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# Honeybee Helper

Conservation scientist Dr. Reese Halter speaks with P&C about the importance of the honeybee and how to help the environment as a family.



By [Alexandra Frons](#) | June , 2010

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Dr. Reese Halter, conservation scientist and author of the book *The Incomparable Honeybee*, discusses why the honeybee is an essential part of our society and why it is in trouble. He gave us some great recommendations on how each of us can help the honeybee. Our favorite is his suggestion that everyone this summer plant a fruit tree. Check out our list of resources at the end of the article for more information on how to get started!

**P&C: How is the honeybee such an amazing contributor to our society?**

**Dr. Reese Halter:** The honeybee does a number of things for us. They contribute to everything on our breakfast, lunch, and dinner plates. That makes up

over 100 crops, including beef and dairy, because the cattle eat clover and alfalfa. They are also an essential part of our cotton industry, our wax products, such as candles, and some medicines. In America alone, the dollar amount of commerce that I conservatively estimated that the honeybee contributes each year is 44 billion dollars.

**Parent and Child: What are the problems facing the honeybees at this moment?**

**Dr. Halter:** The problem is that honeybees around the world are dying. In nature, there is rarely just one thing that happens and then one result. Here, we have many things coming together. Bees time their existence to when flowers begin to bloom and climate change is changing when the plants are flowering. There are hosts of electromagnetic radiation sources from cell phone towers. And there are plants that are exposed to pesticides and other poisons, which in many cases leave through the plant's pollen. All these things have come together to cause trouble for the honeybee.

**P&C: What can families do to help the honeybees?**

**Dr. Halter:** Everyone can lend a helping hand.

--This spring, scientists are asking everyone to plant local blue and yellow flowers. Plant them in patches by color and in as large a block as you can, so the bees can see them.

--Every morning, fill a little water bowl and put it in the garden, and every night bring it back into the house to replenish in the morning.

--Try not to use any insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, or miticides in the garden.

--Consider buying organic food, because it's at every supermarket now. If you buy it in season, organic food is not as expensive.

--Also, consider supporting your local beekeeper by buying their honey. If you buy honey in the store, buy honey that has an organic label on it.

If everybody did one thing differently, it would make a huge difference.

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**P&C: What do you do with your kids to inspire environmental awareness?**

**Dr. Halter:** We plant trees in the springtime wherever we are. My kids love trees and we love to camp. They're a little more grown up now, but we still all love experiencing nature together. We have a camping ritual, where we go for 4 or 5 days into the wild, with no cell phones and no electrical gadgets, and we have an exploration. We camp, we fish, we sing songs, and we tell stories around the fire.

**P&C: What is one thing that everyone can do to give back to the environment?**

**Dr. Halter:** When I was growing up, every springtime our family planted trees, and my dad's love of trees and nature became my passion. I knew very young that I was going to grow to be a tree scientist. So, I think it would be great if every family this spring or summer that has the means and ability would consider planting a fruit tree in their yard. And that way, they're going to see, in most cases, that the fruit tree is being pollinated and that they can get food from that tree. By doing this, we can also get a little bit more connected as a family while we're providing a nectar source and a pollen source for the bees to eat from and grow from.

For more information...

For more ways to help: [usanpn.org](http://usanpn.org)

For more about Dr. Reese: [reesehalter.com/info/](http://reesehalter.com/info/)

For information on planting fruit trees: [eartheasy.com/grow\\_fruit\\_tree.htm#b](http://eartheasy.com/grow_fruit_tree.htm#b)

**About the Author**

Alexandra Frons is the digital assistant for *Parent & Child*.

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