



January 2014 Bee-

Mail 



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What's new for 2014?

- [Your hibernating bees](#)
- [January ~ time to inventory for the spring!](#)
- [Goals: How we did and for this year](#)
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Your hibernating bees

What is hibernation?

Your bees are in deep hibernation right now. Whether they are in your refrigerator, snug in their little bee bed (☹️), or outside in the deep freeze they are consuming their stored fats slowly. Cold lowers their metabolism. Mason bees need about 6 months of hibernation for them to perform well. You can wake them up after 4 months, but it takes a long time to break their sleep. If you hold them too long (7 months +), their stored fats can deplete and they can die before visiting your garden.



Can bees freeze?

Unlike honey bees that cluster together for winter warmth, solitary mason bees don't have snuggle friends. But nature helps out by providing mason bees with a bit of natural "bee anti-freeze." This bee-blood concoction helps our native North American mason bees tolerate freezing temperatures.

However, they are not immune to frigid climates. Ice crystals forming in the bodies of insects expand and contract, which can cause organ damage and possible death. You can help your bees survive a brutal winter by storing them in your refrigerator.

Are we playing with nature and not letting the fittest survive? Maybe, but my thought is that we need to protect our vital pollinators. They give back so much to our food supply and the beauty of our gardens and yards. Overwintering in our refrigerators is an easy way to not only help them survive, but thrive for the coming pollinating season. Everyone benefits with this one small action. 😊



Humidibee check up

Remember that refrigerators dehydrate everything. Make sure that your Humidibee has water in the bottom. Check for mold on the cocoons. Don't panic if you find some, [read here](#) for a quick solution.



Plan, stock up, or sell us your excess

This time of year I get a lot of questions about how many bees are needed for spring garden planning. To help you, here's a basic *Pollination Formula*. It's based on our experience and the science behind bee pollinator efficiencies.

- Ten cocoons will pollinate about one fruit tree
- Ten cocoons need about ten nesting holes



It really is that simple. If you have many fruit trees to pollinate, [read more here](#).

For those of you who raised mason bees last season, it's not too late to harvest your cocoons. Get harvesting details by [clicking here](#). If you need more bees or supplies, either reach out to your local nursery/bird food store, or [click here](#).

Do you have excess cocoons? Don't forget our [Bee Buy Back](#) program will pay you for your excess cocoons in cash or products. This season's buy back ends Jan. 15, so don't procrastinate! If you have unopened tubes/wood blocks and don't want to harvest, here is a rough guess as to how many cocoons you *may* have.

- **New holes filled only last year** ~ 6 cocoons/hole
- **Old holes** ~ maybe 1-2 cocoons per hole. Probably less. Unharvested holes build up pests over time and these holes never open up. If in doubt, mark each hole with a felt pen and see which opens up next season! Seriously consider getting rid of your drilled block of wood. [Read why and how here](#).

2013 report and our goals for 2014

Our 2013 Goals and highlights:

Increase Bee Awareness

- Bee-Mail readership increased 45% with 5,200 subscribers. Thanks for your help in spreading the message and referring gardeners to our Bee-Mail.

Social Media

- More people are following us on Facebook and Twitter. Thanks to those of you who post, comment and challenge us with great questions and responses. You helped us double our Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest followers. Only through your help can mason bee messaging reach more gardeners.

Our Website

- We completely revamped our website based on feedback from our loyal bee fans. We view the site as a *work in progress* as we continue to make it easier to navigate and more intuitive. Don't hesitate to let us know how we are doing. We listen. Our goal is to meet the needs of existing customers and help new bee raisers quickly find useful information for bee success. Our website visitors increased substantially last year. We must be doing something right, as we gained the attention of hackers this fall. Like busy bees, we immediately took counter measures that hopefully will thwart future attacks.

Established partnership with National Garden Club, Inc.

- **This wonderful partnership creates awareness with more than 188,000 gardening enthusiasts nationwide. We look forward to the power of many to help increase our mason bee population. We hope that you might consider joining a local NGC club.**[Click here to learn more.](#)

Launch BeeGAP (Gardeners Adding Pollinators):

- As part of increasing awareness, we developed several ways for gardeners and bee lovers to get involved. Check out the [BeeGAP speakers bureau](#), blogger and writers programs. Find your true calling to help our bees.

Implement Bee Buy-Back

- We received over 50,000 cocoons from across the country. Thank you! (We're still accepting your excess cocoons until January 15th.) [Learn more.](#)

Expand gardeners raising bees

- 50% more nurseries are carrying our products and message. Want to find a nursery near you? Send an email request. If your local nursery doesn't carry them yet, introduce us please.

2014 Goals:

- **Double Bee-Mail readership to 10,000**
- **Double the number of nurseries carrying mason bee products**
- **Have 30 BeeGAP speakers across North America**
- **Receive back 100,000 cocoons from BeeGAP partners across North America**
- **Introduce bumble bees to gardeners (We're thinking this one through. You may hear more about this next month.)**

Teaming with science

Mason bees have been around a long time, but research on their pollination efficiencies is just now gaining popularity in response to the troubled honey bee. Crown Bees was founded on a vision of creating healthy bees and bee-safe products to protect our food supply. Science was and continues to be part of our ongoing research and activities.

Here are a few studies we are able to participate in because of the support you provide us raising bees. Your feedback and participation in our Bee BuyBack program allows us to include your excess bees in nationwide studies.

Texas: **Texas A&M** is conducting a survey from Bee-Mail readers to see how successful they are raising mason bees. (Permission was granted by readers first!)

California: Mason Bees from Utah are being used by the **Logan Bee Lab** in almond industry field trials.

Virginia: **Old Dominion University** is determining how well Utah and Virginia raised blue orchard mason bees perform in strawberry fields.

Federal Government: Project ICP, funded by a USDA grant, is in its second of 5 years analyzing managed and wild bees in Almonds, Apples, Cherries, Blueberries, and Cucurbets across the nation. This grant involves over 50 researchers and assistants from multiple government, academic, and private companies.

Washington State: Washington State University along with the Urban Bee Company are studying cavity nesting native bees in Western Washington

Education: *All science studies and schools received products discounts.* Educators interested in mason bees products, should reach out to us by email, rather than ordering from our website. Our Educational Discount Program is designed to support the efforts of research, universities, high schools and elementary schools to experiment and increase mason bee awareness.



When we are allowed to report results, we'll do so through Bee-Mail.

In our next issue...

- Spring will be here soon. How best should you locate your nesting house, nesting material, and cocoons?

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

Dave Hunter, Owner