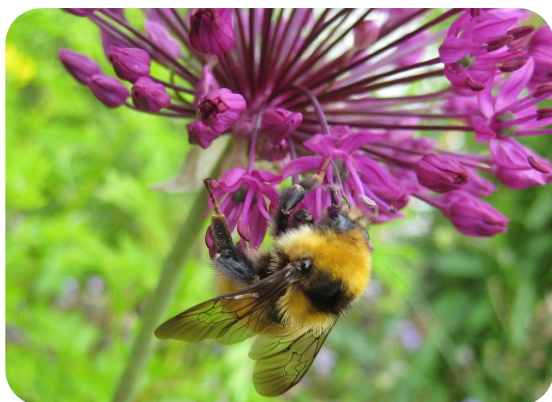

All about bumblebees



www.bumblebeeconservation.org

Saving the sound of summer



Bumblebees are among the most loved and familiar of garden insects. The sight and sound of them buzzing from flower

to flower is a quintessential part of British summertime, but sadly these charismatic creatures are struggling to survive. In our modern world of paved gardens, intensive agriculture and a changing climate, our bumblebees find themselves hungry and homeless.

There are a total of 24 bumblebee species found in the UK.

Unfortunately, two UK species have become nationally extinct over the past century, while other species have declined dramatically. The reason for this is simple and clearly visible: there are now far fewer flowers in the countryside to provide bees with the pollen and nectar that they need to survive. When you combine this with modern pressures like pesticide exposure, climate change, and exposure to parasites and diseases, it is clear that our precious pollinators are at risk.

But all is not lost - you can take action today to help save these hardworking pollinators. This leaflet explains why bumblebees are important and how you can help.

What's so special about bumblebees?

To most people, bees are instantly recognisable, but there are distinct differences between the appearance and lives of bumblebees, honeybees and solitary bees. Bumblebees are larger and hairier than their cousins which makes them perfectly suited for colder climates. Their extra insulation allows them to venture out on cold days when honeybees stay tucked up inside their hives. But, bumblebee nests are small and they do not store large quantities of honey which means they are more sensitive to the availability of pollen and nectar-rich flowers to feed on.

Bumblebees play a vitally important role which we shouldn't take for granted. They pollinate many crops that provide us with food to eat and the colourful flowers in our landscape. Without their 'free-bee' service, many wildflowers and the animals and ecosystems which depend on them could decline dramatically or even disappear altogether.

A sugar water mix . . .

If you find a stranded or sleepy bumblebee, the best thing to do is pop it on a bee-friendly flower. If there are no flowers around you can help to boost its energy levels with a simple sugar-water mix. Mix equal parts white sugar and warm water then pour into a small container or sponge. Place both the bumblebee and the artificial nectar in a sheltered location and allow some time to recuperate.



Bumblebee lifecycle

Bumblebees are social insects and can live in nests of up to 400 individuals. Each nest is ruled by a queen and lasts for just one year. This is different to honeybee hives which remain active for several years.

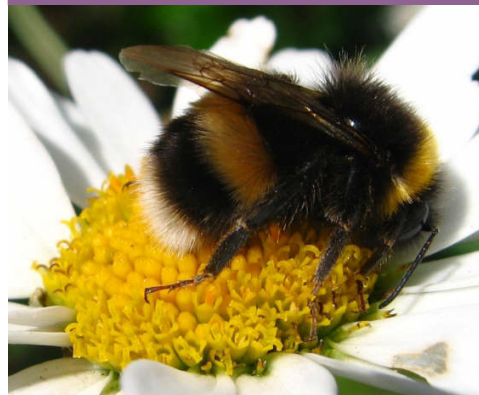
① In early spring, the queen emerges from hibernation to start a new nest. ② Her first task is to build up her energy reserves so it is really important that she can find plenty of nectar-rich flowers. ③ Once she has found a suitable nest site she will collect lots of pollen and rear her first batch of eggs.

④ These eggs develop into a group of female workers whose role it will be to feed and nurture the colony. This process is repeated throughout the summer with the queen rarely leaving the nest. ⑤ Towards the end of the summer the queen produces male offspring, along with new queens, which leave the nest to find a mate. At the end of summer, the nest dies off naturally. Only the new, fertilised queens will survive over winter by hibernating in the ground, ready to emerge and establish their own colonies the following year. ①



Did you know . . .

- In the UK there are over 250 different types of bee, 24 of these are bumblebees, one of them is the honeybee and the others are solitary bees.
- Key ingredients from our diets, such as beans, peas, raspberries and tomatoes would be harder to produce and much more expensive without British bumblebees.
- In the UK, only bumblebees are capable of buzz pollination. This occurs when the bee grabs hold of a flower and produces a high-pitched buzz, releasing pollen that would otherwise stay trapped inside. Tomatoes are pollinated in this way.
- Bumblebees have smelly feet? Well they do and it's quite useful! After feeding they leave a scent on the flower which helps other bumblebees to avoid wasting energy landing - the flower will contain very little nectar or pollen.



What you can do to help

British gardens cover more than 1 million acres and can be a lifeline for bumblebees. No matter what size your garden is, you can contribute to our efforts to save the sound of summer by providing lots of bee-friendly flowers. By bee-friendly we mean flowers that are rich in pollen and nectar.

Many ornamental plants that are commonly found in British gardens, such as pansies and begonias, are of no value to wildlife. Years of cultivation for showy blooms mean that these colourful flowers often produce little pollen or nectar.

There are hundreds of beautiful flowers that do offer these rewards though, including foxgloves, lavender, alliums, herbs and wild roses that you can add to your collection.

You can also help by supporting our work, including volunteering, fundraising and becoming a member of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust. For more information on all of the above, including access to our Bee the Change resources, visit bumblebeeconservation.org



Join us today!

Support our conservation work safeguarding the future of these vital pollinators. You will receive a membership pack full of bumblebee information and our members magazine three times a year. Visit: www.bumblebeeconservation.org for our range of memberships & prices.

The Bumblebee Conservation Trust is a registered charity (England & Wales 1115634 / Scotland SC042830). Company registration number 05618710 (England & Wales).

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Photos: John Hoyes, Nick Owens, Mary Harris, Carron Brown & Sara Botterell.



Improve your Bee ID skills with our 'What's that bumblebee?' App for the Big 8 - search on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store today!

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