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Know the Habitat on your Farm

In order to farm for crop pollinators, it is important to know the habitat on your farm. Native bees need both food and shelter—they eat only pollen and nectar and they nest in tunnels or in the ground. In the process of gathering pollen and nectar resources, bees move pollen from one flower to another, and thus pollinate your crops. Bees rely upon an abundance and variety of flowers, and need blooming plants throughout the growing season. Native bees don't build the wax or paper structures we associate with honey bees or wasps, but they do need places to nest, which vary depending on the species. Wood-nesting bees are solitary, often making individual nests in beetle tunnels in standing dead trees. Ground-nesting bees include solitary species that construct nest tunnels under the ground. Cavity-nesting social species—bumble bees—make use of small spaces, such as abandoned rodent burrows, wherever they can find them. Using the illustration below as a guide, look for areas on and around your land that can support native bees.



Illustration by Andrew Holder.

Hedgerows or Windbreaks

Riparian Buffers

Natural or Undeveloped Areas

Artificial Nests

Snags

Field and Road Borders

Cover Crops

Temporary Bee Pasture

Ponds and Ditches

Gardens

Fallow Fields

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Program Features

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Program Highlights

- [On-line presentation](#) on pollinator conservation basics in farm landscape
- The Xerces Society works with congressional staff to include [pollinators in the Farm Bill](#)
- Xerces organizes a [briefing to D.C. legislators](#) on honeybees, Colony Collapse Disorder and native pollinators
- The National Research Council issues a [report](#) on the Status of Pollinators in North America
- Agriculturally important [bumble bees in decline](#)

photo: long horned bee (*Melissodes* sp.) on sunflower by Mace Vaughan

