

Garden Bumblebee

Habitat Hero



Green-Schools

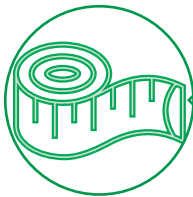
An Taisce



Common Name: Garden Bumblebee
Irish Name: Bumbóg Gáirdín
Scientific Name: *Bombus Hortorum*

Seen in Ireland:

February to October
 (and maybe some Queens will also appear out of hibernation in winter months, if the weather is very mild!)



A medium-large sized bumblebee, queens up to 18mm in length, and the males and workers are smaller in size.



This species of bumblebee is common and widespread in Ireland. It can be found in many habitats including gardens, school grounds and grasslands.



It has a long tongue that allows it to feed from long, tubular flowers, such as foxglove and honeysuckle. It will also visit red clover, vetches and nettles for nectar and pollen.



Bumblebee queens live for 1 year including the hibernation period. Normally bumblebee queens will die after 1 year but, some bumblebee queens can live for several years. Worker bees only live about four to six weeks, so they need to be replaced constantly.

Garden Bumblebee Life Cycle

All the bumblebees die before **Winter**, *except* the New (now mated) Queens, who go into hibernation!

The Queens come out of hibernation in early **Spring**, usually around February

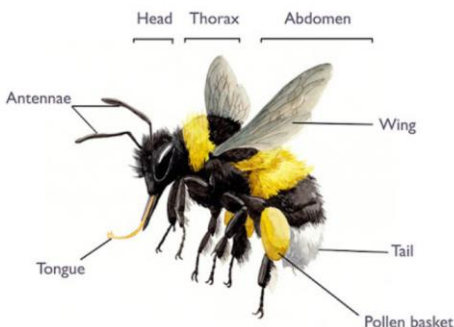
She then searches for a good nest site (usually this will be underground or in long grass) and for food.

By **mid-Spring** she has collected and stored nectar and pollen in her nest for her young, in the form of a 'nectar pot' and a 'pollen loaf'. She lays eggs.

The first eggs to hatch are worker bumblebees (all female!). Once strong enough, they take over the duties of the nest and rear all the other young.

Males and new Queens are born in **late summer**. They will breed with individuals from other colonies by **Autumn**.

The colony will grow to around 100 bees over the **summer**, as the Queen continues to lay eggs (still producing mostly worker bees at this stage).



Garden Bumblebee

Some more Facts:

- Garden Bumblebees are 1 of 21 bumblebee species in Ireland.
- The Garden Bumblebee is one of our six most common bumblebees.
- This bumblebee has a white tail, two yellow bands on its thorax, one on its abdomen, and it has a long face (its face is longer than it is broad).
- Remember! All female bumblebees have a sting. They are very mild mannered by nature, but if they get a fright, they will defend themselves! Ouch!
- If you're finding it hard to see a bee's features, it is safe to catch them with a butterfly net, and transfer to a glass jar, with a lid, for a minute or so. But be sure to put the bee back in the same place that you found it ASAP!
- There are just 21 species of Bumblebee in Ireland; only a few are common and widespread, and even fewer have a white tail! So, start by looking for a white tail!
- Only one other (the Heath Bumblebee) has the same pattern of yellow stripes and white tail, so you should have no trouble finding bees with this pattern near your school! The long face and tongue will confirm whether it is a Garden Bumblebee or the Heath Bumblebee.
- Enjoy all the bumblebees that you bumble into on your travels!
- Don't get too bogged down with identification; just record the colours and patterns of whatever ones you meet to see if you have a few different types at school

