

How to make a habitat for ground nesting bees

people's
trust for
endangered
species

Bees are incredibly important pollinating insects. We have around 270 species which inhabit the UK, with the majority nesting underground in soil. Although the most familiar varieties are social bees, (bumbles and honeybee), there is a staggering diversity of solitary bees which do not live in hives and have very secretive lives underground.

Using simple affordable materials, you can attract some of these beautiful and beneficial insects to your garden.

Step 1: Find a suitable structure

- ▶ A large plant pot, box or wooden frame will do, it just needs to be deep enough to fill with sand and strong enough to weather rain and wind.
- ▶ Place this structure at ground level in a south facing area of your garden, if you can tilt the structure so that it has a slight upward angle then that will allow water to run off its surface.

Step 2: Make your nesting material

- ▶ Sand, gravel and top soil can be used to make a fine substrate.
- ▶ Using a trowel, measure out two portions of sand, one portion of gravel and half a portion of top-soil until you have filled up your container. Ratio = (2:1:0.5)
- ▶ Make sure to mix your substrate up as you add each portion of nesting materials.
- ▶ Once all the materials are added, take an empty spray bottle and fill it with warm water.
- ▶ Gently spray the surface of your nesting substrate with water, using a flat hard surface such as a tile, to

evenly press into the sandy material.

- ▶ This will make the substrate more compact, repeat this stage several times once you have finished adding the nesting materials.
- ▶ It is advisable to keep spraying the substrate and adding light pressure using a flat surface a few days after finishing your nesting material.



Step 3: Make some nesting holes

- ▶ Bees don't like spending time digging their own holes as it can be time consuming
- ▶ Take a pencil or a large screwdriver and make some nesting holes in your material, a variety of holes should be used between 8 – 13 mm in diameter.
- ▶ By now, the material will be compact enough to not crumble when you add a hole, if it does start to fall apart, add more water and gently pat down the sand until it's hard.
- ▶ Space out your nesting holes, leaving 2 cm between each.

- ▶ Push each pencil down as far as it will go, the deeper the hole, the more space for bee larvae.



Step 4: Add some flowers

- ▶ Position your structure close to some flowering plants, daisies, buttercups, thistles and umbellifers are popular, solitary bees also love fruit trees.
- ▶ Look out for mining and furrow Bees, mini-miners, blood bees and a host of predatory Nomad Bees that are common in grassland habitats and are often found in urban area

