

# TWO-SPOTTED BUMBLE BEE

Hymenoptera: Apidae

*Bombus bimaculatus*

# Bug of the Month



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The two-spotted bumble bee is distributed throughout the northeastern U.S. and parts of the Atlantic Coastal Plains and Great Plains. It is the second most common bumble bee found in Pennsylvania and can thrive in both open and forested habitats. Its name comes from the two yellow “spots” typically seen on the top of the abdomen on workers (females), often forming a distinctive W pattern. Coloration is more variable in males, often with some extra yellow abdominal stripes, yet most resemble females.

Although considered a generalist pollinator like most bumble bees, this bee shows foraging preferences for bee balm, clovers and other legumes, mints, penstemon, and some thistles. *B. bimaculatus* typically nests underground but has been recorded nesting on the ground surface and in stone walls.

This species is one of the earliest bumble bees to emerge in spring. It reaches peak colony numbers in June, producing small to mid-sized colonies (~50 workers) ending unusually early

or bumble bees in late-July.

Further research is needed to understand what *B. bimaculatus* queens do between the end of the colony cycle in July and the start of the winter season. These queens are rarely seen after the end of June, indicating they may initiate hibernation in summer instead of continuing to forage.



pollinators.psu.edu

For more information on bumble bee life history, visit the Center for Pollinator Research website.

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