

Native Bees of South Australia

Native bees aren't aggressive and some of them aren't even capable of stinging you.
There are seven species of native bees found on the South Australian mainland.

Reed Bees *Exoneura* and *Braunsapis*

Reed Bees are slender black bees less than 8 mm long. Some species have a red abdomen. They nest inside dry



pithy twigs

Many of the slender Reed Bees have a yellow patch on their face.

Teddy Bear Bees *Amegilla* (*Asaropoda*)

Most species of these rotund furry brown bees are 7 - 15 mm long. They build shallow nest burrows in soft soil and sometimes nest underneath houses.



A chubby Teddy Bear Bee with a thick brown fur coat.

Blue Banded Bees *Amegilla*

(15 Australian species)

These bees (mostly 8-13 mm long), have glittering stripes of blue or whitish hair across their black abdomens. They build nests in shallow burrows in the ground but they may also nest in mudbrick houses or in soft mortar.



Homalictus Bees *Homalictus*

Most less than 8 mm long, they come in a dazzling array of colours. Homalictus Bees dig intricate branching nests in the ground. Many females may live together in each nest, taking turns to guard the narrow nest entrance.



Leafcutter Bees *Megachile*

(About 40 Australian species) Beewatchers often first discover these amazing 6 - 15 mm long bees when they notice rows of neat circular cuts on the edges of some leaves in their garden. Leafcutters use the disks of leaf as a nest building material. They particularly like the soft leaves of roses, Bauhinia and Buddleia.



Masked Bees *Amphylaeus*, *Hylaeus* and *Meroglossa*

These slender black bees, generally less than 10 mm long, have pale markings on their faces. Masked Bees have very little hair and carry pollen to their nests by swallowing it. They nest in pithy stems or pre-existing holes in wood. Masked Bees weave their brood cells from an amazing cellophane-like secretion.



Resin Bees *Megachile*,

Resin Bees come in many colours and sizes. There are large black 14 mm bees with white tufts of hair, and small 8 mm black bees with bright orange abdomens. They nest in pre-existing holes or gaps in timber or stonework. They collect resins and gums to build partitions between their brood cells and to seal their nest holes.



The information on this page come from the **Aussie Bee** website (Aussiebee.com.au.) A comprehensive and excellent source of information on Australian native bees.

*This information sheet produced by:
The Friends of the Urrbrae Wetland*

Encourage native bees to visit your garden by taking these simple steps. Your plants will thank you for it.

From: "How to attract native bees to your garden" – environment.sa.gov.au

All the South Australian native bees are solitary – they live on their own. There are no social/community native bees in South Australia

Native bees play an important role in the environment. You probably know that honey bees help pollinate our plants but did you know that there are some native plants that they can't pollinate?

This is where native bees come in. Many of our native bees are able to buzz pollinate, which honey bees can't do, and it's this type of pollination that's required by some of our native plants.

Buzz pollination basically involves creating a vibration in the flower of the plant so that it will release its pollen. The blue-banded bee is one of these buzz pollinators. They can also improve tomatoe pollination in the vegie patch

Encouraging native bees to your garden

There's lots you can do to entice native bees to your garden:

Choose flowers that native bees would choose.

Native bees prefer native plants, but they won't wait around until your garden is in flower. Bees need pollen and nectar to live, and if they can't find flowers in your garden, they won't settle in. Some bees begin foraging as soon as spring arrives, while resin bees and leafcutter bees often become active in summer.

Plant a variety of locally native plants that provide flowers from early spring to late autumn, and you'll keep native bees happy all year.

Don't use insecticides

If you want to encourage bees to visit, don't use insecticides, especially systemic insecticides. Systemic insecticides are essentially taken up by the plant roots and then move all the way up to the rest of the plant. The insecticide stays in the plant for a long time, which means pollen and nectar are poisonous for weeks, or even months, after application. You might wind up accidentally killing the native bees visiting your garden.

Other types of insecticides are 'contact' and 'ingested' insecticides, which basically work as their names suggest – to be effective they either need to make contact with their target or need to be swallowed/absorbed.

Give native bees somewhere to live

Some native bees like to make their homes in the ground – that's right, some bees burrow! Other bees live in wood or crevices between rocks.

To appeal to those that live in soil, leave some **bare** ground. That means leaving some areas with no mulch.

You could also create a bee hotel for your new friends. A bee hotel is basically just the term for man-made homes for bees, which can be as simple as a few holes drilled into wood or paper straws in a piece of pipe. You might like to get involved in native bee 'n' bug hotel projects, run by the government and various city councils. It's all part of the shared vision of improving the River Torrens from the foothills to the sea.

For more information see: Aussiebees.com.au; sophiespatch.com.au; naturalresources.sa.gov.au