

Native Bee Facts

Native bees are very important pollinators and are an important part of our ecosystem. Blueberries for example, are almost exclusively pollinated by native bees, and other important crops that rely on native bees include sunflowers, tomatoes, cucumbers, melons, squash, eggplant and alfalfa.



Honeybees and wild native bees pollinate 75% of the fruits, vegetables and nuts grown in the U.S. Honeybees are not native to the U.S. The honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) was introduced by European settlers to provide honey and pollinate crops.

There are more than 4000 species of native bees in North America. Most native bees are solitary, which means that they raise their brood alone. Most are quite small and are either overlooked or mistaken for flies. They do not produce honey, are very gentle and do not sting as a rule as they do not have a large cache of brood or honey to protect.

70% of native bees live in the ground. This includes bumblebees, sweat bees and digger bees. One species is an important pollinator of commercial sunflower crops.

30% of native bees nest in rotting wood and hollow twigs. This group includes the very colorful “sweat bees” which are important pollinators of alfalfa, sunflowers and watermelons.

Another member of this group is the **Blue Orchard Bee** also called a **Mason Bee** which is a more efficient pollinator of fruit trees than the honeybee. This nursery is designed to attract mason and leafcutter bees.

Provide a “Bee-Friendly” yard and garden

Minimize your use of insecticides. Practice integrated pest management (IPM) If you must spray, do so when it is not windy and late in the day when pollinators are not active.

Avoid systemic insecticides that contain *Imidacloprids*, as they move from plant to flower and into the nectar.

Provide a source of clean water. A shallow dish with pebbles will be welcome in the summer.

Plant a “pollinator garden” to attract bees and butterflies. A good planting mix should include plants that flower at different times of the year and provide a variety of colors, flower shapes and structures.



Learn more

Crown Bees: <http://crownbees.com>

If you are serious about attracting and raising mason bees go to this site. They have a wide range of materials and tutorials to help you increase your success with these native bees.

Xerces Society: www.xerces.org

The Xerces Society is a nonprofit organization that protects wildlife through the conservation of invertebrates and their habitat.

Bee Basics: An Introduction to our Native Bees (A USDA publication)

http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5306468.pdf