

The National Biodiversity Data Centre has set a challenge for farmers to record some of the amazing biodiversity found on your farm during the year. We have 40 species for you to record.

Are you up for the challenge?

## Species: Garden Bumblebee

Scientific Name: *Bombus hortorum*

Irish name: Bumbóg Gharraí Bheag

### Group

1 of 21 bumblebee species in Ireland. The Garden Bumblebee is one of our six most common bumblebees.

Check out our Bumblebee poster:

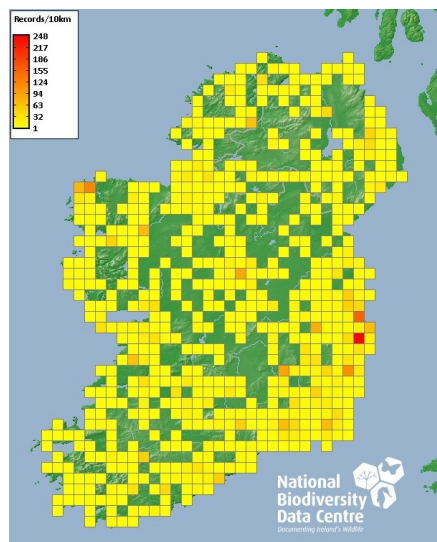
[https://pollinators.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/SE-29-NBDC-Bee-Poster-2019\\_EMAIL.pdf](https://pollinators.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/SE-29-NBDC-Bee-Poster-2019_EMAIL.pdf)

### How common on farms

Biodiversity surveys were carried out across 40 farms within the National Biodiversity Data Centre's 'Protecting Farmland Pollinators' EIP project (<https://biodiversityireland.ie/projects/protecting-farmland-pollinators/>). The 40 farms were chosen to reflect farms of differing types and intensity levels. The Garden Bumblebee was recorded on eighteen of the 40 farms.

### Distribution

Widespread and common.



Source: The Garden Bumblebee records as viewed on Biodiversity Maps,



Garden Bumblebee (Queen). Note: White tail. Two yellow bands on the thorax. Has a long face.

### Identification Tips

- A medium-large sized bumblebee, queens up to 18mm in length.
- White tail and two yellow bands on the thorax and one yellow band on the abdomen.
- Head significantly longer than wide when looked at face-on.
- Can be confused with the Heath Bumblebee as it has a similar pattern, but this species has a short, heart-shaped face.

### Biodiversity Tip No. 16

Clover is a great food supply for bumblebees.

They're also drought tolerant and low maintenance.

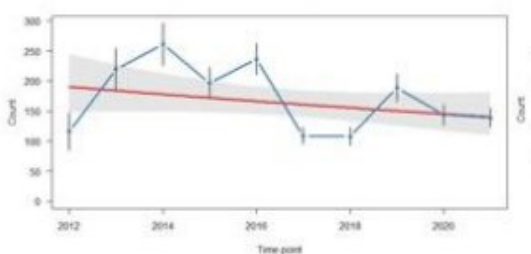


## Conservation Status

Red Lists are an internationally recognised methodology for assessing conservation status. An Irish Bee Red List was published in 2006. Based on the Red List the Garden Bumblebee is 'Least Concern'.

Data from the All-Ireland Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme (<https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/bumblebee-monitoring-scheme/>) suggest that the Garden Bumblebee numbers remains uncertain. Volunteers within this citizen science scheme have been helping assess changes in bumblebee abundance since 2012.

### *Bombus hortorum*



Source: Report on the All-Ireland Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme.

## Management Tips

### *Food for the Garden Bumblebee:*

On the farm:

- In spring encourage: clovers, dead-nettles, bluebells and Ground-ivy.
- Later in the season encourage: Honeysuckle, thistles and vetches.

Nest sites:

- Leave some tussocky grass and undisturbed areas around the farm.



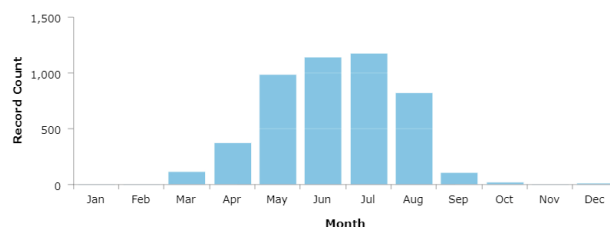
Garden Bumblebee feeding on Clover.

## When?

Flight period is March to October. Queens can appear by March, workers by late April and males by May.

The new mated queen will go into hibernation in by September.

### Records per month across all datasets



National Biodiversity Data Centre, Ireland, Garden Bumblebee (*Bombus hortorum*), image, accessed June 2023, [Small Garden Bumble Bee \(\*Bombus \(Megabombus\) hortorum\*\) - Detail - Biodiversity Maps](https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/small-garden-bumble-bee-bombus-megabombus-hortorum-detail-biodiversity-maps) ([biodiversityireland.ie](https://biodiversityireland.ie))

## Where on the farm?

Found in most habitats, hedges, field margins, non-farmed areas, meadows and pastures, woodland edges, glades, and gardens.

## Value

- Provides valuable 'pollination service'.
- Cross pollination of our wildflowers, helping them stay resilient and boosting their fruiting ability for wildlife and the next generation.
- Health and wellbeing: 'There's nothing better than hearing a bumblebee buzzing or watching it move from flower to flower while feeding. So, it's fair to say, it give us that 'feel-good' factor.



Garden Bumblebee (male), feeding on Common knapweed.

## Further Info

This distinctive bumblebee has the longest face and tongue of all the bumblebees. This allows it to forage on many long-tubed flowers including Honeysuckle and Foxglove.

Nests are small, with up to 100 workers. They usually made below ground in an old rodent nest but are sometimes on the surface among the leaf litter. They have also been found above ground in old birds' nests. A second generation is sometimes produced.

## Similar species

Can be confused with the Heath Bumblebee as it has a similar pattern, but this species has a short, heart-shaped face.

## Affected by a change in climate?

They may be affected by a change in flowering periods.

Bumblebees have become increasingly stressed by changes in climate over the past century.

Climate change may bring hotter and wetter years. Bees develop asymmetrical wings when they experience stress during development, and by examining a series of preserved specimens and their dates, scientists found bees showed higher levels of wing asymmetry in hotter and wetter years.

## Need some help with identification?

Just drop us a line, we'll be happy to help:  
[pollinators@biodiversityireland.ie](mailto:pollinators@biodiversityireland.ie)

## Useful Links

Try our free online course on how to identify common bumblebees. It includes activities and quizzes to test your progress, and get feedback on answers: <https://learn.biodiversityireland.ie/courses/commonbumblebees>

There are also other free resources here: <https://pollinators.ie/record-pollinators/id-guides/>

## Record here

Your records will help us build a picture of farmland biodiversity in Ireland. If you're happy with your Garden Bumblebee identification, you can submit your record:

- On our website at the National Biodiversity Data Centre: <https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/biodiversity-on-your-farm>

or

- You could also download our free smartphone App for recording in the field

*Android App:*

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=nbdc.mobile.biodiversity>

*iPhone App:*

<https://apps.apple.com/ie/app/biodiversity-data-capture/id906361120>

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