



## Bees of the Trades:

*Masons, carpenters and leafcutter bees*

Most bees lead solitary lives. After mating, females dig or find suitable nests in soil or wood. They begin visiting flowers, making dozens of trips for pollen and nectar. (Think of solitary bees as single moms with families back home to feed). Sugar from nectar provides “flight fuel” for their trips to and from the nest. The proteins and amino acids in pollen are vital nutrients needed for the bees’ young (larvae).

Females lay eggs on masses of pollen mixed with nectar within urn-shaped earthen nest cells. The eggs hatch and the grub-like larvae devour the food placed for them. Over a period of weeks they eat pollen, defecate, and pupate, often spinning a silk cocoon. The new adult generation may emerge then or during the spring or summer of the coming year.

Flowering plants and their environments provide essential resources all bees need to make their living. Bees use diverse building materials for their nests; leaves, mud, sand, stones, plant resins, downy plant fibers, even abandoned snail shells. Because of the materials they collect, solitary bees are often called carpenter bees, mason bees, leafcutter bees, carder, or plasterer bees.

