

# Digger Bee

©Joe Schelling



**solitary nester, but in  
large colonies**

# Digger Bees - Numerous species

Genus: **Varied** Family: **Apidae**

Speedy and robust with lots of hair

Appear slightly silver with pale bands on the abdomen

5-25 mm long

Mostly numerous and diverse in the western U.S.

Digger bees can vary greatly in their size and markings within the over 400 species found across the world. The United States is home to about 70 species and most of those live in the western U.S.

The females have very hairy scopae for carrying pollen. They can be hard to tell apart as the colors vary from one region to another. They are not particular about the flowers they visit for pollen and nectar. The Digger bee has a long tongue that it uses to drink nectar in some of the deep throated flowers that they visit. Some of the species, like *Anthophora urbana*, are very important pollinators of specific agriculture crops like cherry tomatoes.

The Digger bee will dig its nest into a sandy vertical slope or on sandy flat ground, sometimes even in beach areas. Some of the species have specialized nest building systems, like the *Melea*. This subgenus will dig a curved pathway down into the earth for each nest. The subgenus *Clisodon* is the one type of Digger bee that does not necessarily nest in the ground as they usually nest in dead wood or soft stems. Digger bee nests are waterproof as the female lines each nest cell with an oily substance.

As with other types of bees, the digger bee provides a mixture of pollen and nectar for the larvae to eat during development. Males have been seen sleeping together on the backside of leaves.

Digger bee nesting site in sand, the small mounds are the Digger bee nests. Some Digger bees will make mounds outside their nests, while others do not.

