



When many people think of bees they picture the honeybee, but there are actually about 20,000 bee species in the world! In Britain alone, there are around 270 species of bee, including 25 different bumblebees and 220 different solitary bees. All bees collect nectar and pollen from flowers, but only honeybees produce honey. In most species of bee, it's the females that do most of the work! Let's look at some different types of bees...

BUMBLEBEES

Bumblebees are usually look larger and fluffier than other bees because they're covered in lots and lots of hair. They live in social groups in tree cavities or in holes in the ground. Here are the 'Big 7' bumblebee species commonly found in gardens around Britain.



Buff-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus soroeensis*)

Buff-tailed bumblebees live in a range of habitats across Britain. It's actually only the queen which has a buff-coloured tail; the male workers bees have white tails. Look out for them from March to August.



Common carder bee (*Bombus pascuorum*)

Common carder bees are the only all-ginger bee in the 'Big 7'. They live in a range of habitats across Britain, including in gardens. Look out for them from March to November.



Early bumblebee (*Bombus pratorum*)

As you might guess from the name, early bumblebees are one of the earliest bumblebees to wake from their winter hibernation. You can see them buzzing around spring flowers as early as April. Look out for them from March to June.



Garden bumblebee (*Bombus hortorum*)

Garden bumblebees live in a range of habitats across Britain, including - as their name suggests - in gardens. They don't like their nests to be disturbed and sometimes build them underneath garden sheds! Garden bumblebees especially love foxglove flowers so planting some foxgloves (*Digitalis*) is a great way to bring them to your garden. Look out for them from March to October.



Red-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus lapidarius*)

Red-tailed bumblebees live in a range of habitats across Britain. They have a black abdomen with a long, bright red tail. The queen and female worker bees have black heads but male worker bees have black and yellow striped heads. Look out for them from April to November.



Tree bumblebee (*Bombus hypnorum*)

Tree bumblebees have only been in Britain since 2001 when the first migrated from mainland Europe. They're now widespread in England and Wales and parts of Scotland. They make their nests in parts of buildings and in empty bird boxes. Look out for them from March to July.

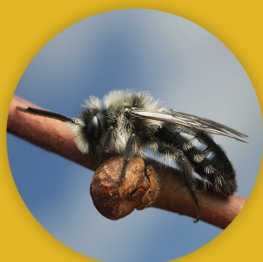


White-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus lucorum*)

White-tailed bumblebees are the typical black- and yellow-striped insects with white tails which most people picture when they think of bumblebees. They make their nests in gardens, woodland and farmland. Look out for them from March to November.

SOLITARY BEES

Solitary bees usually live alone. Each bee makes its own nest and collects its own food. Solitary bees live in a range of habitats. Some, like mining bees, live in holes in the ground. Others, like mason bees and leafcutter bees, live in hollow plant stems, dead wood and holes in walls. There are about 220 different types of solitary bee around the world. Here are some of the most common ones in Britain.



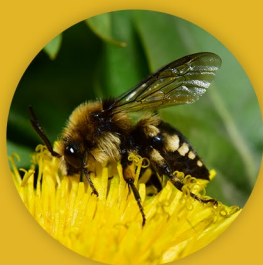
Ashy mining bee (*Andrena cineraria*)

Ashy mining bees are small black- and grey-striped bees that usually live alone but can sometimes live in small groups. They make their nests underground, especially in places with sandy soil such as near the coast, in river banks, woodland and some gardens. Small mounds of soil with tiny entry holes form above their underground nests. Female ashy mining bees lay each egg in its own cell in the nest. Ashy mining bees are widespread in England and Wales and in the southwest of Scotland. Look out for them from March to June when they are most active.



Hairy-footed flower bee (*Anthophora plumipes*)

Hairy-footed flower bees can be mistaken for small bumblebees because they're quite furry. Females are black all over with bright orange hairs on their legs. Males, which are ginger with feathery hairs on their feet/legs, are often found buzzing around flowers to attract mates. No wonder we call them 'hairy-footed flower bees'. These bees make their nests alone in holes in old walls and cliffs, and sometimes in the ground. They are widespread in the south and east of England but can be found across England and Wales. Look out for them from February to June when they are most active.



Mourning bee (*Melecta albifrons*)

Mourning bees are easily recognised by the small white spots on the sides of their black-grey abdomens. They are actually *kleptoparasites*, which means that they steal the nests of another type of bee – the hairy-footed flower bee – and lay their own eggs in the ready-made cells. Their larvae develop and emerge as adult bees very quickly and then eat the larvae of the hairy-footed flower bee before they emerge. They are widespread in south and south-eastern Britain, especially in areas where there are lots of hairy-footed flower bees. Look out for them from March to June when they are most active.



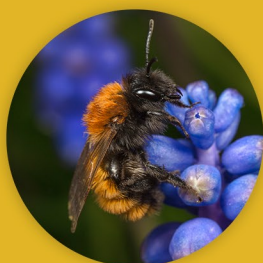
Patchwork leafcutter bee (*Megachile centuncularis*)

Patchwork leafcutter bees are small bees which look like honey bees but with orange on the underside of their abdomens. They're called leafcutter bees because they cut big circles from plant leaves, especially roses - it's quite a sight to see a bee flying past with a huge piece of leaf! They use the leaf pieces to build cells for laying eggs in hollow plant stems, old mortar in walls, dead wood and holes in cliffs. Patchwork leafcutter bees are widespread in England and Wales but less common in northern parts and in Scotland. Look out for them from April to August when they are most active.



Red mason bee (*Osmia bicornis*)

Red mason bees are small, ginger-coloured bees which live alone. They make their nests in hollow plant stems, crumbling mortar between bricks and in holes in cliffs. Each female red mason bee makes her own nest which she lines with mud and pollen to create cells into which she lays her eggs. Red mason bees are widespread in England and Wales but less common in Scotland. Look out for them from March to June when they are most active.



Tawny mining bee (*Andrena fulva*)

Tawny mining bees are furry, ginger-coloured bees that live alone. They build their nests underground in lawns, fields and flowerbeds. Above a nest forms a small, volcano-shaped mound with little holes where the bee flies in and out. Female tawny mining bees lay each egg in its own cell in the nest. Tawny mining bees are widespread in England and Wales but less common in Scotland. Look out for them from April to May when they are most active.



Wool carder bee (*Anthidium manicatum*)

Wool carder bees are easily recognised by the yellow spots on the sides of their dark abdomens. They make their nests in hollow plant stems, dead wood and old walls in gardens and other places full where there are lots of their favourite flowers. Male wool carder bees are larger than females with more body hair and spikes on their abdomens. A male will fiercely guard its patch of flowers from other insects so he can use it to attract female bees to mate with. Females collect woolly fibres from hairy-leaved plants like Lamb's ear (*Stachys byzantina*) and great mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) which they carry back to line their nests. Wool carder bees are widespread in the south of England and Wales but rare elsewhere. Look out for them from May to August when they are most active.