



# BUILDING A BEE HOTEL

## How to Get Started

### Building for Bees

**Select** tubes of varying diameters, and secure them in a container (such as a flower pot or old coffee tin) or simply bind them together with a natural material such as raffia.

**Place** in the crook of a tree in your backyard or attach to a fence post.

**Monitor** for bee activity!

### Follow-up Actions

We'd love to know what bees you are finding! If you can, snap a picture of bees visiting your hotel and email them to the School Programs team at [info@nhm.org](mailto:info@nhm.org).

Information to include would be: the direction the openings of the bees hotel faces (south or south-east facing are best), whether the hotel is under a tree or awning, what the occupied tube is made of (bamboo, plastic straw, etc.), the diameter of the occupied tube, and the bee's move-in date.

**Why Build Bee Hotels?**

Many native California bees are solitary! They don't build hives or make honey, but rather lay their eggs in tiny spaces and line the walls with leaves or mud. Providing these spaces helps encourage pollination.

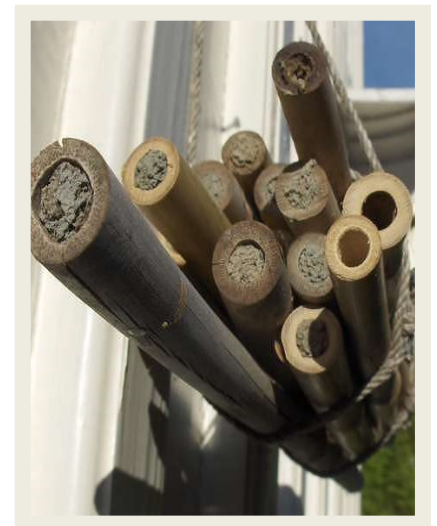


Photo credit: Magne Flåten

### Background Info

These homes are not for honey bees! Honey bees live in big groups and build large nests where they collectively raise young and store honey. Bees such as the bumble bee live in small colonies. Most bees, however, are solitary (over 2,000 species just here in the U.S.) and build very small homes to lay their eggs. In nature they might use hollow stems, or small holes in trees or the ground. You can help one group of these bees, the family scientifically known as Megachilidae (known commonly as leafcutter and mason bees), by building a bee hotel for them to lay their eggs. This will encourage these bees to visit your yard and pollinate! The bees will line the tubes of the bee hotel with small pieces of leaves they cut or mud they collect, and lay their eggs inside. These bees are short lived and most active during the summer, and utilize a wide variety of plants for pollen (visit <http://www.xerces.org/pollinator-conservation/plant-lists/> for more information on plants to attract native bees). All you have to do is build your hotel, place it in your yard, and wait for the bees to move in! They will clean it out when they are done, and new bees will move in the next year!



## Mason bees versus honey bees:

Honey bees visit about 700 flowers a day and pollinate 30 of them; mason bees visit as many as 1,600 flowers a day and pollinate almost all of them!

Honey bees can be quite aggressive in defending their large colonies, so they give a powerful sting. Mason bee stings are very rare, usually only happening when the bee gets trapped in clothing, and are relatively mild.

We'd love to know what bees you are finding! If you can snap a picture of bees visiting your hotel, please upload them to "The Grand Busybee Hotel Project" on iNaturalist! Information to include would be: the direction the openings of the bees hotel faces (south or south-east facing are best), whether the hotel is under a tree or awning, what the occupied tube is made of (bamboo, plastic straw, etc.), the diameter of the occupied tube, and the bee's move-in date.

For more information on native bees, we recommend the *Field Guide to the Common Bees of California* by Gretchen Lebuhn.



Mason bee



Honey bee