

BWARS

Information Sheet

BEE HOTELS

Robin Dean

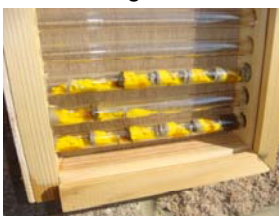
- * Make your garden a bee friendly zone
- * Easy to make
- * Good uptake
- * Designs to fit every budget
- * **Do your bit for the conservation of bees**

Featuring:

- Background information
- Variety of Design
- Orientation
- Do's and Don't's
- Maintenance



A Female Leafcutter bee sealing her nest



Osmia rufa nests in glass tubes with partitioned cells



A more modest bee hotel

A Helping Hand

You don't need to be a skilled carpenter to make a nest suitable for solitary bees. Cavity nesters are less than fussy, although you will discover in time that some nest materials and/or hole sizes are significantly more attractive than others. The Red Mason-bee, *Osmia rufa*, probably the most common of the hotel occupying solitary bees, likes a hole diameter of anywhere between 7 and 8 mm, although a good variety of sizes from 4 mm all the way up to 10 mm will attract a range of bees to your hotel.

At the bottom end of the housing market is a nest made from a cardboard milk carton filled with straws or cut bamboo canes. If you are using canes, you need to cut them just below a node, so one end of the tube is still sealed. A length of approximately 150 mm seems to be the most appropriate, however cutting the canes with slightly varying lengths helps the bees to orientate to their particular nest as it creates a three dimensional face to the hotel. From these humble beginnings, your imagination can run riot, and your bee hotels can expand from the simple "B and B" to an edifice like the grand construction shown at the top of the page. Don't feel restricted to garden canes; any stem or branch with a pithy centre will suffice as some species will even excavate the centre and then nest in the new cavity they have dug



A deluxe bee hotel fitted to the wall of a house



Construction and Maintenance

There are only really three rules regarding solitary bee nest construction:

- 1) Please **don't use plastic straws**
- 2) Fix firmly so the nest does not move around
- 3) The nest entrance **must face south or east** to get the early morning sun.

As with any hotel, maintenance is important, and in time you will need to renew some of the nesting materials. This can also have a significant impact on parasite populations, leading to a healthier stock of bees in your hotel.



A female *Osmia rufa* bringing mud back to a bee hotel

Hymettus Ltd is the premier source of advice on the conservation of bees, wasps and ants within Great Britain and Ireland.

<http://hymettus.org.uk/>

BWARS, The Bees Wasps & Ants Recording Society is the national recording scheme which provides the only source of fully validated data on the UK bee, wasp & ant fauna.

<http://www.bwars.com/>

For further information:

contact: [redbeehive\[at\]btopenworld.com](mailto:redbeehive[at]btopenworld.com)

Photos: S.P.M. Roberts, L. Hislop, R. Dean, A.J Bates