

Swindon Borough Council
Pest Control Service
Fact Sheet

Bees



Bees

There are over 250 kinds of bees in Britain. The honey bee and bumble bees live in colonies and belong to a group known as the social bees, but the majority of other species do not live in colonies and are solitary bees.

HONEY BEES:

They are brown and yellow in colour and smaller than the bumble bee. They are the species kept by man in hives from which honey and wax are made. The numbers can vary in a colony from 40 - 50,000 at the height of the season (July). Those born at the end of Summer however survive the Winter living on stored honey.

SOLITARY BEES:

Solitary bees are to be found in many gardens during Spring and Summer but go largely unobserved. Common species include the masonry, mining and leaf cutter bees.

MASONRY BEES:

The female is often seen constructing a tiny tunnel in a wall normally in the pointing between the bricks where she lays a single egg.

BUMBLE BEES:

Larger and rounder than honey bees and often produce a deep buzzing sound. Bumble bees build small round grass nests, often under buildings or in holes in the ground. They do not swarm nor do they sting unless the nest is disturbed.

SWARMS:

If a hive is overcrowded, bees may emerge in a dense cloud and headed by the queen, settle on a branch or tree. If left, scout bees will eventually find a sheltered situation and start a new colony. At this stage a bee keeper may be notified and they may come and collect the swarm. This is not to be attempted unless you are suitably experienced in apiary. If you come across a swarm please contact us and we will put you in touch with a local bee keeper who may offer to come and collect it.

CONTROL METHODS

There is no treatment for masonry bees, the only answer is to re-point the area after the new adult bee emerges.

Solitary bees do not swarm and are unlikely to sting unless they are handled or their nest disturbed.

If at all possible, bumble bee nests should be left undisturbed for at the end of the Summer all bees except the queen will die and the nest abandoned.

The Council does not treat bees and for professional treatment you should approach an independent pest Control Company, details of which can be found in local telephone directories and Yellow Pages. You should note that bees should be left alone if they are not posing an immediate risk to public health. They perform a very important role in pollination and should be left alone where possible to do so.

To report a swarm of bees

Call (01793) 466071