



Photo Victoria MacPhail

Bee Facts

Native bees are mostly small and go unnoticed. Bumblebees are colourful giants compared with most bees.

- ✿ Less than half of the world's bees are capable of stinging. Only female bees sting.
- ✿ Foraging bees collect pollen and nectar to feed their young and themselves. They are not flying around looking for someone to sting!
- ✿ You are completely safe watching bees as they fly from flower to flower.
- ✿ Most bees only sting if you pinch or step on them, or if they get caught in clothing.
- ✿ Honeybees and some bumblebees are defensive within 3 to 6 meters of their nests. Keep back.
- ✿ Keep children from disturbing bee nests.
- ✿ Ground-nesting yellow jackets will usually leave you alone if you leave them alone, but they are more likely to sting than pollinating bees, which are the ones that get the blame.
- ✿ Yellow jackets are minor pollinators. The best approach to eliminate yellow jackets is to set queen traps in the spring before they establish new nests.

The **North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC)** is a collaborative body of over 140 organizations that work for the protection of pollinators across Mexico, Canada and the United States.

The **NAPPC Garden Task Force**, with further support from **Wildlife Preservation Canada**, produced this brochure for your use and information to learn about the fascinating lifestyles of native solitary bees and social bees like the bumblebees or the honeybees. Feedback is welcome.

For more information and resources or to order more brochures contact

Pollinator Partnership
info@pollinator.org
415-362-1137
www.pollinator.org

or

Wildlife Preservation Canada
admin@wildlifepreservation.ca
1-800-956-6608,
www.wildlifepreservation.ca



NAPPC



Inviting Bees to Your Property



Photo Paul Williams

No Fear of Stings!

Bees and Other Pollinators are Your Gardening Friends: But, Won't I Get Stung?

Humans could not exist without pollinating insects, especially solitary bees, bumblebees, and honeybees. Pollinators provide humankind with 35% of our diet along with beverages, fibers, and medicines. Colourful fruits and vegetables containing nutrients and health-giving antioxidants sustain us and give us pleasure. Without bees, our diets would be restricted to bland starchy foods, wind-pollinated cereal grains.

Many people are wary, if not fearful, of insects such as bees and wasps. We don't like to get stung. Less than 1% of Canadians have actual sting allergies from bees, wasps, and ants which could, if untreated, lead to systemic reactions. The risk of a sting from bees in your yard or garden is very small, especially with a bit of advance knowledge.

This brochure will help reduce your insect anxiety while promoting an outdoor lifestyle that could include walking, hiking, gardening, taking photographs, or appreciating the beauty of wildflowers and nature. By trying some of these simple tips you may come to appreciate the beauty and fascination of watching pollinators at work.

Prepared by the
**Garden Task Force of the
North American Pollinator Protection
Campaign (NAPPC)**
Canadian Version

Photo Victoria MacPhail

More About Bees and Avoiding Stings

Social vs. Solitary – Two Kinds of Bees

Social bees live together as a unit. This includes honeybees which form a colony and divide the work of the hive into different jobs and bumblebees who live in small colonies but do not have individualized job descriptions. Think of solitary bees, mostly ground-nesting bees, as single moms with families at home to feed. Male bees will also visit flowers but only collect nectar as flight fuel. Foraging bees are solely focused on gathering food.

The Stinging Truth

Unlike cartoons and movies, bees are not flying around looking for people and pets to sting. You can safely get within 10-15 cm of bees visiting flowers and not get stung. People get stung when they harass bees at their nests, step on or pinch them, or if bees become entangled in folds of clothing. Stay away from social bee nests (honeybees, bumblebees) which are usually found in a beekeeper's hive, in tree cavities or underground.

Visit
www.wildlifepreservation.ca
www.pollinatorpartnership.ca
or
www.nappc.org
for more information.

Non-Allergic Reactions

In most cases, bee stings are annoying, but do not require treatment. Swelling or pain at the sting site are not the result of allergic reactions and will diminish with time. If you are stung by a honeybee, remove any stinger that remains by scraping it away (a credit card works perfectly) or removing it with a tweezer. Our other Canadian bees do not leave stingers behind. Apply an ice pack to reduce swelling. Wash the area with soap and water and apply hydrocortisone. Take an antihistamine to reduce swelling.

Allergic Reactions

Some people may have an allergic reaction after being stung (even some who do not know they are allergic to stings). Only a very small proportion of people (about 1-2% of the Canadian population) are at risk of anaphylactic shock because of a food or insect allergy, with food allergies being a much more frequent trigger than insect stings. However, if someone experiences nausea, wheezing, or difficulty breathing following a sting, or if they are stung multiple times, they should seek immediate medical care. This is rare, but is an early systemic symptom of anaphylactic shock.

You are more likely to drown in a bath-tub than suffer a fatality from a bee sting. For example, according to Statistics Canada, during the ten year period from 2000 through to 2009, only 35 Canadians died because of contact with hornets, wasps and bees (10 times that number drowned in a bath-tub). Indeed, many of these incidents are actually from wasp stings. Ground-nesting yellow jacket wasps (*Vespula* species) in particular are defensive around their populous nests and cause the most stings.

What About “Killer Bees”?

African honeybees (*Apis mellifera scutellata*) were accidentally unleashed on the Americas and have mated with the existing honeybees to form Africanized honeybees, a very effective pollinator which has a more defensive nature than other honeybees. However, these bees are currently only found in about 6 southern border states in the U.S. and in Mexico; thus they are not a concern for Canadian gardeners and outdoor enthusiasts.

Reduce that Risk – Safety Tips

Nests: Keep back from honeybee nests. Watch from a safe distance of 6 meters. Many of our native bees nest in the ground, including in lawns, fields, and trails. However, these bees are generally not a concern, and you likely walk over their nests without even knowing they are there. Indeed, some solitary bees have been called “tickle bees” by school children. Don't let children throw rocks at bee or wasp nests.

Actions: Try not to wear dark clothing, strong perfume, or move quickly when passing by honeybee nests. These actions, along with carbon dioxide in exhaled breath, could stimulate the guard bees to sting. Also, do not swat at a bee or wasp that is near you, as this may aggravate it. If you leave it alone, it will likely leave you alone.

Help Bees and They will Help You

Garden tips: When we mulch pathways or landscape with large areas of concrete, we destroy the sunny flat bare ground areas that most nesting female bees need to raise their young. Leave bare patches for ground nesting bees. Provide



bare ground, twigs, and dead branches for nests and lots of flowers for nectar and pollen. Use few or no pesticides in a pollinator garden, or spray when bees aren't active. Try to use locally adapted native wildflowers or old-fashioned heirloom varieties, which produce more nectar and pollen than modern hybrids. Plant in enticing clumps of 5 or 6 plants of the same kind. In turn, you will be rewarded with bountiful crops and a healthy lifestyle by being outdoors. If you are growing a vegetable garden, or have fruit trees, pollinating bees are your allies. They do the busy work, making thousands of trips moving pollen from flower to flower resulting in larger and tastier vegetables and fruits even in varieties that normally self-pollinate.



Photos: Victoria MacPhail