

Mining Bee



©Cheryl Moorehead - Bugwood.org

**solitary nester, but in
large colonies**

Mining Bees - *Andrena* spp.

Genus: *Andrena* Family: *Andrenidae*

Mostly black, with some dull metallic green and blue

7-18 mm long

1500 species worldwide, approximately
400 in the U.S.

Mining bees are a rather common site as they like to nest in lawns.

Mining bees, as they are commonly called, get their name from the fact that all of the bees in the genus excavate holes in the earth for their nests.

Mining bees come out to pollinate early in the spring when temperatures are in the mid 60s; making them a friend to fruit growers whose native fruiting shrubs like Nanking cherry and Manchurian apricots bloom earlier than non-native fruit varieties.

These small bees are generally black with dull metallic green and blue coloring, and are quite hairy. The females have large depressions on their faces that look like eyebrows. The mining bee also has hair used for carrying pollen on their hind legs which is called scopae.

Mining bees gather pollen from quite a large assortment of flowers. The females prepare the nests in sandy soil and prefer areas under shrubs. There is generally a small mound of soil just around the nest hole. The female will line her nest with a material she has secreted from a special gland. The secretion soaks into the soil and then the female will rub it with a flat area on her abdomen, making the sides of the nest hole strong and polished.

The female gathers pollen and nectar and makes a ball out of it before laying an egg atop the ball and sealing the nest. The mining bee keeps its own solitary nest, but the nest is likely to be in an area with thousands of other mining bee nests. Even though these bees nest in lawns you will not be stung by them, their stingers are too weak to penetrate human skin.



©Whitney Cranshaw, CSU, Bugwood.org