

How to identify what kind of bees you have in your roof or birdbox or on the fence?

So, you have bees buzzing around your house. How do you identify what you have before finding the right person to help move them on?

Bees tend to fall into three categories: Bumblebees, solitary bees and honeybees.

Bumblebees

There are various sizes of bumblebees, but they are the same shape and look very hairy. Depending on the variety, you see them around from about March/April.

The variety that tends to make a home in a birdbox or under the eaves of the house are most likely tree bumblebees. They are quite small – about the size of an adult's thumbnail.



Other types of bumblebees live in the ground and have a nest like this one or in wall spaces.

Through the spring and summer months, the queen, who mated at the end of summer the previous year, starts laying worker and drone bees. There can be up to 100 bees in a bumblebee nest, and they tend to move rather slowly. If you see a few bees bobbing around your

chimney or by the birdbox, compost bin or similar places, you are hosting a colony of bumblebees.

All bumblebees will die off in late summer/early autumn and the queen will find somewhere to hibernate for the winter. You should leave them alone if possible until they die. Meanwhile, enjoy watching them do their work around the garden plants.

Solitary bees

Solitary bees can look quite like honeybees, but the clue is in the title. There are various varieties of these as well; some live in the ground and will enter their nest through many different entrances. Bug hotels are an excellent way to help these little bees.



Honeybees



Honeybees live in large colonies - in summer up to about 50,000 individuals or more – and the whole colony survives through the winter. These are the bees of which beekeepers are custodians. Beekeepers keep them in hives which are usually made of wood. Sometimes honeybees swarm which is a natural part of the honeybee life cycle.

This is a swarm on a tree, but you can find them on fences, hedges, gates or even on a wall. These bees are looking for a new home. Honeybees move a lot quicker than bumblebees and they want a new home as quickly as possible. In general, swarming bees tend to be calm bees.

If you see a swarm, please contact your local Beekeepers' Association.



Wasps



Wasps live in beautifully made paper homes and are not related to bees in any way. If you have wasps, you need to employ a pest control expert to remove them. The queen can find her way into houses and make a nest in an attic or roof space. This is when they can be a nuisance. However, like the solitary and bumblebees, they die off in autumn leaving the queen to fend for herself.



I hope this helps you identify what bees you have.

Please only contact your local Beekeepers' Association if you have honeybees. They will not, and cannot, remove other bees and certainly not wasps. Solitary bees and bumblebees should be left by themselves and enjoyed. They will not sting or bother you if left well alone. If you have children, perhaps make it an educational project for the summer months which they can then take into school in the autumn term. All these creatures do an enormous amount of good in the environment. Please help look after all bees.