Plants Honey Bees Use

Presented by: Shannon Trimboli
At: 2018 Eastern Kentucky Winter Bee School
Honey Bee Foraging Behavior

• Bees forage for 3 main items from plants
  – Nectar
  – Pollen
  – Resin / propolis
Honey Bee Foraging Behavior

- Hive focuses on only a few types of flowers and locations / day
  - Can change from day to day
- Diversity of options important
  - Flowering times
  - Different nutrients, amino acids, etc.
Not all Plants Created Equal

- Color
  - Yellow
  - Blue
  - White
- Flower shape
- Wild-type or ornamental
- Tree vs. Forb
Not all Plants Created Equal

- Nectar / pollen production varies within species
  - Soil type
  - Soil moisture
  - Elevation (micro-climate)
Not all Plants Created Equal

• Major Honey Plants
• Minor Honey Plants
  – Important
  – Not-so Important
• Importance may be relative
Planting for Honey Bees

• Know what trying to accomplish; be realistic
• Know what is already growing in your area
• Don’t plant major honey plants and don’t compete with them
• Fill in gaps
  – Late winter / very early spring
  – Summer dearth
• Don’t plant invasive species
  – Exotic Plant Pest Council
Brief Overview of a Few Important Minor Honey Plants in KY
Important Minor Honey Plants

• Elm (*Ulmus spp.*)
  – Blooms: Feb. - April
  – Use: Pollen
Important Minor Honey Plants

• Maple (*Acer spp.*)
  – Blooms: Feb. - April (Depending on species)
  – Use: Nectar and pollen
Important Minor Honey Plants

• Fruit trees (*Prunus* spp., *Malus* spp., *Pyrus* spp.)
  – Blooms: Feb. - May (Depending on species or variety)
  – Use: Nectar and pollen
Important Minor Honey Plants

- Blackberries and Raspberries (*Rubus spp.*)
  - Blooms: March - June (Depending on species)
  - Use: Nectar and pollen
Important Minor Honey Plants

• Sumac (*Rhus spp.*)
  – Blooms: March - Aug. (Depending on species)
  – Use: Nectar and pollen

Can be a major honey plant in some areas
Important Minor Honey Plants

• Holly (*Ilex spp.*)
  – Blooms: April - June (Depending on species)
  – Use: Nectar and pollen
Important Minor Honey Plants

• Poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*)
  – Blooms: April - July
  – Use: Nectar and pollen
Important Minor Honey Plants

• Yellowwood (*Cladrastis kentukea*)
  – Blooms: May - June
  – Use: Nectar
Important Minor Honey Plants

• Honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*)
  – Blooms: May - June
  – Use: Nectar and pollen
Important Minor Honey Plants

• Milkweed (*Asclepias spp.*)
  – Blooms: May - Sept.
  – Use: Nectar and pollen
Important Minor Honey Plants

• Mountain mint (*Pycanthemum spp.*)
  – Blooms: May - Sept.
  – Use: Nectar and pollen
Important Minor Honey Plants

• Sunflower (*Helianthus spp.*)
  – Blooms: June - Oct. (Depending on species)
  – Use: Nectar and pollen
Thank You!

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