

The Bee-Friendly Backyard Guide

The weather's warm, gardens are in bloom, and nothing's better than spending time outside with loved ones. Learn how to enjoy your personal outdoor oasis alongside the precious pollinators who help bring it to life — bees!

The Bee-List

The pollinator A-list is packed with bees.



Honey Bee

Originally from Europe, they're the only bees that make honey, and live in colonies populated by tens of thousands. Spot one by its tawny orange hue and leg "baskets" of colorful pollen.



Bumble Bee

The big "teddy bear" of bees, bumbles boast fluffy hair that helps carry sticky pollen between flowers. They live in underground colonies of up to a few hundred bees, led by a queen.



Carpenter Bee

Predominantly black in color, these solitary bees build nests by tunneling into hard plant material like wood. You can tell them apart from the similar-looking bumble bee by their shiny abdomens.



Mason Bee

Nature's spring pollinators are smaller than a honey bee, and a beautiful metallic blue or green-black. They carry pollen on their furry underside and nest in pre-made holes like reeds and stems.

A Bee, or Not a Bee? That Is the Question!

They fly, they buzz, but are they bees?
Here are common cases of mistaken identity.



Wasps

Yellow and black wasps (including yellow jackets) differ from bees in that they sting multiple times, are often hairless, and have long, thin legs.



Flies

Colorful flies can be distinguished from bees because of their shorter antennae, and the fact they have two wings rather than a bee's four.

Get Bees to Buzz Off

Bee stings are uncommon, caused only when bees feel threatened. In fact, most native bees don't sting as they don't have honey or a colony to protect. Some species don't even have stingers, or have stingers too small to puncture human skin.

Sting Tips

- Don't panic, swat, or make sudden movements if you spot an annoyed bee near you. Just walk calmly away.
- Avoid wearing sweet scents that may be mistaken as a food source.
- In the unlikely event that you're stung by a bee, remove the stinger by carefully *scraping* the protruding end away and out with the edge of a credit card or similar item. Don't squeeze or pinch the stinger, as this releases more venom into the body.

How Does Your Garden Grow?



Plant flowering trees and plants — native to your area if possible — to provide ample pollen and nectar food sources for bees.



Avoid chemical pesticides, fertilizers, and herbicides which can be harmful to bees, often endangering their lives.



Did you know 70% of bees live underground? Help them nest safely by leaving a part of your garden wild. Avoid heavy barriers like mulch which prevents bees from digging their homes.



Keep bees hydrated — and away from beverages or pools — by leaving shallow dishes of water filled with rocks outside. Change the water every 7–10 days to prevent insects like mosquitos from hatching eggs.

Fast
Facts
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- Bees pollinate 1 in 3 bites of food we eat!
- There are 20,000+ bee species around the world, with 4,000 native to North America.
- 1 in 4 of North America's native bee species are at risk of extinction.
- The rusty patched bumble bee was the first wild bee in the continental U.S. added to the Endangered Species List in 2017.