

Solitary Bees

Solitary bees are bees that build their own nest and raise their own young. Most bees found in Oregon are solitary bees.

Mason, leafcutter, long-horned and alkali bees are some examples of solitary bees. After mating, a solitary female bee, all on her own, will build her nest, forage for pollen and nectar, and lay her eggs. The solitary female bees in the illustrations below and on the right are making their nests in three different places: **A** a tunnel in the ground, **B** an old tree stump and **C** a plant stem.

Common Dandelion



Bee larva (immature grub) in a leafcutter bee nest cell.



Mason bee emerging from a cocoon.



A wild female bee with nectar on her tongue that she will mix with pollen for her nest.

Common dandelions (*Taraxacum officinale*) Unlike the horned dandelion (Oregon native), the common dandelion is not **indigenous** to North America. In the 1600s, colonists brought common dandelion seeds with them from Europe, as they believed the plant could cure many illnesses. In time, some people came to view the common dandelion as a weed that crowds out native plant species. Other people, including Indigenous Peoples, still see it as a great source of food and medicine. Did you know that you can eat dandelions from flower to root? They are a healthy source of vitamins A and C. One cup of dandelion greens contains almost twice as much iron as spinach! Look for dandelion greens and teas at local stores. In the kitchen, you can use the greens in salads, soups, bread, pesto, smoothies and desserts. Dandelions can also be used to make oils, teas, jellies, salves and traditional medicines. And of course, social bumble bees and honey bees that pollinate dandelions make honey! Dandelions are a food source for many types of bees. They are available in so many places, and start blooming early in the spring before many other flowers and through the fall.

The illustration below shows what might be an excellent habitat for solitary bees to live in and make their nests.

