



GROUPS

Examples from left to right: Bumble bee spp. (*Bombus spp.*) Regina Ebner, Gwynne's mining bee (*Andrena bicolor*) Peter Sturgess, Honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) Norman Crowson, Red mason bee (*Osmia bicornis*)
Peter Sturgess

Bees (incl. bumblebees)

Information: Sarah Leedham

All about bees

- There are 270 species of bee in Britain and Ireland.
- They have four wings (two pairs), two antennae, and three segmented body parts (the head, the thorax, and the abdomen).
- Bees will generally reside in any habitat, as long as there is a place for them to build a hive, abundant flowering plants, and a water source.
- Like many other insects, bees are crucial pollinators.
- Climate change may be causing bumblebees to wake from hibernation in winter, increasing their dependence on early-flowering garden plants and if they are not available, bees can starve.

Why do bees need our help?

- Bees are declining because of habitat loss, climate change and agricultural intensification.
- Honeybees currently have no legal protection in the UK so they need all the help they can get!
- Many bee species are declining but information is patchy. Take part in a survey to record species on a favourite patch of ground in your area. You do not have to be an expert, but you could be after a few weeks. Start by looking up BWARS and Buglife.

DID YOU KNOW? The lifecycles of bees are intertwined with those of many other organisms, not just plants, for example, oil beetles lay their eggs in burrows close to those of mining bees. Oil-bettle larvae, called triungulins, hatch from the eggs. The triungulins crawl on to a mining bee, are taken into its burrow and feed on the bee's pollen store!

Bees cannot see the colour red but they can see the ultraviolet patterns in flowers so they do visit red flowers!

How can we help?

- Plant bee-friendly plants and flowers (rich in nectar). Transform your garden into a buzz of activity: grow flowering plants all year round and be part of creating the largest nature reserve in Britain – our gardens. If you do not have a garden, use windowsills and hanging baskets.
- Provide a source of shallow water in your greenspace (a shallow bowlful is fine!).
- Create suitable habitats through suitable mowing and cutting regimes and allow some area of grass to grow taller.
- Avoid using pesticides whenever possible, and check chemicals to see if they contain neonicotinoids (acetamiprid, clothianidin, imidacloprid, nitenpyram, nithiazine, thiacloprid and thiamethoxam).
- Use peat-free compost.
- Is your local churchyard/cemetery/school a haven for bees or a closely-mown desert? Can you encourage people to think differently? Could you start a small wildlife project in your local area?
- Support farmers looking after their land in wildlife-friendly ways. Buy local, organic produce.
- Provide space for an apiary. Bee and Bee is run by the British Beekeeper's Association and links landowners with beekeepers looking for a space for their hives. Perhaps you fancy taking up beekeeping yourself?

Learn more

- A year of bee-friendly flowers to grow: bbka.org.uk/gardening-for-bees
- Make a bee hotel, take part in surveys and more: bwars.com/information_sheets
- Buy local, organic: soilassociation.org/take-action/organic-living/buy-organic/find-your-local-independent-retailer/
- Provide space for an apiary: bbka.org.uk/bees-neighbours-siting-an-apiary/
- Bee Hives | National Bee Supplies: beekeeping.co.uk/collections/hives
- beehivesupplies.co.uk
- Contact an A Rocha UK naturalist at naturalist@arocha.org