

# Bees

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I've been meaning to write a post on bees for a while. This week I read an article that said recent research suggested that bees [were not visiting bee friendly plants](#) as much as was thought. This post (mainly pictures) will concentrate on bumble bees since I rarely see a honey bee in my garden nowadays. This is part of an ongoing problem with bee numbers. Honeybee populations have declined massively in recent years. A wide variety of things have been blamed from nuclear power to climate change to [insecticides](#). But certainly some of the same factors affect bumblebees which have also declined in numbers. Bees are important since they are systematic pollinators. By that I mean they work a plant over. Other insects wasps, flies, beetles and hover flies will pollinate plants but visit flowers on a random basis. Hence the importance of these insects. Even plants that are self fertile do better with pollination. We get 5-6 different types of bumblebee in our garden as well as some types of solitary bee. Here are some of them. I've been trying to photograph them, which is not easy. Bumblebees build small nests often using grass and other materials. They contain up to about 200 insects. They often nest in roofs (we have had at least one). It is forbidden to destroy the nests under UK law and they rarely cause trouble unlike wasps or honeybees where the nest gets very large and can damage the building. Bumblebees can sting many times (in fact the only bee I've been stung by was a bumblebee) but are very none aggressive. *Bombus terrestris*,



buff tailed bumblebee (worker)

*Bombus hypnorum*, the tree

bumblebee queen. This species has benefited from climate change and is now found in Southern Scotland.



*Bombus pascuorum*, common Carder Bee



These are most common one I see, they seem to go in stages in

that one particular species works one plant at a time. The bees visit all the flowers in the garden that the article above says they don't. One of their favourites are the thistle which I've photographed them on above since they have to work at getting the pollen on this. They also love common sage, a type of salvia from south Africa that no insect seems to be able to obtain anything from but they try, Lavender, Oregano, echinops. They quite like nasturtiums and inula. I hope this short blog has given you a bit of insight into these important insects which we rely on so much and need all the help they can get. Neil

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