

SOLITARY BEES

Mason Bees

Mason Bees, ... as their name suggests often make their nests in walls, however they also nest elsewhere, for example the Two Coloured Mason Bee makes its nest in empty snail shells. It is here that the mason bee will produce up to two generations of bees, one this season and the other emerging in the following year.

Bumble Bees

The Bumble Bee gets its name from the apparently bumbling flight when foraging or searching for a nest site. Most bumble bees nest below ground, in old mice nests for example.

The queen bee actually incubates her eggs with her warm body, like a bird.

Unlike most other insects, bumble bees can generate their own heat. That's why on cool spring morning the bumble bee can be seen bumbling about before other insects have warmed up.

Miner Bees

As their name suggests these attractive little bees like to make their homes in bare, dry soil that's well drained. Careful scanning of such areas in early summer will reveal their little 'mines' which are the entrances to their nest sites."

Helping Bees

If you'd like to help bees or simply enjoy watching them go about their business, there are several things you can do in your garden.

By planting flowers that attract bees you can encourage them to visit and collect the nectar and pollen that are so important to them and our flowering plants. There are many such plants and the internet or local garden centre will be able to advise you.

Why not install a bee post. A 1.8m x 15cm post drilled with lots of 10 cm deep holes of varying drill widths between 6 to 10 millimetres will encourage solitary bees to nest. Alternatively, a bundle of short canes hollowed out to the same depth, can be attached to a fence, window sill or tree and provide more nest sites.

For up-to-date information, events and advice please visit the website: <http://www.leicester.gov.uk/bees>



If you want to take up honey bee keeping as a hobby then the Leicestershire and Rutland Beekeepers Association can provide lots of valuable advice

at: <http://www.lrbka.org/>

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Bees Need our Help



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Bees are vital for pollination of flowers and flowers provide a food source for bees. In fact, one could not survive without the other.

In addition to the honey bee used in bee-keeping, there are also 14 species of bumble bee and around another 250 other species of bee.

Bees will rarely sting unless provoked. They are usually too busy collecting pollen and nectar.

Changes in agriculture and climate have reduced their wildflower food source and have destroyed potential nest sites.

Contrary to popular belief, most bees are solitary. They require habitats for nests, (ranging from snail shells to brick walls) and flowers and shrubs for pollen and nectar.

Gardens and open spaces within cities are becoming increasingly important habitats for bees.

By planting shrubs and flowers and providing nesting opportunities such as bee posts we can all help bees.



SOME BEE FACTS

Honey Bees

There are three different kinds of honey bee in a hive: the Queen, the Workers (females) and the Drones (males).

To make honey, young bees swallow nectar and then bring it up again. This is done many times until the water is reduced in the nectar and forms honey. They then store the honey in wax cells in the hive.

Female workers make honey to store in the hive as food. Honey is made from the nectar which itself is a watery solution of sugar, salt and protein. The bees sip the nectar using their long tongues like straws.

Honey bees live together in colonies and make their home in a hive. A colony can contain 50,000 bees but only one queen.



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Not all bees form colonies. Those that choose to lead non-social lifestyles are known as solitary bees.

Leaf Cutter Bees

One of the most interesting solitary bees is the Leaf Cutter Bee. As their name implies, leaf cutters neatly cut out circular pieces of leaf from living plants (particularly roses) in order to make their nest cells. Around 10 eggs are laid in their own individual leaf cell which is then packed with pollen and honey that feeds the larva and sealed by the adult. The fully formed bee will emerge the following summer.

Leaf cutter bees build their nests in burrows of rotting wood such as fence posts and even old park benches! The burrowing and nest creation is carried out solely by the female bee.