

BEE STINGS

Most bees are gentle and will only sting if provoked, except for highly aggressive Africanized bees.

Entomologist Justin Schmidt of Tucson, AZ, created a Sting Factor ranking pain from 0 to 4, where 0 is benign and 4 is excruciating pain.

Bumble Bee: 2.5 – Feels like stepping on a hot nail. Knox Cellars offer a quality Humble Bumble home. Or, purchase a ceramic tea pot at your local thrift store, recycle and bury it in your garden, leaving the spout above ground, to allow the bumble bee access to its new home.

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Honeybees: 2 -- Like touching a burning match. These are America's most important pollinators. These social bees are dying off in large numbers due to tracheal mites, colony collapse disorder, pesticides, urban sprawl and zoning ordinances.

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Leaf-cutter (alfalfa) Bee: 0 – Feels like brushing a thorn. These are tiny, grayish bees that cut leaves, roll them up, and use them to line their nests in hollow, tubular openings.

Orchard Mason Bee: 0 -- Feels like a mild pinprick (i.e. mosquito bite). They only sting if stepped on, squeezed, provoked, or caught in clothing. Only the female stings. These gentle, solitary, dark-blue bees lay eggs in existing holes in wood, straws, bamboo, or reeds, which they plug with mud.

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Sweat Bee: 1 – Hurts briefly, like a spark. They get their name because of their attraction to salt on skin. These bees are black, brown, or metallic-green in color.

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Life threatening (anaphylaxis) allergy reactions affect less than one percent of the population, while approximately three percent are allergic to bee stings.

Carry a bee sting kit with you, and know how to use it. Obtain and wear a medical ID if you are allergic to bee stings.

Stay calm if stung. Remove the stinger as quickly as possible. Gently slide the edge of a credit card, or the tines of a hair comb, flat against the skin to remove the stinger. Do not squeeze, or pull out, the stinger with your fingers. Wash the sting area with soap and water, and apply an ice pack. Contact your family doctor, emergency medical service (EMS), 911, or local medical emergency room for treatment.

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