

BEE-FRIENDLY BLOOMS

Parents & Caregivers: In the **Apple TV+** series, *Jane*, Jane Garcia and her best friend David learn that bees around the world are disappearing. Why? One reason is there are not enough flowers for bees to get the pollen they eat, so they are starving. As more land is developed, there are fewer places for wildflowers to grow. And that means there are fewer bees to pollinate our fruits and vegetables.

We can help bees by upcycling plastic bottles and containers into planters, and filling them with bee-friendly flowers. The planters can be grouped together in yards and shared with neighbors to make small outdoor flower gardens. Remember: You can also support bees by not using pesticides in your yard.

Check out [ymiclassroom.com/jane](https://www.ymiclassroom.com/jane) for a video on how to make planters.



Supplies Needed

Remember to use environmentally safe supplies!

- Covering to protect your work area
- Large plastic soda bottles, yogurt containers, or other large deep plastic containers [large milk cartons also work]
- Power drill for making drainage holes
- Scissors and/or utility knife
- Sandpaper
- Nontoxic waterproof acrylic paint
- Paint brushes
- Stickers or ribbon (optional)
- Glue gun
- Potting soil
- Planting stones
- Flower seeds/seedlings: some bee-friendly choices are pansy, cornflower, daisy, calendula, cosmos, zinnia, phlox, New England Aster, black-eyed Susan, and crocus. Be sure to use flowers that are native to your community. Ask your local garden center for help. Some seed packets also note if they are good for bee gardens.
- Water

SAFETY NOTE: Only grown-ups should use the scissors and drill to cut plastic bottles and containers and create drainage holes.

Directions

- Remove any labels, then wash, clean, and dry all containers.
- Cover your work area to protect it from spills.
- Cut off the top third of each plastic soda bottle.
- Drill two or three holes in the bottom of each bottle or container for water drainage.
- Gently sand the cut edge of each bottle to smooth it.
- Lightly sand the outside of each bottle so paint will stick better.
- Paint the outside of each plastic container (not the inside). Add stickers or ribbon for decoration if desired. Let dry.
- Place a thin layer of planting stones at the bottom of your painted or decorated containers.
- Fill the planter partway (about two-thirds) with gardening soil. You can also mix in some compost if you have it.
- Follow the directions on the seed packet for planting your flower seeds. If not available, poke a hole about one-eighth to one-quarter inch into the soil, then drop a few seeds in each hole and cover them up.
- If you start with seedlings, make a hole in the soil in the planter big enough for the seedling's roots and add soil until the roots are completely covered.
- Water plants based on seed/plant recommendations.
- Use plastic container lids as coasters to catch drainage water while your plants grow indoors.
- Keep your planters in a sunny spot inside for a few days until your seeds sprout, then move the planters outdoors.
- Group your planters together when you take them outside so they catch the bees' attention when the flowers bloom.

Grow Your Own Seedlings

Did you know that you can grow your own flower seedlings with recycled toilet paper tubes? Gently make four ½-inch cuts on the bottom of the tube so that you have four equal cut sections or flaps. Fold the flaps in to create a flat bottom. Follow the directions on the seed and soil packets for information specific to your plants. Fill about three-quarters of the tube with soil, add your flower seeds, and gently cover the seeds with a thin layer of soil. Water. When the seedlings are ready to be transplanted into your planter, create a little hollow in the soil, gently undo the folds at the bottom of the tube, remove the tube, place the plant in the soil, and cover the roots with soil to secure the plant. If transplanting outdoors, there's no need to remove the tube! Place the tube in a hollow in the ground, surround it with soil to the depth of the seedling so it is secure, and cut off the part of the tube above the soil. Then, watch your flowers bloom!

