

Solitary Bees

As our climate changes, gardens are becoming even more vital to wildlife and people. They can provide shade, absorb carbon, soak up flood water and help to cool buildings. A well managed network of gardens stretching across the Sussex would also help wildlife to move more freely and adapt to climate change enabling us to create a living landscape.

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What are solitary bees?

Solitary bees are wild bees which do not build a communal nest. You are also unlikely to ever be stung by a solitary bee as many of them do not have stings in their tails.

How many species of solitary bee are there in the UK?

Bees are fun to watch as they bring life and movement to a newly emerging spring garden. Most people are familiar with the bumblebee but not so aware of our solitary bees of which there are roughly 250 species.



Tawny mining bee by Darin Smith

Why do we need Solitary bees?

Solitary bees are important as they are vital in pollinating a huge variety of our crops such as;



Tawny mining bee by Richard Burkmar

- ◆ currants
- ◆ Strawberries other soft fruit
- ◆ runner beans
- ◆ broad beans
- ◆ tomatoes
- ◆ many other vegetable crops

Where do Solitary bees nest?

They typically lay their eggs in cells which they construct in tunnels under the ground or in soft sandy banks, old mortar or dry stone walls or in tubes or tunnels of dead wood. Each species has very specific needs which it looks to fulfil in your gardens.

Should I make an artificial solitary bee home?



Artificial bee nests for solitary bees really do work and are really easy to make – Download our ‘how to make a bug home’ guide!

Where should I site my solitary bee home?

The best place to hang the bee home is on a south facing wall between 30-100cms above the ground and in full sun (not shaded by overhanging vegetation). Suspend the bee home with a slight tilt so that rain does not enter the open canes. If you are using a pipe that is open at both ends, then hang with one end of the pipe against the wall. Sites sheltered from the wind are best.

When is the best time of year to put my solitary bee home out in the garden?

We suggest you put your bee home up in March or early April. This will offer prime nesting sites for solitary bees for laying their eggs.

How can I tell if my solitary bee home is being used?

On warm sunny days you may see bees coming and going from your artificial nest. You can tell when nests have been built as you will see the ends of the bamboos sealed with mud (red mason bees) or leaves (leaf cutter bees).

