

# Bumble Bees

We are encouraged not to destroy Bumble Bees because they are naturally under threat of extinction and they are recognised as contributors to our economy. Instead we are encouraged either to leave them alone, or to translocate the nest to a forest or paddock, where thick undergrowth can be lifted and the nest thrown in and then covered with a sod or bracken.



They are the only pollinators of legumes (runner beans, sugar snaps, peas etc) as well as pollinators of lucerne, tomatoes and many other plants. They can tolerate the heat inside a glasshouse to pollinate tomatoes and cucumbers.

They do not sting you unless you disturb their nest site, so if you are going to deal with them don some thick clothing, welly boots and a veil. They have a huge sting in their rear end of about 5mm+. They prefer to fly around you. They do not 'bite' as some twits believe.

They love to nest in old fabric such as a pile of thrown out curtains, an outside padded chair or sofa, in a shed filled with paper, fabric or cardboard boxes, or in a warm compost heap or under the floor in a piled house. Entry is often through an air vent brick.

If you can tolerate them, then leave them alone and you will get a much greater crop of vegies such as beans, tomatoes, and cucumbers. Next year they will be gone.

The nest is comprised of a number of balls each about the size of a marble that are loosely stuck together. The balls are made from wax so they cling together by simply heating. Most balls contain a developing grub. Some are used for storing the food for the grubs.

They do not store honey as honeybees do but, some balls do contain honey.

Generally, the nest stinks because they defecate in it (unlike a honeybee that always goes outside the hive). Often, the nest composts around them and heats the nest to warm the brood. At the end of summer, the nest is abandoned and never used again.

Derek T Skinner