Introduction

The number of British bee hives has declined by nearly 75% over the last century and the UK is now home to just 30% of the bee hives needed in order to future-proof our bee count. Pollinators, like the British honey bee, help ensure the livelihoods of more than 80% of crops and wild plants in Europe and they are crucial for the production of a third of the fruit and veg we eat, meaning lots of our favourite food and drink produce - like apples and strawberries - wouldn't exist in a world without them.

Whilst there are several factors behind the decline in bees, the two main causes are bee disease and a lack of food on which bees may forage. So, whether you are a bee-fanatic or a bee-ginner, there are lots of small changes you can make and now is the ideal time to get started.

Rowse Honey has compiled this handy Bee A Bee Buddy Guide to help you on your way.

But what can you do to help?

Plant a variety of flowers next to each other

Bees don't like having to fly very far, so plant your flowers in beds close together. Some plants are more effective than others at attracting bees to your garden; they love bright flowers, particularly blue ones like lavender, and love the pollen found in herbs such as thyme and marjoram.

Get started with some pots on your patio, herbs in a window box or even hanging baskets. The more habitats you have in your garden, the more insects and bees you can attract - bees like plants with varying heights, so planting trees, shrubs and larger plants will also help.

Wonderfully wild gardens

Don't throw the weeds out – pile them up! A simple wood pile in a corner is a cheap way to help bees and bugs nest and feed. Although the micro-habitat will decay over time, even a little heap of branches or twigs can provide shelter and be placed out of sight in the corner of your garden.

It's thirsty work being a bee

Make sure there is somewhere in your garden for bees to drink from. They're too small to be able to drink from a pond or bird table so try putting a little water on a plate or in a small bowl to help the little chaps out.

Revive sleepy bees

It's a simple mix for a bee in a tight spot! Rowse Honey suggests mixing two tablespoons of white sugar with one tablespoon of water. Place the bee itself on the spoon - it should have a drink and, hopefully, become energized enough to take flight!

Don't throw it– pile it

Have you ever noticed a tired or struggling bee in your garden? Well, you can actually revive them easily using a simple mix of sugar and water. Rowse Honey suggests mixing two tablespoons of white sugar with one tablespoon of water. Place the bee itself on the spoon - it should have a drink and, hopefully, become energized enough to take flight!