

Garden Wildlife

Solitary Bees

Introduction

Bees are fun to watch and bring life and movement to gardens from early spring to autumn. Most people are only familiar with bumblebees but of around 250 species of bee found in the UK the vast majority are solitary bees.



Did you know...?

- Bees are vital pollinators of garden flowers, wild flowers, fruit and vegetable crops.
- Solitary bees hardly ever sting – unlike hive bees they do not have honey stores to defend.
- Many bee species have declined alarmingly in recent decades.



This leaflet will...

Enable you to build a solitary bee home for your garden.

Help you attract solitary bees to pollinate flowers and fruit trees in your garden.

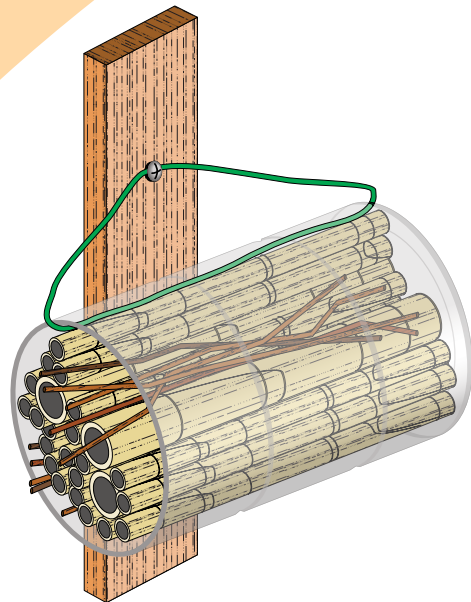
Give you hours of fun studying your own 'pollination pets'.

Bee friendly: How to build a home for solitary bees...

Artificial bee nests for solitary bees really do work. If you follow these instructions you stand an excellent chance of your bee home being used.

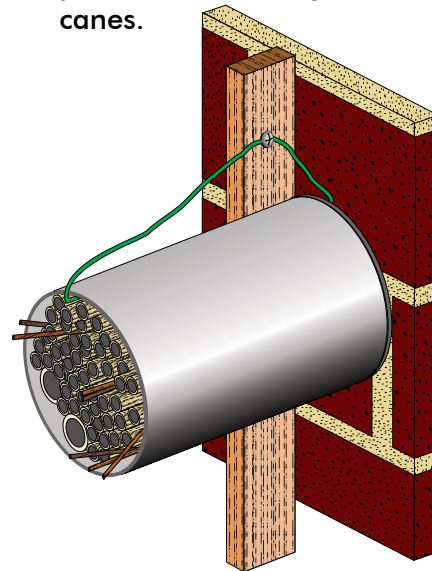
What you will need

- String, garden twine, or garden wire.
- Plastic drinks bottle or a 15-20cm length of plastic pipe with a diameter of between 10-15cms.
- Bamboo canes around 1cm diameter and/or hollow dead stems of garden plants (you may like to include a few larger diameter bamboos).
- Some smaller twigs or plant stems.



How to make your solitary bee home

- If using a plastic bottle carefully cut the neck off and make a small hole in the base.
- Cut the bamboo canes into lengths approximately equal to the height of the bottle or the length of the plastic piping.
- Ensure all the canes have hollow ends.
- Thread the twine through the bottle or pipe allowing enough length to make a loop for hanging the bee home.
- Push the bamboo canes into the bottle or pipe until they are tightly packed – you may need to push some smaller twigs or plant stems in to tighten the canes.

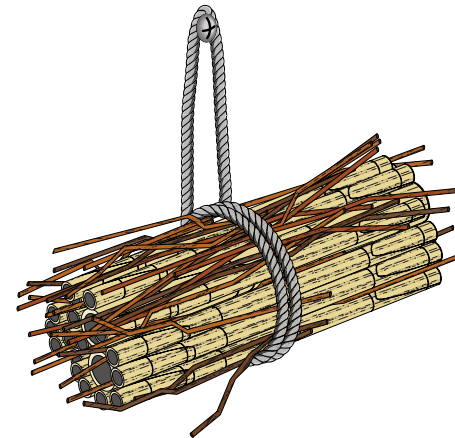


Where to site your new solitary bee home

The best place to hang the bee home is on a south facing wall between 30-100cms above the ground and in full sun (not shaded by overhanging vegetation). Suspend the bee home with a slight tilt so that rain does not enter the open canes. If using a pipe that is open at both ends, then hang with one end of the pipe against the wall. Sites sheltered from the wind are best.

Simple alternatives

No bottle or plastic pipe! Don't despair, simply tying cut bamboo canes and hollow plant stems together will also work.



No bamboo canes! Try drilling 8-12mm diameter holes into a log and leave this in a sunny sheltered position.



Male leaf cutter bee at rest



Red mason bee
Osmia rufa



Leaf cutter bee
Megachile willughbiella

Best time of year?

We suggest you put your bee home up in March or early April. Why not submit a photo of your bee home in use to Norfolk Wildlife Trust's photo gallery, visit www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/naturalconnections

Frequently asked questions

How do I make my garden more attractive for solitary bees?

Solitary bees need pollen, nectar and mud. Ensure you have plants in flower from early spring to autumn and some bare areas of soil in your garden.

Are solitary bees safe near children?

Yes. The solitary bees that will use artificial bee homes are non-aggressive and can be closely observed without risk.

How can I tell if the bee home I have made is being used?

On warm sunny days you may observe the bees coming and going. When nests have been built you will see the ends of the bamboos sealed with mud (red mason bees) or leaves (leaf cutter bees).



To find out more about Norfolk's wildlife visit **www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/naturalconnections**

Alternatively call Norfolk's free wildlife information service on **01603 598333**

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