

Providing Shelter

While honeybees often live in hives looked after by beekeepers, bumblebees and solitary bees use different nesting materials and sites.

Bumblebees (of which there are 24 species in the UK!) create a new nest each spring to lay their eggs in. Their messy-looking nests can be found anywhere from abandoned mouse holes to thick grass and loft spaces. They rarely use bee hotels or other artificial bumblebee nesting sites.

Solitary bees in the UK build little compartments and lay an egg in each. For example, the red mason bee uses mud to create nests in cavities between brickwork, whereas the leafcutter bee cuts small circles out of plants and glues them together using its sticky saliva!



You can make homes for bees and protect the places they like to live:

Wall Holes

Different-sized holes can easily be drilled into fence posts or walls for solitary bees, while loose mortar in walls can provide a home for masonry bees

Shady Sites

Bumblebees often like undisturbed shady corners such as under sheds, log piles and in thick raised clumps of long grass

A Sunny Bank or Patchy Lawn

These are great locations for mining bees such as the tawny mining bee and ivy bee to make nests in

Bird Boxes

Not just for birds, they are often used by the tree bumblebee

Abandoned mouse holes

Many bumblebees nest underground in holes made by larger animals!

Compost Heaps

Another popular nesting spot for bumblebees



Activity: Make an upcycled bee nest

- Cut off the top half of a clean and empty 2 litre plastic bottle
- Measure and cut some bamboo canes so they fit in the bottle and pack them in tightly
- Lie on its side and fit snugly into a gap in a wall or shed. Angle your nest downwards so it doesn't fill up with rainwater
- Replace every year or two



Top tip:

A bee hotel fixed to a sunny wall or fence near bee-friendly flowers will look good in your garden. Keep an eye out for solitary bees flying in and out in spring and summer!