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## March 2013 Bee-Mail



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Spring is here for many! Tips for success!

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## **Optimal mason bee house location**

Spring mason bees want sun to warm themselves up prior to their daily activities. Morning sun helps them start off right. Place your house on an eastern or southern location.

The house is best if installed on a wall under an overhang.

If you’re pollinating in an orchard, place it in an open location on a stout branch so that the house doesn’t move around. Make sure that the house won’t get covered by leaves as the fruit trees bloom.

Locating the house just above head height is best. You could have the bees from 2’ off the ground to 20’ high... we just like to watch them in action!

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## Nesting material



Honey bees like “perfectly lined up” holes. Mason bees have a tougher time finding their holes. If you had an apartment complex with identical doors, it would be tough to find your apartment unless the door was unique! Create a 3-D setup for your bees. Pull tubes/reeds in and out, create gaps, and put in a stick, pencil, etc. to help the bees locate their specific hole. Even with this help you’ve given, you may still find the bees wander into the wrong hole. They are then smelling with their antennas to ensure it’s

their correct hole. Try not to move holes once the bees have begun nesting. If you have our InvitaBee (mason bee attractant), place this between the tubes/reeds or side of wood trays so that half of a scent sheet is hanging in the air. To your mason bees, this smells like someone else has nested here last year! Wood trays retain last year’s nesting scents... And are easy to harvest from. We have designed our trays with a 3-D look as well. You’ll find our trays are torched slightly and have some boards longer than others. Remember... if you make your own holes, have about 4 overlaps on the paper. The holes should be about 6-8” long and fit a pencil on the inside. If you have bamboo holes that are huge, in general those won’t be used. Our [reeds](#) are on sale this month. 😊

## Where do you place your cocoons for bee emergence?

Spring mason bees emerge from cocoons when the temperature is about right. (55 degrees F/13C). Whether the bees emerge from their natural hole, a dixie cup, or an emergence container, we want them to crawl on top of nesting material before they leave their house. (This helps them know where they came from.) Place the cocoons behind the tubes/reeds/trays, or towards the back. If left in a tube, the bees politely wait until their sister/brother exits in front of them. The only hassle with this is we have seen MANY valuable females stuck (dead) in the tube/reed that we harvested from in the fall. *What happened?*



We think that it became warm in the spring, the bees emerged from their cocoons, and then waited in line patiently. It became cold and they lost their energy to emerge and died. How sad! 😞 As a result, we recommend always harvesting your cocoons and letting them become active immediately after they emerge.

If you have a lot of cocoons, place them out in thirds. One third when you feel there is enough pollen and temperatures are fine. Wait a couple of weeks and place out the next third, and the final sometime close after that. This way, you are helping your bees avoid some of the bad weather that may occur and you have your bees available to pollinate longer in your yard/orchard.

If you are still using a block of wood, bamboo, or haven't harvested, our advice is to have your bees nest in new holes. Pest build up will eliminate many of next year's bees if the bees that emerge today reuse old holes. [How to shift from old holes to new!](#)

## Meet Brad, from Nebraska

Something fun Crown Bees does is to give every 500th Bee-Mail sign up one of our bee-friendly products that will help them be more successful.

Brad (Our 3,500 sign up) has a small suburban house in Papillion, NE that he wanted pollination for his cherry trees. He had ordered both hornfaced and eastern blue orchards. We added a [HumidiBee](#) to his order for his bees to as we didn't want his bees to dehydrate in his refrigerator while waiting for warm temperatures.

### ***Here are his thoughts:***

“Thanks again for getting my bees sent off to me. I'm looking forward to getting them out and working in my yard this spring. I've got a sour cherry tree, a peach tree, two apple trees and numerous berry shrubs that I hope benefit from the bees. I also raise honeybees, but because of city ordinance restrictions, I cannot keep them in my residential yard so that's why I'm going with the Mason and Hornfaced bees.

I had looked around quite a bit while researching mason bees and CrownBees was the only place that provided bees based upon your geographical area. In Nebraska, we have a couple of hot, humid months during the summer and I wanted to make sure that the bees that I purchased were going to be able to hold up to the temps.”

😊 Praise without any coercion

## Almond industry crisis this week



The almond industry, today, is experiencing extreme pollination problems. They don't have enough honey bees. What's gone wrong?

1. We believe they have over-planted. Where they use to have 650,000 acres, they have transformed desert up to 850,000 acres. With the failing honey bee numbers, that's dangerous.
2. The drought last year impacted the ability of many honey bee hives to collect enough honey to survive the winter.
3. The varroa mite continues to be a

lethal pest to hives.

Combine all of these problems and the almond farmers do not have enough hives to pollinate their acreage. This which will be a huge hit to California's exporting and all of the honey bee contractors across the US.

What can you do about this? See the next section on BeeGAP.

## **BeeGAP, a pollination movement**

### **Bee Gardeners Adding Pollinators**

This is a movement that we're helping to start, market, and work with teammates to get behind it. You're the first, and most vital piece.

*We've already reached you, you're learning, and are connected through Bee-Mail.*

We're helping you to be so successful that you have too many cocoons and will pass those to friends/family/neighbors in the fall/winter.

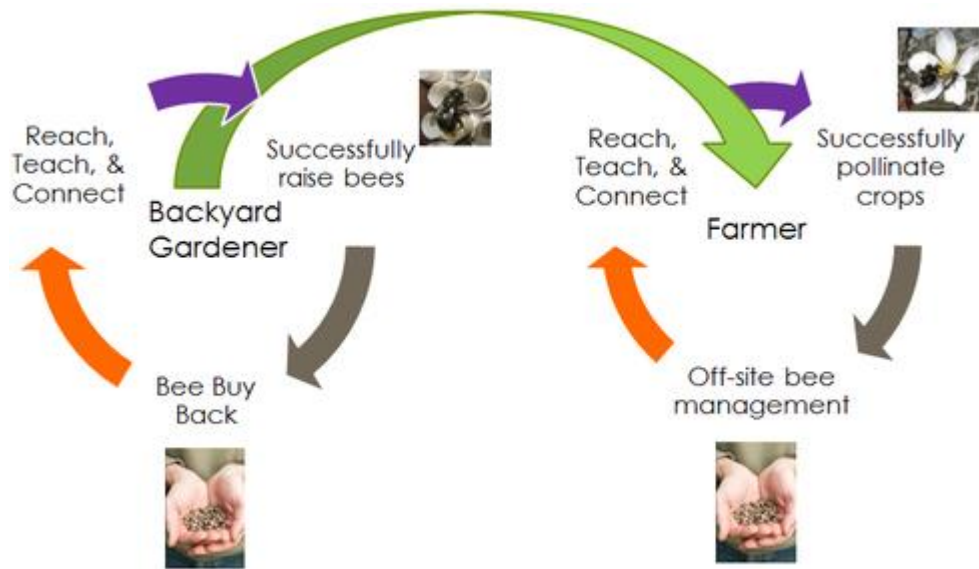
We've already begun exchanging excess cocoons for nesting material, houses, and have paid some for cocoons as well.

The bees today are sold to other gardeners to raise more bees. In the future, most bees will head towards regional orchards/crops.

Today we're teaming with three progressive orchards with many of these bees. The farmers will be learning how to place the bees in their orchard, thinking about how to spray around these bees, and to ensure the bees have enough foraging pollen once the bloom is complete. These three farmers are our heroes for trying something new out! We'll be posting updates from these farmers in our FaceBook site.

The Albuquerque Film Media Experience, happening in June this year, will be announcing this concept to the world. We're helping to create this event. This will be fun...

Read more (I'm still creating pages for this) on our website: [BeeGAP](#)



## 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:

- California nurseries are starting to get behind BeeGAP
- A bit about MUD!
- Why pollinating with multiple species of bees is wise
- Some bees smell through their feet! What's up with that?
- A relaxing view from my in-law's cabin looking at the Hood Canal

## In our next issue...

- What's happening with your bees
- Thinking through bad weather
- Something exciting?

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

Dave Hunter, Owner