



# Hawk Hill Bee Farm

## Plantings for Honey Bees in Northern Illinois

### *A Season-Long Guide for Home Gardens & Community Spaces*

Honey bees thrive when landscapes offer nectar and pollen from early spring through late fall. Even small plantings — backyard beds, patio pots, community plots — can make a meaningful difference. The selections below are well-suited to **Northern Illinois** and provide reliable forage across the entire season.

#### **EARLY SPRING BLOOMERS**

*Critical for colony buildup after winter*

Plant	Notes
<b>Willow (dwarf or shrub forms)</b>	One of the earliest pollen sources.
<b>Maple (red, silver)</b>	Vital early pollen; suitable for yards and streets.
<b>Crocus</b>	Easy bulbs; bloom before lawns green up.
<b>Dandelion</b>	Often the first nectar/pollen — encourage tolerance.
<b>Lenten Rose (Hellebore)</b>	Shade-tolerant, long-lived perennial.

#### **LATE SPRING TO EARLY SUMMER**

*Bridges the gap before major nectar flows*

Plant	Notes
<b>Chives</b>	Excellent bee plant; edible and ornamental.
<b>Blueberry</b>	Superb nectar; also a garden crop.
<b>Serviceberry (Amelanchier)</b>	Native shrub/small tree; early nectar.
<b>Catmint (Nepeta)</b>	Long bloom period; bees adore it.
<b>Lupine</b>	Native types support both bees and soil health.

 **MID-SUMMER BLOOMERS**

*Peak nectar season — abundant forage*

Plant	Notes
<b>Bee Balm (Monarda)</b>	Signature pollinator plant; thrives in Midwest soils.
<b>Coneflower (Echinacea)</b>	Long bloom; drought-tolerant.
<b>Hyssop / Anise Hyssop</b>	One of the best honey-bee plants for gardens.
<b>Borage</b>	Constantly blooming annual; bees flock to it.
<b>Culinary Sage</b>	Ornamental and useful; strong nectar source.
<b>Sunflower (open-pollinated varieties)</b>	Pollen-rich; great for wildlife too.

 **LATE SUMMER TO FALL BLOOMERS**

*Essential for winter preparation and fattening winter bees*

Plant	Notes
<b>Asters (New England, Smooth, Aromatic)</b>	Top-tier fall nectar; native and hardy.
<b>Goldenrod (Solidago species)</b>	Major fall nectar flow in Northern Illinois.
<b>Sedum 'Autumn Joy'</b>	Reliable garden perennial; bees cover it in September.
<b>Joe-Pye Weed</b>	Tall, showy, and beloved by all pollinators.

 **PLANTING TIPS FOR SUCCESS**

- Choose **native species** whenever possible — they bloom reliably and support broader ecology.
- Aim for **continuous bloom**: at least one plant flowering in each season.
- Plant in **clusters or drifts** so bees can forage efficiently.
- Avoid pesticides, especially systemic ones.
- Leave some areas a bit “wild” — bees appreciate it.