



Help a bee out – what you consider “messy” is crucial for wild, native bee survival in the winter.

Gardens provide critical habitats for wild bees that need a safe place to hibernate. Most native bees spend the winter in their nest cells as pupae, emerging as adults the following spring or summer. (see below)



🍂 Mess is best

Undisturbed patches of ground with leaf litter, standing dead twigs/stems, or other ground cover make great bee habitat. These “wild” or natural (e.g., not manicured) locations provide the protected nooks and crannies that pollinators and other animals need for survival.

Protecting nesting areas from disturbance is just as important in the fall and winter as during the nesting season. New queen bumble bees find their overwintering sites in the fall and burrow into small cavities just below the surface of the ground or in woodpiles, rock walls or sheds. This means any near surface disturbance such as mowing, tilling and planting can be disastrous.



🍂 Leave it tall in the fall

Throughout the summer and fall, some cavity nesting bees use hollow or pithy stems to lay their eggs. These are plants that should be left standing tall throughout the winter or be cut to no shorter than 20 cm. In spring, you can cut and leave plant stalks on the ground, providing extra weeks for the bees to emerge.



Example: *Sambucus nigra* (Elderberry)

Here’s a list of plants you should leave standing tall throughout the winter:

Pithy-stemmed Plants:

- Elderberry
- Raspberry
- Rose
- Sumac

Hollow-stemmed Plants:

- Cup Plant
- Sunflowers
- Goldenrod
- Echinacea
- Spotted Joe Pye Weed
- Swamp Milkweed
- Wild Bergamot



Courtesy of Credit Valley Conservation Authority