

Flora & Fauna

Gardening for the Bees

Bees of all types are a gardener's best friends. These little bugs will spend their days buzzing from flower to flower, drinking nectar, collecting pollen, and helping your garden (both vegetables and flowers) grow to its full potential.

It may surprise you to learn that there are nearly 5,000 species of bees in the U.S. Most lead solitary lives and have no interest in stinging you. You can be a welcoming host to these little guys by planting the right flowers and even making special houses for them.

Bee Gardens

Bees cannot see red, so to encourage them to visit your garden consider planting sweet alyssum, coriander, dill, tansy, and white yarrow. These plants have white or yellow blooms. Plant them in a border around your plot or in rows between your veggies.

Also, be sure to plant these and other bright blossoms in succession so bees will have a steady source of nectar and pollen throughout the season.

Note: You may want to make sure you plant your garden away from any areas where people gather (such as near the porch of the backyard). This is not for you or your visitors' protection, but for the bees. You do not want your guests swatting at them because they were attracted to someone wearing bright clothes.

Bee Houses

Often what limits native bees from reproducing isn't the availability of flowers, but the lack of nesting sites. Some bees nest in underground nests, so leaving a small patch of bare ground somewhere in or around your garden is helpful. Other species would greatly appreciate a bee house which you can make yourself or purchase from your local gardening center.

To make an inexpensive bee house, bundle plastic soda straws and glue them into bottom of a milk carton or coffee can (so that it resembles the honeycomb hive). Hang your bee house in a protected shady and dry place in the early spring and the bees will come!

A Note about Wasps

Wasps such as hornets and yellow jackets get a bad rap because of their nasty stinging powers and tendency to nibble on your garden's fruit. However, these little guys are fierce predators of common garden pests such as fly larvae, beetle grubs, ants and caterpillars. If you can tolerate them in your garden, you'll spend less money on pest-controlling chemicals because the wasps will do the dirty work for you.

To avoid stings, don't wear scented products such as perfume, sunscreen, or hairspray when working in your garden. Avoid light blue or yellow clothing, and try to garden in the evening when wasp activity is low.

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Cleaning Corner: A Twist on Lemon!

You probably already know that the lemon has many uses in food dishes and can even be used to lighten hair, but did you know this brilliant multi-tasker does much, much more?

- **Air freshener.** Simmer six lemon slices and a handful of cloves in a pan of water. This is especially good for removing food odors lingering in your kitchen.
- **Copper polisher.** Dip half a lemon in a small dish of coarse salt and rub it over tarnished copper.
- **Linen whitener.** Fill a large pot with water, add a few lemon slices, and bring to a boil. Turn off heat, add linens, and soak for up to an hour. Remove and launder as usual.
- **Stain remover.** To remove berry, coffee, and tea juice stains from clothing, soak the soiled areas in lemon juice for about an hour.
- **Hiccup cure.** Biting into a lemon may cure hiccups; the tartness is said to interrupt the nerve impulses that cause the diaphragm spasms.

March

- 1302 Romeo & Juliet's get married, according to Shakespeare
- 1616 Copernicus' "de Revolutionibus" (*On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*) which introduced the heliocentric theory, is placed on the Catholic Index of Forbidden Books
- 1799 Congress standardizes US weights & measures
- 1877 Rutherford B. Hayes inaugurated as 19th US President
- 1979 The first extraterrestrial volcano is discovered on Io, one of Jupiter's moons
- 1986 Popsicle announces its plan to end the traditional twin-stick frozen treat for a flatter, one-stick model
- 1997 Ashes of Star Trek creator, Gene Roddenberry, are launched into space

Health Information: Your Body's Temperature

How Your Body Temperature Adapts

It's one of those remarkable tricks of human biology: whether you stand sweating in the summer sun at high noon or huddle in a winter wind cold enough to freeze your eyelids shut, your body skillfully minds the internal thermostat. When it's hot outside, the body's veins and arteries dilate to push heat outward, and sweat glands send moisture to the skin to induce cooling through evaporation. When it's cold, blood vessels contract to hold in warmth, and the muscles tense and shiver to create more heat. So, day in and day out, a healthy body hovers dependably at 97-99°F.

Body temperature varies throughout the day according to what a person is doing and eating (that's why experts advise waiting to take someone's temperature at least one hour after vigorous exercise or a hot bath, and a half hour after eating or drinking).

Why a Fever is a Good Thing

A fever is an important sign that the body is fighting illness. When the body is sick, it raises its internal temperature. High temperatures help kill viruses and bacteria, which thrive at normal body temperatures but can't survive at hotter ones. A fever also cues the immune system to produce more white blood cells, antibodies, and other microscopic fighters that protect a person's health. A prolonged fever lasting several days, however, or a fever in children under 2 months old needs a doctor's attention right away.

Taking a Temperature

- **Under the tongue** – This is the most common place to use a thermometer. Digital thermometers will beep within 10-20 seconds once the reading has been taken. Pacifier thermometers have also been developed for young babies. However, they require the child to suck vigorously for 3-5 minutes for an accurate reading to be reached.
- **Rectal** – A rectal temperature reading is used for babies who are too young to hold a thermometer in their mouths.
- **Ear** – These thermometers use infrared energy to measure temperature. When a fever is just beginning, it is often first detected in the ears.
- **Skin – Forehead or Armpit** – although the least revealing areas to measure body temperature, there are thermometers that can be used in the armpit or, like the plastic-strip thermometers, held at the forehead. These areas can be as much as one degree cooler than in the mouth, so a temperature reading here won't be as accurate. However, for children who are unable to hold a thermometer in their mouths and unwilling to allow a rectal or ear thermometer, this may be the only option.

Kid Corner: Spring is for the Birds

The arrival of spring is usually accompanied by the arrival of birds who have been migrating to other parts of the world during the winter months. As the days grow longer and the temperatures begin to rise, there's no better time to get outside with your kids and introduce them to feathered friends around the neighborhood. Here are some tips for getting kids interested in birds:

- **Don't force it.** Suggest that your family go for a walk around the neighborhood. As you walk, keep things simple. Say things like, "Oh, look at the robin building a nest in that tree. Can we sit and watch?" or "What do you think those geese are eating?" Doing these kinds of low-intensity activities more often tend to work the best for younger children.
- **Get a birdfeeder and a birdbath.** If you don't have a yard, get a window feeder. There's no easier way to watch birds than from the comfort of your own home.
- Buy a pair of **lightweight binoculars**, but avoid the cheap plastic ones. Make sure that everyone takes a turn looking through them as you walk around the neighborhood. Ask your children what they notice about the birds through the binoculars. Is there anything about the bird (such as the color of its feathers, the shape of its beak) that they didn't see with the naked eye?
- Buy a **field guide** that includes all of the regional bird species in your area. After all, you're not expected to know every single bird in the area. It's a good lesson for kids to look through the pages themselves to identify the bird they've seen.
- **Make it a game.** Challenge your kids to find three bird nests or 10 different kinds of birds on your walk. Kids can draw, write or sketch the bird, then look it up later at home. (It's hard to quickly flip through the pages of a book before the bird flies away.)
- **Age-appropriate bird watching.** For kids under 6, focus on the larger birds such as ducks and geese. Older children can be challenged to find different birds and recognize the difference between male and female birds.

Bird watching is a fantastic activity for young people to take up and enjoy throughout their lives. It's also a terrific way for parents to get their kids active outside and appreciating a little bit of the natural world around them!

Ingredients:

- 4 cups sliced apples (tart apples are best)
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 1/4 cup water
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 3/4 cup flour
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1/3 cup butter

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Arrange apples in a buttered baking dish.
3. Add water and sprinkle with 1/4 cup white sugar mixed with cinnamon.
4. Mix brown sugar, butter, and flour together. Spread over apples.
5. Bake for 30 minutes, or until apples are tender.
6. Serve warm with a scoop of vanilla ice cream and a couple of graham crackers.

The Power of Cinnamon

Cinnamon has long been valued in Ayurvedic and traditional Chinese medicine as an appetite stimulant and remedy for abdominal pain and gas.

Now, modern medicine has discovered other benefits of this remarkable spice. Ceylon cinnamon, the most common variety, has potent antioxidant properties. The cassia variety of cinnamon may have a powerful effect on blood sugar and can possibly reduce total cholesterol levels.

Cooking tip: Add a bit of cinnamon into your stews and meat dishes. You'll lend an exotic flavor that will quickly become a family favorite!

New Ways to Use Old Things

Most of us have a few items around the house that you may inadvertently throw out without using them to their full potential. Here's how you can recycle some old and ordinary things to both bring beauty to your home and save you money!

Coffee filter. Use any extra filters to prevent soil from draining out of flowerpots. When repotting, place a filter at the bottom over the drainage hole. Then add the soil. You'll have happier, healthier plants and less mess!

Paper shredder. A paper shredder is terrific for destroying sensitive documents, but that's not all! You can also use it to shred colorful tissue paper to stuff inside gift boxes and bags for a more festive look.

Tissue box. Don't throw out that old tissue box; use it to store extra plastic grocery bags! Just store it under your kitchen sink so it's always handy.

Dried spaghetti. Why waste money on extra long matches? Simply light the end of a long piece of dried spaghetti and use it to light multiple candles around the house.

Toothbrush holder. Instead of throwing out that toothbrush holder that no longer matches your bathroom décor, use it as a vase to hold flowers. Fill the holder with water, slip in a few blossoms, and relocate your new, interesting vase to another room!

Photo tree. You can use photo trees for more than just displaying pictures of your loved ones. Jot down your most-used recipes on index cards and slide them in the metal holders instead. The tree will hold up cards so you can easily see whether the recipe calls for a teaspoon or a tablespoon.

Jars. When you've finished with that jar of spaghetti sauce or grape jelly, don't throw it out! Put a jar in your office and put all your pens inside instead of letting them roll around your desk drawer. Use them to collect paper clips, twist ties, or other objects that clutter up your junk drawer.

Carpet Talk: Removing Pet Urine

Part of being a pet owner is dealing with occasional accidents. Sometimes Fido can't wait till you get home from work, or Fluffy gets upset after a trip to the vet. Pet urine can be tricky to remove, especially if it's been left untreated for a long time. However, with a few simple tricks and some fast response, you can successfully preserve your carpet.

Step 1: If the area is still damp, start by blotting with a plain white towel.

Step 2: Next, mix a cleaning solution of a half-teaspoon of liquid detergent (no bleach) and one cup of warm water. Apply the solution to the area, blot with a white towel, then rinse with warm water.

Step 3: Keep repeating step 2 until the discoloration is removed.

Step 4: Mix one cup white vinegar with two cups water. Apply and blot up with a towel. Rinse with water.

Step 5: Get the carpet as dry as possible. Blot as much moisture up with towels as you can and turn a fan on over the spot to get it dry.

These steps work well on fresh urine stains. However, if the stain has been there for a long time (or if it is a spot that has been repeatedly marked), the urine may have saturated down through the carpet and padding. If this is the case, it's time to call in the experts. Your carpet care professional has an arsenal of specialized products to tackle your worst pet odor problems. So don't hesitate to call!



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This issue of Neighborhood News brought to you by:



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