

Plant and Share

Identifying bees

Spring sees the welcome return of bees in our gardens and open spaces. Did you know that there are over 250 different species of bee in the UK alone?

We probably all know the honey bee or the bumblebee, but what about other species? Learn about the most common UK species and then organise a bee identification session as part of Plant and Share.

These illustrations should help you identify bees, but if you want even more detail why not check out the **Friends of Earth bee app**.



Name: Honey bee

How to spot them: **slim, sandy thorax and black abdomen with golden-amber bands**

When to spot them: **March - September**

Where they live: **Mostly live in hives and are not truly wild**

What they like to eat: **Herbs, apples and other orchard fruits, raspberry flowers and much more.**



Name: Tree Bumblebee

How to spot them: **Identified by their ginger thorax, black abdomen and white tail**

When to spot them: **March - July**

Where they live: **Forests, gardens, old nest boxes, bee hotels**

What they like to eat: **Bramble fruits, herbs including comfrey.**



Name: Red Tailed Bumblebee

How to spot them: **Female red-tailed bumblebees are jet black with a bright red or red-orange tail, while males have a yellow-haired head and collar, and a weak yellow midriff-band**

When to spot them: **April - November**

Where they live: **Woodland, urban sites, gardens and wildflower meadows and grasslands**

What they like to eat: **Thistles, buddleia, clover and daisies.**



Name: White Tailed Bumblebee

How to spot them: **White-tailed bumblebees have a bright yellow collar, a yellow abdomen band and a bright white tail**

When to spot them: **March - November**

Where they live: **Can live just about anywhere but commonly found in hedgerows and heathlands**

What they like to eat: **Brambles, thistles and hedgerow flowers.**



Name: Buff Tailed Bumblebee

How to spot them: **large species with dark yellow bands at the front of the thorax and middle of the abdomen, queens are the only one which actually have buff-coloured tails (workers are very similar to white tail bumble bees)**

When to spot them: **March - August although in the south of the UK they are becoming winter active!**

Where they live: **in lowland areas, underground, using old nests**

What they like to eat: **Crops including potatoes, lavender and many flowers especially daisy like flowers.**



Name: Garden Bumblebee

How to spot them: **yellow-black-yellow thorax, a yellow band at the base of the abdomen, and a pure white tail**

When to spot them: **March - October**

Where they live: **Underground in and around grassy areas such as uncultivated fields and mossy areas.**

What they like to eat: **Foxgloves, clover, thistles, honeysuckle and blossom.**



Name: **Early Bumblebee**

How to spot them: **Yellow and black bands and an orange tail. Small size. Males also have yellow facial hair**

When to spot them: **March - June**

Where they live: **Gardens, parks and woodland, often found in old birds' nests**

What they like to eat: **Blossom on fruits such as raspberries and blackberries as well as tomatoes and other garden flowers.**



Name: **Common Carder Bumblebee**

How to spot them: **These big fluffy bees are the only UK species with all-brown (ginger) colouring and no white tail**

When to spot them: **March - November**

Where they live: **They can live in urban or woodland settings as well as gardens**

What they like to eat: **Gorse flowers, bluebells and foxgloves, dandelions, clover and fruit blossoms.**



Name: **Red Mason Bees**

How to spot them: **These solitary bees have black head, brown thorax and orange abdomen, and in females, a lot of fluff!**

When to spot them: **March - June**

Where they live: **Urban areas, they live in wall and wood cavities. They like urban gardens, churchyards and urban green space. If you make a bee hotel its most likely Red Mason Bees who will check-in!**

What they like to eat: **Fruit tree blossoms including plums, strawberries and oilseed rape.**



Name: **Hairy Footed Flower Bee**

How to spot them: **Black with yellow legs. Males: Brown with a pale face and hair plumes on their middle legs**

When to spot them: **March - June**

Where they live: **In old walls or ground nester in walls and banks**

What they like to eat: **Wallflowers and early blossom, primrose, comfrey, dead nettles, peas and beans.**



Name: **Wool Carder Bee**

How to spot them: **Yellow spots along abdomen. Males also have prongs on their rear**

When to spot them: **May - August**

Where they live: **Solitary bees nesting in existing holes. They will often check into a bee hotel.**

What they like to eat: **Tubular flowering plants including dead nettles, peas and mint.**



Name: **Leaf Cutter Bees**

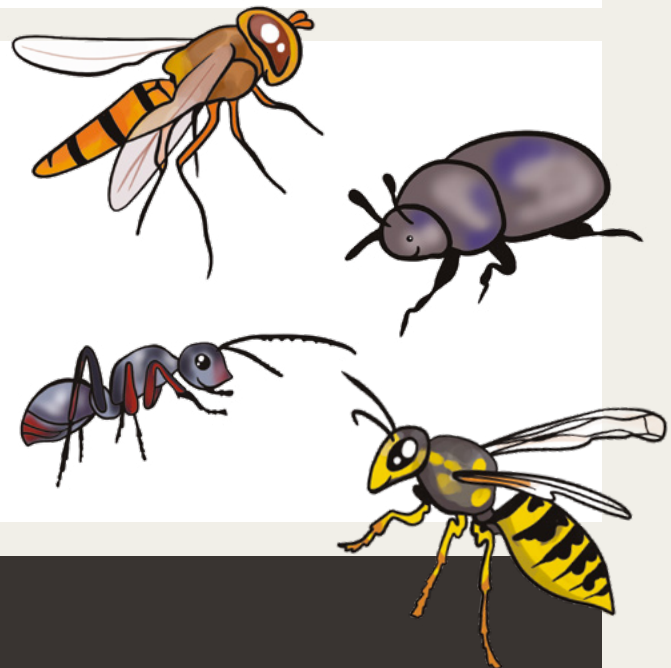
How to spot them: **They look like a small dark honey bee, with an orange underside. Seen carrying bits of leaf. Broad head and body. Females also have a brush of hairs under the abdomen**

When to spot them: **April - August**

Where they live: **In naturally occurring tunnels such as hollow stems or rotten wood. They will happily make use of bee hotels.**

What they like to eat: **As the name suggests the female leaf cutter bees cut leaves on plants like roses, which they glue together to make cells in their tunnels in which their larvae live.**

Although bees are the superhero of pollination, other insects and bugs like wasps and beetles are pollinators. Check out the Precious Pollinators resource to find out why we should learn to love wasps and other bugs.



About this resource:

Got the gardening bug? Why not take part in our **Worm Hunt** next, or learn about more **bee-friendly flowers** and herbs, how to build a **DIY insect home**, and how to **fight climate change and biodiversity loss** – from home! Want another Plant & Share challenge? Try growing our **bee-friendly strawberry wellies**.

Now you know a bit more about the common bees found in the UK, why not go out on a bee adventure and spend some time in a local park or allotment, or even your own garden or balcony seeing what bees you spot.



Bee species you spotted	Plant it was visiting	How many?

Now you have identified lots of bees, dive into our other Plant and Share bee resources...

foodforlife.org.uk/campaigns

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