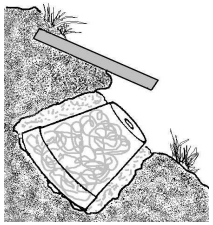
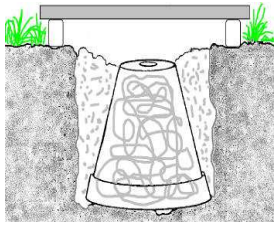
Bumblebee Nest Chambers



Slate/tile to keep chamber dry

Old mouse nest or dry grass

10—12.5 cm clay pot sunk into the ground



Bumblebees nest at or below ground level, often using old mouse nests. If you cannot find an old mouse nest to use, try asking at the local pet shop for some old bedding from the cages in which mice have been kept. Alternatively a loose ball of dry grass can be used. You might like to set up two or more, using mouse bedding material in some, and grass in the others, to see which they prefer.

Cover the entrance of the nest with a slate or tile to keep it dry. Some writers suggest burying the pot completely and using a short section of hose pipe to provide assess from the surface of the soil to the hole in the pot. Make sure the tube is wide enough for two bees to pass each other easily.

Artificial nest sites for bumblebees do not generally prove successful, but we need to do everything we can to help conserve these insects. The Bumblebee Conservation Trust website has a great deal of information about UK bumblebees and links to other websites of interest.
Go to: www.bumblebeeconservationtrust.co.uk

Wycombe Wildlife Group

Among its activities Wycombe Wildlife Group surveys and promotes the management of wild habitats for the benefit of wildlife and advises on and promotes wildlife gardening.

Information about the Group can be obtained from the Group's web site at: www.wycombewildlife.org.uk

Gardens for Bees &Wasps

WYCOMBE WILDLIFE GROUP

There is a great variety of bees & wasps which, unlike the Honey Bee, are solitary. They don't live in colonies with a queen, drones and workers, there are just the males and females.

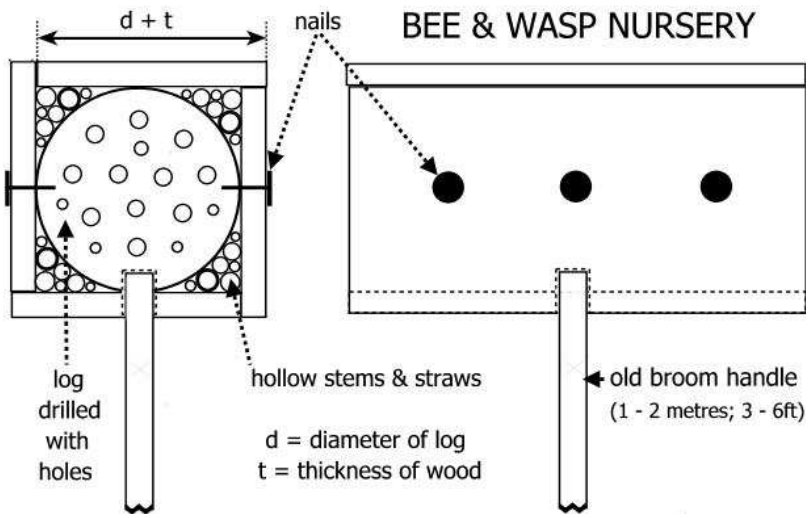
Some solitary wasps use their sting to paralyse spiders, caterpillars and other insects on which they feed their larvae. They are not a threat or nuisance, unlike the Common Wasp in the autumn, and most are smaller than the Common Wasp. Bumblebees are also unlikely to sting and are useful pollinators in the garden.

Some species may excavate holes in the ground or use existing holes to lay their eggs in, while others utilise holes in rotting wood, holes left by wood boring beetles, or old, hollow stems.

In the wildlife garden the most "natural" way of providing for these insects is to grow Hedge-parsley and Fennel, or you might prefer

to grow a few Carrots and Parsnips and allow them to grow on in their second year to flower. The flowers will benefit many insects and the seeds can be harvested and put on the bird table. Don't however, cut them down, just cut off the flower heads. In the winter, insects such as ladybirds and lace-wings will hibernate in these hollow stems, then in the following summer a number of solitary bees and wasps may nest in them. Alternatively you could cut the stems of these plants when they are dry and stack them in a sunny corner of the garden or against a hedge.

A variety of artificial breeding and hibernating sites for bees and wasps have been devised, several of which are described in this leaflet.



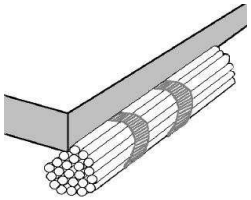
The above "nursery" provides holes drilled in an old log and a collection of old, hollow stems in which solitary bees and wasps can lay their eggs.

Select a log about 10cm in diameter & cut off a piece about 22cm long. Construct an open-ended box around the log as shown in the diagram. Nail the sides of the box together and secure the log in position with nails. Drill a hole through the centre of the underside of the box through into the log, to take a broom handle on which the nursery will be mounted. Drill a number of holes 3 – 10mm in diameter about 50mm deep in both ends of the log. Fill the corners between the log and the box with a mixture of straws, hollow lengths of bamboo, or other hollow stems collected from your garden in the autumn.

If you collect stems from the fields, be careful if you use Hogweed, as you may get a rash from handling this plant. If you cannot identify the plant you use, play safe and leave it alone. Erect the box in a sunny, sheltered spot in your garden.

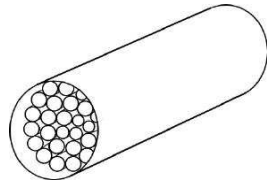
A small glass or clear plastic tube inserted into some of the wider holes will allow you to examine the eggs and developing larvae.

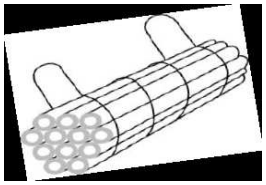
Other Bee, Wasp & Insect Homes



A bundle of straw
Tie or tape the bundle together and fix it under a window-ledge on a south-facing wall. Block up one end of each straw with a blob of glue.

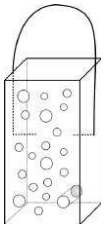
Straws or dry hollow plant stems
Pack them in a tube or tin (closed at one end) which you can make more visually acceptable, and waterproof, with a coat of green or brown paint. Mount them horizontally in a sunny spot.

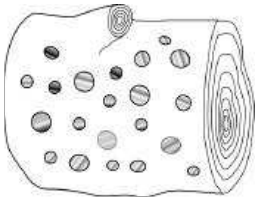




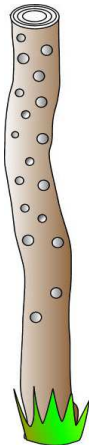
Short lengths of bamboo cane
Wire them together and hang them from the branch of a tree preferably where they will get some sun.

Bee Block
Drill 3mm to 10mm holes in a thick block of polystyrene or a block of old wood, and suspend it by means of a thick wire on a wall or fence. Don't drill right through the block.





Bee Log
Drill a short, thick log with 3mm to l0mm holes and put it on a sunny rockery.



Bee Post
Drive a log vertically into the soil in a sunny flower bed. Drill the exposed part of the log with holes 3mm to 10mm diameter & 20 to 30mm deep. Do not drill right through the log.