



A BEE Smart Club™

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BEE Smart™ DIGEST: COMMON MYTHS ABOUT BEES

Excepts From Reader's Digest, Unless Otherwise Indicated:

<http://www.readersdigest.ca/home-garden/gardening/5-myths-and-truth-about-bees/2/>

There are almost 20,000 known species of bee. Most of them do not fit the traditional view of what a bee can do and some of them fit none of the archetypes people will normally think of when they think of bees. Discover some of the most common myths about bees and see how you can help them.

Bee Myth #1: ALL BEES MAKE HONEY

Only **honey bees** and **stingless bees** make enough honey to make it worthwhile for us to raid their food stores. There are less than ten species of honey bee and less than 450 species of stingless honey bee. Bumble bees, another approximately 260 species, may have a teaspoon or two of honey in their nests. So, overall, **less than 5% of bee species make honey.**

Bee Myth #2: ALL BEES STING

The sting is a modified egg-laying apparatus. Consequently, only female bees can have the necessary equipment to sting. But even the **females of many bee species cannot sting.** In most of the bees that do not sting, the sting apparatus is mostly still present, but it does not work. In a few instances most of the sting apparatus has disappeared altogether.

Male bees, called drones, are stingless. <http://www.honey.com/honey-at-home/learn-about-honey/honey-bees-and-pollination/>

Bee Myth #3: BEES LIVE IN COMPLEX SOCIETIES

Honey bees and stingless bees live in perennial societies with a complex division of labour. Not only do they have queens and workers, but workers are often specialized to perform specific tasks such as looking after the young, ejecting the dead or defending the nest.

Some other bees have smaller, simpler societies that rarely last for more than one summer. Bumble bees and some sweat bees are examples of such short-lived social groupings.

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Most bees are solitary: a single female constructs a nest, collects enough food for the complete development of an offspring, lays an egg on the food mass and then repeats the foraging and egg-laying again and again. The social interactions of most bees are limited to mating and laying eggs. Ninety percent of bee species are not very social at all.

Bee Myth #4: BEES LIVE IN HIVES

Only **the advanced social bees** can be said to live in a hive. As most bee species are solitary, most bees do not live in hives. Most bees nest solitarily in burrows in the ground; some make their nests in abandoned beetle burrows in wood, or in hollowed out pithy stems. Some make their nests out of mud or resin and place their brood cells on hard surfaces.

Bee Myth #5: BEES WORK HARD

The statement “busy as a bee” is certainly true of honey, bumble and stingless honey bee workers. Male bees do little or no work in the nest and females of most solitary bees may work for only a couple of weeks. Individuals of some bee species do no nest construction and collect no food. These are the cuckoo bees that lay their eggs in the nests of other bee species. There are also socially parasitic bees that invade the nests of social bees and replace the queen, using the deposed monarch's daughters as slaves to rear their offspring.

Bee Myth #6: BEE STING ARE COMMONLY FATAL

If you're not allergic to bee stings, the average person can tolerate 10 stings per one pound of body weight. Most adults can tolerate more than 1,000 stings. 500 stings may be fatal for children. **Source: The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy**

Bee stings can be deadly to people who are allergic to them. However, fatal bee stings are very rare. From 1999 to 2007, the Centers for Disease Control reported 509 deaths from wasps, hornets or bees stings, and fewer than 1 percent of children and 3 percent of adults are prone to anaphylaxis, the often deadly allergic reaction some experience in response to a sting. **Source: Centers for Disease Control**

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