

Help your local bumblebees find a place to call home by doing a few simple things in your garden. Or have a go making your own nest spot out of a flower pot with our step-by-step guide!

Did you know bumblebees don't live in hives like honeybees? Instead a queen bumblebee will **make a nest in spring** after carefully choosing the perfect spot.

Queen bumblebees will look for somewhere sheltered. **Different bumblebee species like different places to nest**, including abandoned mouse holes, compost heaps, and bird boxes. They also need lots of pollen and nectar from flowers to give their colonies a successful start.

The queen and her worker daughters will live in the nest for a few months, then die off naturally at the end of summer. **Only new queens survive by hibernating** in the soil over winter – ready to emerge and create a new bumblebee generation the following year!



5 simple ways to give bumblebees a home

It's hard to guess where queen bumblebees will nest – they're picky! Here are some simple things you can try to make them feel welcome in your outdoor space:



Photo: Clare Flynn



Photo: Gemma Smith



Photo: Raymond Hutcheon

- **Start a compost heap**

Bumblebees often nest in them. Just take care not to turn the compost over with buzzing bees inside!

- **Put up a bird box, or leave old boxes**

Tree bumblebees like them! Make sure there's nesting material inside.

- **Don't strim hedge banks**

Mice and voles can create burrows, which bumblebees might use later.

- **Leave patches of grass to grow wild**

Some bumblebee species like long, tangled grass.

- **Install a hedgehog box**

These can be wonderful homes for hedgehogs in winter and bumblebees in summer.



Caution: If you are lucky enough to find a bumblebee nest, enjoy watching it from a sensible distance. Bumblebees are gentle insects and are generally only interested in finding flowers, but can react when provoked or if their nest is disturbed.

Make your own bumblebee nest spot

Many bumblebees make their nests underground, so here's a fun DIY project to try in early spring or late winter!

First, look for a shady, dry spot – bumblebees don't like their nests to be in direct sunlight. Somewhere next to a fence or a hedge, or in a soil bank, will do nicely. Make sure to choose somewhere that won't be disturbed, too!

You will need:

- Terracotta flower pot (more than 20cm wide)
- Flexible pipe (more than 20mm in diameter and between 30–50cm long)
- Piece of slate/tile or a matching tray for the flower pot (to make a rain cover for the nest)
- A handful of nesting material, like dried moss, old wool or used pet hamster or rabbit bedding
- Square of chicken wire.

Step-by-step guide

1. Put a few holes along the pipe's underside – so any water getting in can leak away.
2. Make a shallow hole that the nest will sit in, and a trench for the pipe.
3. Wearing gloves, curl the edges of the chicken wire downwards to make a platform, and place in the hole.
4. Lay the pipe along the trench to the top of the platform.
5. Place the nesting material on the platform.
6. Place the flower pot over the top to cover the nest, sinking it into the shallow hole, and then fill around it with soil and fill in the trench.
7. Make sure the entrance hole to the pipe is still open, and level with the ground.
8. Put a few small stones on the top of the upturned pot, and then place the tile on top. This will let air in, but keep rain out.

Wait to see if bumblebees use your homemade nest site in the spring!

Remember: Don't take a peek inside later. You don't want to disturb any bumblebees.

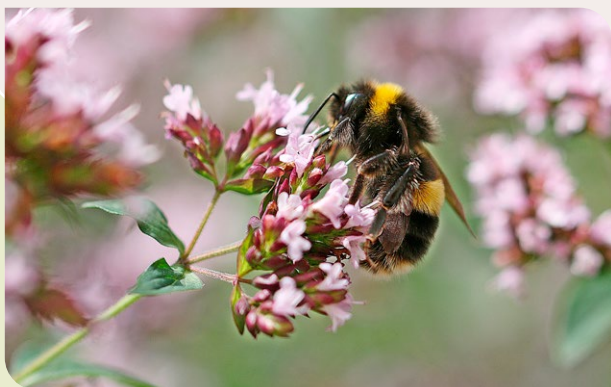


Photo: Kevin Hill



For lots more information on bumblebee nests, visit bumblebeeconservation.org

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