

Bumble Bee Nest & Life Cycle



The queen hibernates in the winter in shallow dirt burrows and leaf litter.



The queen emerges from hibernation in the spring to forage on early blooms like maple, willow or bloodroot.



The queen establishes a new nest in an abandoned burrow, like that of a chipmunk.



The queen lays eggs and continues to forage for nectar and pollen while her first batch of workers develop into adults.

The adult bumble bee emerges from its cocoon and must wait for its wings and body to dry.



The adult female workers sometimes have different markings than the queen such as in the Rusty-patched species.

The pupa goes through metamorphosis to become an adult while in its cocoon. This takes about 14 days.



The larvae pupate by spinning a cocoon around themselves.



The larvae are fed a mix of pollen and nectar which is inserted in a tear in the wax cover before it is quickly sealed again.



The queen incubates the eggs by shivering her body to keep them warm.



The queen creates a pollen loaf and lays 6 to 8 eggs in a wax egg cup which is then covered.



During the summer, the workers forage and maintain the nest while the queen continues to lay eggs.



New queens and male bumble bees are produced toward the end of the colony cycle. This signals the end of the colony is coming soon.



The new queen stores the sperm and seeks a place to hibernate for the winter. All members of the colony other than the new queens die at the end of the season.



Male bees find new queens from a different colony to mate with before dying.

