

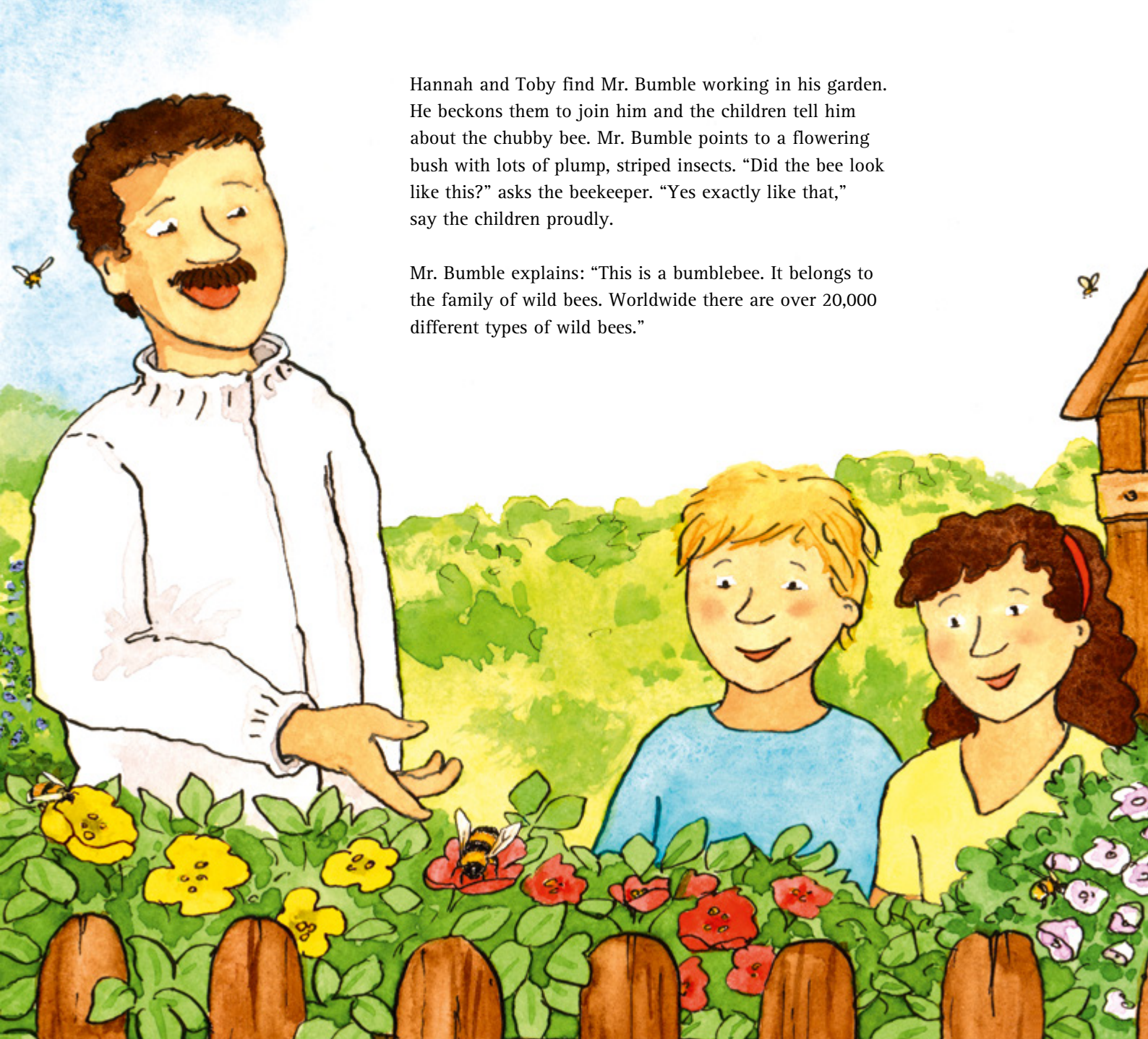
Toby and the Wild Bees



It's the Easter holidays at last and Toby gets to spend time at his uncle's farm. As always, he starts his visit by running to the meadow to say hello to Emmi, his favorite cow. His cousin Hannah is already waiting for him. She hugs Toby happily: "Let's go and play!"

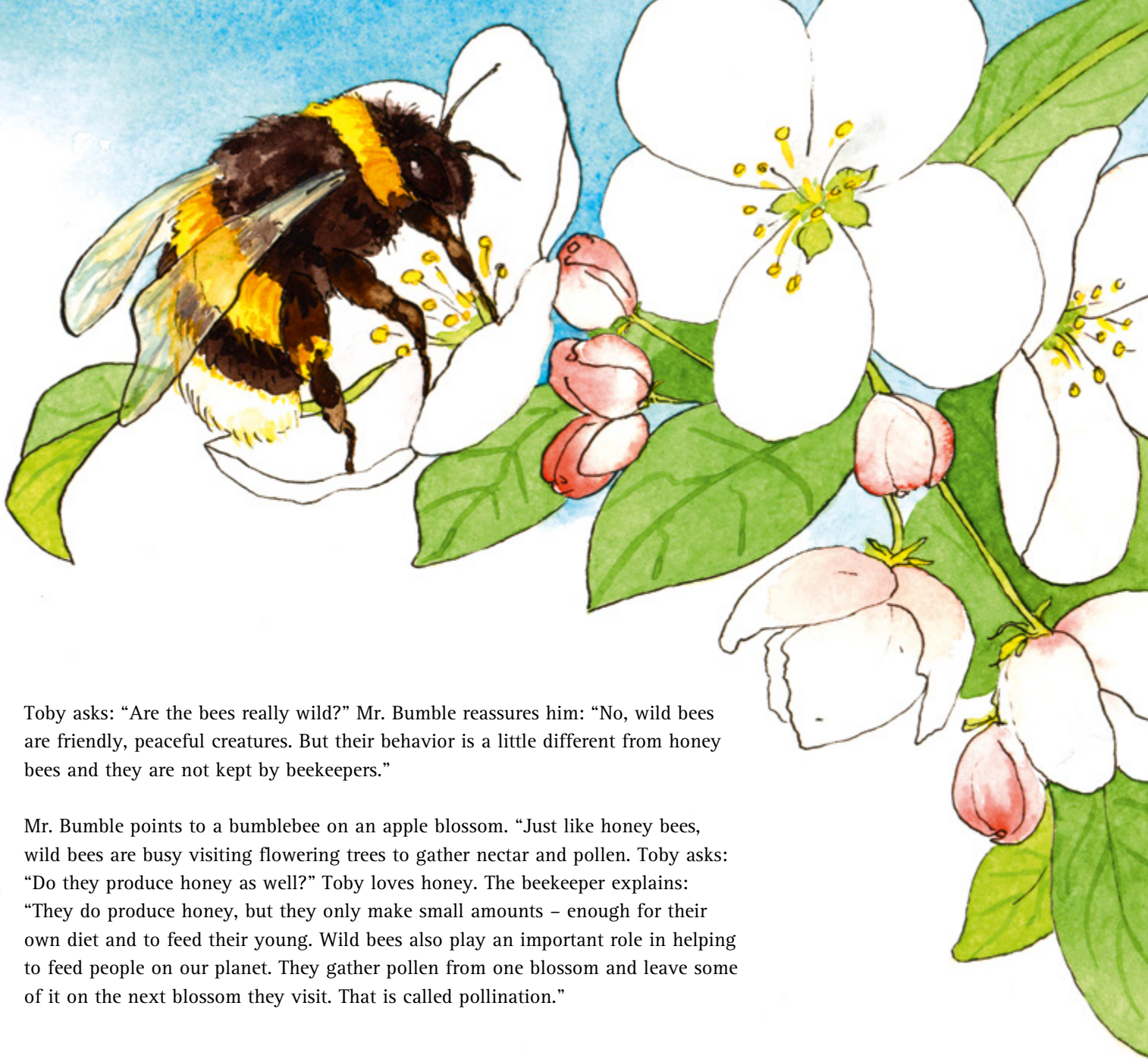
Laughing and talking, they stroll along the field track. Suddenly, Toby stops and points to a dandelion: "That's the chubbiest bee I've ever seen!" The children watch in awe. Hannah says: "Let's tell Mr. Bumble, the beekeeper, about this!"





Hannah and Toby find Mr. Bumble working in his garden. He beckons them to join him and the children tell him about the chubby bee. Mr. Bumble points to a flowering bush with lots of plump, striped insects. "Did the bee look like this?" asks the beekeeper. "Yes exactly like that," say the children proudly.

Mr. Bumble explains: "This is a bumblebee. It belongs to the family of wild bees. Worldwide there are over 20,000 different types of wild bees."



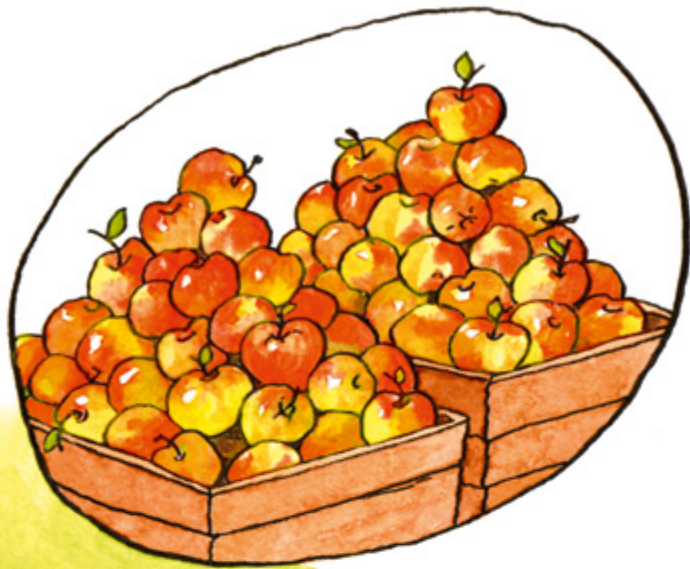
Toby asks: “Are the bees really wild?” Mr. Bumble reassures him: “No, wild bees are friendly, peaceful creatures. But their behavior is a little different from honey bees and they are not kept by beekeepers.”

Mr. Bumble points to a bumblebee on an apple blossom. “Just like honey bees, wild bees are busy visiting flowering trees to gather nectar and pollen. Toby asks: “Do they produce honey as well?” Toby loves honey. The beekeeper explains: “They do produce honey, but they only make small amounts – enough for their own diet and to feed their young. Wild bees also play an important role in helping to feed people on our planet. They gather pollen from one blossom and leave some of it on the next blossom they visit. That is called pollination.”

Mr. Bumble points to the flowering apple trees. "If a blossom is pollinated in spring, it will turn into a fruit later in the year." He hands both children an apple: "I harvested these last fall." Toby starts thinking aloud: "So, without wild bees there would be less pollination and fewer apples!"

Hannah wonders: "Are there any other plants that are pollinated by wild bees?" Mr. Bumble replies: "Yes, wild bees pollinate many food plants. For example, cherry and plum trees but also strawberry and tomato plants."





Toby finds this hard to believe: "So many plants need pollinating? Are there enough bees for all those flowers?" Hannah points to the apple blossoms: "If every blossom wants to turn into an apple, you need a whole lot of bees!" Mr. Bumble nods. "That is right."

"Unfortunately there are fewer and fewer wild bees, because our landscape has changed. Wild bees find fewer places to live, and there are often not enough blossoms to feed them." "Poor wild bees," cries Hannah. "Can we do something to help them?"



“In fact, we can,” says Mr. Bumble and points to the colorful flower bed in his yard: “This is what they like most: blooming areas near their nesting place where they can visit many different flowers in a very short time.”
“And the flowers are so beautiful,” says Toby.

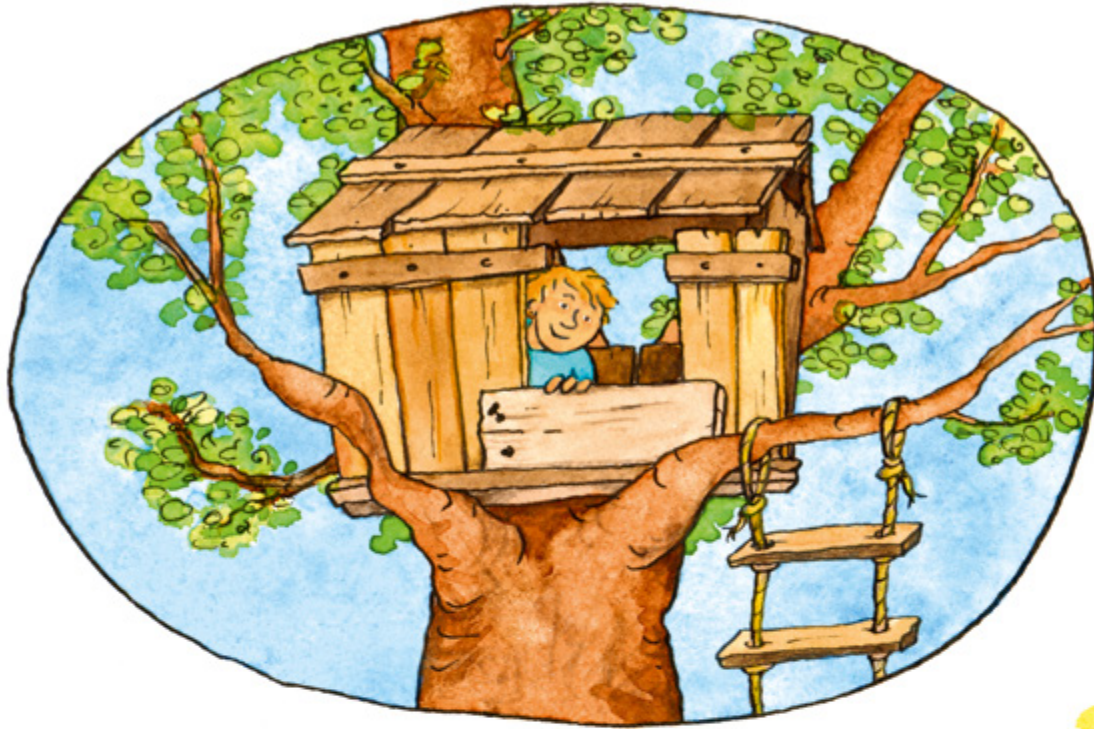




Toby asks: "Do wild bees live in a beehive like honey bees?"
The beekeeper explains: "No. Most wild bees feel at home in hollow spaces. Many bumblebees build their nests in the earth – in abandoned mouse holes. Other wild bees, like the mason bee, live in weathered stone walls or holes in dry wooden logs."

Mr. Bumble points to a dry old tree trunk. "Wild bees are very resourceful. See how they scuttle about." The children are amazed.





Mr. Bumble explains. "If we want wild bees to be healthy and happy, we need to provide them with sheltered nesting places. Some wild bee species like to live in deadwood tunnels that other insects have excavated."

Toby chuckles: "Such an old tree must be really cozy. These wild bees are just like me: my favorite place is my tree house!" Toby has an idea: "Can we build the wild bees a home that is as cozy as my tree house?"





Mr. Bumble points to an unusual-looking wooden box: "That's an insect hotel. It is made of wood and other natural materials and it has many different-sized holes. They provide the bees with a safe place to lay their eggs."

Hannah loves the idea: "A hotel for wild bees! Can we have one, too?" Mr. Bumble laughs: "It's easy. You can buy a pre-fabricated insect hotel, or you can build one yourself. All it takes is a sheltered place in the garden for the hotel to attract wild bees and other insects."

Upon returning home, Toby joins his dad in the yard. He shows him a chunk of deadwood the beekeeper has given him. Toby is excited and proud: "Look dad. We can drill many holes into it and turn it into a hotel for wild bees."

"We can put it up next to the apple tree in the back yard, where it's sunny and quiet. I am sure we will have many guests staying in our hotel soon. Then, in the fall, we can harvest lots of apples!" Dad laughs: "Ok, I guess, I will fetch my tools to start the building works."



Dear parents,

We at Bayer have been committed to animal health and the protection of our environment for many years. This book is designed to help raise the awareness about the importance of wild bees and to inspire families to contribute to the wellbeing of these pollinators.

We hope you and your children enjoy the read!

Masthead

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