



January 2013 Bee-Mail



Click icons to follow

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

In this issue:

We're starting to think about spring, summer, and a few of our goals. So should you!

- What's happening with your hibernating bees
- What's missing for your spring bees?
- If your bees aren't refrigerated, you're making a mistake...
- OBA conference results
- More interest in solitary bees?
- Our goals. Those we made, those we're planning for 2013
- What's happening in Facebook
- What's next?

Your hibernating bees & larva

Spring bees (blue orchard, hornfaced, red rufa, cornuta) are still in deep hibernation and their stored fats that they survive on are about half depleted. Next month these adult bees will begin to slip from "deep hibernation" to "waiting for warmth to emerge." If you're in the southern states, your bees are close to emerging.



Summer bees (leafcutter) should be harvested now. The bees are still larva, but they are hardy enough to be roughly handled. Place these leafy cocoons in a cocoon humidifier in your fridge. (You can mix the leafcutter cocoons with your spring cocoons to save space and they really look different!)

Global weather change causes solitary bee losses!

If you haven't refrigerated your hibernating bees, you are making a mistake.

The upcoming few months are crucial to your bees. With global weather change, unexpected warm weather forces bees out of hibernation before pollen is available. **Most solitary bees die.** This was the case last year in the Midwest and eastern states. I received 40+ emails from people asking why their bees didn't perform well or never nested.



In about a month, your hibernating bees will be waiting for warm temperatures (55°F 17°C). If they receive the warmth, they will emerge within days. Your flowering trees and bushes take much more collective heat to entice their blossoms to “pop out”. When/if nature cools back down, the trees stop their blossom production and the bees, if any survived, now completely perish.

To some of you, this may seem like you're “playing with nature” and you should let nature take care of itself. I appreciate that point of view, however we want you to be successful with your pollination and bee raising.

Store your cocoons in a humidifier, similar to our [HumidiBee](#).

For those of you already doing this, do check for moldy cocoons. It's not harmful if you catch it now. See our [remedy](#).

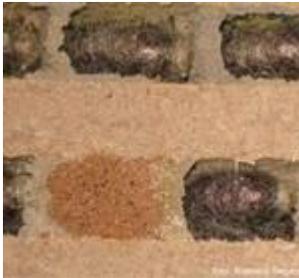
What's missing for your spring bees?

January is “take inventory of your supplies” time.

- How many bees do you need to pollinate?
- How many holes should you have available?
- Should you have a few locations (houses) to experiment which one your bees prefer?
- We have a few [articles](#) to help you think this through.

You need about 4 females (10 cocoons) per mature fruit tree.

You need about 1 nesting hole (reed, easytear, wood tray hole) per cocoon.



Hopefully you've harvested your bees. It's not too late if you haven't. **Your biggest issue is the pollen mite** (lower left in the photo by Roeland Segers.) We strongly believe that the mite is one of the most damaging pests your bees will face. If you don't harvest your cocoons, you reintroduce these pests back into your yard. As a result, you'll lose even more mason bees the following year.

If you've been raising bees for a time, consider shifting to wood trays. They're much easier to harvest from, retain nesting scents, and last 20+ years.



The Orchard Bee Association conference results



On December 10-11, the 3rd international conference of the Orchard Bee Association met in Sacramento, CA.

It was a great conference, but very frustrating to me. So many things were said but there hasn't been enough time to place all of the new facts in a website. OBA's [website](#) is slowly taking shape, but is fairly "heady" at times. There are a lot of scientific studies on pages, and a few slides shows from our session. To see a few of the Powerpoint slides [click here](#).

If you'd like to participate in OBA, send me a note. We'd love to have you join the fun. Our next conference will be in Utah near the Logan Bee Lab in early October.

More people are learning about native bees!

I've heard more people reference mason bees and leafcutters over the past year. That means that many of you are talking to friends and neighbors about these gentle bees. Blog writers are starting to take notice as well and writing native bee posts. We want to encourage that. *(If any of you are blog writers, reach out to me and I'll help you with a post.)*

Last month Orchard Bee Association received our first donation to assist us with research. Of importance is bee propagation and pollen mite analysis/control. There are many things to learn.

I will be in Florida this week teaming with government and academia researchers on a large grant to find out which species of wild and managed native bees can help pollinate apples, blueberries, cherries, almonds, and cucurbits. This is a great team of national researchers. I'm excited to see what results are brought about in this 5 year program. Here's a [weblink](#) to the ASPIRE program's site.

Our goals, those made and those for 2013

Last year's goals:

- **Increase the number of gardeners learning about mason bees.** *We have nearly tripled in size of website activity and orders.*
- **Help gardeners be successful enough that they would share their bees to others.** *About 20 gardeners nationwide shared their bees with us to help others. We hope to triple that number this year!*
- **Begin reaching others through social media.** *We now actively post in Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Bee-Mail. We are confident this has brought about new solitary bee raisers.*
- **Continue researching new products to increase your success raising bees.** *We introduced the HumidiBee, BeeGuardian, and InvitaBee last year.*
- **Begin teaming with nurseries to reach more gardeners.** *We are in 95 nurseries and garden centers now.*

Goals for 2013:

- **Increase the readership of Bee-Mail by at least 1,000.** Today we're at 3,300.
- **Double the number of nurseries carrying our product.**
- **Gain 5,000 twitter followers and double the facebook followers.**
- **Modify the website to help new bee raisers quickly find information.**
- **Increase collaboration between peers and competitors.**



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:

- The early spring impacted ground nesting bees similar to the masons bees
- Bees see UV colors. So what?
- Back to the basics... how long do males live, why they nest in holes, etc.
- How mason bees pollinate differently than honey bees
- We strive to have something posted daily.

In our next issue...

- Ensuring that you're ready for the spring
- Something newsy!

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

Dave Hunter, Owner

For archives of previous editions click on [Crown Bees Newsletter Archives](#)