

Ground Bees at MUSC

In North America, **most ground bees become active in early spring**. Nests of these bees are easy to identify above ground because of the conical piles of dirt with a large hole in the middle that serves as the entrance to the bee burrows.

One of the most abundant **ground nesting bees** in northeastern and midwestern region of North America; *Colletes inaequalis*. Even though this bee is solitary, meaning that every individual female builds her own nest, it is also a gregarious nester. Many females build their nests in close proximity to one another.

The nests are obvious above ground because of the piles of dirt visible on bare ground. *Colletes inaequalis* has a strong preference for sandy soils on south facing slopes.

Unlike social bees and wasps, **solitary species are not aggressive insects** even though females do have sting. **These bees will not attempt to sting humans unless handled**. Most activity at nest sites in early spring is of males looking for females to mate with – **male bees cannot sting**.

Specifically, *Colletes inaequalis* and similar looking *Andrena* species are important pollinators of spring crops like apples, blueberries and cherries. Therefore, we do not consider these bees as pests and strongly recommend avoiding the use of chemicals to control them.

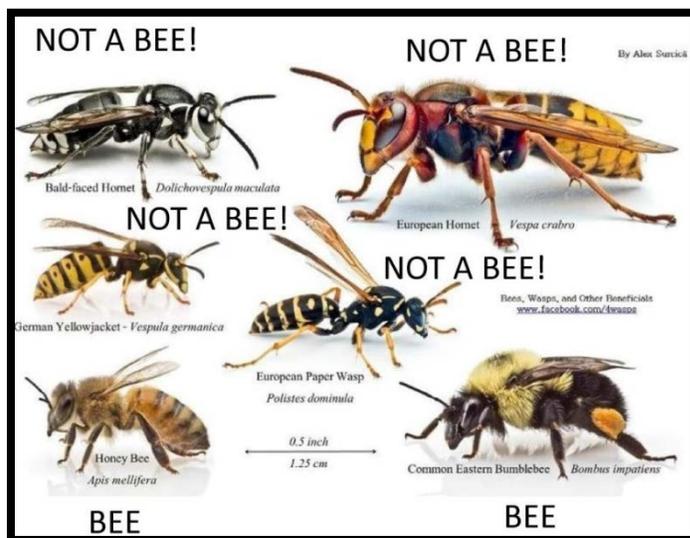
Being one of the most abundant native pollinators, you may see them in your own backyard this spring. If you must remove them, using water over the area of the nest is enough to encourage the bees to look for a different nesting area. However, due to their beneficial role as pollinators and their lack of aggressive behavior, please consider maintaining these important bee pollinators in your backyard!

It is important to be sure to identify non-aggressive ground bees with other more aggressive ground hornets (see bottom right photo).

- **Not all bees live in hives like honey bees do. In fact, 70% of all bees nest underground**



Fig. 2 *Colletes inaequalis* 1



Ground Nesting Bees in Your Backyard! <https://entomology.cals.cornell.edu/extension/wild-pollinators/native-bees-your-backyard>

Pest Alert: Ground Bees Active but Do Not Threaten People or Yards

<https://ipm.ces.ncsu.edu/2014/03/pest-alert-ground-bees-active-but-do-not-threaten-people-or-yards/>