

Ireland's Common Bumblebees

Ireland has 21 species of bumblebee. Fifteen are true bumblebees, and six are cuckoo bees.

Here we show you how to identify seven of the commonest and most widespread species - the ones that you are likely to meet in your garden.

The pictures show females (queens or workers). Be warned, males may look very different.

Only mated queens overwinter to start a new colony in the spring. The nest is usually underground. The queen raises the first brood of workers. Then the queen stays in the nest laying eggs while the workers forage for food.



Buff-Tailed Bumblebee,
Bombus terrestris

A large species, with one orange-yellow band on the thorax, and one on the abdomen. Tail may be buff or off-white.



White-Tailed Bumblebee,
Bombus lucorum agg.

Tail white. One lemon-yellow band on the thorax, and one on the abdomen. A complex of three identical species that can only be separated by DNA analysis.



Early Bumblebee, *Bombus pratorum*

Workers are very small. Red tail. One yellow stripe on the thorax. One yellow stripe on the abdomen, although this is sometimes absent.



Garden Bumblebee,
Bombus hortorum

Tail white. Two yellow bands on the thorax, and one on the abdomen. The face is long. A very similar species, the Heath Bumblebee, *Bombus jonellus*, has a short face. (Not illustrated.)



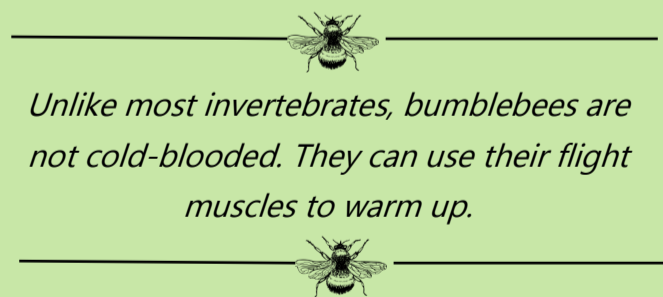
Common Carder Bee,
Bombus pascuorum

A variable species, but always with a ginger thorax and tail, and some black hairs on the abdomen.



Red-Tailed Bumblebee, *Bombus lapidarius*

Red tail and a black body.



Forest Cuckoo Bee, *Bombus sylvestris*

White tail. One yellow band on the thorax and none on the abdomen.

This is the commonest of the Cuckoo bees. Cuckoos take over a true bumblebee nest, killing the queen, and forcing the workers to raise the young cuckoos.



Unlike honeybees, bumblebees do not store food, so they are always only a few days from starvation. You can help bees by growing suitable flowers and leaving wildflowers to flourish.

Only females bumblebees have a sting, but they are not aggressive and rarely use it.

For more information see www.pollinators.ie



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