

BEES

There are many species of bee in the UK. Not all species are producers of honey. Some species live in colonies whilst others do not, and not all bee species can sting. Bees will only rarely be considered a pest when they swarm in areas where they come into close contact with man. Control may then be required.

Honey Bees



Honeybees are wasp-like in size and shape (approximately 15mm long) and light brown in colour. They live in a well organized colony, which may contain several thousand workers, that does not need to hibernate. They produce honey and store it in wax comb. Honeybees survive over winter and are headed by a queen.

During the warmer months swarms may collect on your garden shrubs or in some instances on your property. Usually they will not stay for longer than a few days and if left alone, remain harmless.

What Causes Bees To Swarm?

A swarm is the natural way for bees to multiply and produce new colonies. It is normally the culmination of queen rearing.

What Should I Do if I Have a Swarm in My Garden?

If a swarm is in close proximity to buildings keep doors and windows closed. Ensure the swarm are left alone and **do not try to remove it yourself**. If however the swarm or nest is posing a problem then our Pest Control Officer will visit to determine if it is likely that a Bee Keeper could capture the bees. If so, a Bee Keeper will be called. However if it is not possible to capture the Bees and the Pest Control Officer believes that the bees pose a threat, the nest can be destroyed.

Bumble Bees

Bumble Bee, common name for any of a group of large, hairy, usually black-and-yellow, social bees. They are very attractive with characteristic bee-like features, up to 30mm long with 2 pairs of wings. They are mostly found at ground level in holes, compost heaps, earth banks or under garden sheds.



Bumble Bees are extremely valuable insects as they pollinate many flowers, fruit and vegetables that honeybees cannot.

The queen bee starts looking for a nesting site during March, dependent upon weather conditions. The nest is constructed of moss and grass to give a dense vegetation. The queen spends most of her life inside the nest laying her eggs. The nest only lasts a single season reaching its peak during mid-summer when pollen is readily available. The nest cannot be used again once all the young have left.

How Do I Know Whether I have Bumble Bees?

You will normally have visual sightings of adults flying in and out of holes in the ground.

Are There Any Health Risks?

Bumble bees will sting but only when seriously provoked. However, because their stingers are not barbed, they can sting multiple times. They do not swarm.

How Do I Get Rid of Them?

They tend not to be aggressive and will only sting if threatened. They will die out naturally in the autumn – so if you can, leave them alone. In some situations it may be unavoidable to destroy the bees. The Councils Pest Control Officer will offer advice and only in exceptional and unavoidable circumstances may offer treatment to destroy the bees.

Masonry Bees



Slightly smaller than honey bees but similar in appearance. These insects are solitary. A single female will tunnel into soft mortar or sandstone to lay her eggs in 6 or so small chambers she builds off the tunnel. Each chamber is packed with food then sealed. Once complete the adults die off. 2 broods are produced each year – in April and July.

What Are the Risks?

The masonry bees are incapable of stinging us. However as these do dig into soft building materials, their presence is indicative of a structural problem – it is probable that soft mortar needs raking out and repointing – a job for a builder. Any remedial work should be carried out during late summer or autumn after all activity ceases. Note that although solitary, if a wall offers a suitable site for tunnelling then it may attract many individual bees thus increasing the rate of damage.

Mining Bees

They resemble the honey bee with a hairy rump. Mining Bees get their common name based on their practice of building ground nests. While they are classified as solitary bees, often females build nests in proximity to each other, creating large mining bee. They can cause a minor nuisance until they disappear in mid-summer, but like the masonry bee their stings are unable to penetrate human skin and they too are beneficial pollinators and predators of garden pests, thus control should be avoided.



Test Valley Borough Council do not undertake any treatment of bees.

It is recommended that you do not self-treat and that either a bee keeper or professional pest control company is sought.