

A message about Bees



Although bees are vital to the pollination of many of the European plants we get our food from, it is important that European bees are well managed. Poorly managed and feral European bees can be a nuisance and can compete with native bees.

EUROPEAN BEES

European honey bees are an introduced species and although they are producers of honey, they can also steal food from native birds and animals, or take over their homes.

Responsible management of European bees is important, which is why we seek to relocate bee swarms from trees, bird boxes and other spaces in our reserves and parks.

Native bees are different from European bees. There are around 200 different species of native bees in South Australia. The species we have in SA don't store nectar or produce honey that can be harvested by people.

Native bees don't live in hives like European bees, but tend to live alone in wood, gaps between rocks, the stems of plants and some dig holes in the ground, according to Beekeeper's Society of South Australia. Although they don't produce much honey, they're still important to the cross pollination of different native plants.

Swarms of bees that can be seen in trees or bird boxes are unmanaged European bee hives that run out room and 'swarm'.



YOUR GARDEN AND BEES

Plant a range of native plants that flower from early spring to late autumn

Most native bees only live for a few weeks. They need pollen and nectar to reproduce. If they can't find food in your garden, they won't settle in. Plant a variety of locally native plants that provide flowers from early spring to late autumn, and you'll keep different species of native bees happy all year. Eucalypts, hakeas, Banksia, peas and Eremophila are very attractive. Plant smaller plants in clumps, to make them more attractive.

Plant buzz pollinated plants

Honeybees cannot use buzz pollinated plants (see overleaf), so by providing them, you provide an edge for native bees. Senna, fringe, flax and chocolate lilies, Hibbertia, and velvet-flowers are all buzz pollinated. Make sure there are nectar producing plants close by (Scaevola, Eucalypts, Christmas bush, tea-tree and Bottlebrush are all good).

Limit pesticide use

Chemical pesticides, particularly broad spectrum and systemic insecticides, can negatively impact native bee populations. Use pesticides conservatively, or better yet, not at all. That way, you'll also encourage beneficial predators to stick around and feed on your insect pests.

Don't mow your lawn so often

When you don't have many native plants yet, weeds can provide nectar and pollen when nothing else is flowering. Mowing trims these flowers. Try to let your lawn grow a little longer before you mow.

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YOUR GARDEN AND BEES CONT.....

Leave some areas of your garden free of vegetation

Many native bees nest in the ground; these bees usually seek out slightly compacted soils, not too dry, not too wet, with at most light traffic, that are free of vegetation, often on a bit of a slope. Yes, they are picky! Look for existing nests, and leave or make a few patches of bare soil, so they can burrow, and they won't have to travel so far to pollinate your flowers.

Be careful with mulch and don't use weed barriers

Mulch has large benefits. But half of our native bees dig nests in the soil, and a layer of mulch or plastic weed barriers will discourage them from taking up residence in your garden. Leave a few suitable areas (see under 4) free of mulch for the bees.

Leave dead wood for wood nesting bees

Resin bees often use old beetle bores in dead wood. Leaving dead trunks or branches will help them.

Plant plants with pithy vines or canes

When pruning dead branches with pithy or hollow centers, leave a stretch of 10 cm or more above the node to allow reed, masked and resin bees to construct a nest.

Install some artificial nests for resin, masked and leafcutter bees

Resin, masked and leafcutter bees make tube-shaped burrows, in which they lay their eggs. Having a small bee hotel will allow you to observe them provisioning their nest.

REMOVAL

Removal of bees - council land

We will remove bees from council land if the bees are causing a risk to public health and safety.

Swarming bees are not removed unless they have settled for at least 48 hours and started to form a hive.

To report a bee hive that is causing a nuisance or a public health and safety risk, please call our Customer Centre on 8375 6600.

Every attempt will be made to relocate the bees without destroying them. However as a last resort, destruction may be the only option.

Removal - private land

On private land, it is the resident's responsibility to manage bees that form a hive and cause a nuisance. Hives may be removed by an apiarist or destroyed by a pest controller.

Please refer to the Yellow Pages or other resources to select a provider who will provide this service for a fee.

More information on bees can be found on the SA Department for Environment and Water's website .

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