

Bee House Maintenance

A Garden Guide



Bee houses, also called bee hotels, are meant to attract helpful native solitary bees to your garden. They can be more effective pollinators than honeybees, and may also help with pest control. As native species, they appreciate having a safe place to raise their young. Bee houses consist of a wooden, birdhouse-like structure containing native bee nesting materials—typically hollow reeds or cardboard tubes.

Siting: Securely position the bee house to face the morning sun, facing east or south, as hole-nesting bees need the sun's warmth to give them energy to fly. The ideal location would have morning sun and afternoon shade, protected from high winds. For bee safety, space houses around the garden, and be prepared to cover with wire mesh if birds discover them. Mount them at least 3' off the ground, with no vegetation obscuring the entrances to the tunnels.

Maintenance: **Bee houses need to be cleaned out EVERY YEAR**, and replenished with fresh nesting materials. Make sure that your bee house is accessible to you, so that you can easily remove filled nesting materials and store them in a warm, dry place. Remove all the filled nesting tubes at the end of the season (around October), and store them in an unheated shed or garage. Early next spring, place the filled nesting tubes inside a cardboard box with a small exit hole - this way the bees can escape, but cannot re-enter. Once everyone has emerged, toss the old reeds and paper tubes, remove any remaining inner material and wipe down with a weak bleach solution. Once fully dried, refresh with new nesting materials made entirely of natural products.

Plants: To attract native bees and insects and ensure full occupancy in your bee house, grow a diversity of native plants to attract them. We carry a variety of native perennials, trees, and shrubs. For more information on native plants, please see our Garden Guide entitled 'Native Perennials, Trees, & Shrubs'. For more information on creating habitat, please see our Garden Guide entitled 'Pollinator-Friendly Gardening'. For an in-depth look at native bee care, SARE.org has a great publication: 'Managing Alternative Pollinators - A Handbook for Beekeepers, Growers and Conservationists'

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