BUZZING FOR BEES

There are three main types of bee in the UK, can you tell your bees apart? Here’s some handy tips...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Honey bee</th>
<th>Bumblebee</th>
<th>Solitary bee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body</strong></td>
<td>Slim and small - Shiny</td>
<td>Big and round - Fuzzy</td>
<td>Variable size - Can be fuzzy or shiny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buzz</strong></td>
<td>Quiet buzzing</td>
<td>Loud buzzing</td>
<td>Quiet buzzing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of species in the UK</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preferred flower shape</strong></td>
<td>Any and all flower shapes</td>
<td>Specific flower types depending on their tongue length</td>
<td>Each species has a preferred flower shape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colony size</strong></td>
<td>Over 50,000 individuals</td>
<td>Up to 400 individuals</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wild or domesticated</strong></td>
<td>Domesticated</td>
<td>Wild</td>
<td>Wild</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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BEE IDENTIFICATION GUIDE

See if you can identify any nearby bees using our handy guide. All the bees shown below are female worker bees.

- **European honeybee** (Apis mellifera)
- **Patchwork leafcutter bee** (Megachile centuncularis)
- **Long-horned bee** (Lucera longicornis)
- **White-tailed bumblebee** (Bombus lucorum)
- **Tree bumblebee** (Bombus hypnorum)
- **Garden Bumblebee** (Bombus Hortorum)
- **Common mourning bee** (Melitta alba)
- **Early bumblebee** (Bombus pratorum)
- **Common carder bee** (Bombus pascuorum)
- **Wool carder bee** (Anthidium manicatum)
- **Red mason bee** (Osmia rufa)
- **Red-tailed bumblebee** (Bombus lapidarius)
- **Buff-tailed bee** (Bombus terrestris)

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The bees take both nectar (a high-sugar energy source) and pollen (a source of protein) from flowers. Collecting both is important for a happy, healthy and strong hive. The queen needs pollen to develop and lay eggs, and the young bumblebees need it to grow. The workers need more nectar to keep up energy levels so they can collect pollen. But what do the flowers get out of this relationship I hear you ask? As the bees visit each flower they will (by accident) drop a little pollen. The plant then uses this dropped pollen to reproduce. This process is called pollination.

However, not every bee likes every flower, and vice versa. Each bee species has a different head shape and tongue length meaning they favour certain flowers over others when searching for nectar and pollen. The domesticated honeybee prefers open flowers like those found on hawthorn.

Whereas the garden bumblebee has a long face and prefers long-stemmed flowers like foxgloves.

Having a variety of bee-friendly flower shapes in your garden (planted or wild) gives the best chance for all species of bees to find the nectar and pollen they need to survive.

Similarly, having a variety of different bee species provides the best pollination chances for all flowering plants.