



TAKE AND MAKE: Bee Gardens

Watch on YouTube by entering this URL or scanning the QR Code: <http://bit.ly/beegardens>



Why plant a bee garden? Most of the crops we depend on for our survival - including apples, pumpkins, almonds, berries, and even hardwood trees – need pollinators to survive. Bees travel from plant to plant for nectar, collecting pollen in the process and spreading it to other plants. Unfortunately, bees are threatened in a variety of ways – issues such as disease, loss of habitats, pesticides, and climate change have decreased bee populations throughout the world. While researchers, scientists, farmers, and even governments are working to support the bees, you can make a difference by developing a bee-friendly backyard or urban garden.

What's in the kit?

- 1 packet of Colorado wildflower seeds
- 1 package of polymer clay to make a bee bath

Planting your flowers. The seeds included in this kit are a Colorado-specific wildflower mix. While there are lots of varieties you might get, look for plants like Blue Flax, Bachelor Buttons, Black-eyed Susan, Rocky Mountain Penstemon, and Purple and Yellow Coneflower. To plant the seeds, broadcast your seeds by hand in your garden. Cover the seeds with soil only to a depth of 1/8 to 1/4 inches. Maintain consistent moisture but do not overwater to prevent weed growth. Seeds can take 4 to 6 weeks to germinate.

Working with polymer clay. Before starting your project, be sure to lay out wax paper, foil, or newspaper for easy cleanup and to protect your surface. To make the clay workable, cut or break off small pieces and work them with your hands until soft and pliable. The clay can be manipulated into a variety of shapes from here. Because polymer clay is not water-based, it does not dry out. However, it will harden over time and should be stored in a plastic zip-top bag when not in use.

Constructing your bee bath. It's important for bees to hydrate too, and here in Colorado bee-friendly water can be hard to find. A bee bath, or shallow dish with water and rocks for them to perch on, allows bees to safely drink while they do the important work of pollinating your garden. Here are a few options for constructing your bath:

Pinch Pot

Roll as much clay as you would like into a round, even ball. Using your thumb, make a deep indentation into the ball, about halfway through. Carefully use a pinching motion to expand the indentation, shaping into a shallow dish.



Coil Pot

Using your palms in a rolling motion, shape your clay into a long snake shape that is thick enough to work with. Curl one of the ends in on itself in a circular shape, building a shallow dish up from the base. Either leave the coiled texture or smooth out the ridges.



Shaped Pot

Roll your clay out on a work surface in a flat shape about ¼" thick. Using a knife, cookie cutter, or other tool, cut out a shape from your clay. Lay the clay over an upturned muffin tin to shape into a shallow dish. Bake on the upturned muffin tin.



To finish your bee bath, place on a baking sheet covered in foil and bake at 275°F for 15 minutes per ¼" of thickness. DO NOT MICROWAVE. Polymer clay is non-toxic and does not need to be coated before placing it out for the bees.

Think of other ways to decorate your bath – maybe cut out some additional shapes and decorations or paint the outside of the bath.

When you place your bath outside for the bees to enjoy, fill the bottom with small rocks, then with water while making sure the tops of the rocks are exposed. The bees will be able to land on these rocks and hydrate safely as they enjoy your Colorado wildflowers. If you share your finished bee gardens on social media, be sure to tag us with #PPLDTakeandMake

Library Resources and Links

Bees and Gardening

Green Living LibGuide:

<https://research.ppld.org/greenlivingresources>

The Pollinator Victory Garden by Kim Eierman

Our Native Bees by Paige Embry

Where Have All the Bees Gone? by Rebecca E. Hirsch

Nature's Best Hope by Douglas W. Tallamy

100 Plants to Feed the Bees by The Xerces Society

Polymer Clay

Polymer Clay for Beginners by Emily Chen

Polymer Clay 101 by Angela Mabray

Polymer Clay Master Class by Judy Belcher