

Save London's bees

April 29 2016



The public are urged to plant bee-friendly flowers now to attract one of the hundreds of QMUL tagged bees due to be released later this summer.

Nature lovers and green-fingered enthusiasts are urged to plant bee-friendly flowers to help ailing pollinator populations and to attract one of the many hundreds of bees due to be released later this summer from the rooftops of Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) in a

competition launched by the London Pollinator Project.

Bees are under threat from habitat loss and lack of suitable flowers. Biologists from QMUL's School of Biological and Chemical Sciences want to tap into any green space the public might have access to such as a garden, roof terrace or window sill, and encourage Londoners to plant flowers which are rich in nectar and pollen, like English lavender, viper's bugloss, or spiked speedwell.

The QMUL bees will each have a weather resistant number tag on its back, which will allow the public to track the bees and let researchers uncover how successful urban gardening efforts have been.

A new [website](#) launched as part of the London Pollinator Project will help the public learn which flowers are most beneficial for bees and the best gardening methods to improve their chances of spotting a busy bee carrying a QMUL identification tag.

To encourage the public to participate, prizes of £100 Amazon gift vouchers will be awarded for the best photo of a QMUL-tagged bee on a flower, for the highest number of QMUL-tagged bees spotted and for the best photo of a London bee-friendly garden (as judged by the research team).

Project coordinator, Dr Clint Perry, from QMUL's School of Biological and Chemical Sciences, said: "We hope the London Pollinator Project will encourage the public to plant flowers in our urban spaces that will help supply the right nectar and pollen resources for our threatened urban bees, and hopefully increase urban pollinator populations if a large enough effort is made across the city."

The researchers hope to discover how much urban gardening can affect the pollinating practices of urban bees and learn what flowers are most

attractive for pollinators in our London urban settings.

Project leader Professor Lars Chittka, also from the School of Biological and Chemical Sciences, said: "Bees are fascinating subjects: they travel the distance of London's congestion charging zone everyday foraging for nectar and somehow remember to return to their hive—not easy when you have a brain the size of a pin."

Pollinators play a vital role in producing the food that we eat. One third of global food production would not be available but for bees' pollination activities. About 70 different crops in the UK are dependent on, or benefit from, bee visits. Bees also pollinate [flowers](#) of many plants which help feed our farm animals. The economic value of honey bees and bumble [bees](#) in the UK has been estimated to be £400m per annum and €14.2bn across the EU. Much of the decline here in the UK has been due to reduction in wildflower availability through landscape changes and widespread agricultural practices.

Provided by Queen Mary, University of London

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