



Bees

In certain circumstances the law does allow pest controllers to destroy bees, however, this should be a last resort. In most cases bees pose little danger and should be left alone.

What do they look like?

Bees can be easily mistaken for wasps but the colours of a wasp are bright yellow and black stripes whereas the bee's colours are duller. The bee's body is more furry than the wasps and little yellow pollen sacs are usually visible on the hind limbs. There are many different kinds of bees:



Masonry / Sand Bees: These burrow into soft mortar or soil and lay a single egg at the end of each hole. They do not form large colonies. They cause relatively little damage and are unlikely to sting. We recommend that they are left alone, but that damaged mortar is re-pointed in autumn / winter.

Bumble Bees: These are quite large (up to 30mm) but there can be a variety of sizes within a colony. They generally nest below ground, using old mouse holes. They occasionally nest in a bird box or shed and are sometimes found in compost bins or compost heaps etc. A nest may contain between 100 and 200 bees but there are usually about 50 - 80. They rarely sting – unless when severely provoked and are a beneficial insect. General advice should be to 'leave them alone'. Find out more about bumblebees at <http://bumblebeeconservation.org/>



Honeybees: These are important pollinators and should not be killed unless essential for public safety. They can form large nests within cavity walls, lofts, sheds hedges and trees etc. A colony can have up to 40,000 bees and a swarm can contain up to 20,000 bees. See below for more information about 'honeybee swarms'

Honey and bumble bees cause no damage in the garden, they are vital pollinators for insect pollinated fruit and vegetables. Find out more about honeybees at <http://www.bbka.org.uk/>



The British Beekeepers Association

When are they active, and what else needs to be done?

Wasps and bumble bees are seasonal insects in so far as when the first frost arrives the colonies die but honey bee colonies continue to live throughout the winter. It may be necessary to remove honey bee comb from your property as walls can become stained and the wax can burn.

Once established in a property none of the above insects are likely to just "go away". If nests are built in a chimney or gas vent it is essential that the nest is fully removed. Contact a chimney sweep or a gas engineer if the nest is in the vent to a gas appliance, and do not use the appliance until it has been confirmed to be safe.

Bees will not normally sting unless they perceive a severe threat to the colony. Once a bee has stung it dies.

Honeybee Swarms

Only Honeybees swarm. This is a natural process where a queen leaves a colony and her followers mass around her. It typically occurs during very hot weather at the beginning of summer (May-June). Swarms occur where a colony of bees produces more than one queen, the colony then splits and one of the queens leaves the hive along with her workers to find a suitable site to create a new colony.

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If you have a swarm of bees on your property it is best and safest to **leave them alone** and seek some expert advice from a beekeeper or Pest Control or look at the following BBKA link for more information and advice http://www.bbka.org.uk/files/library/bees_in_buildings_1337961053.pdf.

If a swarm has settled for more than a couple of hours, and is in an accessible location, you can contact a beekeeper who will often come and remove the swarm for you. A list of local beekeepers can be found via the BBKA website at http://www.bbka.org.uk/help/do_you_have_a_swarm.php.

Beekeepers do not work for the Borough Council, and are not obliged to respond. Any arrangement you make with them is a private agreement. They may make a charge for their time and travelling expenses.

If the swarm is not easily accessible, or no beekeeper is available the Borough Council may be able to assist. The Authority is unable to 'collect' bees and can only use a chemical to destroy them. The council is reluctant to carry out control measures for bees on environmental grounds. **We have a policy to only destroy bees in extreme circumstances.** We charge to attend / treat. Our contact details are shown below.

What to do if you are Stung

- Some people (about 3 in 100) are strongly allergic to bites and stings and can be very ill. Most people who have an allergic reaction have been stung before without an allergic reaction. Some people never have another allergic reaction again after their first. This is why they are almost impossible to predict.
- **Remove the sting if it has been left**
 - Wash the area with soap and water.
 - Put a cold flannel on the area.
 - Raise the part of the body that has been stung to prevent swelling.
 - Use a spray or cream containing local anaesthetic or antihistamine on the area to stop the itching and swelling.
 - Take painkillers, such as paracetamol if it is very painful.
 - Do not scratch the area as it may become infected.
- **If you experience swelling or itching anywhere else on the body immediately after being stung, wheezing, headache, feeling sick, fast heart rate, feeling faint, difficulty swallowing, or a swollen face or mouth, you may need emergency treatment. Call 999 for an ambulance immediately as you may be having a generalised allergic reaction and this can be fatal.**
- Although itchy and sometimes painful they are rarely dangerous and need only some antihistamine or local anaesthetic cream from your pharmacist. Ask your pharmacist for advice. Bites can become infected by scratching.
- The redness and swelling are usually due to the allergy rather than an infection. Antibiotics are rarely needed in the first 48 hours.
- **Call your doctor if the symptoms will not go away or if you are stung in the mouth, around the throat or receive multiple stings.**
- **Contact NHS 111 if you require further advice about aftercare.**

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