

FLOWERS WHICH ATTRACT SOLITARY BEES

The following flowers found in the United Kingdom that attract solitary bees include Foxglove, Lavender, and Oxeye Daisy, along other plant varieties suited for short and long-tongued wild bees.

SPRING FLOWERS

- **Foxglove** (*Digitalis purpurea*): Tall bell-like tubes favoured by long-tongued mason and carder bees.
- **Lungwort** (*Pulmonaria*): Vital early source for hairy-footed flower bees waking up in early spring.
- **Primrose** (*Primula vulgaris*): Low-growing native perennial providing early nectar.
- **Grape Hyacinth** (*Muscari armeniacum*): Dense blue spikes visited by tiny early mining and furrow bees.
- **Wallflower** (*Erysimum*): Fragrant short-lived perennial loved by early-season pollinators.



Foxglove



Lungwort



Primrose



Grape Hyacinth



Wallflower

SUMMER FLOWERS

- **Lavender** (*Lavandula angustifolia*): Rich aromatic purple spikes acting as a mid-summer magnet for leafcutter bees.
- **Oxeye Daisy** (*Leucanthemum vulgare*): Open, flat heads providing easy landing pads for short-tongued solitary species.
- **Common Harebell** (*Campanula rotundifolia*): Deliberate food source for specialist bellflower colletes and scissor bees.
- **Yarrow** (*Achillea millefolium*): Flat-topped umbrella clusters heavily utilised by furrow bees.
- **Field Scabious** (*Knautia arvensis*): Pincushion heads that offer easy access to pollen for diverse wild bees.
- **Meadow Cranesbill** (*Geranium pratense*): Open cup-shaped native blooms supplying abundant summer nectar.
- **Borage** (*Borago officinalis*): Star-shaped blue forage plant heavily worked by mason bees.
- **Marjoram** (*Origanum vulgare*): Tiny clustered purple blooms favoured through the peak summer months.



Lavender



Oxeye Daisy



Common Harebell



Yarrow



Field Scabious



Meadow Cranesbill



Borage



Marjoram

Here are United Kingdom -grown flowers that provide the easily accessible POLLEN and NECTAR solitary bees need to thrive.

Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) Why solitary bees love it: The large, tubular bells are heavily targeted by larger solitary species like the wool carder bee, which uses the fuzzy leaves for nesting.

Viper's Bugloss (*Echium vulgare*) Why solitary bees love it: This native biennial produces ultra-rich nectar that replenishes continuously throughout the day, making it an absolute magnet for mason and mining bees.

English Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) Why solitary bees love it: Lavender's dense, highly aromatic flower spikes offer an abundance of accessible nectar during the peak mid-summer nesting season.

Chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*) Why solitary bees love it: The pom-pom purple heads are made up of dozens of tiny, shallow florets, allowing short-tongued solitary bees to feed with ease.

Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*) Why solitary bees love it: A vital native wildflower found across UK meadows, red clover is packed with high-quality pollen that helps solitary species build up their egg provisions.

Cosmos (*Cosmos bipinnatus*) Why solitary bees love it: Ensure you choose single-flowered open varieties. The massive open central landing pad allows solitary bees to easily gather sticky yellow pollen grains.

Single-Flowered Dahlia Why solitary bees love it: Avoid pom-pom or double-petal varieties which block access. Single-flowered dahlias expose their pollen centers clearly, offering an easy late-summer feast.

Ice Plant (*Hylotelephium spectabile* / *Sedum*) Why solitary bees love it: Flowering into September and October, this succulent provides a critical late-season fuel source before adult solitary bees finish their life cycles.

Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) Why solitary bees love it: Resembling a hard thistle, knapweed flower heads are overflowing with nectar and are a top choice for species like the leafcutter bee.

Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) Why solitary bees love it: The wide, flat, sunshine-yellow centers act as a landing strip for small solitary species, especially plasterer bees.

Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) Why solitary bees love it: A single sunflower provides a vast expanse of pollen. It is highly attractive to larger mining bees who will blanket themselves in the bright dust.

Common Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*) Why solitary bees love it: The nodding clusters of bell-shaped flowers bloom early in spring, offering a lifeline to emerging hairy-footed flower bees and early mining bees.

Borage (*Borago officinalis*) Why solitary bees love it: Also known as starflower, its vibrant blue downward-facing cups produce nectar at an incredibly rapid rate, keeping foraging bees returning all day long.

Sea Holly (*Eryngium maritimum*) Why solitary bees love it: This striking, architectural coastal native features cone-like blue flower heads that are a rich, unique source of summer nectar for specialist coastal solitary bees.

Michaelmas Daisy (*Aster*) Why solitary bees love it: Blooming right at the end of autumn, these daisy-like flowers ensure that late-emerging solitary species have enough food before winter sets in.



Other Bees

Little Buzzers – Big Helpers

Aside from honeybees and standard bumblebees, the United Kingdom is home to nearly 250 species of solitary bees and 6 species of cuckoo bumblebees (plus various solitary cuckoo bees), making up roughly 90% of all British bee varieties.

SOLITARY BEES

Mining Bees



Mortar/Mason Bees



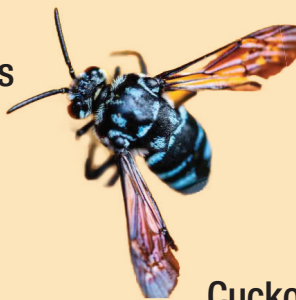
Flower Bees



Wool Carder Bees



Leafcutter Bees



Cuckoo Bees

SOLITARY BEES – INTERESTING FACTS

NESTING HABITS

- Live alone: Each female makes her own small nest in wood, plant stems, or holes in the ground.
- No queen: They do not have a large queen or a big colony to guard.
- No honey: They do not make honey or store syrup for the winter.
- Hidden rooms: Mothers divide their nest tubes into small rooms with mud, leaves, or chewed plant parts.

FEEDING AND POLLINATION

- Busy workers: They visit many flowers quickly, making them much better at pollinating plants than honeybees.
- Pollen brushes: Many carry pollen on the underside of their hairy bellies instead of on their legs.
- Pickier tastes: Some types only eat nectar and pollen from one special kind of flower.

LIFE CYCLE

- Short adult life: Grown-up solitary bees live for only a few weeks in the spring or summer (5-6 weeks)
- Egg to baby: Mothers leave a ball of pollen and an egg in each room before sealing it shut.
- Safe growing: The young babies eat the pollen, sleep through the winter as pupae, and hatch out when the warm weather returns.

SAFETY AND INTERACTION

- Very gentle: They almost never sting because they have no honey or nest to protect.
- No aggression: A male has no stinger at all, and a female will only sting if you squeeze her hard.

TYPES AND VARIETY

- Big family: There are thousands of different kinds of solitary bees all over the world.
- Mason bees: These metal-blue bees love to use tiny holes in old wood and brick walls.
- Leafcutter bees: These clever insects cut neat round circles out of rose leaves to wrap their eggs.

BEE HOUSE

A bee house, sometimes called a bee hotel, is like a small complex of spaces constructed specifically for pollinators. In the wild, certain species of solitary bees seek out hollow reeds, holes in trees, or crevices in rocks to make their nest in.



Bee houses create a simulation of these environments by bundling together tubes of bamboo or reeds, or by drilling cylindrical holes in wood.

In a bee house, each bee can nest in as many as a dozen tubes.

How to build a Bee House/Hotel

- **Materials Needed:** Untreated hollow plant stems (bamboo, reeds), a solid block of untreated wood, and a drill.
- **Frame Construction:** Make a simple wooden box with a roof to keep the interior dry.
- **Drilling Holes:** Drill holes in the solid wood block varying from 2mm to 10mm wide and 100mm deep to attract different solitary species.
- **Adding Tubes:** Pack tight bundles of hollow bamboo or reed stems inside the box frame.
- **Placement:** Hang the house in a warm, sunny spot facing south or south-east, about one meter off the ground, near flowers.

Bee hotels are used by solitary pollinators. Unlike honeybees, where thousands of insects work together to maintain a hive and provide food for a Queen, and the eggs she alone lays, solitary pollinators mate once, and then live entirely on their own. Without the benefit of a hive, they must find a safe place to lay their eggs.

Bees, are threatened by habitat loss. Installing a bee house is an active and tangible way to support the nature pollinator population, which is crucial for maintaining biodiversity and healthy ecosystems.

To attract solitary and cuckoo bees, plant open, nectar-rich flowers like Borage, Field Scabious, and English Lavender. Sow annual seeds in mid-spring after frost risks pass; water seeds gently daily until germination, then deeply once or twice a week depending on soil dryness.

Solitary bees are gentle, non-hive insects that make up most bee species, featuring key traits like nesting alone, rarely stinging, and being amazing plant pollinators.

Q: What types of pollinators use a Bee House?

A: Solitary bees, such as Mason, Leafcutter and Carpenter Bees, and occasionally solitary and wasps, such as red and black Mason Wasps will use the house.

Q: Do I have visitors at my Bee House?

A: In mid to late summer, if you see bees frequently going in and out of the tubes in your Bee House, there's a good chance that they will lay eggs there. The most reliable indicator of nesting bees will come in late summer and early fall. This is when the nesting bees will seal up the tubes where they've laid their eggs. If you see mud, leaf or sawdust plugs filling some of the tube ends, you're hosting guests in your bee house! Well Done!!

Q: Where should I put my Bee House / Hotel?

A: You can put your bee house on a building or fence or set it on a wall or platform. It should be at least one metre / three feet off the ground, well secured, facing south, in a sunny location.

Q: Will my Bee House require any maintenance?

A: You should replace all blocks of wood and hollow reeds at least every two years, and any that have been used as nests in mid-summer, before new bees begin nesting.

Q: Do I need to protect my Bee House in the winter?

A: If you live in an area where there is frequent rain or snow, you can bring your bee house into an unheated shed or open porch from November through mid-February to avoid water damage to nests and rot and fungus in the wood blocks and reeds.

Q: Do I need to protect my Bee House from parasites and predators?

A: If birds are eating the larvae in your bee house, you can protect them by moulding wire about 1" out from the face of the house. You can protect from predatory flies, spiders, and wasps by covering the front of the house with a fine gauze or cloth from November through mid-February.



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