Agapostemon is a widespread genus of bees in North America, with 14 known species across the United States and Canada. Most species have a metallic green head and thorax with a black and yellow striped abdomen, however some species may be entirely green. Their bright metallic green coloration gives rise to their common name: the metallic green bees.

All Agapostemon are generalist foragers, meaning they have no floral preference. Like other members of Halictidae, they are short-tongued and have difficulty extracting nectar from deep flowers. Agapostemon can often be observed foraging throughout the summer and fall on plants in the family Asteraceae, such as the sunflower in the above image.

Agapostemon can be found nesting in the ground across a variety of soil types, from very sandy to thick clay. Most species are solitary, however some will nest communally. In these cases, multiple females may share a single nest entrance, but each individual builds and provisions her own brood cells.

By Rachel McLaughlin