

Providing For Cavity-Nesting Bees in the Garden

Thirty percent of California's native bee fauna are solitary bees that nest above ground. These bees are referred to as *cavity-nesting*, since they lay their eggs in twigs, abandoned beetle galleries, and other tree cavities.



How do I use a bee house?

- The back of the house should be solid so that no light enters. The house entrance should be shaded and the house secured so it does not move.
- The entrance should face away from the prevailing wind
- To prevent disease, the tubes should be replaced once the fill has been chewed open (photo, right, at arrow). This indicates that the bees developing in the tube have matured and left.



How does a bee house work?

- An egg is laid in the cavity and provisioned with pollen and nectar that will be food for the developing bee; the egg is then covered with protective material. The material varies with bee species, but mud or leaves are common (photo, right, shows a cross-section of a nest with leaf pieces).
- This is repeated to fill the nest. The bees develop to adulthood and chew their way out.



Can I make my own bee house?

- Bee blocks can be drilled in untreated lumber. Holes should be 4 to 6 inches deep and 3/16, 4/16, and 5/16 inches across.
- Wood is the material most likely to be used by bees

What should I look for at my bee house?

- A bee entering a cavity with a load of pollen (photo, right, at arrow)
- The bees that use these nests carry pollen on the underside of the abdomen; look carefully and you'll see her abdomen is yellow with pollen. Bees will enter the tube repeatedly with loads of pollen, nectar, and nest material.

