Creating Homes for Pollinators

You can give bees a home in your yard!

Many native bees nest in the ground. You can help by keeping a bare patch of ground in your yard or mowing with the highest blade setting to allow for minimal disruption.

Other native bees live in cavities. You can help by making bee homes! These homes give mother bees a safe place to lay and care for their eggs.

What's in it for you? You are creating pollinator nesting habitat, so these bees can pollinate your plants.

Here’s what you need:

- Hollow sticks or reeds like bamboo, phragmites, or sumac
- Wire or zipties to bundle the reeds
- Hand saw for cutting
- Wire for cleaning out the insides of the reeds or sticks
- An optional shelter like a coffee can
- Optional paint (usually blue, black, and white) to personalize your design and ensure that house-hunting bees can see the home from far away. Bees also use visual cues to return home, so these colors will help them remember how to come back!

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Leafcutter bees (Megachile) nest all summer

Tips:

- Face nest openings southeast.
- Replace reeds every one to two years.
- Avoid insecticide use, especially near the bundles, on flowering plants, and during the day.
- Use petroleum jelly as a barrier to ants and spiders. Apply it to the post where you install the nest, or encircling the nest bundle itself.
- You can increase your bees’ survival by keeping them in an unheated shed over winter. The nests can be contained in a dark, sealed box with one hole for the bees to emerge out of in spring.
- In early spring, take the emergence chamber out of storage and watch the bees emerge as beautiful adults!

Bee nest information and photos unless otherwise noted obtained from Joel Gardner. More designs and info at:
http://www.beelab.umn.edu/prod/groups/cfans/@pub/@cfans/@bees/documents/asset/cfans_asset_434476.pdf

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