

WHERE DO BEES GO IN WINTER?

Spring is beginning. Plants are unfurling their leaves. Some plants are in bloom. And we see bees. Bumblebees are among the first bees we usually see. (This year the first bee I saw was a honeybee on a crocus in early March.) If one watches you will see solitary bees such as mining bees (*Andrena* is one of the largest bee genera.) Mining bees are smaller than honeybees. They have a stout body. They seldom sting. They are solitary bees and love well-drained soils for nesting.

The many species of solitary bees that are emerging spent the winter either as pupae or as adults under ground or in cavities in plants. (Watch for mason bees in late April or early May.)

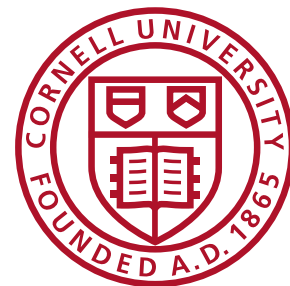
Bumblebees lived in small colonies which got up to about 100 bees last summer. At the end of the season most died. Only the mated queens hibernated. Now the queens have woken up and are looking for a new place (holes in the ground) to start new colonies.

Honeybees spent their winter in hives in a cluster to keep warm. Those who overwintered are dying out and are being replaced by new honeybees. The queen began laying eggs again in February!

As gardeners we need to be aware of the needs of bees and other pollinators. Give the bees some bare ground where they can dig. Don't be over tidy in your garden! Keep some broken twigs or stems with pith around. And.....grow plants that produce nectar and pollen!



Image by Art Tower



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