

A Bug's Life

Bumble bees

Family: Apidae; Genus: *Bombus* (20 bumble bee species in Nebraska)

Fun facts

- Common native bees
- Able to fly at cooler temperatures
- Large queens emerge in spring (April) to look for a suitable nest site
- Queen collects pollen and nectar to feed brood, which become workers
- Males produced later in summer
- Colonies are annual, die each winter
- Fertilized queens overwinter in underground burrows

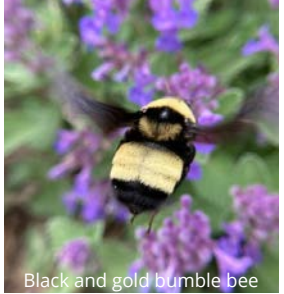
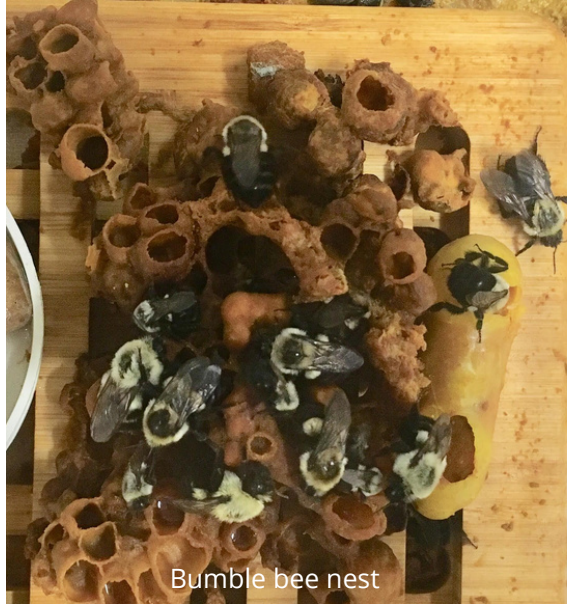
Identification

Bumble bee: Fuzzy, robust-bodied bees; striped black, yellow and/or brown; pollen baskets on hind legs

Nest: Queen constructs nest in underground cavity like abandoned rodent burrows. May also nest in compost piles, bird boxes, other vegetation or under sheds. Nest consists of disorganized, waxy honey pots

Management

- Bumble bees are important generalist pollinators able to "buzz pollinate"
- When possible, wait it out until winter
- If nest is threatened, bumble bees will sting in defense, can sting repeatedly
- Some nests can be relocated by an experienced person with safety gear
- If a bumble bee nest causes safety concerns and must be destroyed, consider calling a professional



Black and gold bumble bee



Brown-belted bumble bee



Common eastern bumble bee



Two-spotted bumble bee

Photos: J. Green