leave the peels around your garden.

Other ideas include choosing double flowers with lots of overlapping petals that make it more difficult for bees to access the pollen inside. This includes some chrysanthemums (*Chrysanthemum* various -- I often buy some but they don't tend to last more than one or two seasons depending on our winter weather), roses, carnations, and impatiens. I often buy impatiens for one season use but don't have double flowered roses or carnations. I love red geraniums in pots in the yard during the summer. I store them indoors over the winter.

Happy gardening and stay safe.

"Where flowers bloom so does hope." Lady Bird Johnson