



## CITTASLOW INTERNATIONAL BEE MANIFESTO

### "CittaslowBee: concretely for bees, sentinels of biodiversity"

#### introduction

The bee (*Apis mellifera*) is the insect known to all of us for the production of honey. Many know its importance in favouring the pollination of plants.

Less known is its essential action for the protection of biodiversity, understood as coexistence in a given ecosystem of multiple species, both animal and plant, in which a balance is created through their reciprocal relationships.

The basic importance of maintaining biodiversity lies in the fact that the environment must constantly be able to adapt to climate changes and be able to limit the onset of diseases and parasites; to do this, the environment requires to be populated with genetically different plants. This diversity survives, to a large extent, thanks to the work of pollinating insects such as bees, which during the search for nectar from flowers transport pollen from one plant to another. In this way, a constant remixing of the plant genes is determined, which can become more resistant to diseases, infestations, parasites, drought.

Recent studies have shown how the bee, besides contributing to the pollination of 80% of flowering plants (both spontaneous and cultivated), plays a central role in those areas of the world where the environments have deteriorated with the possible danger of the occurrence of natural disasters such as floods, landslides, erosions and desertifications.

It was calculated that just in Europe the 84% of the 264 cultivated species need insect pollination and that over 4000 different plant species continue to thrive and reproduce precisely through the humble and precious action of bees.

Today this insect known to all is in danger: let's do something, concretely.

Mayors and the Cittaslow communities work every day exchanging good practices and projects to give a "future of good living" to all, in alliance with the next generations and with every organism on earth. This is why we have always been in the front row to defend the bees in the awareness that if we save the buzzing tireless worker we will save the world.

To reverse the trend of bees' decline, we consider their defense of primary importance, given the irreplaceable role of bees, beekeeping (beekeeping remains today an economic activity focused on the production of honey and wax, which still has a significant importance in rural areas, ensuring the communities present the ability to control the territory and produce income) and other pollinating insects in the protection and maintenance of biodiversity, to ensure food security and adequate economic support of many people, in particular of those living in rural or marginalized areas.

Much of what we eat comes from the work of these small pollinating insects that live in a cooperative society. For example, vegetables in gardens and fields are developed thanks to bees, as well as most of fruits on trees. Without plant food we would not even have meat ...: just in Europe, over 4,000 vegetables! Obviously, faced with a general bee crisis, the damage would be immense and probably irreversible. Today, industrial and intensive agriculture, which uses chemical pesticides in large quantities, monocultures plants, adopts destructive agricultural practices, is indifferent to biodiversity. As if that weren't enough, climate changes are also adding stress and dangers to bees' lives.

**This is a small list of plants and flowers that attract bees the most:**

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)

Loddon lily (*Leucojum aestivum*)

Alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*)

Iris or Giaggiolo (*Florentine or Germanic Iris etc.*)

Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia* Miller etc.)

Rose (*Rose are many varieties of Rosaceae*)

Chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*)

Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)

Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)

Sage (*Salvia officinalis*)

Clover (*Trifolium*)

Jerusalem artichoke (*Helianthus tuberosus*)

Chrysanthemum (*Chrysanthemum*)

Borage (*Borago officinalis*)

Echinacea (*Echinacea*)

Achillea (*Achillea Millefolium*)

Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*)

Mallow (*Malva sylvestris*)

Tagete (Tagetes)

## Seasonality

Paying attention to the seasonality of the plants guarantees to have blooms during a large part of the year, which give nourishment to small pollinators throughout the vegetative period: CREATING SMALL HABITATS IN THE URBAN CONTEXT FOR BEES BY CULTIVATING PLANTS AND FLOWERS ABLE TO FEED THEM IT CAN HELP THEM NOT TO BECOME EXTINCT.

## How to feed bees in Spring

Spring is good for embellishing one's balconies or gardens, public parks and green areas for civic use, with a wide variety of flowers and plants with many scents.

**Tulips:** the tulip bulb should be planted in cold months, in the ground or in pots, to have flowering in spring. There are varieties of different colours of tulip flowers, from white to purple, from red to orange.

**Chives:** aromatic herb widely used in cooking, it produces soft purple flowers, of which insects are very greedy.

**Rosemary:** cold resistant aromatic herb. The twigs bloom in Spring with shades ranging from blue to soft purple.

**Dandelion:** it is a perennial plant that grows spontaneously in lawns or gardens without the need to sow it. The characteristic yellow flower attracts bees and is one of the first sources of nutrition after the end of winter.

**Sage:** shrub that grows quickly and enjoys the sun. Its blue-violet flowers are very popular with bees.

**Clover:** present in numerous varieties, it is very easy to grow and it's increasingly chosen because it helps improve soil fertility. It blooms from April to July.

## What plants to choose in Summer

**Borage:** it is an annual plant used in agriculture and horticulture as a pesticide, in the cuisine as ingredient. Easy to grow, even in pots. The deep blue flowers have a high amount of nectar and therefore attract bees.

**Lavender:** rustic plant, which is well suited to the various climatic conditions of our territory. The flowers, of the characteristic blue-violet color, release a fragrance with innumerable properties into the environment.

**Basil:** a well-known and widely used aromatic plant, it produces white flowers that bloom in Summer and are very popular with bees.

**Sunflower:** very useful for collecting nectar, from which very good honey is produced. However, it is essential to choose organic and genetically unmodified seeds to avoid harming the bees.

**Calendula:** rustic plant that easily adapts to different environmental conditions. Its characteristic yellow-orange flowers attract pollinating insects.

**Mallow:** perennial herbaceous plant whose flowers bloom from April to October and have a purple hue, it is a rich reserve of nectar for bees.

**Daisy:** bushy plant that blooms from May to September. Grown for ornamental purposes both in pots and in the garden to embellish rocky corners. If grown on the balcony, it should be placed in a sheltered and well-lit corner.

## What plants to choose in Autumn

**Jerusalem artichoke:** from the sunflower family, it also grows spontaneously and blooms with its bright yellow in October.

**Chrysanthemum:** perennial plant, cultivable in pots and resistant to colder climates. In October and November in temperate climates, it produces colorful flowers: bright red, golden yellow, lilac. Fundamental to give bees the last nourishment before Winter.

**Various, native and colorful flowers:** bees have evolved with wildflowers, which naturally vary according to the area. Planting various and native wildflowers on your garden or balcony means giving these insects a safe haven in which to stop and refresh themselves.

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