Native Bees in the Pacific Northwest

2026

The Washington State Beekeepers Association has received an increasing number of questions about identifying and requesting help to safely remove and relocate native bee nests. Working with the Washington Native Bee Society, Washington State University, Honey Bee + Pollinator Program, WSU Extension Service, Xerces Society and several other resources, we have attempted to pull together sources that address many of the questions we have received.

Our first recommendation is to identify the insect in question, so you know how best to handle it. How one approaches a bumble bee nest is very different from how one approaches a yellow jacket nest even though both are usually ground dwelling insects.

Most of the questions we have received have involved bumble bees so at the moment the preponderance of information in this document relates to bumble bees. Understanding their life cycle usually results in the person relaxing and allowing the bees to complete the season in place. However, if the nest needs to be removed there are several sources that provide details on how to do that safely for the person doing the removal as well as successfully as possible for the nest of bees being relocated.

We will continue to add new sources as we identify them. If you find a source that you think would be helpful, please let us know.

The following agencies are excellent resources for further information:

Pacific Northwest Bumble Bee Atlas https://www.bumblebeeatlas.org/pages/pnw
Oregon State University https://extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening/pollinators
Washington Native Bee Society https://www.wanativebeesociety.org/
Washington State University Honey Bee + Pollinator Program https://bees.wsu.edu/
Xerces Society https://xerces.org/

Bumble Bees

About Bumble Bees. Xerces Society. https://xerces.org/bumble-bees/about

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Xerces Society - Bumble Bee Conservation - About Bumble Bees

About Bumble Bees

(Photo: Xerces Society / Sarah Foltz Jordan)

All bumble bees belong to the genus *Bombus* within the family Apidae. The family Apidae includes the well-known honey bees and bumble bees, as well as carpenter bees, cuckoo bees, digger bees, stingless bees, and orchid bees. Bumble bees are important pollinators of wild flowering plants and crops. As generalist foragers, they do not depend on any one flower type. However, some plants do rely on bumble bees to achieve pollination. Loss of bumble bees can have far ranging ecological impacts due to their role as pollinators. In Britain and the Netherlands, where multiple bumble bee and other bee species have gone extinct, there is evidence of decline in the abundances of insect pollinated plants. Bumble bees are also excellent pollinators of many crops.

Bumble Bees in Your Birdhouse? Or: Do You Need to Relocate a Bumble Bee Nest? By Lisa Robinson, Washington Native Bee Society, May 31. 2025. https://www.wanativebeesociety.org/post/bumble-bees-in-your-birdhouse-or-do-you-need-to-relocate-a-bumble-bee-nest

Bumble Bee Nest Relocation and Rearing, Adoni Menopolis, Oregon State University Extension Service. And Steve Gomz; PolliNation podcast. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TydF7hwMmOc

Bumble Bees: Nesting and Overwintering, Xerces Society. https://xerces.org/bumble-bees/nesting-overwintering

Discovering a bumble bee nest, or unearthing a queen bumble bee from hibernation is an exciting experience! Many researchers have spent hours looking for these elusive components of bumble bee biology with limited success. If you're here, it is likely that the bumble bees have found you! The good news is that this likely means you're doing a good job of creating habitat for pollinators, kudos! We also understand that finding a busy nest of bees near family or property can be unnerving, or frightening. If you're looking for more information on what you've found, or how to negotiate the situation, this page will provide details on overwintering queen bumble bees and bumble bee nests, including background biology to help you better understand the situation and provide some options for moving forward safely.

How to Get Rid of Bumble Bees Humanely and Relocate Nests, by Steven Robinson, Bye Bye Bees, September 16, 2024.
https://byebyebees.com/how-to-get-rid-of-bumble-bees-humanely-and-relocate-nests/

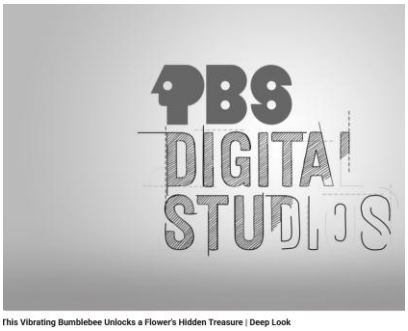
Bumble bees, known for their fuzzy bodies and essential role in pollination, are crucial to the environment. However, when a bumble bee nest is situated too close to your home or garden, it can lead to potential problems, especially for those with allergies. In this comprehensive guide on how to get rid of bumble bees, we'll focus on humane and effective methods to address the issue while protecting these vital insects. You'll learn various techniques for bumble bee removal, tips for preventing future infestations, and how to responsibly relocate their nests. Whether you're dealing with a bumble bee nest in your yard or near your home, this guide provides practical solutions for safely and efficiently getting rid of bumble bees.

How to Move a Bumble Bee Nest, by Rusty Burlew, Honey Bee Suite.
https://www.honeybeesuite.com/how-to-move-a-bumble-bee-nest-2/

Relocate Bee Nests Safely with Our Step-by-Step Guide, by Anderson James, Beekeeper Corner, May 15, 2025. https://beekeepercorner.com/relocate-bee-nest-safely-step-by-step-guide/

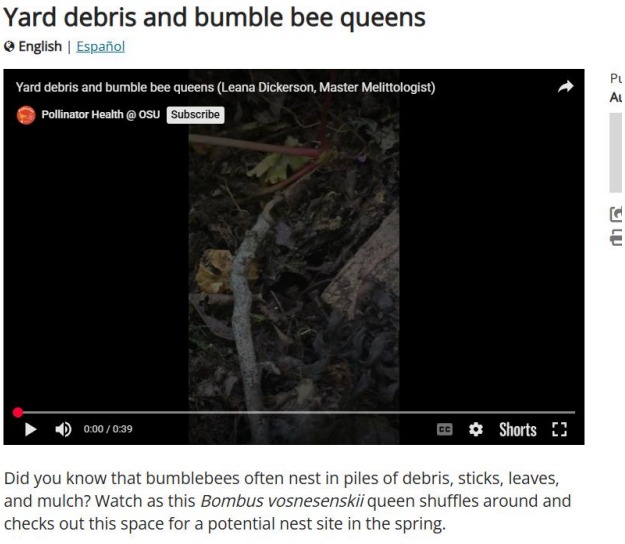
If you've discovered a bee nest on your property, relocating it can be a daunting task. Not only do you want to avoid getting stung, but you also want to ensure the well-being of these important pollinators. Learning how to relocate a bee nest safely and humanely is crucial for both you and the bees. The good news is that with some expert guidance, you can do it successfully. In this comprehensive guide, we'll walk you through the necessary equipment, techniques, and post-relocation care to ensure a smooth transition for both you and the bees. We'll cover everything from preparing the new location to monitoring the nest's activity after relocation, giving you confidence in your ability to relocate a bee nest safely and humanely.

This Vibrating Bumblebee Unlocks a Flower's Hidden Treasure | Deep Look https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZrTndD1H10



Washington Bumble Bees in Home Yards and Gardens, by David Pehling. WSU Extension, 2017. https://pubs.extension.wsu.edu/washington-bumble-bees-in-home-yards-and-gardens

Yard Debris and Bumble Bee Queens, by Leana Dickerson, Pollinator Health@OSU, August 2020, Reviewed 2024. https://extension.oregonstate.edu/video/yard-debris-bumble-bee-queens



Another resource: Matilda Haliburton contacted us and asked us to spread the word that she works to train dogs to smell bumble bee nests. She needs identified nest sites to train the dogs. If you have located a nest site on your property and are interested, contact her at the number listed. The time needed is approximately a ½ hour. No damage is done to the property. The nest will not be removed. (604-828-4294)

If you are interested in programs like this:
https://www.conservationdogscollective.org/bumble-bee-nest-program
https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8115777/
https://thenatureofhome.com/meet-americas-first-bumblebee-conservation-dog-saving-bees-nationwide/

Other Native Bee Nest Removal

How to Get Rid of Ground Bees Safely and Naturally, by Steven Robinson, Bye Bye Bees, September 16, 2024. https://byebyebees.com/how-to-get-rid-of-ground-bees-safely-and-naturally/

How to Get Rid of Wood Bees Without Harming Your Home, by Steven Robinson, Bye Bye Bees, September 16, 2024. https://byebyebees.com/how-to-get-rid-of-wood-bees-without-harming-your-home/

Other Native Bee Information

A Citizen Science Guide to Wild Bees and Floral Visitors in Western Washington, by Elias H. Bloom, Rachel L. Olsson and David W. Crowder, Department of Entomology, Washington State University, Pullman, WA
Since wild bees are difficult to monitor and identify, this guide acts as an introductory document for those who would like to understand wild bee biodiversity and contribute to conservation through monitoring.
https://wpcdn.web.wsu.edu/wp-cw/uploads/sites/2974/2024/01/EM110E.pdf

Enhancing Urban and Suburban Landscapes to Protect Pollinators, by Andony Melathopoulous, et al. OSU Extension Catalog, June 2020, Reviewed 2024. https://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/em-9289-enhancing-urban-suburban-landscapes-protect-pollinators?reference=catalog

Enhancing Urban and Suburban Landscapes to Protect Pollinators

English | Español

Andony Melathopoulos, Neil Bell, Signe Danler, Amy Jo Detweiler, Iris Kormann, Gail Langellotto, Nicole Sanchez, Heather Stoven and Dave Smitley

EM 9289 | Published June 2020, Reviewed 2024 | Download PDF

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An Introduction to Cavity-Nesting Bees in the Puget Sound Region, by Elias H. Bloom, Rachel L. Olsson, Emily H. Wine, Robert N. Schaeffer, David W. Crowder. WSU Extension, 2018. Cavity-nesting bees are important pollinators, contributing billions of dollars in global pollination services each year. Adequate nesting resources across agricultural and natural landscapes are essential for the survival and reproductive success of these pollinators, and the pollination services they provide on farms. In the Puget Sound Region of Washington state, cavity-nesting bees are likely significant contributors to pollination services. However, compared to other parts of the United States, relatively little is known about cavity-nesting bee diversity in the Puget Sound Region, or techniques that could be used to conserve them. Here, we provide profiles of the major groups of cavity-nesting bees found in the Puget Sound Region and examples of artificial and natural nest resources for these species. We also provide information on how citizen science can enhance our understanding of cavity-nesting bees through monitoring, thereby contributing to the conservation of these pollinators throughout the Puget Sound Region.
https://wpcdn.web.wsu.edu/wp-cw/uploads/sites/2974/2024/01/FS293E.pdf

Leave Behind Some Stems for Bee Habitat, by Leana Dickerson, OSU Extension Service, 2020, Reviewed 2025. https://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/em-9507-leave-behind-some-stems-bee-habitat

Leave behind some stems for bee habitat

English | Español

Leana Dickerson

EM 9507 | Published November 2020, Reviewed 2025 | Print (or Save as PDF) | Share

Many native bees, such as the tiny, dark, small carpenter bee (genus *Ceratina*), utilize old, pithy stems as nesting habitat and overwintering sites. During the spring and summer, when these bees are actively seeking nesting sites, gathering pollen and laying eggs for the next generation, they search for dead twigs and stems with pithy centers that they can carve out for their nests.

How can you help provide natural habitat for these native bees? In the fall and winter, when pruning back shrubs that have pithy stems like raspberries, elderberries and hydrangea, or even flowers with thick-stemmed structures like coneflowers, sunflowers and asters, leave an extra 8 to 10 inches of stem to harden and provide options for native bees looking for places to carve out their nesting sites the next season.

The accompanying photo shows raspberry canes that hardened over the winter and spring and were carved into by carpenter bees during the summer. Next spring, out will come the next generation of native pollinators!

Carpenter bees carved nests in these raspberry canes that hardened over the winter.

Credit: Leana Dickerson

Published Nov 2020, Reviewed 2025

Author

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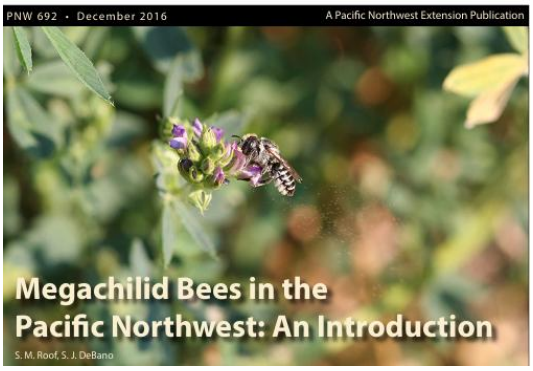
Master Melittologist

Megachilid Bees in the Pacific Northwest: An Introduction, by S. M. Roof and S.J. DeBano. Oregon State University, Washington State University, Idaho State University, a Pacific Northwest Extension Publication, 2016. https://wpcdn.web.wsu.edu/wp-cw/uploads/sites/2974/2024/01/pnw692.pdf

There are over 200 different species in the Pacific Northwest alone. Megachilid bees are solitary, meaning they do not share nests, and there is no social hierarchy or division of labor among individuals. Rather, each

female mates, builds her own nest, and is in charge of providing food for her larvae



Pollinators in Canola in the Inland Pacific Northwest, by Rachel L. Olsson, Karen Sowers, David W. Crowder, PNW Extension Publication, 2021. https://wpcdn.web.wsu.edu/wp-cw/uploads/sites/2974/2024/01/PNW751-3.pdf

Pollinators contribute widely to the growth and productivity of crops worldwide. Due to habitat loss, reduced food availability, increased parasite and pathogen pressure, and increased exposure to environmental toxins, these insects are facing steeply declining populations, which is causing global alarm. While a single approach to solving the pollinator crisis is unrealistic, canola grown in the inland Pacific Northwest region of the United States could have a major positive effect on wild bee populations. This region is exceptionally well suited for canola production, and canola provides extensive pollen and nectar food resources to bees. Canola production in the inland Pacific Northwest could aid bees—this region is dominated by cereal crops, which provide no food resources. At the same time, insect pollination from both wild bees and managed honey bees may increase canola seed yields, creating an economic boost for farmers. The aim of this article is to inform growers of the importance of pollinators in the canola growing region of the Inland Pacific Northwest and to provide crop management recommendations to facilitate habitat and food conservation for these pollinators.

Nesting Habits of Solitary Bees, by Leana Dickerson, OSU Exension Catalog, September 2020, Reviewed 2024.
https://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/nesting-habits-solitary-bees

Nesting habits of solitary bees

English | Español

Leana Dickerson

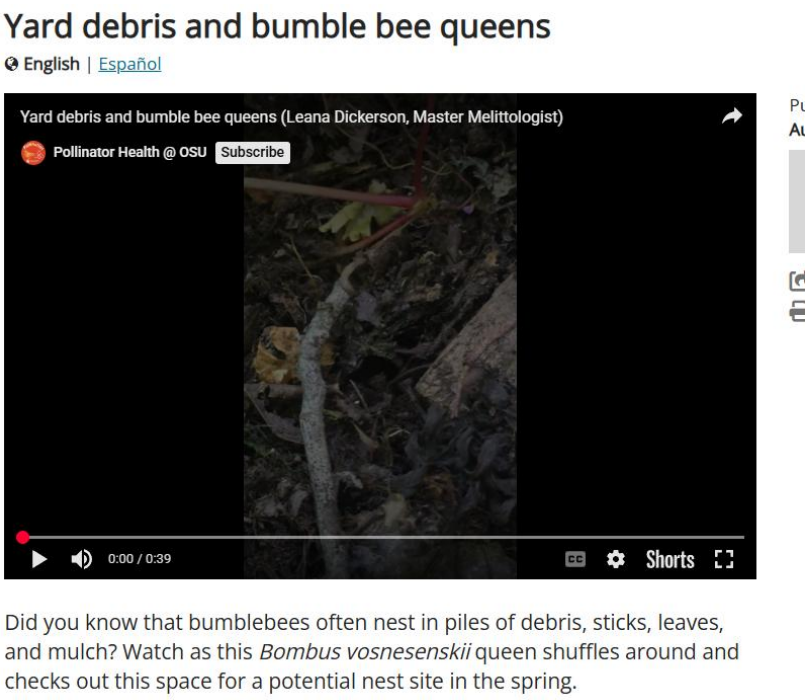
Published September 2020, Reviewed 2024 | Print (or Save as PDF) | Share

Providing healthy habitat alongside pollen and nectar sources for our native bees is one of the best ways to support a healthy pollinator population.

Do you ever wonder where cavity-nesting species go when they don't have access to man-made cardboard tubes or bee houses?

Solitary cavity-nesting bees are clever and resourceful, and they'll find holes, tunnels and tubes in our natural and developed environment. For instance, here is a leafcutter bee sunning on a barn wall, just outside the hole where he probably hibernated all winter. Here too, is evidence of a female leafcutter pulling pollen into a new hole for the next generation to feed on.

This piece is part of the collection Creating native bee habitat in the landscape



Yard Debris and Bumble Bee Queens, by Leana Dickerson, Pollinator Health@OSU, August 2020, Reviewed 2024. https://extension.oregonstate.edu/video/yard-debris-bumble-bee-queens