

Bees



Many people do not know the difference between the various kinds of bees and assume they have a swarm of honeybees when they may have a wasps' nest or a bumblebees' nest instead.

Honey Bee

Honeybees may be light coloured, a dull yellow and brown—through to dark brown.

Sometimes a colony of bees becomes too big for its home (hive, disused chimney, hollow tree etc) and then the queen and many of the bees leave to find a new home. This is a swarm. Whilst doing this they may pause and hang in a large cluster on a convenient tree, bush or post. They will not hurt anyone unless disturbed. Before leaving their old home they fill themselves with honey and are quite docile.

The Council is unable to deal with swarming bees and does not provide a service for the treatment of bees.

However bee swarms can be intimidating. The most common scenario is when a large bee swarm leaves a hive, often on a hot day in early summer. Typically these intimidating swarms will first set up temporary camp somewhere nearby, such as a tree branch or a fence post. In almost all cases the swarm will take off again within a day or two at most to occupy a more suitable permanent home elsewhere.

The British Bee Keepers Association (BBKA) should be able to put you in contact with a local beekeeper. www.bbka.org.uk.

Solitary Bee (known as Masonry Bee)

Not all bees and wasps live in colonies. Solitary bees lay their eggs in cells hidden away in soft sand, soil or mortar, providing each egg with its own food supply. Perhaps the best-known solitary bee is the 'leaf-cutter', which is responsible for cutting neat little semi-circles from the leaves and flowers of roses. While the activities of the leaf-cutter bees can be irritating when they decide to pick on your prize roses, the problem is short-lived and any attempt to discourage the bees will be ineffective. The benefit they provide is much greater than the damage they do.

Mining Bee

Mining bees are very hairy bees, often reminding one of bumblebees and canderbees, but they are much slimmer and usually their hairs are a bit shorter. Mining bees do not live in colonies. They live a solitary life. As you might conclude from the name Mining bees build their nest by making mines in the ground, preferably sand. They especially enjoy firm sandy soils with no overgrow. They build their nests in sandy paths. These paths have everything a mining bee requires; dry, well established sand and no plants threatening to either overgrow the nest or destroy it by means of their roots.

Bumble Bee

Bumble bees are no threat whatsoever; they are an ideal social insect to watch and learn about and are an essential part of any garden in summer.

Bumble bees never swarm like honeybees and rarely reach more than 70 bees in a colony. The colony is headed by the 'queen bee' that lays the eggs, while worker bees collect the pollen and nectar that keeps the colony supplied. They are very important as pollinators for both farmers and gardeners. Bumble bee queens live just about 12 months. Colours vary from all black, black with white or orange abdominal tip to rusty or yellow bands.

Please remember that all kinds of bees (and many other insects) are valuable for pollination. Never destroy them needlessly.

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