

There are insects galore in your yard. Most, like bees are beneficial. Offering housing or hotels is a great way to attract pollinators to your family's flower or vegetable garden.

Most of our bees are solitary bees which live alone, not in hives or colonies like the honeybee or bumblebee. Solitary bees are mild mannered and are unlikely to sting because they are not defending a hive. They do not make honey.

Female solitary bees spend most of their life looking for good nesting sites in which to lay their eggs. Some nest in holes in the ground, while others will look for old beetle holes or hollow stems. Each egg is laid in its own chamber or cell. The cell is filled with pollen and then sealed with a mud "door". After the new bee hatches, it will eat the pollen until it is ready to break through the mud and fly away. There are several egg cells per hole.

The male eggs are laid first in the hole then the female eggs. A hole which is too short (less than 15 cm) results in more male bees as there is no room left for the female eggs.

You can provide a suitable home for the solitary bees by making your own pollinator hotel.

Make a Pollinator Hotel



Materials:

- ◇ Waxed carton (milk carton), or plastic bottle
- ◇ Scissors, pencil, glue stick or glue
- ◇ Lots of brown paper cut into 15x10 cm rectangles

Procedure

- ◆ Cut top off a empty milk carton or plastic bottle on an angle to create an overhang. The container should be at least 15 cm deep. Leave the bottom intact. Or make a box from scrap wood (not cedar which repels insects).
- ◆ Roll brown paper around a pencil and glue to form 15 cm long tubes. Make enough tubes to fill your container snugly.
- ◆ Choose a site for your hotel - location is everything. A sunny wall or fence, sheltered from rain and 1.5 - 5 feet above the ground. It needs to remain still so do not hang it from a tree or hook. The eggs will hatch next spring so also consider winter protection.
- ◆ Fasten your hotel by piercing the bottom of your container and hanging it on a long finishing nail (small head) which has been driven into the wall or fence. Or, use a long screwdriver to turn a screw through the bottom of the container and into the wall or fence.
- ◆ You can tell bees are using your hotel when they make a mud "door" to cover the entrance.

Tip: If you make more than one hotel, the pollinators would prefer they were different colours.

The bees will need mud to seal each egg chamber. Perhaps you could make some fresh mud pies for them throughout the summer. Bumblebees need help too! See how to build a home for them at [Bumblebee Conservation](#).

