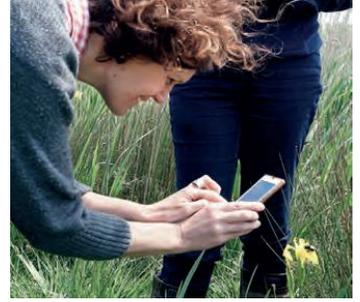


## How to catch bumblebees

You can survey for bumblebees just by finding bees sitting on flowers, and looking at them or photographing them. However, they move around quickly and this makes seeing small features – and thus identification - difficult.

Catching bees with a net and a pot will make your life so much easier!

When choosing a net, make sure you get one with mesh fine enough that the bees can't crawl through the holes (seaside shrimping nets have too big a mesh, for instance), but beyond that any size or shape can be used. Anything sold as a 'butterfly net' should be suitable.



To catch a bee, maneuver the net as close as possible. Make sure that your net isn't catching on brambles or other spikey plants, and that you've got space to complete your swing. Then swipe the net fast across the bee - horizontally in one direction works best - and quickly flick your wrist so that the net folds over itself. This should ensure that your bee is folded into the material rather than flying straight back out!

Make sure you tilt the net 90 degrees so the net ends up with the opening facing down. Holding the net with the opening facing down means you won't lose your bee so easily – bees almost always take off and fly upwards.

Once your bee is in the net, you'll need a clear, lidded pot such as a jam jar or specimen tube to put it in. The bee will nearly always crawl upwards, so place the pot underneath the bee in the net.



Now you'll be able to have a really good look at it in order to see the smaller features for identification. As an alternative to a standard pot, particularly for seeing the smaller features, beekeepers have invented a handy device called a 'queen marking pot' or 'queen plunger'. Basically it's a clear pot with an open mesh at one end, and the lid replaced by a sponge-tipped plunger. This allows you to gently press the bees against the end of the pot, constraining its movement and making it much easier to see the smaller details. It doesn't harm the bee as long as you are gentle, and it minimises the amount of time that you need to keep the bee in captivity.

You shouldn't keep the bee in a pot for more than a few minutes, especially in full sun, because it will overheat and become stressed.



Always release the bee back where you found it so that she can make it back to her nest. If you want to photograph your bees, they'll be less active when it's cooler, so early mornings and late evenings can be good. Alternatively, popping the bee into a fridge or coolbox for a few minutes (only a few!) won't harm it and will slow it down enough to take pictures, particularly useful if you want to take close ups.

Happy surveying!