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Bee Palooza showcases backyard bee habitats

By [MICHIGAN RADIO NEWSROOM](#) (/PEOPLE/MICHIGAN-RADIO-NEWSROOM)



Credit Logan Chadde / Michigan Radio [Enlarge image \(http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/michigan/files/201206/beehotel.jpg\)](http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/michigan/files/201206/beehotel.jpg)

A native bee hotel on display at Bee Palooza. The bee experts from Michigan State University say a bee hotel is easy to build.

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Honeybees are responsible for pollinating about one of every three bites of food we eat.

Rufus Isaacs is an entomology professor at Michigan State University. He studies pollination of berry crops.

"Honeybees are, if we're talking about commercial agriculture, they're the most

important pollinator. We have tens of thousands of those bees that come into Michigan every spring, and they do the lion's share of the work to get our cherry crop, our blueberry crop, our apple crop, our pickling cucumber crop pollinated."

But since 2006, beekeepers have been reporting major honeybee losses. That's because of something called [Colony Collapse Disorder](http://www.ars.usda.gov/News/docs.htm?docid=15372) (<http://www.ars.usda.gov/News/docs.htm?docid=15372>).

Honeybees are not native to Michigan, but there are 400 native bee species in the state. Isaacs says these native bees also pollinate crops and wild flowers. But he says the overall health of native bee populations is unclear.

"To be honest, we don't really know anything about long-term trends in their populations because there hasn't been any careful monitoring of them over the years," he said.

A few days ago, Isaacs and others in MSU's entomology department put on an event called [Bee Palooza](http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/get_your_summer_buzz_on_bee_palooza_marks_national_pollinator_week_at_michigan_state_university/) (http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/get_your_summer_buzz_on_bee_palooza_marks_national_pollinator_week_at_michigan_state_university/).

The bee experts say human development is threatening the habitats that native bees use. So they wanted to show people how to build homes for native bees in their backyards.

Emily May is a graduate student at MSU. She's standing next to a structure that's shaped like a house. It's made out of logs, bamboo and pieces of wood with a lot of holes in them. May calls it a bee hotel.

"It's really easy to make a bee hotel. You can just basically take a piece of old wood and drill some holes into it around 6 millimeters in diameter, and pretty much, if you put it out there, the bees will come."

May says in winter, you should put your bee hotel in the refrigerator so it doesn't freeze. In the spring, you can put it back outside along with a fresh piece of wood.

If you're worried about getting stung, the experts at Bee Palooza promise that native bees are docile; they won't hurt you.

It's not too late in the year to start a bee hotel, and you can also plant blue, purple and yellow flowers to attract native bees.

-Suzanne Jacobs, Michigan Radio Newsroom

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