



The Big Six - Common Bumblebees Found in Gardens

Buff-tailed bumblebee, *Bombus terrestris*

Queens very large and common in early spring. Workers have largely white tail, but usually with a hint of buff at the front margin. Yellow bands slightly darker/dirtier than in the white-tailed bumblebee

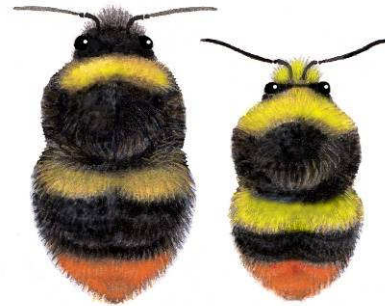


Queen

Worker
(male similar)

Early bumblebee, *Bombus pratorum*

A small bee, often nesting in tit-boxes. The yellow band on the abdomen is sometimes missing in females. Colonies are very short-lived, producing males as early as April. Rarely seen from July onwards



Queen

Male

Common carder bee, *Bombus pascuorum*

Abundant everywhere, the only common all-brown bumblebee. Can generally be distinguished from the much rarer brown-banded carder by the presence of some black hairs on the sides of the abdomen



Queen

White-tailed bumblebee, *Bombus lucorum*

A common bee, often nesting under garden sheds. Distinguished from the similar buff-tailed bumblebee by pure-white tails and lemon yellow bands

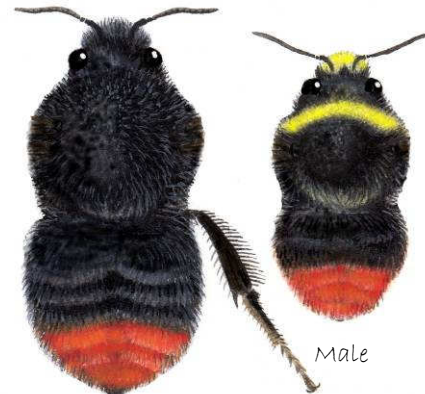


Queen

Male

Red-tailed bumblebee, *Bombus lapidarius*

Very common on chalk downland, frequent in gardens. Distinguish from the much rarer red-shanked carder bee by black hairs of pollen basket on hind legs

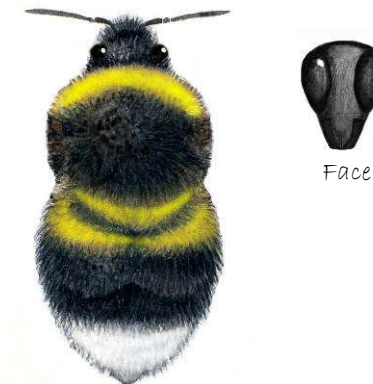


Queen

Male

Garden bumblebee, *Bombus hortorum*

A very long-tongued species preferring deep flowers (e.g. foxgloves, *Delphinium*, honeysuckle). Distinguished from the generally smaller heath bumblebee by much longer face when viewed from the front.



Queen

Face





Rarer species sometimes found in gardens

Heath bumblebee, *Bombus jonellus*

A small bee, found on mountains, moorland, lowland heaths and sometimes in gardens. Distinguished from (larger) garden bumblebee by short heart-shaped face when viewed from front. Short tongued, preferring shallow flowers such as heather (ling) and cotoneaster.



Queen

Tree bumblebee, *Bombus hypnorum*

Colonised the UK only in 2001. Very distinctive colouration. Becoming common in gardens in the south of England but is spreading north. Prefers to nest in holes in trees.



Queen

Blaeberry bumblebee, *Bombus monticola*

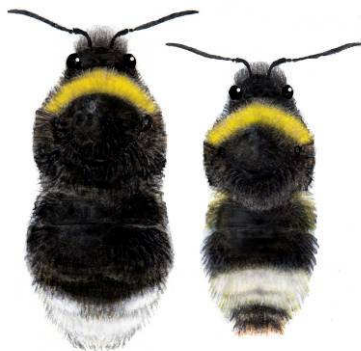
Easily recognised by the extensive red on the abdomen. A montane species, found on moorland, in open forest and also visiting lowland meadows. Feeds predominantly on blaeberry, heaths, ling and white clover.



Queen

Forest cuckoo bumblebee, *Bombus sylvestris*.

Widespread throughout UK. Attacks nests of early bumblebees. Males have distinctive reddish tip to abdomen.



Female

Male

Field cuckoo bumblebee, *Bombus campestris*

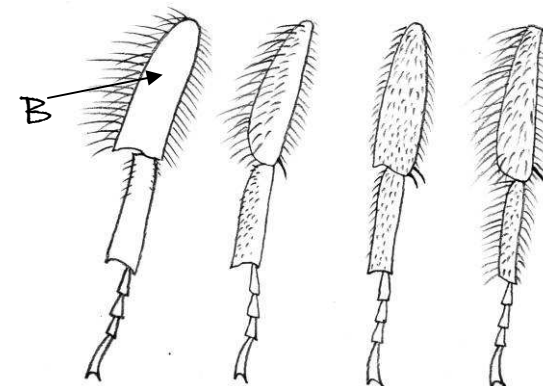
Widespread and more abundant in the south. Attacks nests of common carder bees. Males sometimes entirely black, distinguished from male ruderal bumblebees (dark form) by much shorter face.



Female

Male

Note that female 'true' bumblebees have pollen baskets (B) – a concave area on the hind leg that is surrounded by long hairs and is used to carry pollen. cuckoo bumblebees do not have pollen baskets on their hind legs - the area is convex and covered in short hairs.



♀ bumblebee ♂ bumblebee ♀ cuckoo ♂ cuckoo

