



April 2013 Bee-Mail



Click icons to follow

For best viewing download the pictures, or visit www.crownbees.com

In this issue:

Spring is here for many! Tips for success!

- [When to release your bees](#)
- [Don't miss our online event on Saturday 9 am PST](#)
- [Are your bees staying around?](#)
- [Chemicals in the world news](#)
- [What's the difference between males and females?](#)
- [You didn't harvest cocoons and left them in place over winter. Now what?](#)

When to release your bees

This is a tough issue to write. The southern states need bees flying now, northern states/provinces have many weeks to go. My advice is either too late, too early, or maybe just right. Here are the rules... You're in charge.



- If you don't have adequate pollen, don't fly your bees, even if it's warm.
- Daytime temperatures of 55F (13C) or so degrees is perfect. Don't worry about night temperatures.
- If you see a long rainy spell coming, or a period of cold weather approaching, hold the bees in your refrigerator or north side of your house in the shade.
- If a few bees have emerged, read about [how to feed them](#). (bottom section)

- Spread your bees over a few weeks. Place out 1/4 when you feel it's about right, wait a few weeks and place out 1/2, and then place out the last 1/4 a few weeks after that. This way you might bypass some ugly weather. Your bees will thank you for that!
- Bees should be placed behind or on top of your nesting material. (Tubes/reeds/trays). This causes them to climb over the tubes and helps them know where they came from. In the photo above, the white PVC pipe holds in cocoons which the bees emerge from.
- Males will come out first, then females, which are attacked by the mating males!

Online BeeAction event this Saturday!

I'm looking forward to this Saturday morning at 9:00 PST. We have lined up for you and garden writers across the globe a strong message to hear. It's all about the power of YOUR garden.

You, believe it or not, play a key role in what we're unfolding.

Here's what you'll experience:

Awesome people with fascinating messages:

- You'll hear a bit more about what's not going well with the honey bee.
- You'll meet the top honey bee and mason bee researcher from the largest almond grower, which is part of the world's largest pollination event.
- You'll meet an organic farmer near Milwaukee that believes mason bees hold the key to his success.
- You'll hear from Carol Brown, one of the US's top garden writing talents.
- You'll be introduced to a partner of Crown Bees (Alisha) who is helping launch a worldwide event around you, the gardener, who is raising gentle bees.

An overview of the hour

- BeeGAP discussion from different perspectives
- The power of the bees in your yard
- Various roles that are actively involved today
- Where pollination is headed
- Next steps

- Questions answered live from any/all of the panel

What's neat is that we'll be using "Google Hangout", which allows you to see all 5 panelists at once.

Please strongly consider attending this live event. It's designed for you!

[Sign up now](#) and I'll send you a reminder.

View the BeeAction event at 9:00 PST at

www.crownbees.com/beeaction

Are your bees hanging around?

There's nothing more unsettling than seeing an empty set of holes and no bees. You've placed out little "For Rent" signs, there's a fresh batch of mud below, and you've even decorated the mason bee house front porch with dandelion heads... What's up?

Here are some thoughts from years of answering questions:

- Your bees might not have emerged yet. Look for telltale signs like fresh bee poop. (photo to the right)
- Your bees might be foraging and checking out the area for a couple of days.
- **Be patient.** Surprisingly a few holes just get muddled over. When did that happen...?
- Are your bees alive? Open one or two cocoons up. [Here's a video on how.](#)
- If you've held back some cocoons, think through what's going wrong. House placement, too windy, did you *assume* that your mud was adequate? (CORRECT MUD IS IMPORTANT)
- Is your beautiful bird feeder too near your emerging bees?



Mason bees nest in holes at night. Use a flashlight to count noses/tails.

It can be frustrating. I encourage you to think through the above. In general, most yards do just fine. As a last resort, you can always blame your neighbor for spraying chemicals without abandon.

Pesticides in the recent news

In the past week, there has been some disturbing news about pesticides using "neonicotinoids." Although this is nothing new, it's nice to see that researchers are coming up with potential issues that need change.



For example, the neonic is coated on corn seeds, and the dust from the machine produces 700 times the lethality to honey bees. Monsanto will be changing things to drop that in half. Read more on this [here](#).

Another recent article suggests that neonics make bees dumber. It showed about 30% of the bees fail memory tests. ...for example remembering where their hive

is. Wow. Read this article [here](#).

Crown Bee's perspective is simple. **Do good.** When there is more darkness in the world, little lights on the hill shine brighter.

Join us in doing good. Help your neighbors learn about gentler ways to get rid of pests or weeds without using chemicals. I placed all of my yard chemicals in a hazardous material recycling event years ago.

If your bees could talk, I bet they'd say "thanks."



Males have similar looks

(see next page)



Four of the world's common mason bee species are shown here. All males. Note the white nose on each and the long antennae. I find this fascinating.

Osmia cornuta, *rufa*, *cornifrons* (hornfaced) and *lignaria* (blue orchard).

They all come out first due to a couple of reasons. They ran out of stored fats, they emerge a degree or so cooler, and if left unharvested, they have to emerge first.

Emerge, forage for nectar/pollen, wait for females, mate a few times, and then die after about two weeks. As they forage for food, they do pollinate somewhat!

I wouldn't quite call them "useless", as they do perform a function in the circle of life, but compared to the busy females... they aren't that active!

The males are typically smaller than the females. ...this is due to the females purposely providing them less pollen in the spring. Less pollen has the feeding larva in the summer gain less weight... resulting in smaller males. Those wicked females! 🙄

Unharvested bees... now what?

Harvested bees are healthier due to you having separated the pests from the cocoons back in the fall.

You didn't do that... please reconsider this bad habit!

What to do:

1. The bees will emerge from the old hole, crawl to the hole in the side of the box/sack and then exit for good. You'll find the males will continue to crawl back into the box/sack hunting for females.
2. Provide clean holes for them to use. We do have these available! Consider shifting to [wood trays](#) due to their retaining last year's nesting scents.
3. Hide your old tubes, drilled wood blocks, or bamboo in a sack or box with a hole in the side.

Mason bees tend to nest in holes they can see. It's a one way shift from old habits to new!

What you missed in Facebook...

We're continuing to gain more followers in [facebook](#), [twitter](#), and [pinterest](#). Our intent is to continually educate all gardeners about gentle solitary bees.

Here are a few topics we covered:

- How many cherries do mason bees produce?
- Defining Garden Oasis
- How to open up mason bees
- Meet Crown Bee volunteers who raise bees for us!
- Why hybrid flowers aren't great for bees

In our next issue...

- What's happening with your bees
- How to determine if you have enough holes

Thank you for caring about raising solitary mason bees! Your success is important to us.

Dave Hunter, Owner