Native Bees - Habitats and Nesting Requirements

Bumble bees

Abandoned mouse nests, other rodent burrows, upside down flower pots, under boards, and other human-made cavities. A new queen mates in fall and is the only bumble bee to overwinter. In spring the queen awakens and starts a new colony from scratch. Our only true social native bee that produces worker bees for the hive. Can forage in cooler weather than honeybees, even in light rain.

Mining bees

Sandy soil, compacted soils, bank sides. Are usually active in the morning hours but can be seen other times.

Squash bees

Sandy soil, may nest in gardens (where pumpkins, squash and gourds are grown) or pathways. They are early risers and can be found in pumpkin patches before dawn. Males often sleep in the wilted flowers.

Sweat bees

Bare ground, compacted soil, sunny areas not covered by vegetation. Like most bees, sweat bees forage for pollen earlier in the morning and then for nectar.

Plasterer or cellophane bees

Sandy bare ground, banks or cliffs. Often many nests found in same area. Active in morning and later in the day.

Adrenid (Mining) bees

Sunny bare ground, sandy soil, under leaf litter on banksides and cliffs. Generally active in spring, most commonly seen on flowers during morning hours when pollen and nectar resources are abundant.

Mason bees (include Orchard bees)

Use pre-existing tunnels of various diameters in dead wood made by emerging beetles. Man-made and commercially sold nesting houses can spread disease and parasites if not managed properly. Xerces.org has a fact sheet on proper management of bee houses and blocks. Good maintenance requires considerable time and effort. Providing natural nesting habitat such as logs and snags is a safer and better option for our tunnel-nesting bees.

Leafcutter bees

Pre-existing circular tunnels of various diameters in dead but sound wood created by emerging beetles; rarely nest in the ground. Leave dead limbs and trees to support them and other wildlife. Leafcutter bees can be seen foraging throughout the day even in hot weather.

Large carpenter bees

Soft dead wood of poplar and cottonwood, willow trunks and limbs, untreated structural timbers including redwood. Depending on species, there may be one or two brood cycles per year. These bees can be active all day even in extremely hot weather. An important pollinator.

Small carpenter bees

Pithy stems including roses and blackberry canes. Most active in the morning but can be found at other times.

Yellow-faced bees

Nest in dead stems. Abundant in forests and forage on many floral resources More active during morning hours.