

Love Your Ground Nesting Bees
By Dolly Hunnell, Hillsborough Garden Club

It'll soon be springtime (Yes) with the return of birds and bees. Birds are always welcome but bees and wasps not so much.

Ground nesting bees which appear in the early spring are worrisome to many people when their nests of tiny dirt piles are found in our lawns BUT they provide many benefits, including pollination services.

Research shows that ground-nesting native bees such as mason bees, mining bees and bumblebees outperform honeybees in pollinating flowers and crops. Ground nesting bees are solitary. They build their nests in tiny patches of bare ground where they enter the soil. Female ground bees Do Not make hives like honeybees do but several females may nest in the same area.

Queen ground nesting bees Do Not defend their nests and are UNLIKELY to sting so do not fear them. Males frequent the area for mating purposes, BUT they lack a sting so are harmless.

The visible part of ground nesting bee nests consist of piles of soil less than 1" across. Your lawn may not look as perfect with these little spots, but they DO NOT harm the lawn or the soil. They actually assist your lawn in aerating it and allowing nutrients and water to enter. This is important since we have so much clay in our soil which inhibits drainage.

When summer arrives the ground bees are gone and the small holes fill as soil goes back on with rain.

If you must rid your lawn of these innocuous creatures, the best

solution is watering your lawn in early spring before they arrive. They need dry soil to make their underground homes.

To recap:

1. Ground bees are around for only a short time in early spring.
2. They don't sting or cause injury to your beautiful lawn or soil.
3. And they are excellent pollinators for your flowering perennials and vegetables.

Additional information:

<https://gardenerspath.com/how-to/animals-and-wildlife/ground-and-wood-nesting-bees/>

<https://entomology.cals.cornell.edu/extension/wild-pollinators/native-bees-your-backyard/>

<https://www.petnpat.com/ground-bees/>

<https://union.ces.ncsu.edu/2019/04/ground-nesting-bees/>

Buzzin' Around is an educational project of the Hillsborough Garden Club in support of Hillsborough as the 35th Bee City USA. Bee City USA[®] galvanizes communities to sustain pollinators responsible for 1 in 3 bites of food we eat and the reproduction of almost 90% of the world's flowering plant species – by providing them with healthy habitat, rich in a variety of native plants, and free to nearly free of pesticides. Bee City USA is an initiative of the Xerces Society. <https://www.beecityusa.org>.

For other gardening questions or to become a member of the Hillsborough Garden Club, please email us contact@hillsboroughgardenclubnc.org or visit our website at www.hillsboroughgardenclubnc.org. All gardeners or would-be gardeners are welcome.