

Creating nesting substrate for cavity-nesting bees

The **simplest nest** is a bundle of hollow and pithy stems. You can harvest long canes of bamboo, lantana, or other hollow or pithy stemmed weeds. You can also use the prunings from your garden. Just check the stems when you start tidying your garden to see if they have hollow or pithy centres.



Cut them to about 200 mm long, wire them together at each end, and hang them in a tree. These may attract reed bees and masked bees.

The **hardwood nesting block** can be hardwood or untreated pine (pine just won't last as long). This is drilled with a variety of different sized holes, between 3 and 8 mm in diameter. The longer you can drill the holes the better, but try to drill them to a depth of at least 100 mm. For the largest holes (6-8 mm) it is recommended that you use an 'auger' bit when working with hardwood. You can sand the block to make it less splintery and to remove rough bits from the entrance holes.



The block can then have a hole drilled through the top-back corner, to insert a wire and hang it from a tree or decking. It can also be free-standing, but not on the ground. These may attract reed bees, masked bees, resin bees, leafcutter bees, solitary wasps and ants.



A **mix of materials** is the most complex nest. First find or make a small box, at least 100 mm deep. Put a back on it made of plywood or fine mesh, to stop materials falling through. Cut 1-3 blocks of wood (not treated) to a length of 100 mm and drill with a variety of holes (as above). Cut hollow and/or pithy stems to fit the depth of the box. Bundle with wire or elastic bands, for ease of handling. Add layers of bark, gum nuts or rotten wood. Pack the box tightly with the materials, so the openings are facing out (for easy access and it looks good). Close the front of the box using wire mesh, with a gauge no smaller than 10 mm (to allow insects to enter), using a staple gun or tacks.

Hang the nest with hooks and wire or keep it as a free-standing nest, not on the ground. These may attract reed bees, masked bees, resin bees, leafcutter bees, solitary wasps, ants, ladybeetles, lace bugs and other pollinators.

It is recommended that nests be placed in a sunny position, to best attract the insects.

