

Creating safe nesting habitats for native bees is as important as providing food sources.



It's certainly true that native bees need a diverse array of pesticide-free native plants that flower at different times of year and are rich in nectar and pollen to complete their life cycle. But equally important is the availability of nesting and overwintering sites for native bees to be able to survive and reproduce.

Most North American native bees build solitary nests in the ground.

To support ground-nesting bees, leave some bare soil or sparsely vegetated patches of un-mulched soil near pollen and nectar-rich food plants to provide sites for them to build their homes. These patches should be in a sunny area that is not prone to flooding. Be sure to avoid soil disturbance: avoid tilling and protect these areas from pets.

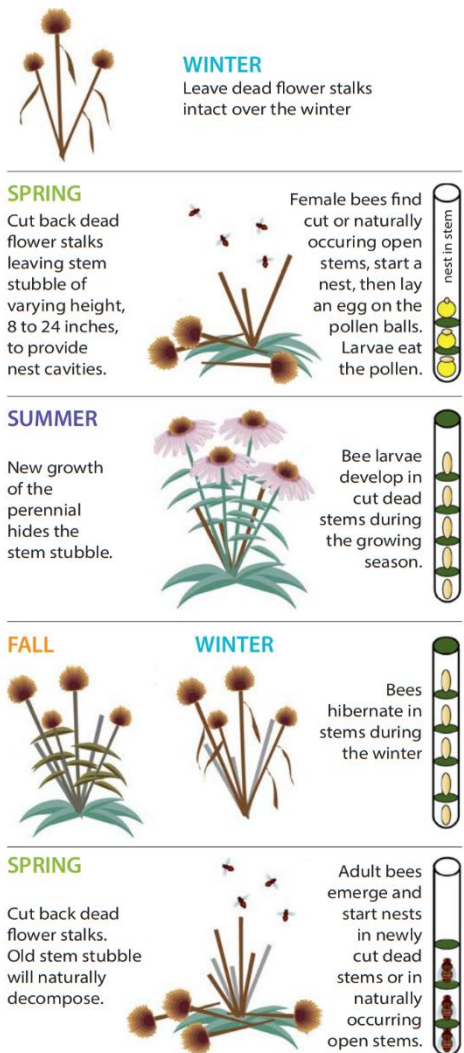
Other native bees nest in cavities, such as tunnels in dead wood made by beetles, or hollow plant stems.

To provide nesting sites for cavity-nesting bees, you can build and maintain **nesting blocks** following certain specifications, and/or plant **plants with pithy or hollow stems** for bees to nest inside. (See list of recommended plants on reverse.)

Be sure to leave untouched over the winter and don't cut back until early Spring. When pruning dead wildflowers, make a variety of cuts, leaving stems 2-24" from the ground to create a variety of nesting spots for different sizes of bees.

In spring and early summer, watch for bees scoping out the stems to pick the perfect one to call home. If you find a stem plugged up with natural material, it may be occupied by an overwintering adult bee.

Remember to leave cut stems in place during the following Spring because they may be housing larvae (baby bees), pupae (kid bees) or overwintering adult bees.



Bumblebees are social bees that nest together inside protected cavities.

Bumblebees often nest near flowering plants in old small-mammal burrows, in rock or brush piles, and under native bunch grasses.

To provide nesting sites for bumblebees, plant native bunchgrasses such as purple three awn (*Aristida purpurea*) or deergrass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*).

You can also construct a rock wall or pile to provide cervices for bumblebees and other bees like leafcutter bees and digger bees to nest in.

Be sure to use different sizes of rocks and use dry wall construction (instead of a mortar) to create nesting spaces between the rocks.



Plants that Produce Hollow or Pithy Twigs and Stems Used by Nesting Bees in the California South Coast Region

Latin name	Common name	Bees recorded
<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	fireweed	No data
<i>Chilopsis linearis</i>	desert willow	Leaf-cutter bees
<i>Cirsium occidentale</i>	cobweb thistle	Leaf-cutter bees
<i>Erigeron canadensis</i>	horseweed	Small carpenter bees
<i>Helianthus annuus</i>	sunflower	Leaf-cutter bees, Mason bees
<i>Helianthus californicus</i>	California sunflower	Leaf-cutter bees, Mason bees
<i>Phragmites australis</i>	common reed	No data
<i>Monarda pectinata</i>	bee balm	Yellow-faced bees
<i>Rosa californica</i>	California wild rose	No data
<i>Rubus parviflorus</i>	thimbleberry	Small carpenter bees
<i>Rubus ursinus</i>	California blackberry (avoid non-native blackberry!)	Small carpenter bees, Yellow-faced bees
<i>Salvia apiana</i>	white sage	Small carpenter bees
<i>Salvia clevelandii</i>	Cleveland sage	Small carpenter bees
<i>Sambucus mexicana</i>	blue elderberry	Mason bees, Yellow-faced bees
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	black elderberry	No data
<i>Solidago velutina</i>	goldenrod	Mason bees
<i>Symphotrichum subspicatum</i>	Douglas aster	No data
<i>Yucca spp.</i>		Large carpenter bees

Adapted from Appendix 3. Plants That Produce Hollow or Pithy Twigs and Stems Used by Nesting Bees in Eastern North America | NC State Extension Publications

For more information about nesting and overwintering habitat for native bees, visit:

xerces.org/publications/fact-sheets/nesting-overwintering-habitat