

Where do bumblebees live?

Bumblebee queens have two homes:

- In autumn, bumblebee queens mate and then burrow into the soil, where they will **hibernate** alone all winter. They can withstand temperatures as low as minus 19°C because they have a special anti-freeze in their bodies.
- In spring, the queen will wake up and establish a nest, where she will live until the end of summer with her daughters. Depending on the species of bumblebee (there are 24!) the queen will build her nest underground in an old rodent nest; in a crack in a garden wall; in a bird box or sometimes in the roof of someone's house.



A queen bumblebee preparing for hibernation.

Male bumblebees are born at the end of the summer. Their primary purpose is to mate so as soon as they are grown they leave the nest, never to return. As a result, they spend their nights sleeping on flowers. So, after a few weeks they can look a little weather beaten.

Inside a bumblebee nest

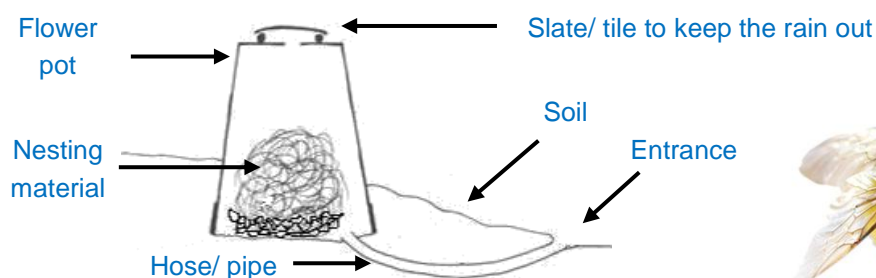
Unlike the inside of a honeybee hive, which is very organised and geometric, bumblebee nests look quite untidy. There are lots of wax balls with baby bees growing inside and little wax pots filled with nectar to feed the queen and the worker bees. Not to mention all the bumblebees crawling about inside. Sometimes there can be up to 400 bumblebees living in the same nest!



Encourage bumblebees to nest in your garden

In spring, when the queen wakes up, the first thing she looks for is something to eat. If your garden has lots of spring-flowering plants then she will pay you a visit. The next thing she will look for is somewhere to nest, and you can help. Here is a design to build a suitable nesting site.

All you need for this design is a flowerpot (> 20cm in diameter) and a bit of tube or pipe. Sink the upturned flower pot into the ground. Put a slate/ tile over the drainage holes to keep out rain. Run a hose or pipe underground to the pot, leaving a prominent entrance. Be sure to make drainage holes in the pipe. Finally, fill with a generous handful of nesting material.



Bumblebee pompoms

What you will need

- Yellow and black wool
- Two cardboard rings
- Brown paper
- Googly eyes
- Scissors



Instructions

1. Cut a long piece of black wool.
2. Hold both cardboard rings together and wrap the wool around the rings as shown in the photo.
3. Keep going until you have completely covered the cardboard in black wool, then change to yellow wool and then back to black (so you should have three layers of colours).
4. Once you have finished the final layer of wool, slide the blade of the scissors in between the two cardboard rings (so that there is a piece of cardboard on either side of the blade). Cut all the way around. Hold the wool where the centre hole of the rings used to be so that the wool doesn't fall out at this stage.
5. Then take a new piece of wool and slide it in between the cardboard rings and tie a double knot (see bottom photo). Repeat this several times so that the wool is tightly held together.
6. Once secure, remove the cardboard rings by using the scissors. You should now have a pompom.
7. To finish your bumblebee off, cut out two wing shapes from the brown paper. Make a hole in one end of each wing and thread this through the long bit of wool left over from knotting the pompom.
8. Finally, stick on the googly eyes.



**Congratulations, you now have a pompom
bumblebee!**



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