



## Project Story: Support the Bees

Emiko Ando

The Support the Bees Event was held on Saturday, March 2 from 10 am to noon at The Shed restaurant at Bowen Island Golf Course. About 30 Bowen Islanders braved the snowy conditions to attend. Coffee, tea and snacks were provided.

The event started with everyone introducing themselves, the part of the Island they were from, and what interested them in the event. Many were interested in plants that are deer resistant and others interested in bees.





## Neighbourhood Small Grants Bowen Island

After providing information about the NSG Program, Emiko Ando shared information about the importance of honey bees including that they:

- Pollinate flowers, fruits and vegetables, which help produce 1/3 of our food supply
- Create many medicines
- Provide food for wildlife, such as birds and insects
- Prevent soil erosion by maintaining plant diversity and soil fertility



Honey is known to help boost your immune system and reduce environmental allergic reactions but not if it is heated such as putting when you put it in hot tea as it kills the medicinal benefits.

Honey bees will travel up to 5 km to collect nectar and pollen.

A bee can visit 1,500 flowers in a day and 63,000 flowers in its life.

A colony with 20,000 bees can visit 30 million flowers in just a day.

The pollen is collected and put in pollen baskets on their legs and the nectar is sucked in and stored in their stomach. A bee can carry its own weight in nectar.

Bees can see ultraviolet light (UV light), which is invisible to the human eye. UV light plays a crucial role in helping them determine which flowers are the most nectar-rich. While many different coloured flowers are nectar-rich, bees will be more attracted to purple and blue-coloured flowers because these have shorter wavelengths, like UV light.

During the last few decades, the population of not just bees but other pollinators has been declining. This poses a risk to our food supply and biodiversity. So everyone can help by planting flowers and not pulling out dandelions.





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Emiko consulted a master gardener and several online resources to share information about bee friendly, deer resistant plants. Living on Bowen, the deer will eat almost anything, even deer resistant plants. Deer generally don't like strong smelling scents and plants that are spiny.

Honey bees cannot extract the nectar from some flower because their tongues are not long enough. These include fox gloves, rhododendrons and daffodils but they are good for bumblebees. Other flowers have closed petals such as lupins and honey bees are not strong enough to open them but bumble bees. When planning a garden you will want to select flowers that bloom at different times for your own enjoyment but this is also helpful for bees to have a continuous forage.

The sowing and growing instructions of seeds is important to follow. Some seeds you can start inside and others directly in the garden as they don't transplant well. Each plant has different requirements to germinate. Some require water, some light, some oxygen, some heat and some cold.

It is also important to plant the seeds the right depth. A general rule of thumb is to sow the seed twice the width, not length. Many of the seeds (provided at the event) are microseeds so they only require a light dusting of soil on the top.

The participants were then invited to fill pots and sow seeds.

The following handouts were given:

- Seed information
- an extract from West Coast Seeds Gardening Guide which shows the planting and flowering times for plants for Southern BC.





**Neighbourhood**  
**Small Grants**  
**Bowen Island**

A follow up email was send including the following:

- link to the video about the interaction between bees and flowers.

[https://www.tiktok.com/@yesterday\\_channel/video/7324052002273529121?lang=en](https://www.tiktok.com/@yesterday_channel/video/7324052002273529121?lang=en)

- Gardening with Native Plants on Bowen.

<https://bowenbook.ca/gardening-with-native-plants-on-bowen-island/>



The following feedback was received after the event:

*“Thank you Emiko for a wonderful day. It was great to see the diversity of Bowen people there. I am totally impressed by your steep learning curve. You covered so many elements of our bees and it was totally appreciated”*

*“Thank you for planning and organizing today – it was great and I love all the seed I have for the garden.”*



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