



# The buzz about bees

## Australian bees

Australia has over 1,500 species of native bees that have evolved side by side with Australian plants. Most native bees don't sting, and others are too tiny to have much of a sting for people. Native bees can be just 2mms long.

## Native bees

Blue banded bees and teddy bear bees live in Victoria. They use special 'buzz pollination' with their wings to shake out pollen from a flower.

## Blue banded bees

Blue banded bees are beautiful native bees. They are about 1cm long and have bands of metallic blue fur across their black tummies. Blue Banded Bees are solitary. Each female builds a nest in a shallow burrow in clay soil or mudbricks.

## We need bees

Bees provide people with more than just honey. Without honeybees, we cannot grow apples, blueberries, carrots, strawberries, or almonds! Help our bees by giving them native plants for habitat and avoiding any chemicals or pesticides. Honeybees help pollinate around one in every three mouthfuls of food we eat.

## How do bees feed?

Most bees feed on pollen or nectar. Bees land on flowers and pollen sticks on their legs or 'pollen baskets'. Honeybees store pollen in their hive, making a 'bee bread' that lasts through winter.

## Where do bees live?

While honeybees live in a hive, many bees live alone. Solitary bees can be found in holes, hollows or burrows in wood or soil, or rock or in plant stems

## Bees in the heat

On a hot day, some honeybees fan the nest, and some 'water collector' bees fill their bellies with water, fly back home, then squirt the liquid at other bees and the hive to cool the colony down! Help bees by putting out shallow dishes of water in the shade. Add sticks and pebbles to ensure they can climb out.



## Pollination

Bees move pollen from flower to flower. The wind cannot pollinate all plants – some native plants only survive because native bees help fertilise them!

## Pollinating our food crops

Most Australian crops are pollinated by the Honeybee. However, native bees also help. Stingless Bees are good pollinators of macadamias and Blue Banded Bees pollinate greenhouse tomatoes.

## Great gardeners

Native bees don't just pollinate native plants – they are excellent for your backyard veggie gardens too!

## Making honey

Honeybees swallow extra nectar to bring back to their hive. The nectar is then passed from bee to bee. Their enzymes turn the plant sugar into honey, which they store for winter.

## Citizen science

You can be a 'citizen scientist' and record bees you see at <https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/>. You can do this from your own back yard with your family members, or at school with your teacher or other students.

