



{ASK THE BUG EXPERT}  
DR. ERIK RUNQUIST

Q: Do all bees sting?

A: No! Only a handful of bee species can sting, the most common of which is the introduced European honeybee that we heavily rely on for our food. Bees will not sting unless they feel threatened. Most “bee” stings are actually by hornets or wasps.

Q: Is there a natural way to keep wasps away? Our deck is usually over run in the spring/summer.

A: There are a number of plant-based food-grade insecticide sprays that could be used, like those that include peppermint oil. Dishwasher soap sprays can also be effective. If you can tolerate them though, it is important to remember that they are beneficial predators of many garden pests.

Q: What can I do to help the bee population in my yard?

A: We rely on bees and other pollinators for most of our fruits, vegetables, nuts, chocolate, coffee, honey, and even alfalfa. Bees and other pollinators are struggling mostly due to habitat loss and pesticides. Luckily, everyone can help in three easy ways!

1. Plant flowers that provide a lot of nectar and pollen.
2. Provide open patches, and leave old flower stocks or wood around to provide bees with necessary shelter.
3. Avoid or minimize pesticide usage. New “neonicotinoid” insecticides are absorbed into every part of the plant, including pollen and nectar, and can kill pollinators for months. Ask your garden stores not to sell plants treated with neonicotinoids.

Q: What is the most common “bug” in the Twin Cities? Minnesota?

A: Tough question! The most abundant bug might be one that almost no one has heard of: springtails. Up to 200,000 of these tiny insect relatives have been found in a wooded area the size of an average bathroom. A five to six mm long springtail can jump 75 to 100 mm! A human with this power could jump over 100 feet straight up!