

Dear Monarch,

I am allergic to bees but my HOA is refusing to remove plants that are known to attract them! I can't enjoy my patio and I'm afraid to walk past these plants. Help!

BEES

Dear Concerned Resident,

Those little pollinators sure have a tough reputation. Your Homeowner's Association may have plants in common areas that will not be removed if they are healthy – flower production (and subsequent bee attraction) is not grounds for replacement.

- Where there are flowers, there will be pollinators. Flowers are the reproductive parts of plants; they are not there to simply look pretty! A landscape without any flowers would not be very engaging and in many cases, the scope of removal and replacement would be far outside a typical budget.
- Bees typically prefer flowers with cool colors (blue to violet) although there are plenty of notable exceptions. Avoid planting bee favorites in your own garden or patio. This includes bee-pollinated produce like fruit trees, herbs, and veggies.
- Prepare yourself. Bee allergies are common, and it is important to take control of your safety in the landscape, just as you would apply sunscreen or avoid thorns. Act calm around bees and do not provoke or swat them. Bees are *not* attracted to humans – keep yourself and others out of planters so you do not accidentally threaten them. If you have severe allergies, carry the appropriate medical supplies.
- It may not be possible to remove plants that bees enjoy but you can reduce their activity. Ask that the plants be sheared just before flowering to remove buds. By preventing flowers, bees will have significantly less interest in your landscape. Be warned that this takes a watchful eye to get the timing right and plants with multiple bloom cycles will need constant shearing and may not look or perform as well.

MONARCH TIP

Three-quarters of the world's **flower production** and over a third of our **food production** relies on pollinators like bees!