

# Fruitful partnership



**Designer Sadie Stowell reveals how she was inspired to create a bee-friendly garden for Copella at this year's Hampton Court Flower Show**



**G**rowing up on the borders of rural Herefordshire in a cottage situated in 15 acres of the remains of an old orchard, I naturally developed an interest in the flora and fauna of the British landscape and the importance of nature and the environment.

Many of the original trees in our orchard have long gone, simply through age, but we are lucky enough still to have our wonderful old standard Bramleys. These lovely trees are now eleven metres or more in height and, as well as providing us with delicious cooking apples, offer shelter to many insects and birds. In early spring, at blossom time, their branches are particularly alive with bees collecting pollen and nectar for the developing brood in the hive.

## Highlighting bee health

It was the current concern for the health of our bee population in the UK – and indeed globally – that kindled my interest in bees and led me to research what could be done to help what appears to be an impending threat to their survival. Studies to investigate the reasons for the decrease in bee colony numbers have come to no firm conclusions but, at present, it seems that a number of different factors play a part in Colony Collapse Disorder. The parasitic Varoa mite takes the brunt of the blame, along with suggestions that global warming and disease pathogens have a part to play. All have come under the close scrutiny of researchers, but no clear conclusion has been reached so far.

**BELOW: The Copella Bee Garden was developed with a bee's perspective in mind**



With these issues in mind I approached Copella who use UK apples in their juice. Copella juices have been pressed on Boxford Farm, in the heart of the Suffolk countryside, for over forty years. The company very much relies on British bees to pollinate the apple trees from which it makes its apple juice and as such, the issue of bee decline is of natural concern.

Being so crucial to the apple pollination process, the team at Boxford Farm are used to taking various measures to support and attract local bees, such as planting plum trees which flower earlier than apple (encouraging bees to visit the farm as early as possible).

Copella had sponsored my Bronze-medal winning garden at RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show in 2008 and working with them to create a bee-friendly garden seemed the perfect progression. So, 'The Copella Bee Garden' was born.

## Show garden 2010

This year's garden is to be designed with bees in mind, the idea being to highlight the on-going decline in both honey and bumblebee populations, while creating a garden that demonstrates some of the simple ways in which people can support bees, such as through the appropriate choice of plants.

The layout of the garden takes inspiration from the rhythms of the bee's 'waggle dance' while the overall concept reflects the bees' journey from plant to hive. The main focal element in the garden will be an interactive sculptural

**BELOW: Sadie's own garden is a haven for bees and other insects**



**ABOVE: Sadie's 2008 Hampton Court design was also sponsored by Copella**



**LEFT: The most simple flowers, such as apple blossom, are the easiest source of nectar**

building taking its inspiration from a natural bee hive. Rolling earth banks inspired by ridge and furrow patterns will cradle the building to create a feeling of enclosure while apple trees and native shrubs will provide strong structural shapes throughout. A winding path will weave its way through the garden while a calm pool will echo the curvilinear design of the central seating area.

Most of the plants I have chosen for the garden are towards the blue and mauve end of the colour spectrum and, because of this, are especially attractive to bees. They include *Hyssopus officinalis*, *Origanum* 'Rot Kugel', *Scabiosa* 'Chilli Black' and *Trifolium rubens*. An area to the rear of the garden will be planted with wildflower species and grasses. My plant list also includes a number of annual varieties which

are wonderful bee attractants. I am growing these at home with the help of my mother who has taught me most of what I know about horticulture and they amount to nearly a thousand plants – a tricky task, especially as we have had such an unkind spring this year!

So it is with bees in mind that I enter my second show garden at Hampton Court 2010. All the different elements of the garden are now ready and waiting to begin their journey to the show where they will be put into position by my team, Landscape Associates Ltd.

Visitors to The Copella Bee Garden will be able to create a wildflower patch to attract bees in their own garden, as they will be given a mix of bee-friendly seeds (from [Lbsgardenwarehouse.co.uk](http://Lbsgardenwarehouse.co.uk)), including bird's foot trefoil, greater knapweed, cornflower and selfheal.

My hope is that we can create a garden to be proud of, one that educates the public about bee decline and showcases the simple things that can help. Most importantly, I hope we create a garden that bees love and visit in their swarms! □

**For further information on The Copella Bee Garden, visit [Copellafruitjuices.co.uk](http://Copellafruitjuices.co.uk)  
For more information on designer Sadie May Stowell, visit [Sadiemay.co.uk](http://Sadiemay.co.uk)**

## Top tips for bees

Please consider bees when planning your own garden. Domestic gardeners can be of significant help in providing a long season of pollen- and nectar-rich flowers and your garden can give you a great deal of pleasure whilst, at the same time, sustaining your local bees and keeping them happy.

- 1** Grow annuals (seasonal flowers) such as *Phacelia tanacetifolia*, *Limnanthes douglasii* and *Nemophila*. These are excellent for attracting bees because they produce an abundance of nectar that is easily accessible for them.
- 2** Bees collect both pollen and nectar which are found on all plants in combination. By planting for flowering at different times of the year – spring, summer and autumn – you will ensure your garden is bee-friendly for as long a season as possible. Early producers of nectar like crocus, and pollen like willow and hazel are good for bees, as are flowering mature ivy and aster, providing a supply of nectar later in the season.
- 3** The flowers of herbs like lavender, marjoram, sage, hyssop, borage and mint are also excellent for drawing bees to your garden. Shrubs such as *Cotoneaster horizontalis*, holly (if allowed to flower) and *Escallonia* are great for creating a bee-friendly garden because their flowers produce plenty of nectar.
- 4** Blue, violet, white and yellow are the best flower colours to plant to catch the attention of bees.
- 5** Plan your borders in a sheltered site that catches the sun. Bees work best in sunny areas because their metabolism works best in temperatures above 10°C, and nectar flow increases in plants on a sunny day.
- 6** Honey bees prefer single open flowers, such as apple blossom, as they can reach the nectaries more easily with their short proboscis (tongue).
- 7** Place your plant species in groups so that you create a mass of one type of flower. This is far more likely to attract the bees attention than single flowers scattered around the garden.
- 8** Vegetables such as parsnip and carrot are biennial (they flower in their second year) and if left in the ground over winter, they will flower the next season. Leave a few in the ground – rather than harvesting them – and when they do flower, they will attract bees.
- 9** Native shrubs such as willow and hazel are excellent for providing a crucial early source of pollen for bees.