

Beyond the Drill Hole: Appreciating Carpenter Bees in the Landscape

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Few pollinators are as recognizable or as misunderstood as the carpenter bee. With their shiny black abdomens and powerful flight, these native bees are a familiar sight in Virginia gardens each spring. Yet many gardeners overlook the important role they play in supporting healthy landscapes.

Carpenter bees are highly effective pollinators of native wildflowers, flowering trees, shrubs, and many garden crops. As they move from bloom to bloom in search of nectar and pollen, they help plants reproduce, increasing seed production and supporting the food webs that sustain birds, butterflies, and other wildlife. They are also among the few bees capable of "buzz pollination," a remarkable technique in which they vibrate their flight muscles to release pollen from flowers. This specialized ability makes them especially valuable for plants such as tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, and many native species.

Unlike honeybees, carpenter bees are solitary insects. Each female creates and provisions her own nest rather than living in a colony. Their life cycle is closely tied to the natural rhythms of the landscape, with adults emerging in spring just as many plants begin to flower.

Carpenter bees also contribute to biodiversity. Their nesting sites may later be used by other native bees and beneficial insects, providing habitat that supports a variety of species.

By planting diverse native flowers that bloom from spring through fall, gardeners can help sustain carpenter bees and other pollinators throughout the growing season. The next time a carpenter bee visits your garden, take a moment to observe it. You are witnessing one of Virginia's most valuable native pollinators at work.



Photo via pixels - Gio Modzmana

Reference:

<https://www.extension.umd.edu/resource/meet-pollinator-carpenter-bee/>