

Gardening for Bumblebees - Lynda Brown finds out the latest buzz from insect and bee Guru Dave Goulson

Hi All – something else I've been busting to share. Last week I zoomed into a video with bee guru Dave Goulson, who has just published his new book *Gardening For Bumblebees*.

<https://www.penguin.co.uk/.../gardenin.../9781529110289.html>

He left us in no doubt of how crucial our gardens/allotments or balconies are. For example, he quoted one gardener in Leicester with a small back- to -nature garden, who over 35 years catalogued 2673 species of wildlife, including 1900 insects.

None of us here need to be convinced about this but here's a few more fascinating snippets

I gleaned :check out Nurturing Nature, too – a real find ! <https://nurturing-nature.co.uk>.

Gardening For bumblebees....

- There are over 20, 000 species of bees worldwide including 9 honeybee and 250 bumblebee
- Unbelievably, bees are still in crisis – pesticides and lack of wildflowers (97% of meadows lost) . It's an emergency – and why gardeners need to step in pronto
- The queen bumble bee hibernates for 9 months in the ground – if you see one flying close to the ground, she's looking for a suitable site to lay her eggs.
- Bumbles use gigantic amounts of energy, needing constant supplies of nectar, and are always 40 mins away from death if they can't find it. To do this, they visit flowers 10,000 times per day. This is because they beat their wings 200 times per second – known as 'shivering', which keeps them warm, heat generated is stored in their fur, which has enables them to live in cold climates. Amazing... .
- There are over 22 million gardens and 400,000 hectares of gardens in the UK – more than all the nature reserves (excluding all the public spaces – parks, verges, roundabouts etc.) That's where we come in , We can literally save our bees, simply by inviting nature into our gardens and creating bumblebee and insect habitats.
- PS Beware RHS pollinator friendly logos on plants from garden centres: as he points out, they're grown using peat, in plastic pots, drenched with pesticides, fed with artificial fertilisers

How can we help?

1. Provide the right sort of flowers – especially in spring when the bumblebees first emerge; and the wider the variety the better, including fruit trees, shrubs, wildflowers etc until autumn. Make your weeds wildflowers, too – all brilliant for bumblebees & pollinators
Double flowers are a no-no they're mutants with no nectar rich stamens.

Top flowers for bumblebees (this may surprise you, it surprised me)

Lambs tongue – the downy leaves are collected by certain species of bumbles to provide nesting

Viper's bugloss

Lesser cat mint

Macedonian scabious

Giant hyssop

For bees and pollinators: cranesbill - hardy geraniums , especially purple ; lesser catmint; helenium

Native flowers : oregano/ marjoram ; viper's bugloss; greater knapweed

2. Provide nesting sites – an untidy garden is fine, traditional stone walls etc - the bumblebees will sort it for themselves . Otherwise make your own eg cut bamboo canes; you need an 8mm hole – beware lots of commercial ones, holes too big/small etc. Dave Goulson recommends Nurturing Nature (see above)

let's get buzzing..

happy gardening

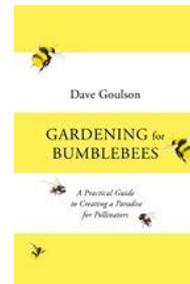
Lynda, Team BDGC

Gardening for Bumblebees by Dave Goulson 'Go on, have a flutter!

Take a few tips from the new book by biologist Dave Goulson and it's a safe bet that beautiful butterflies will start gathering in your garden'

Daily Mail

From the Sunday Times bestselling author of *A Sting In The Tale* comes this practical guide to creating a paradise for pollinators



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