

Bee hotels

Survey extension activity

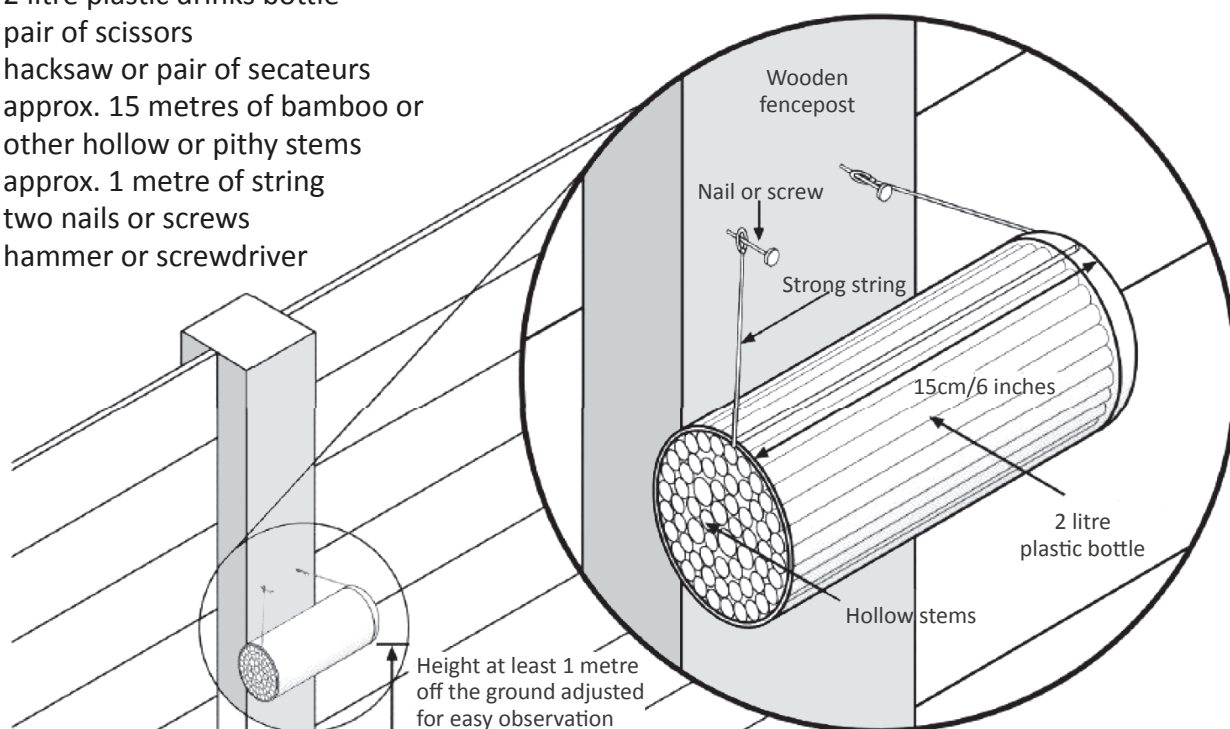


There are over 260 species of solitary bee in the UK. These species commonly nest in bare sandy ground, holes in wood and the stems of hollow plants. It's easy to make your own bee hotel and to provide valuable nesting habitat for solitary bees.

What you will need

- 2 litre plastic drinks bottle
- pair of scissors
- hacksaw or pair of secateurs
- approx. 15 metres of bamboo or other hollow or pithy stems
- approx. 1 metre of string
- two nails or screws
- hammer or screwdriver

MUST BE CONSTRUCTED WITH AN ADULT



Building the bee hotel

1. Cut off the top of the plastic bottle 18cm from its base and discard the top.
2. Carefully pierce a small hole in the bottom of the half-bottle with some scissors, thread through some strong string as shown in the picture.
3. Collect about 15m of dry hollow or pithy stems e.g: bamboo canes, raspberry, thistle, dock, cow parsley or other.
4. Cut the stems into 15cm lengths using a saw or pair of secateurs.
5. Pack the stems tightly into the half bottle. You can use straw or scrap material to fill any little gaps.
6. Your bee hotel is now complete.

Fixing the bee hotel to a wooden fence, shed wall or post

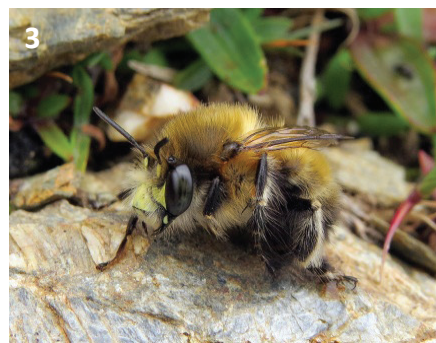
When you have chosen your spot, fix in two nails or screws level with each other on a horizontal plane a few centimetres apart. Get an adult to help you. **Tie the bee hotel in place making sure the open end is very slightly sloping downwards** to drain water away.

Where to install the bee hotel

Bees like it to be sunny and not too windy. **A sheltered, sunny south-facing fence or wall is ideal.** East-facing is the next best thing, followed by West facing. Bee hotels also do well on masonry or stone walls, but you will need a drill, screws and rawlplugs to attach it. The bee hotel should be **at least one metre off the ground** so that it is not shaded by vegetation.

When to install the bee hotel

Install your bee hotel by mid March. If the winter is colder than -5°C take the bee hotel down and keep it in a cool, dry place. Don't forget to put it back up in the same position around the middle of February or once the bad weather is over so that the bees can emerge outside!






All © Steven Falk

Solitary bees you might find nesting in the bee hotel include Red Mason Bee *Osmia bicornis* (1), Leafcutter Bee *Megachile* spp. (2) and Hairy-footed Flower Bee *Anthophora plumipes* (3).

Monitoring your bee hotel

Most solitary bees nest between April and June. **Visit your bee hotels weekly on a sunny day from the start of April** to see what bees are flying around and if they are using your bee hotel. You will know that bees are living in your hotel when you see the tubes filled up with mud, leaves or bits of fluff. A filled tube usually contains 6-10 baby bees that will emerge next spring. Just think of all the plants they will pollinate, the fruit and vegetables that will grow thanks to their (and your) hard work.

This extension activity is paired with the wider citizen science **Polli:Nation Survey** which:

-  **Gives you** the opportunity to learn about pollinators
-  **Helps scientists** to research the health and status of pollinating insects across the UK
-  **Through working together,** aims to discover if changes you make to feeding, nesting and shelter habitats can make a difference to pollinators in your area

It is part of a nationwide programme to transform outdoor spaces into pollinator-friendly habitats.

To find out more visit the Polli:Nation website www.polli-nation.co.uk