

Make Bee Houses to Help our Native Bees!

The Sonoran Desert is a native bee hotspot, with almost 1,000 different kinds! Some of our bees like to nest in holes in wood. Inside, mother bees place a ball of pollen and nectar “bee bread” to feed their babies. You can make bee houses to give these friends a safe place for their babies to grow.



Leafcutter bee by Joseph Wilson

They need narrow tubes in which to build their nest chambers. Different bees like holes of different lengths and widths. Bees such as mason bees like tubes around 6 inches long and about the width of a pencil.

You can build a bee condo out of a clean coffee can or thick cardboard tube, or drill holes into blocks of wood or pieces of sawed off branches. Replaceable or cleanable parts help prevent the spread of bacteria, fungi, viruses, and parasites that can harm bees. Some people like to buy paper straws for mason bees and other bees to line the holes, but you can also make your own paper tube liners. Here's how:



1. Take a piece of 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper such as construction paper, printer paper (without any ink on it), or cooking parchment and fold it in half and half again. Cut the paper into fourths along the folds. You want to use paper straws, not plastic, because plastic can get moldy.
2. Roll the paper around a pencil and fasten it together with a small piece of masking tape or school glue.
3. Insert the paper straws into the can or larger cardboard tube, or into the cells drilled into wood. For wood holes, leave a few without paper liners for some bees that might prefer them.

Or get really fancy and use scrap wood to build a painted bee palace like this one made by Clara, a Junior Girl Scout! Just be sure you leave the holes unpainted inside.

Then, find the perfect spot to put your bee house.

Mounting Your Bee House:

Put your bee house outdoors in a place that does not receive direct sunlight or get rain on it. Make sure it is at least three feet off the ground and not able to move around. Bees won't use a house that swings in the wind.

For more information on Desert Museum pollinator conservation projects and gardening for backyard bees check out this link: https://www.desertmuseum.org/center/pollinator_projects.php

For more ideas and information on native bee conservation, check out this link: <https://xerces.org/pollinator-resource-center/southwest>

