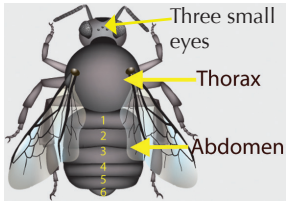
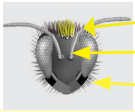
Guide to MN Bumble Bees: Females

This guide is only for females (12 antennal segments, 6 abdominal segments, most bumble bees, most have pollen baskets, no beards on their mandibles). First determine which yellow highlighted section your bee is in, then go through numbered characters to find a match. See if your bee matches the color patterns shown and the description in the text. **Color patterns can vary.** More detailed keys are available at discoverlife.org.
Join the search for bumble bees with www.bumbleebeewatch.org





Yellow hairs between wings, 1st abdominal band yellow (may have black spot in center of thorax)

1. Black on sides of 2nd ab, yellow or rusty in center

2nd abdominal band with yellow in middle, black on sides. Yellow often in a "W" shape. Top of head yellow.

Bombus bimaculatus
two-spotted bumble bee C

2nd abdominal band with yellow in middle bordered by rusty brown in a swooping shape. Top of head black.

Bombus griseocollis
brown-belted bumble bee C

2.All other ab segments black

Light lemon yellow hairs on top of head and and on thorax.

Bombus impatiens
common eastern bumble bee C

3. 2nd ab brownish centrally surrounded by yellow

Center spot on thorax with sometimes faint V shaped extension back from the middle. Queens do not have brownish central patch.

Bombus affinis
rusty patched bumble bee

4. 2nd ab entirely yellow and ab 3-6 black

Yellow on top of head. Slightly elongate space above mandible

Bombus vagans
half-black bumble bee C

Black on top of head. Square cheek. A few yellow hairs on 5th ab. Smaller than *vagans*. Spot on thorax variable but often to wing pads.

Bombus sandersoni
Sanderson's bumble bee

5. Yellow on front edge of 2nd ab

Variable color patterns. Smaller than many other bumble bees. Cheek shorter than width of mandible.

Bombus rufocinctus
red-belted bumble bee

6. No obvious spot on thorax.

Variable color patterns. Usually brown/black on sides of thorax.

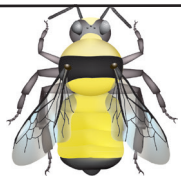
Bombus perplexus
confusing bumble bee C

Black stripe between wings

1. Yellow on ab 1-4

Black on top and front of head. Sides of thorax yellow.

Bombus fervidus
yellow bumble bee



Yellow on top and front of head. Sides of thorax with brown hairs. 5th ab may be black.

Bombus borealis
boreal bumble bee

2. Orange/red on ab 2-3

Distinct V shape extrending back from center stripe on thorax. Black hairs on face and top of head.

Bombus ternarius
tricolored bumble bee C

Yellow hairs on top of head and front of face. Only in Western MN.

Bombus huntii
Hunt's bumble bee

Variable colors. Smaller than many. Cheek shorter than width of mandible. A few yellow hairs between wings, but often looks like stripe.

Bombus rufocinctus
red-belted bumble bee

Back half of thorax is predominantly black

1. Yellow on top of head

Often with yellow on rear sides of thorax and yellow on top of head. Three small eyes lower on face (see below).

Bombus auricomus
black and gold bumble bee C

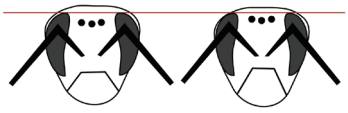
2. Black on top of head

Usually black hairs on top of head. Three small eyes higher on face (see below). Long spine on hind basitarsus.

Bombus pensylvanicus
American bumble bee

Smaller and stouter than many other bumble bees. Fringe of yellow hairs near end of abdomen. Short cheek.

Bombus terricola
yellowbanded bumble bee



C Common in southern MN

C Common in northern MN

Much of abdomen lacking hair, no pollen baskets

Bombus citrinus
lemon cuckoo bumble bee C

Bombus bohemicus
Ashton's bumble bee

Bombus insularis
indiscriminate cuckoo bumble bee

Bombus flavidus
Fernalde cuckoo bumble bee

Elaine Evans: University of Minnesota www.beelab.umn.edu www.befriendingbumblebees.com