



# BUMBLE BEE








Scientific family name: Apidae (bee) Genus: Bombus

**Description:** Bumblebees are the largest bee and range from 1.5 - 2.5 cm (about 0.6 to 1 inch) long. Their color is usually black with yellow or orange bands. They are round, fuzzy, and have short, stubby wings which they flap back and forth (rather than up and down). Bumblebees are generally very gentle; while only female bumblebees have stingers, they rarely sting unless they are disturbed. Unlike honeybees, they can sting repeatedly and do not die after they sting.

## FUN FACTS



-  There are over 250 species of bumblebees worldwide, 49 of which are native to the U.S.
-  Their colony size ranges from 50-400 bees. This is 1,000x smaller than honeybees, whose hives can contain up to 50,000 bees!
-  Only the queen bee survives through the winters. The worker bees' lifespan is only 28 days, making the colony "annual," or only surviving through one season.
-  During the winter, the queen bumblebee hibernates in the ground until spring arrives. She then spends the majority of a few weeks resting on the ground, in grasses and dead leaves, with intermittent short flights of 10-20 seconds until she can find a proper place to nest.
-  Bumblebees are one of the few insects that are able to generate body heat through thermoregulation. This means that they can fly in cooler temperatures as well as live at higher elevations and in more northern climates.

## HABITAT

The ideal bumblebee habitat must be fit for the queen to build her nest.

Colonies are often found near or under the ground in places such as rock piles, cavities in tree stumps, or even abandoned mouse holes. Native bunch grasses can also provide nesting sites and protection for the queen to overwinter.

## WHICH BEE IS WHICH?



Match each bee:  
1) Bumblebee \_\_\_\_  
2) Mason bee \_\_\_\_  
3) Honeybee \_\_\_\_  
Check your answers on the coloring page!



## FAVORITE COLORS

Like all bees, bumblebee vision includes the ultraviolet spectrum. They cannot perceive infrared or red, but they do favor blue, purple, pink, and yellow.

## FAVORITE PLANTS

Bumblebees feed on nectar and pollen from a variety of flowers, blooming shrubs, native plants, or agricultural crops such as:

- Spring: comfrey, hellebore, poppies, columbine
- Early/late summer: coneflowers, sunflowers, black-eyed susans, bee balm, gentian
- Fall: salvia, wild geranium, anemone, basil

## HELP BUMBLEBEES THRIVE

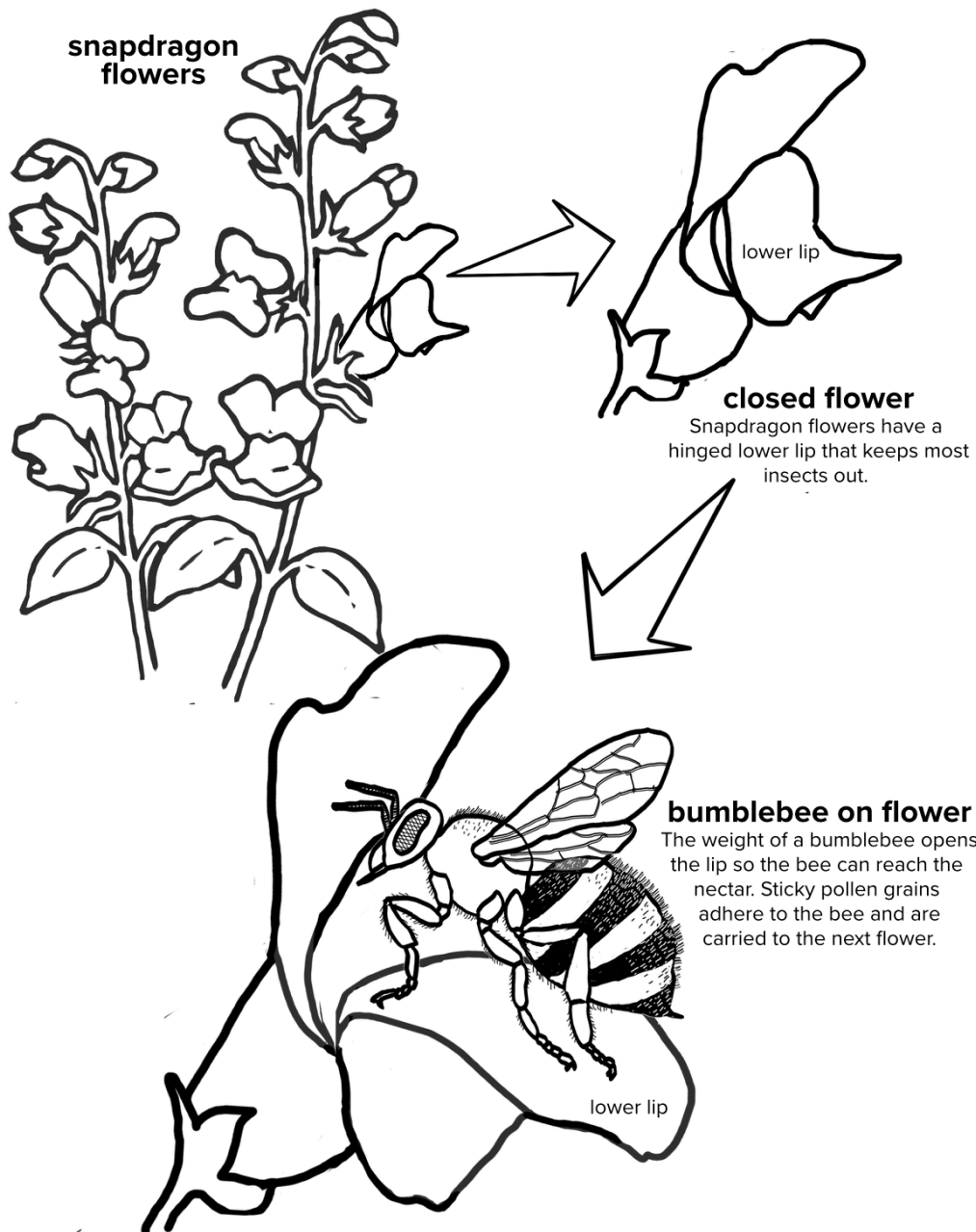
- Avoid using chemical pesticides and herbicides in your garden.
- Plant a variety of flowers that can provide blooms throughout the year.
- Reduce the amount of ground disturbance such as mowing or tilling during the spring.



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Bumblebees use "**buzz pollination**," a rapid vibrating motion which releases large amounts of pollen onto the bee, allowing them to pollinate a flower in a single visit. By contrast, a honeybee typically needs to visit a flower between 7-10 times before it is fully pollinated.



Which bee is which? Answer key: 1) b 2) c 3) a

