

Desert Native Bees



There are ~5,000 bee species in the United States; almost 1,000 species in Arizona.

Very few native desert bee species sting! Native bees are better pollinators than honeybees due to their abundant body hairs, aggressive feeding style, long foraging times, and ability to “buzz pollinate.”

Challenges for Desert Native Bees:

- Changing micro-life environments and global influence
- Habitat erosion and degradation
- Pesticide and herbicide use

How to help:

- Provide flowers throughout the year
- Diversify food source areas as possible
- Plant purple, blue, yellow, or white flowers
- Preferred flower shape: flat, non-tubular
- Provide plants that have overlapping bloom times and that have varying heights

Desert Native Bee Species:

Mason Bee, Leaf-cutter Bee, Yellow Face Bee, Mining Bee, Green Sweat Bee, Squash Bee, Cactus Bee, Cuckoo Bee, Carpenter Bee, Bumble Bee



Mason bee



Carpenter bee



Leaf-cutter bee

How to Make a Solitary Bee Nest

Unlike the honeybee, most of our native bees are solitary and non-aggressive. Leafcutter, Mason, and other small bees will nest in these wooden blocks from late spring through fall.

Materials needed:

- 4"x6" or 6"x6" untreated dried pine or fir post
- Drill and drill bits in a variety of diameters ranging from 1/4" to 3/8"
- A warm location protected from rain and predators

Instructions:

- Cut the wood posts into blocks 8–12" long.
- Drill holes into the wood blocks using a variety of hole diameters. The holes should be 3–5" deep and at least 3/4" apart. Make sure the holes dead end! (do not drill all the way through the piece of wood)
- Smooth ragged edges around the holes and remove any saw dust from holes.
- Mount your new bee nest on a post or attach to the side of a building so that the tunnels are horizontal. Make sure they are in a warm location with south/east exposure and protected from the rain

Notes:

- Don't worry about cleaning out the tunnels, the bees will take care of that and reuse their nest sites
- Your nest will not attract honeybees or killer bees and is safe to have near walkways, patios, and play areas