

# Native Bee Nest Sculptures

Artist: Greg Corman - Tucson, AZ

Native bees are important pollinators who do their work with little notice while imported honeybees get all the attention. Many people are surprised to learn there are over 4,000 species of native bees in the US, and 1300 in Arizona. Tucson alone has 800 species! It is a biodiversity "hot spot" for bees.

Native bees are mostly solitary; they do not form hives and cannot hybridize with honeybees. These docile creatures nest in holes in the ground or in dead trees and visit cacti, wildflowers, trees, and shrubs for pollen and nectar. Unlike honeybees or "killer bees", they are unruffled by human presence and will sting only if caught -- and even then, the sting is mild.

The bee nest sculptures are drilled with small tunnels for use as nesting places by leafcutter, mason, and resin bees. A female bee makes a small leaf cell inside a tunnel and provisions it with pollen and nectar. She then lays an egg in the cell and seals it over. She repeats this process until the tunnel is full of cells, then covers the tunnel opening with chewed leaves, resin, or other materials. The eggs inside hatch, metamorphose into adult bees, and chew their way out of the tunnel, in order, the following year.

Why bee nest sculptures? They are a simple, artistic way to create nesting spaces that bees need in urban gardens. Normally, they'd find tunnels in dead trees, but we remove most dead trees from urban areas, and the bees go wanting for nest sites.

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