

What is THAT Bee?

Common Bees of St. Louis



By Shutterbee

Notes and Acknowledgments

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Please send any comments, questions, or suggestions to nina.fogel@slu.edu or shutterbee@webster.edu. You can learn more about Shutterbee at www.shutterbee.net.

How to use this guide

This guide focuses on the more common groups found in the greater St. Louis City area based on the species list created for [A Checklist of the bees \(Hymenoptera: Apoidea\) of St. Louis, Missouri, USA](#). The list of possible groups may differ outside of the urban core. In general, the features highlighted within this guide are characteristic of females. Males may appear different.

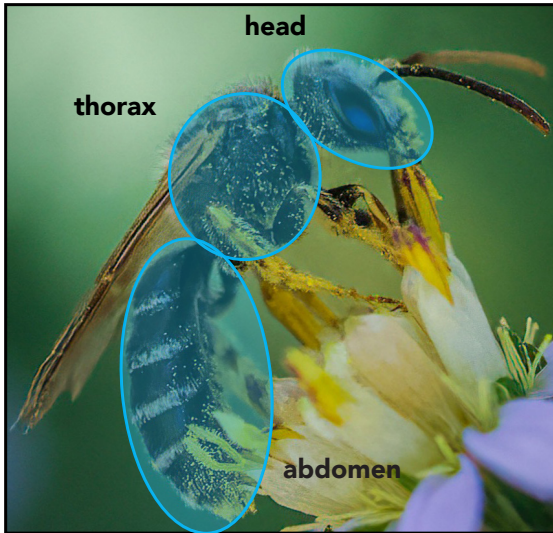
We start with some general taxonomic and anatomical terms that will help you use this guide. The decision tree will help you identify your bees, followed by pages for each group with more detailed information. The groups are first organized by size and then by defining features. The information on each group includes notes some defining features, typical body size, how common they are, when they are active (generally speaking), and some information about their life cycle or natural history.

If you are interested in learning more, we encourage you to check out our more detailed guide: A Shutterbee Guide to the Bees of St. Louis.

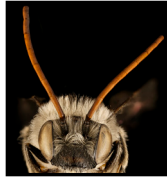
Photo credits

iNaturalist users: ceiseman, patsuttonwildlifegarden, rachelodman, codyh; flickr: Martin LaBar; James Faupel

Glossary of Anatomical Terms Used in this Guide



antennae are sensory organs on the head. Length can aid in identification



"bottlebrush legs" have long scopa that stick out at an angle from the leg similar to a bottle brush



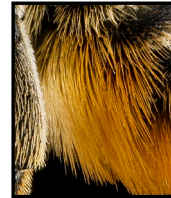
"eyebrows" (facial fovea) are hairy depressions along the compound eyes of some bees, such as female *Andrena* (pictured).



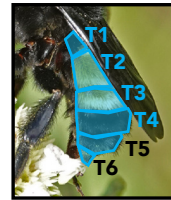
pollen baskets (corbiculae) are convex hairless parts of the hind leg surrounded by hair "combs" for packing pollen together; found in *Bombus* and *Apis*



scopa are specialized pollen collecting hairs on the thorax, abdomen or legs; usually densely arranged and branched



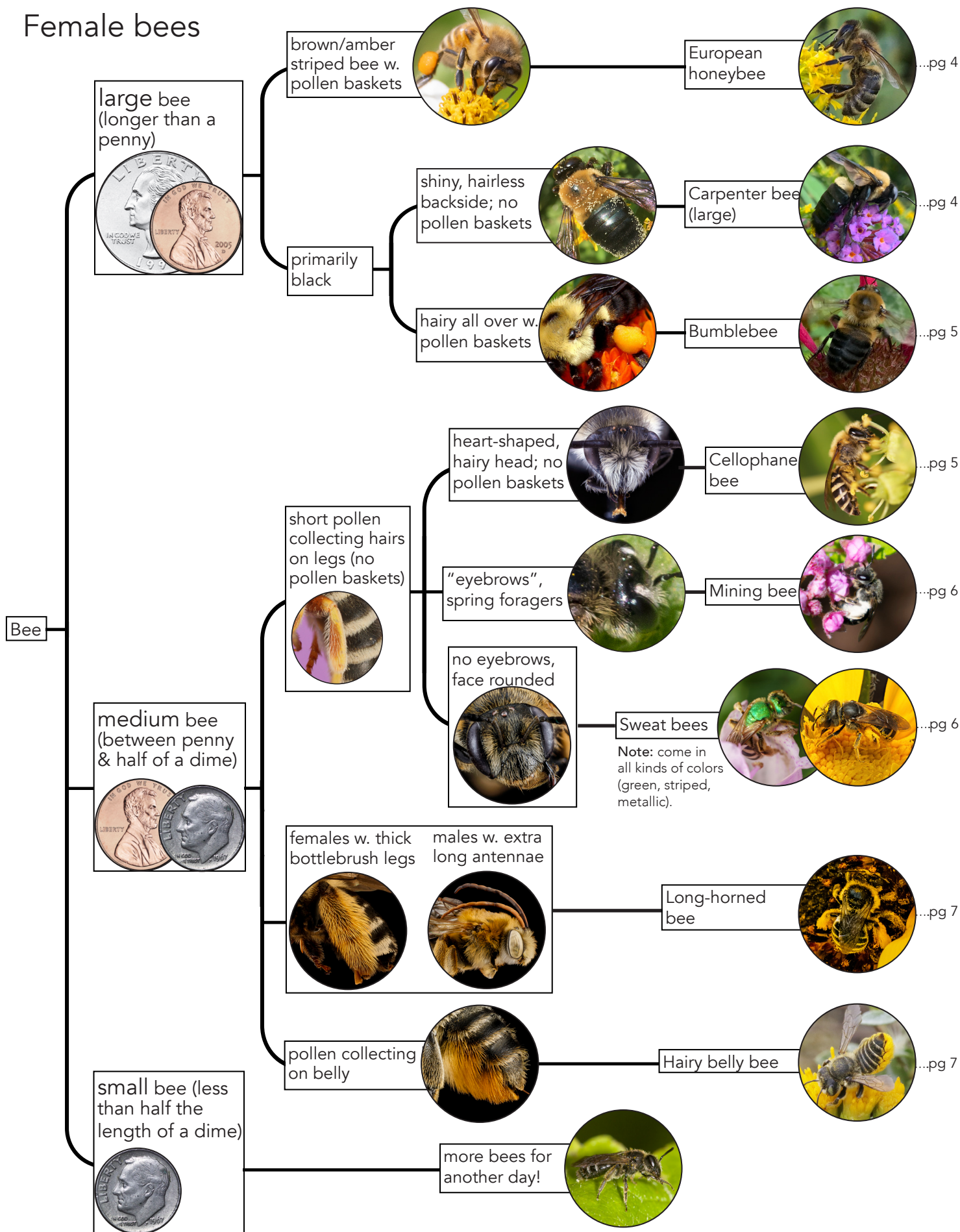
tergites are segments of the topside (dorsal) of the abdomen. Numbered 1 (closest to thorax) to 6 (closest to stinger)



Size Variation



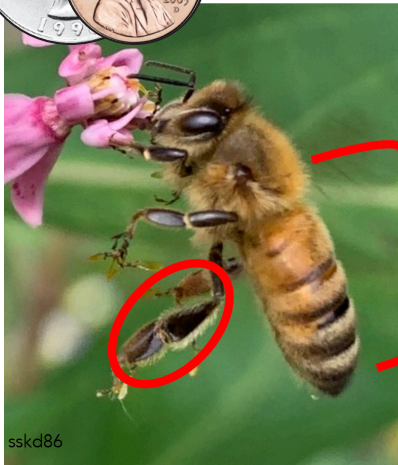
Female bees





European Honey Bee

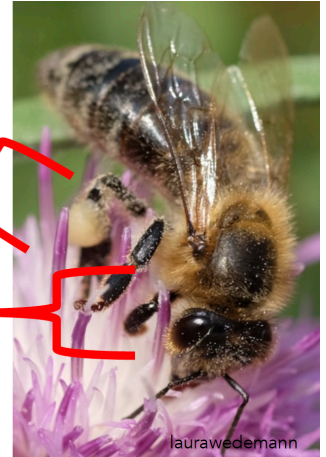
Apis mellifera



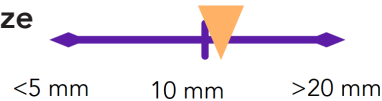
Variable-colored striped abdomen with short hairs

Pollen basket present. If no pollen, leg is triangular shaped (see left photo)

Large, hairy, dark-colored eyes



Size



Spring	Summer	Fall

Pollination: Almonds, grapes, carrots, herbs, berries.

Foraging: Generalists.

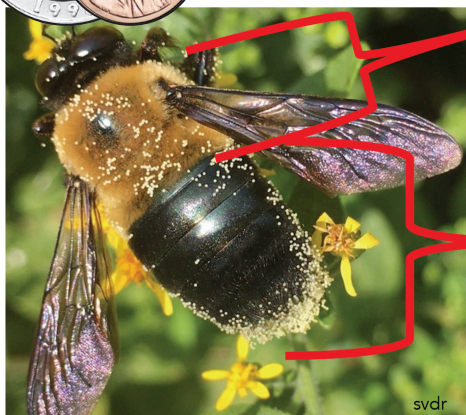
Nesting: Nest in man-made hives or existing holes in the ground, trees, etc. Large social colonies with thousands of worker bees.

Other fun facts: Not native. Brought to the U.S. by Europeans in the 17th century.



Eastern Carpenter Bee

Xylocopa virginica



Shiny, black hairless spot on their thorax

Shiny, black abdomen

Hairy legs (no pollen baskets)



Size



Spring	Summer	Fall

Pollination: Eggplant, passionflower, tomatos, melons

Foraging: Generalists.

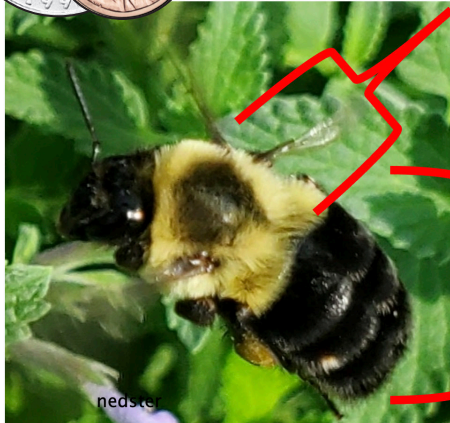
Nesting: Get their name from how they build their nests: a female will use their strong mandibles (bee jaws) to chew holes into wood! Usually solitary, but sometimes related females will nest together.

Other fun facts: When males find a good patch of flowers, they will protect it for the females by chasing away other bees.



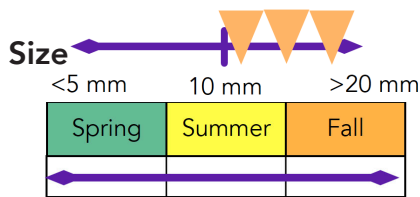
Bumble Bees

Genus *Bombus* Yellow, hairy thorax; some species have black hair as well



May have pollen packed into a ball on the side of the hind leg, known as a "pollen basket"

Black/yellow hairy abdomen (sometimes with brown hair)



Pollination: One of the few groups that can buzz pollinate, which is required for pollination of tomatoes, blueberries, peppers, and others.

Foraging: Generalists.

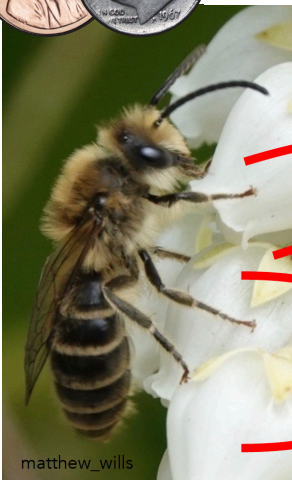
Nesting: Social species with colonies of hundreds of workers or fewer. Build hives in existing holes in the ground and trees.

Other fun facts: Unlike other bees, they can fly in colder temperatures, because they can warm themselves up by shivering!



Cellophane Bees

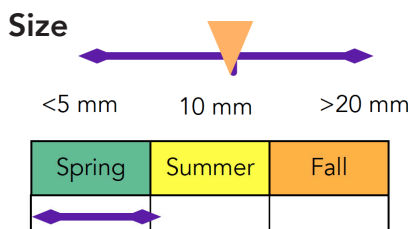
Genus *Colletes*



Very hairy thorax

Heart-ish shaped head (eyes curve along face)

Striped abdomen



Pollination: Apples, plums, peaches, and other spring flowering plants.

Foraging: Some are specialist; others are generalist.

Nesting: Nest alone or nearby one another (like an apartment complex) in the soil.

Other fun facts: They create a cellophane-like, water-proof material to line their nests, giving them their name.



Mining Bees

Genus *Andrena*



Hairy face. Females have "eyebrows," fuzzy patches of hair along their large eyes

Often striped and hairy. Body usually dark colored



Size



Spring	Summer	Fall
←→	←→	←→

few species in summer

Pollination: Apples, plums, peaches, and other spring flowering plants

Foraging: Most are specialists.

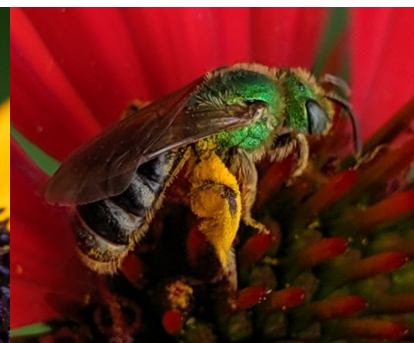
Nesting: Females create solitary nests. However, they will sometimes nest in groups (kind of like an apartment complex).

Other fun facts: Very diverse group with over 30 species in St. Louis City!

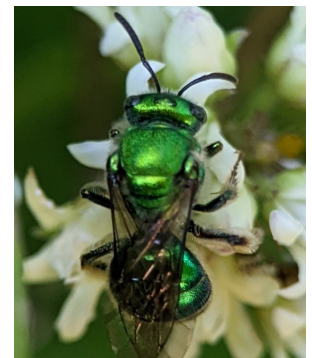


Sweat Bees

Family *Halictidae*



Variable in color; mostly distinguishable from other taxa by what they don't have!



Size



Spring	Summer	Fall
←→	←→	←→

Pollination: Melons, alfalfa (feed for dairy cows), eggplant, cotton

Foraging: Most are generalists.

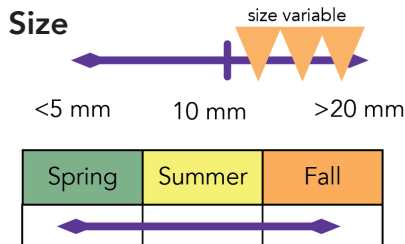
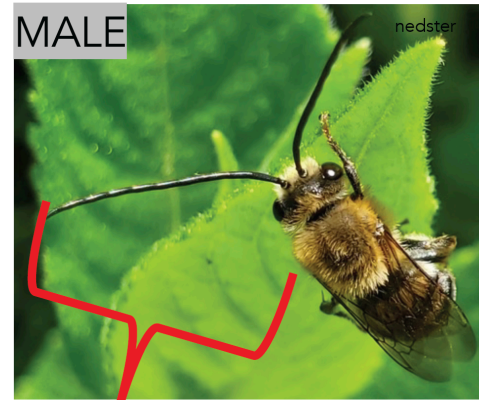
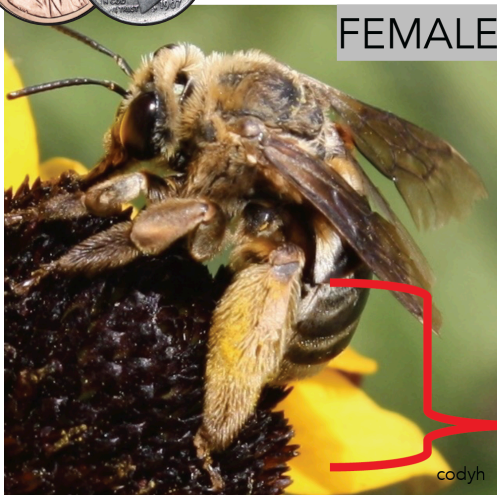
Nesting: Ground nesters that range from solitary to highly organized (social).

Other fun facts: Some collect the water and salts in our sweat, giving them their name. Think of your sweat as a sports beverage for bees.



Long-horned Bees

Tribe Eucerini



Pollination: Cucumbers, squash, sunflowers.

Foraging: Many are specialists; some are generalists.

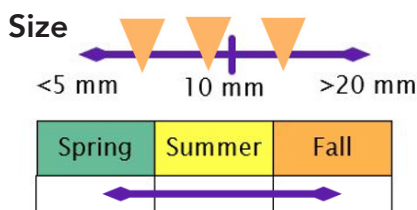
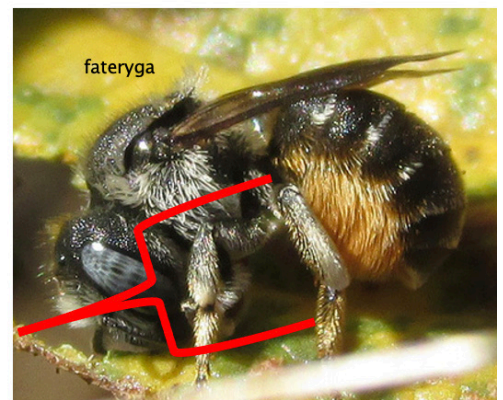
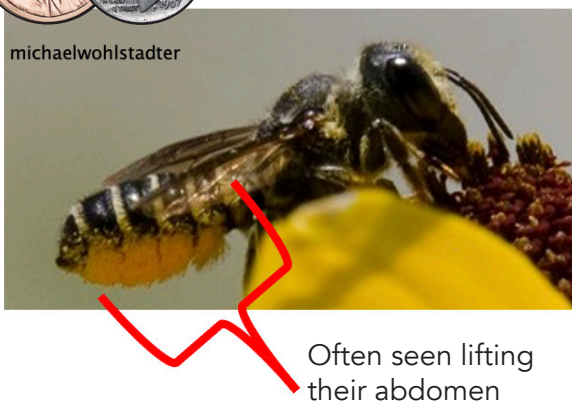
Nesting: Females create solitary nests. However, they will sometimes nest in groups (kind of like an apartment complex).

Other fun facts: Some species in this group are true "specialists". They will only visit certain types of plants, like sunflowers or asters.



Hairy Belly Bees

Family Megachilidae



Pollination: Clover and alfalfa (feed for dairy cows), cranberries, apples.

Foraging: Some are specialists; others are generalists.

Nesting: Females usually create solitary nests in hollow stems or small holes in the ground. However, sometimes they will sometimes nest in nearby one another (like an apartment complex).

Other fun facts: Collect special materials to line their nests. **Leafcutter bees** cut circular pieces from leaves. **Mason bees** use mud, leaf hairs, or resins.



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