



Build your own bee hotel

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So you've decided to make your own bee hotel, congrats! Native bees in your local area are buzzing with anticipation. But first, you need to choose one of three hotels to build. Check out the kinds of bees each one attracts.

Reedy hotel

For bees that love the hollows inside dead pithy flower stems, reeds and untreated bamboo.



Simon Grove CC BY-NC iNaturalist

Reed bees
(*Exoneura*)



Mel Logozzo CC BY-NC iNaturalist

Leafcutter bees
(*Eutricharaea*)



Johreichler CC BY-NC iNaturalist

Masked bees
(*Hylaeus*)

Hardwood hotel

For bees that nest in cavities in wood or the holes made by wood boring grubs (or drill bits!). Some bees that nest in hardwood hotels also like reedy hotels.



Lynda Wilson CC BY-NC iNaturalist

Wasp-mimic bees
(*Hyleoides*)



Tracey Mc CC BY-NC iNaturalist

Grass carrying wasps
(*Isodontia*)



Ged Tranter CC BY iNaturalist

Resin bees
(*Megachile*)

Clay block hotel

For bees that nest in clay, sand or bare soil.



cinclosoma CC BY-NC iNaturalist

Blue banded bees
(*Amegilla*)



Nicole Andrews CC BY-NC iNaturalist

Lasioglossum
*this species likes bare patches of soil



teenytinyworld CC BY-NC iNaturalist

Cuckoo / cloak & dagger bees
(*Thyreus*)

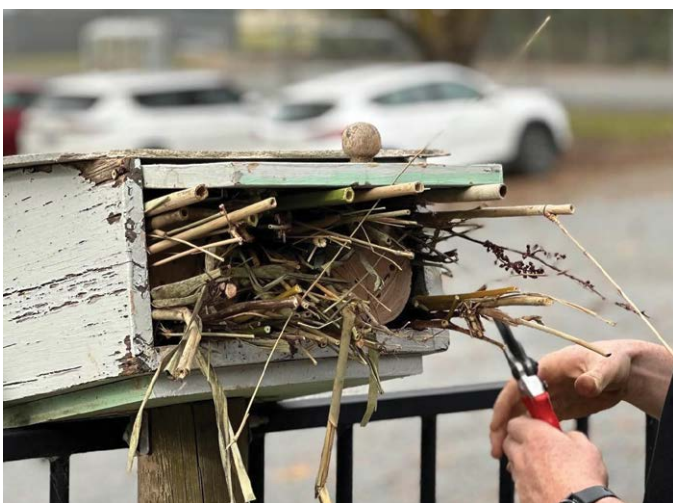
Important: Bees need hotels that haven't been fumigated or chemical treated, so don't use imported materials or treated timbers.

Reedy hotels

1. Find or buy hollow reeds, dead flower stems and/or bamboo with internal diameters less than 10mm.
2. Cut the reeds, stems and bamboo to around 200 mm lengths below the node (the bumpy bit on bamboo) to create an open cavity.
3. Bundle everything up and jam tightly into PVC pipes, old tin cans, or even old letterboxes.



Old PVC pipes are great for bundling up reeds, stems and bamboo. Use a mix of widths to fill any gaps.



Get creative - even old letterboxes can make the perfect bee hotel.



Watch our video tutorial

Hardwood hotel

1. Find or buy native hardwood like eucalyptus, ironbark, jarrah or red gum and cut to lengths of around 200 mm.
2. Using extra long timber drill bits, drill holes of various diameters (3–9 mm) to depths of at least 100–150 mm.
3. Angle all holes slightly upward to prevent water from pooling at the bottom and make sure no holes are bigger than 10 mm wide to avoid unwanted creepy crawlies.



Drill holes of varying sizes to accommodate different sized bees, but don't go over 10 mm in diameter.



Hang reedy or hardwood hotels securely off the ground at about eye-level.

Important: Bees like hotels that are all natural, so avoid using metal tubes or plastic straws that can attract heat and moisture.

Clay block hotel

1. Create a mixture of clay and sand and pack it into something like a concrete besser block or durable container.
2. Using a stick or pencil, poke shallow holes into the clay-sand mixture.
3. Ground-nesting bees, like blue-banded bees, love to nest together, so place clay block hotels in groups of around ten. Also, place hotels near patches of un-mulched bare ground in the garden as some ground-nesting species will prefer to make their own homes.



Place clay block hotels in groups on the ground.



Leave areas of un-mulched ground next to your clay block hotels as some bees like to nest on bare patches of soil.

Inset: blue banded bees dig nests in the ground, so are at home in clay block hotels.



Put a roof on it

Put a roof on your hotel to keep your bees nice and dry. Make sure the roof covers the holes and openings in your hotel, but doesn't block out too much sunlight.

Location, location, location

Choosing the perfect spot for your hotel is easy, you just need to keep a few things in mind.

Reedy hotels and hardwood hotels should be placed off the ground around eye-level, secured either by wire/string or in the fork of a tree. Clay block hotels should be placed on the ground.

Bees enjoy the sunlight. Avoid placing your hotel on the south-side of buildings, which are often shaded in Australia, or in darker areas of your garden. Bees also like to wake up with the sun, so face hotel openings towards the north-east to delight them with a sunrise.

A good hotel has plenty of restaurants close by. Plant native wildflowers such as native daisies (Asteraceae), and flowering shrubs and trees such as myrtles (Myrtaceae), native peas (Fabaceae), and proteas (Proteaceae). Some exotic plants like salvia and lavender are also good food for blue banded bees, but most native bees will rarely use exotic species.

Doors open!

Enjoy watching your hotel come to life, knowing you've created great habitat for local bees to do what they do best - pollinate flowers!

Spring cleaning

At the end of winter, before the weather warms up, your guests should have packed up and left the hotel (signified by a small exit hole on a once capped hole). You can easily tidy up with a pipe cleaner to remove any debris, dead cells and spider webs.



Watch our video tutorial



Roofs help keep your bees nice and dry.



Wedge reedy or hardwood hotels securely in tree forks or tie them to branches using wire or string.



Check for sealed holes, which signify a hotel room is in use.