



Native Bee Nesting Blocks or “Bee Boards”

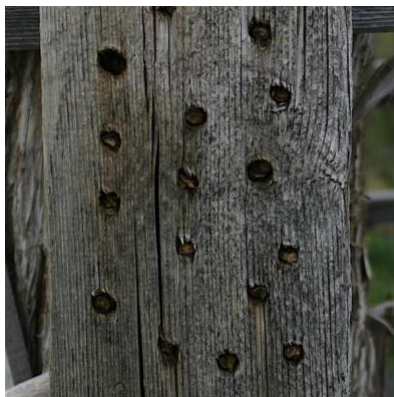
Encouraging native bee pollinators to your garden.

Jim Dyer

Why? According to the Xerces Society about a third of the 4000 species of native bees in North American make their nests in small tunnels like old insect holes in trees, hollow stems of dead plants – and in man-made tunnel nest blocks. Different bee species use holes of different diameters, so a variety of different hole sizes is good. These bees can help greatly with pollination, especially important since our domestic bees are in decline.

The problem with big nest blocks: Some people create blocks with dozens of holes, but my research leads me to the conclusion that creating an unnatural concentration of bees causes more disease problems for them. The maintenance of these larger nest blocks is [described in the link below](#), and includes such things as disinfection, using straws as inserts, and retiring nest blocks after two years.

A simple, more natural approach: From the alternatives suggested by the experts, I have chosen the most natural and simplest: several small nest blocks scattered around the garden to reduce concentrations of bees and made of thin wood so they will disintegrate over time, which reduces disease issues.



Installation: These nest blocks should face east or southeast for morning sun. Attach firmly to a post so the blocks do not move. From three to six feet off the ground is good, and sheltered from the worst weather is nice.

Provide nesting material: Make sure there is some water available and some dry soil so the bees can make their nests. Some of our native bee visitors covered their nest holes with elm tree seeds.

Make your own options:

1. Simply make several like this nest block with any non-treated wood with clean holes from 3/32 to 3/8 inch diameter, 3/4 inch apart or so, around 5 inches deep.
2. Drill holes in untreated fence posts, dead trees, or any untreated wood around the garden.
3. Bundle up hollow stems from teasel, bamboo, or reeds, etc., 6-8 inches long with a node closing it off on one end.
4. Leave piles of some similar plant and weed stems around the garden. The need for nest boxes is due in part to people removing most all natural dead vegetation, dead trees, etc. from their garden areas.
5. Build a big nest block with many holes, but [check the website below](#) for how to manage the diseases that can arise from unnaturally high population densities.



Enjoy: Sit in your garden on a sunny day and watch and listen to all the pollinators around – some of which may have been attracted by your bee boards.



Learn more: Go to: <http://www.xerces.org/fact-sheets> and look for:

- “Nests for Native Bees”
- “Tunnel Nests for Native Bees”