

Are they Bumblebees?

Bumblebees are generally quite large. They look furry and may have stripes of various colours, including yellow, white, orange or red. They are seen in spring and summer and can be heard buzzing around flowers.

Will they sting?

They are unlikely to cause any harm if you do not disturb them.

Where do they nest?

You may first notice bumble bees living in your garden when some are seen going in and out of the same opening. This often happens when you are gardening and maybe disturb some by accident.

- They may be down a hole in the ground.
- Inside old boxes or under carpet in disused outbuildings or sheds.
- Under patio stones, piles of logs or rocks.
- Inside dry compost heaps.
- In sheltered places which have not been disturbed such as unused greenhouses.

How do they live?

Each year a new queen bumblebee makes a small nest. Although it may appear very busy, it will not be anything like having a wasp nest and they will not swarm like honey bees.

How long do they live?

Bumblebees have a short life. Most nests are only active between April and September. After this most of the bees die. New queen bees will go off to overwinter in sheltered spots leaving the original nest empty.

Conservation of Bumblebees?

Bumblebees are extremely important and need to be conserved. Some have long tongues which reach parts of flowers which honey bees cannot, so they are very good at pollinating long tubular flowers. But they are all beneficial for fruit trees and many other crops like tomatoes, peppers, melons and runner beans.

There are 24 species of bumble bee in Britain but only 7 species are commonly found in this part of the country.

This has come about due to changes in land management and lack of suitable flowers for them to visit.

What should you do if you find a nest?

First, disturb the bees as little as possible.

If you do uncover a nest, gently put some of the same material back over it as soon as possible.

Do not be tempted to spray any chemicals or pour anything onto the nest which could upset the bees. Ideally, leave well alone if possible.

The bees should ignore you and the nest will decline naturally usually between mid and late summer after new queen bees have been produced. Soon after this the other bees will die as only new queen bumblebees survive the winter and the nest will become empty.

To limit any further disturbance you could mark the area near the bees with sticks to prevent other people from going too close.

If the bees are in the ground you could place a large clay flowerpot upside down over the site, allowing the bees to go in and out through the drainage hole on top or raising it up half an inch with stones or small blocks to allow bees access at ground level. This helps to identify the location and avoid anyone accidentally standing on the nest site.

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Bumblebees



..... on your doorstep ?

