

Information about Bees

About Bees

Bees are the main pollinators of many of our wildflowers, crops and vegetables. Many plants would struggle to reproduce if it were not for the bees. Bees are on the decline, since the 1950's many have had their populations halved.

Sheffield City Council will only undertake a treatment if the bees are a danger to human health.

Masonry and Mining Bees

- These are a non aggressive solitary bee.
- They are not a threat to human health as they do not sting. (Their sting is unable to penetrate skin.)
- They have hairy bodies that appear brown and orange. (Compared to a wasp they are fatter and do not have an elongated body.)
- Both Masonry and Mining Bees breed early and are active from March until the end of June.
- The bees die off once egg laying is completed in June.
- Masonry bees lay their eggs in small passages which they can make in the soft mortar of walls or they can occupy existing holes. Once they have laid the egg then the hole is sealed ready for the new bee to emerge the following year. Mining bees have a similar practice but they prefer to lay their eggs in soil (preferably sandy areas).

Bumble Bees

- These are also none aggressive and social insects.
- They are a large, hairy, black and yellow bee with a bumbling clumsy flight.
- They only sting if they are handled roughly or feel threatened.
- They never swarm or attack.
- They usually die off by the end of September.
- The nests last one year. They are simple structures covered in moss and usually located on the ground or under wood piles/sheds.
- We recommend that nests are left alone as they are unlikely to cause you a problem.
- Nests can be moved as a last resort as the bees often die.

Honey Bees

- They have dark brown and black stripes as opposed to wasps which are bright yellow and black.
- Only honey bees swarm.

- Swarms are caused by population increases and a group of worker bees will leave to form a new colony with a queen.
- Swarms appear as a mass of insects in mid-air or gathered on a surface like a branch or fence, clinging to each other. The swarm will remain here temporarily, which could be a few days, until the scout bees return with a new location. If the swarm is still there after a week they are unlikely to move on.
- Honey bees are usually non aggressive when swarming and will only react if they feel they are under threat.
- Bee keepers can re-home the swarm if accessible or give you advice.
- If you find a swarm Contact Sheffield City Council for details of a bee keeper in your area.
- If the swarm is inaccessible (eg within a chimney) it may be necessary to destroy them. This is a last resort and should only be done professionally. This is partly because honey from a treated nest can attract bees from other nests. If this contaminated honey is then taken to other hives it could kill the colony, leaving you open to prosecution.

We will only treat as a last resort and when a threat to health. Prices include site visits one to treat and one to block access holes. It is possible that access equipment may be required.