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October Garden Visits with Louis Raymond

**Plant Pro on Channel 10
Saturday, October 14 & Wednesday, October 18**

Plants for a Bee-wise Garden full of color and even flowers— but boring to bees!

Thank you for your interest in bee-wise gardens. We're developing some marvelously detailed information packets on just this topic, which will appear in our on-line store in the next months. Please let us know if you'd like us to update you when the first of them debuts; just e-mail me at Louis@RGardening.com.

Meanwhile, we know you'll appreciate some complementary background right away on how you can make your garden less likely to attract bees. They seek out flowers, so reducing your garden's floral component is the best way to make it uninteresting to bees. Your garden will, if anything, be even more interesting than before because now you're forced—or rather inspired—to look farther afield for garden interest than "mere" flowers. Foliage, bark, and berries can all be extremely colorful, and often have the additional strength of season-long appeal.

But "bee-wise" gardening is much more interesting than using flowers sparingly. Here are some excerpts of the larger story we'll have the space to tell in our information packets-to-come:

1. Many flowering species don't depend on flying insects at all. Wind-pollinated species have small fuzzy flowers without petals, so are not interesting to animals. All grasses —ornamental and bamboos as well as turf— are wind pollinated, as are willows, maples, beeches, birches, and conifers. Further, magnolias and peonies are pollinated by beetles, hardy gingers by slugs, and honeysuckles and trumpet vines by hummingbirds. Ferns don't have flowers at all, so are safe too. You could have a garden just of grasses, conifers, willows, ferns, ornamental maples, and magnolias. There are dozens and dozens of intriguing species in each plant family, so you'd need many acres to do them all justice.



2. Smokebushes, catalpas, robinias, gleditsias, and paulownias are even lovelier when cut back severely each spring. They don't flower then, are more compact, and are also inspired to produce even more marvelously showy foliage than when they are left to grow “free range”.

3. Most hostas are better when disbudded anyway, so no flowers there.

4. Cool-weather and winter bloomers like witch hazel and snowdrops still do attract insects, but you're probably not out in the garden then anyway, so who cares? And winter-blooming houseplants are terrific, because you probably don't keep a bee hive indoors! So by all means, let your pots of beefsteak begonia and winter jasmine enjoy a summer outside in your garden. They'll bloom all the better for you indoors in a cool window this winter.

Remember, bees don't read books, and your own experience will be your best guide to what plants will work in your bee-wise garden. Take a look at plants as they bloom in your local gardens, to see what's buzzing around what. I rarely see insects at work on hydrangeas or Japanese anemones. What have you seen? For all their incessant blooming, I never see insects attracted to my abutilons or hibiscuses either. And I haven't yet seen what pollinates clematis or impatiens, and you couldn't have showier flowers than those. On the other hand, daisies, buddleias, thistles, catmints, lavenders, roses, and fruit trees are party central for bees, so should be avoided entirely. Worst of all are the flowers of linden trees, which are notoriously “bee-licious”: the bees become drunk on their nectar and loll about beneath the trees.

The more you study your local flora the more you'll know just what your local fauna —flying, walking, hopping, crawling, or slithering— are interested in. As you can see from just these brief suggestions, there are hundreds of terrific plants to choose from, for a glorious garden that would still be quite a bore for bees.

Here are descriptions and convenient sources for the plants that we highlighted on the Plant Pro broadcasts of Saturday, October 14 and Wednesday, October 18.

Grasses are wind-pollinated. *Hakonechloa macro 'Aureola'* is one of the best, especially for part shade, with striped chartreuse foliage in a casual but dense mound to 18 inches tall that glows all season long. *Hakonechloa* is now readily available; or try the Farmer's Daughter in Kingston, at 401-792-1340.

Bamboos are grass relatives that are also wind-pollinated. Clumping varieties, called *Fargesia*, are justly popular and easy to handle. The giant-leaved bamboo in my bee-wise garden, *Indocalamus tessellatus*, forms dense colonies 4 – 6 feet tall. Easiest in locations bounded by paving or buildings, or as a larger stand surrounded by mown grass. Seven Arrows in South Attleboro has a great bamboo collection; 508-399- 7860.

Conifers are all wind-pollinated. There are scores of species and hundreds of cultivars from tiny rock-garden buns to tall forest spires. Conifers can be anything from your garden's focal star, to workaday groundcovers, to hedging, to wind breaks, to cathedral groves.

Yellow cypress, *Cupressus sempervirens 'Swane's Gold'*, is a tender cypress that is adorable in summer containers in heat and full sun. You can keep specimens growing for years in a container brought into a cool sunny porch for the winter. Easy spring clipping keeps Swane's Gold compact and encourages the bright gold foliage that makes it sing in your garden. Farmer's Daughter has a great assortment of conifers, Swane's Gold usually among them.

Angel's trumpet trees—brugmansia—are easy container plants, flowering even the first season from small cuttings. Fragrant pendant trumpets nearly a foot long come in monthly waves from July through October. Flowers can be white, pink, or yellow. Some plants also have white-splashed foliage too. Pollinated in the tropics by enormous nocturnal moths; bees fly right by. Farmer's Daughter here too.

Glory Bush—*Tibouchina semidecandra*—is another foolproof Summer show-stopper. Starting in late July, clusters of fuzzy red buds open into stunning indigo five-petaled blossoms. For all their magnetic display, the flowers don't seem to attract any insects at all, at least here in New England. Blooms even from rooted cuttings, so small plants are perfect as part of warm-weather containers. You can also overwinter a Glory Bush easily; a cool but frost-free porch or sunny window is the key. Prune back hard each Spring, which creates lots of new growth and all the more blossoms come next August. Soft cuttings root easily, so Glory Bush is a great plant for passing along to your friends. Small plants for containers: Farmer's Daughter. Larger "patio trees" are expensive but worth it; try Brigg's Nursery in Attleboro; 508-699-7421.

Ivy is available in dozens of varieties, some with colorful foliage. Tender varieties are great for containers, and easy to overwinter. Hardy ivies are essential groundcovers and tree-trunk-huggers to bring an extra note of evergreen to New England gardens. Ivy usually doesn't flower for many years or even decades after planting. When it decides to "go adult" it stops vining and starts growing more as a bush, flowering in late Summer or Fall. Bee-wise gardeners will want to prune off adult branches; bee-safe gardeners appreciate them as one of the bee's more valuable late-season food sources. Any nursery or big box will have the mainstream types; ivy addicts will enjoy mail-ordering from Hederas Etc., 610-970-9175.

Purple amaranth—*Amaranth hypochondriacus 'Prince's Feather'*—is, of all things, a showy grain crop. It deserves welcome in every garden with plenty of sun. The grain is in the top tassels; there are no ears as in



corn. Wind-pollinated, it's a bee-wise favorite. Amaranth self-seeds modestly and often far afield. It does best growing where it wants, so enjoy it when and where it pops up in a flower bed as well as in the odd crack in your sidewalk. Thin these volunteer seedlings to a foot apart. Slow to get going, they rocket up after Summer turns hot, becoming four to even eight feet tree-wannabe's when really happy. Great for cutting too: Put a few stems in a large clear vase and they'll dye the water a complementary burgundy. Get starter plants from Farmer's Daughter—then let the self-seeding begin!

Fancy-leaved Forsythia. Forsythia's early flowers are always welcome, but the totally boring bush that follows is a trial indeed. Kumson is a variety whose new leaves are heavily netted with white, for a sophisticated show from May through frost. Best foliage and overall habit when cut back ruthlessly (to a couple of inches) each Spring. If you're bee-safe, wait until right after it flowers; if you're bee-wise, cut back in late Winter before the flowers open. More and more available at garden centers, or try Briggs or Farmer's Daughter.



Plant Pro on Channel 10 Saturday, October 21

Great Plants for Early Fall Gardens

Altissimo roses bloom non-stop—and I'm not kidding, truly from May through frost—on stiffly-upright canes to eight feet. The single vermilion flowers are large, graceful, and intense in equal measure. Try HighCountryRoses.com. They're in the Rockies so you know Altissimo's hardy.

Have oranges even in New England! The "hardy" orange, *Poncirus trifoliata*, is hardy indeed, all the way up to Boston (at least inside Route 128). Give it all possible sun and heat. Delicious white flowers (no fragrance, alas) lead to a heavy crop of ping-pong-ball-sized oranges. (They are too dry for anything more than marmalade, but hey, they ARE oranges.) Site well away from traffic because the bush's enormous thorns can pierce anything short of rawhide. Hardy orange grows as large as a lilac but is best when clipped (carefully!) into a ball. The thorns as well as the young twigs stay green even after the leaves fall. Great fall foliage color too. Flowers, fruit, Fall foliage, winter twigs: The perfect four-season plant as long as you mind the thorns. The contorted variety, Flying Dragon, is now more available, but not necessarily better, than the species. ForestFarm.com.

Giant whorled sunflowers—*Helianthus verticillatus*—is for gardeners who think big. The narrow dark foliage on tall stems to, oh, twelve feet, is topped by hundreds of yellow daisies that glow against the late September and October sky. Yes, this perennial sunflower needs firm staking. PlantDelights.com.

Tender gingers are classic Deep South perennials but even up North they are easier (and so much more unusual) than dahlias. Tall canes in thick clumps are self-supporting with foliage that is showy all season long. Tender gingers—*Hedychium* is the Latin—maintain an exotic but tidy bushiness even as the rest of the garden gets a bit wild come September. Most varieties bloom so late the frost spoils the show, but Tara is really early (for a ginger): August. Each cane is tipped with a large "cob" of fragrant spidery orange blossoms. Daniel Weeks (the one on the broadcast) is a fragrant pale-yellow show September through frost. Unlike dahlias, gingers are easy keepers over the winter. Let the frost kill the canes, then dig up the whole clump and dump it in the basement. PlantDelights.com.



Dahlias are flowering machines from July through frost but their normally dull-green foliage makes for a long wait all May and June. Purple-leaved varieties are satisfying the moment they sprout, and are also shorter and bushier so don't need staking, or at least not very much. Single-flowered varieties like the yellow 'Party' on the broadcast are particularly easy to add to otherwise open patches between shrubs. Or plant them as filler near your poppies, which are dormant and gone by July anyway. Whatever the location, give dahlias the same siting as tomatoes: rich warm soil, great drainage, and, most importantly, full sun without competition or crowding from neighboring shrubs. PlantDelights.com.

Thanks for watching Plant Pro, and let me know how these terrific plants do in your own garden.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Louis Raymond". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Louis" and "Raymond" being significantly larger and more decorative than the rest of the letters.

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