

The Buzz on Bees: A Grower's Guide to Pollination

Type of Bee	Behavior
Bumblebees	Great pollinators, but the bees don't communicate with each other. Bumblebees don't mind bad weather at all.
Honey bees	These bees stay in their hive during poor weather. They're great communicators and can notify their hive mates of nearby food.

As a cranberry grower, you already know how important it is to have many flowers on those vines! After all, you can't get a berry without a flower. However, it's not enough to just have flowers. The flowers have to be pollinated. That's why bees are so important to you.

Nature could take care of things on its own, but to get the best harvest, you want the most pollination possible. It's best to use bees that you know will be good pollinators. So you will probably want to rent bee hives.

Renting hives costs money. You want to keep costs down, but you want pollination to be high. It's important to choose your timing carefully. You want the bees to be happy right in your bog. If you don't have enough flowers, they may go elsewhere. Also, you wouldn't want to pay for a hive rental when you don't have enough flowers to pollinate—would you? Another reason to wait a while before accepting delivery of the bees is that you can't use certain pest treatments when the bees are around. Bottom line is: You want to keep the bees for as short a time as you can, without shortchanging the pollination.

When the hives are delivered, you want plenty of flowers in bloom, and many more to come. Then again, you also want the bees out of your bog by the time the cranberry blooms begin to fade. Otherwise, bees might pollinate lots of weed flowers—and you'll have to deal with weeding next year.

Another thing to consider is what the weather is up to. See, honey bees—a good choice to start your pollination—don't work in the rain. You'll need to check the long range forecast and decide whether it's worth it to order hives of another type of bee to do some work when and if it rains.

Good luck with your decisions. Happy harvest!

Know Your Bees, Please!



Honey bee – they are great at communicating with each other.



Bumblebee - Fabulous pollinator, but very small colony (50 bees in a colony). It takes 3 hives to pollinate one acre of cranberries.

Did you know?

More than 40,000 honey bees live in one colony. That's a lot of pollinators! Figure you'll need two hives for every acre.

Choose your timing!

A good rule of thumb: Order your bees early! Honey bees must be on the bog when 10% of all the developing buds have blossomed.