



August 2014 Bee-Mail



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Spring Mason Bee Activity

What's going on?



Opening your holes now would be boring. There's activity going on, but you can't see it. Your larvae are covered nicely in their cocoons they spun. They should be darkening slightly. After spinning their cocoons, the larvae wait a few weeks and then begin their mad dash through metamorphosis to become adult bees in about 6-8 weeks.

What you can do:

Ensure that your developing bees are stored in a warm location, safe from predators like birds and rodents. Store them in your BeeGuardian or similar protective, breathable bag.

Let us know how your fruit was pollinated. We have had several Bee-Mail readers "complain" that they had to prop up their plum/cherry/apple trees with boards because they were overloaded with fruit. (What a great complaint!) Send us an email describing how mason bees have helped and add a picture or two!

Summer Leafcutters

We have received great reviews of our [leafcutter preemies](#) this year. They are almost completely developed when the gardener receives them in the mail.

While we are incubating the bees for you, please understand that leafcutters *can* raise themselves just fine, though it takes a varied amount of time. If you're in a cooler climate, it may take longer than a warmer climate.

Other Summer native leafcutters bees

Our summer leafcutter is a smaller bee that prefers 6mm holes compared to the 8mm holes preferred by mason bee. However, there are many other summer native bees across North America that are larger and prefer 8mm holes... That's why we offer a [summer variety pack](#) of tubes and reeds. The different sizes will attract other native bees to nest alongside your leafcutters. Let us know what you find in your summer bee house. You may find a new bee species!



Have you seen a pile of leaves in front of your leafcutter holes? This photo I took yesterday doesn't show leftover leaves, but something peculiar emptied from one of the holes. In general, most gardeners find leaf bits that were dropped by careless bees. Your bees won't pick them up, but rather will go back to get another leaf circle.

Our beans, squash, and peas continually have blooms available for these busy girls! I'm glad they're helping out!

Weakening Bumble bee queens

In August, the queens that have built their hives into busy pollination factories are beginning to lose energy. Soon, they'll lay 4-5 queens in August. She'll also lay males (unfertilized eggs) for the queens to mate with when they emerge.

It will soon be time for her to pass the torch to next year's queens.

In this photo by Scott Nacko, we see a very messy pile of bumble bees all working hard. In this jumble of created holes are larvae still being developed, nurse maids taking care of young bees, and a queen somewhere in the middle. (*Where's Waldo?*) 😊



I find bumble bees as one of the messier bees I know of!

Other Hole-Nesters



While gathering in reeds from a valley near us, Tim, our Warehouse Manager, showed me a few peculiar reeds with the ends of the reed not looking like mud, but pebbles.

We opened a reed up and came across pebbles separating all of the pollen partitions rather than mud. (You can see the larva sticking to the pollen mass by my right thumb and near the edge of the paper.) I have no idea what this bee species is called yet. It seems to be a later spring bee, but one that will overwinter as an adult bee. *We closed the reed afterwards so that the bees could continue their development.*

We're excited to learn what it is! We'll send an adult bee down to our friends at the Logan Bee Lab to help identify this mystery guest.

Do NOT assume that all bees using your nesting holes are the spring mason bee or summer leafcutter!

Some beneficial wasps will use mud to separate their gathered parasitized caterpillar/spider. Others will use grass. In both cases, you have a wonderful addition to your yard!

When you harvest in October, we hope that you are successful with obtaining more than just our most popular bees. The more we learn about bees and raise them, the better our gardens will become.

Joe Lamp'I's Growing A Greener World Mason Bee episode on PBS



If you have a spare moment, watch the PBS [Growing A Greener World episode](#) on Mason Bees. Joe Lamp'I is a wonderful host that I was honored to team with back in April. His camera man and editor, Carl, took some great footage to create a well done episode on mason bees.

I'd like to ask a favor of you. Do one (or both) of two things with this "introduction to mason bees":

1. Share this with your friends/family as a meaningful activity that you're doing and something they might consider.

2. Work with your club program scheduler and get this as a topic for a meeting. While we are unable to provide DVD's of the episode for you, it may be possible to either record the PBS episode for later showing to your group, or you can connect your internet to your TV and show it directly to your group live.

After they've seen it, introduce them to us through our website. We'd like to help them get started raising these gentle bees.

Our New Website!!!!

We invite you to take a tour of our new website. We have worked to make sure it is easy for you to use and to quickly find information and products.

We still have a few pictures to place and add a few nifty functions back in, but it works well. It's fast... and easy to find what you need for your success. Let us know if you find broken links or missing information at info@crowbees.com. Here's a quick introduction to the new site.



When viewing it, go ahead and log on. You'll see link (the circle in this picture) on the top right hand each page. We want you to feel at home.

You'll find the entire library of mason bee tips, tricks, and general information ALL on the [Learn](#) page. You'll also find leafcutter and bumble bee information there as well using the easy menu tabs.



The next most important page is [Get Involved](#). We're working to help make a difference with our yards, orchards. It can only happen with your involvement, whether it's just personal and you get involved with your own yard, or you want to reach t out to others to share awareness about the importance of gentle-natured bees. We have some fun ideas for you to consider. If you think of something new, let us know and we'll add it. Here's a snippet from the page.



Thank you for participating with us. We need your help reaching others about raising gentle bees and altering their impact to our planet.

A word about yellow jackets



I was at an outside dinner with friends when their daughter screams, throws herself away from the table and yells "BEE!" at the top of her lungs.

While I'm not a fan of yellow jackets, it really bugs me *whenever everything that buzzes is "a bee."* Bees are vegetarians, not meat eaters like hornets and wasps. They are getting an unfair label.

About now, yellow jacket nests are getting crowded, and all of the young are out of the nest fighting for food alongside their hive-mates. Yellow jackets are aggressive when you get near their hive. After all, they are social, and thus must protect the queen and any brood still within the hive.

If you don't have a problem with a nearby hive, let the hornet do her thing. In general, she is drawn to the sugar-laden food on your plate and is a nuisance like a fly. *I'd love it if people yelled "FLY!" when bugged at the table rather than "bee!..."*



When I look at my yard, and in particular, my garden, I see yellow jackets. I notice they keep looking at the underside of leaves. They are looking for pests in your yard. That's their job. I know this is tough, but yellow jackets are a part of the beneficial insects in your yard. If they aren't nesting in some public area, let them do their patrolling of your yard.

By fall, most of the hornets die off (they only live 6 or so weeks like your mason/leafcutter bees) and the queen finally dies as well. Just like the bumble bee, a bunch of queens are laid later this month and they'll overwinter in holes to begin their own new hives.

I found a great website (The Daily Sheeple) while researching this topic (and copied their picture above.) [View what to do about hornets here.](#)

I do use all "BEE!" screeching opportunities to help people understand about gentle solitary bees. Not all bees sting and there are differences between bees and hornets/wasps. Please help educate others as well!