

How to make a bee hotel

1. Why make a bee hotel

Making bee hotels is a useful way to help bees – as well as sowing bee-friendly seeds, and providing water – and one that you can do at home.

A bee hotel provides space for solitary bees to nest in. There are around 220 species of wild bees in the UK, called 'solitary' because they make individual nest cells for their larvae. It is these solitary rather than bumble bees that will be attracted to the bee hotel we describe here. Some solitary bees are very small and black so they may not even look like what many of us think of as bees!

2. Materials you will need

- Untreated wood (so no varnish, stain, paint etc) OR empty plastic bottle
- A drill
- Bundles of bamboo or dead stems
- Saw, screws and secateurs
- Hook

3. Step-by-step guide

1. Make the box that will contain the bamboo / dead stems or blocks of wood.
Suggested size: 20cm deep x 30cm wide x 30cm high.

The box should be open on one side, and depending on where you are going to hang it, can be open on the back too. If you're hanging it against a wall that will provide a back to the box, then you can leave this open too.

It is advisable to create a sloping roof so that the rain will roll off and protect the wood and stems inside from becoming wet.

Alternatively you could use a large, empty plastic bottle, with the top cut off so that it is open at one end.

2. Trim the dead stems to the same depth as the box or bottle. It's a good idea to include a mix of different widths of stem as different bees will want to use different sizes.

OR

Drill deep holes 2-10mm wide in to blocks of wood that will fill the box. The open ends of these holes should face outwards, and be smooth of splinters, and clean of sawdust, as bees will not use holes that are messy.

3. Pack your stems or blocks of wood (or combination) in to the box frame.
4. Attach the hook to the back of the box.

For an even simpler way – or if you're really short of time - just bundle together with twine or wire, 10-20 cm lengths of hollow plant stems and place them in a sunny place where they will be protected from the rain.



For instructions on how to build a bee hotel out of a plastic drinks bottle and some hollow plant tubes like bamboo, elder, cow parsley see:

<http://www.opalexplornature.org/sites/default/files/7/file/Howtomakeabeehotel-May2012.pdf>

Where to put your box:

In full sun, facing south or south east. Plus your box must be at least a metre off the ground, with no vegetation blocking the entrance.

It is important that the bundles of stems, or block of wood are kept dry at all times. You may need to move your bee hotel in the autumn and winter to protect the nesting bees. Move your bee hotel to somewhere dry and cold; do not store in a warm place.

Further information:

<http://www.buglife.org.uk/Resources/Buglife/Create%20a%20bee%20hotel%20.pdf>

http://www.foxleas.com/bee_house.htm

Read an account of how volunteers in the Birmingham (or should that be Beemingham) Friends of the Earth group made bee hotels:

<http://www.birminghamfoe.org.uk/blog/building-a-bee-house>

Do nest boxes benefit bumblebees?

Various studies of bumblebee nest boxes have found between 0% and 58% of boxes provided are used by colonies but with generally low take up in the UK.

Underground bumblebee nest boxes - buried 5-10 cm underground and with a 30-80 cm long entrance pipe - are generally thought to be the most effective.

If you'd like to make a bee hotel for bumble bees, see:

<http://www.bumblebee.org/nestboxes.htm>

