

# Bees, wasps and what to do



## Help I have found a wasp nest what do I do?

Wasp nests are only temporary, so try not to worry. As well as being important pollinators, wasps are also a key part of a wildlife garden's natural 'pest' control feeding on caterpillars and aphids in good number.

## 30 Plants popular with bumblebees:

Betony, Bugle, Alkanet, Comfrey, Clovers, Buddleia, Field Bean, Foxglove, Knapweed, Thistles, Lavender, Vipers Bugloss, Verbascums, Woundworts, White Deadnettle, Chives, Borage, Single Larkspurs, Nasturium, Rosemary, Poached Egg plant, Catmint, Toadflax Figwort Marjoram Curry plant, Snapdragon, Sage and mints Cranesbills Agastache

### Early Flowers

Bluebells, Primrose, Dandelion, White Deadnettle, Aubretia Wallflower, Single Crocus, Flowering currant, Hazel, Forget-me-not, Pussy willow and Winter Heather.

### Late Flowers

Michaelmas daisies, Ivy, Buddleia, Goldenrod, Sedum, Lavender, Escallonia, Echinacea, Ceanothus, and Red Valerian.

Bumblebees are insects of temperate climates and differ from honey bees and solitary bees, as they live in small colonies of up to 200-300.

Bumblebees can be active during dull conditions due to their densely furry bodies. They are constantly busy in the garden, foraging for nectar and pollen, helping to pollinate flowers as they do so. Up to 25 species of bumblebee live in the UK. Many are found only in habitats such as moorland or in coastal areas; only 6 or 7 species are widespread and visit gardens. In the last 30 years, one bumblebee species became extinct in this country, and many more have suffered a marked decline.

Bees and wasps are from the *Hymenoptera* order, which comprises of bees, wasps, ants and sawflies. There are over 9,000 species of wasp in Britain. 250 of these are larger wasps with stings. But only 7 species are what most people associate as being wasps: the yellow and black social wasps

## Species found in your garden and their preferences.

### White-tailed

**Buff-tailed bumblebee *Bombus terrestris*** Tail's quite variable white-yellow. BIG! Flying from February – October. It rarely visits pendulous flowers - its large size means it is often not agile enough to and is a hole biting 'nectar robber'. Likes Short open flowers e.g White Clover and daisy like flowers

**Garden bumblebee *Bombus hortorum***. White-tailed, with extra yellow stripe on Its abdomen. Medium sized. Flying April – October. It has a very long tongue so can visit flowers with petals forming long tubes such as honeysuckle, delphiniums and catmint

**White-tailed bumblebee *Bombus lucorum***. No extra yellow stripe. Medium sized Flying from March – September. Prefers short open flowers e.g White Clover, and daisy as it is a hole biting 'nectar robber' of species like comfrey .

### Red-tailed

**Early bumblebee *Bombus pratorum***. Yellow striped with orange-red tail. Small sized. Flying from March – August. Small agile size and medium-length tongue means it can probe a range of flower depths; able to visit upside-down and drooping flowers such as Comfrey and Bugloss.

**Red-tailed bumblebee *Bombus lapidarius*** All black body with red tail. BIG! Flying from April – September. Another large bee which likes to land on flowers with horizontal massed 'platforms' e.g. Daisy family, especially Knapweeds.

### Brown tailed

**Common carder bee *Bombus pascuorum***. No stripes, usually all brown, Small sized and late flying June-October. Long-tongued for long-tubed flowers, especially late flowers of White Deadnettle, but also visits a wide variety of flowers

## Build a home for bees

- Build a 100 mm x 100 mm x 200 mm box with a lid, from wood. Cut an entrance hole at the bottom of the box.
- By the end of April, dig a hole in a dry, well drained spot and place the box inside.
- Force a rod or pipe (25-30 mm wide) into the ground so that it meets up with the entrance hole.
- Place bedding material such as dry grass, straw, or upholsterer's cotton (but not cotton wool) in the box, close the lid and cover over with e.g turf, logs or a paving stone.
- Plant a 10 cm tall stick upright nearby as a 'marking post' to help bees find their way back to the nest.

## What to do if you are stung?

Left alone, wasps are not normally aggressive. However, they become more aggressive as a result of crowding and temperature.

But if you are unlucky enough to be stung

The important thing is to:

- Wash with soap and water
- Apply an antihistamine spray/cream or take antihistamine tablets
- Apply an ice-pack (a pack of frozen peas or similar will do) to reduce swelling - always place a towel or similar between the ice pack and the skin to prevent an ice burn!
- Seek medical attention immediately if you are susceptible to insect bites generally.

## How to build a bumblebee nest



**You will need:**

- terracotta flower pot 
- trowel 
- dry grass or moss 
- sheltered spot that gets some sun 

(preferably under a bush)

**1** Dig a small, shallow hole under a bush. Your chosen site should not get too hot or too cold, and be in sun for about half of the day. 

**2** Fill the flowerpot with dry grass and/or moss. 

**3** Half-bury the flowerpot upside down in the hole. Position it at an angle so that the hole in the bottom points out. 

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