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Spring bees are spinning cocoons

Imagine how many strands of silk each mason bee larva has to produce to completely



encase itself into a protective cocoon!

Between last month and now, your mason bee larvae finished consuming all of the available pollen/nectar, rested for a few weeks, and then began spinning his/her cocoon. Notice the black "frass" or larva poop on the outside of the cocoon. I wouldn't want that in my house either! The final cocoon is slightly pink and soft.

There will be another resting period before our bees begin to transform into adult bees through August/September. The cocoons will be very durable at this point allowing us to easily handle them.

Leafcutter activity

Many of you have purchased leafcutter bees from us. (We still have a [few orders left](#)). These bees are great summer pollinators!

About now, the bees should be developed and ready to fly. See a [recent video](#) of what a thousand or so of these bees look like emerging from their leafy cocoons!



One challenge that we occasionally hear is "the bees haven't emerged yet." How frustrating for these gardeners! The only leafcutter bees available today are the alfalfa leafcutter, which, after 29 days of exactly 84°F (29°C), the bees emerge. If it's been cooler, it takes longer. I have had a pile of cocoons on my desk for 4 weeks (at about 70°) and nothing has happened yet.

If you are concerned, carefully open one of the cocoons up and take a look at the bee's development. My bees right now are "half-formed", but not ready for pollinating... I will have to probably wait another 3 weeks or so.

I also had a customer say that after opening a few of their cocoons they found the bees all formed, but dead. I can only assume that the bees baked somehow in the hot sun. 😞 I believe a warm area, not in direct sun is now best for these bees.

My beans will be ready for these bees when they finally emerge. I wish that these gentle bees over-wintered as adults!

BeeSWeek recap

During the first week of June, Pollinator Support Movement and Crown Bees brought together a band of experts from across the country to create 4 panels discussing a variety of topics on bees. It was professionally recorded with two cameras, lighting, great sound equipment, etc.

- **State of the BeeS** ~ here we discussed what's going on with all bees around us; honey, bumble, leafcutter, mason, and wild bees. Diseases, pests, chemicals, lack of habitat, etc. were impacting them all.
- **Commercial Pollinators** ~ it was unbelievably interesting to hear the differences and challenges that each of the groups face. How the bees are owned, rented, transported, and cared for were openly discussed.
- **Farmers (Gardeners) and pollination** ~ What does the farmer have to do to get their crops pollinated? How does it differ between organic and "normal" fields? We quickly realized that a gardener with a tomato plant was a farmer!
- **BeeGAP and the gardener** ~ This was an eye opening discussion! Who tells us that yards should have perfectly uniform and green lawns with a few flowers on the

side? Who tells us what's a pest and why? The understanding of what a beautiful yard *should be* was equally interesting.

The next step is new to me. We're helping produce each panel into a DVD and have that available for sale. (Those that contributed will receive a free copy). How does one shrink 6 hours into four, 45 minute chapters? We'll try to keep the most interesting questions/responses for your viewing.

Each panelist, after each session, said "This has to get to the honey bee keepers", or "Man, the extension services need to see these.", or "What we just talked about was vital to be heard by all!", or "Each garden club needs to get a copy of this. It will take a few meetings to hear it all..."

We didn't receive all funding and are still looking for support to pay for the plane fares and hotel stays. To donate, [please visit here](#).

A safe bee haven looks like what?

Bees need a few essential elements, most of which are already in your yard. However, this is a reminder!

Clumps of pollen, about 3'x3' is a bee attractant. Individual flowers aren't that exciting to a bee.

Pollen is available from March through September.

Toxic yards are really not healthy for any living creature. A balanced yard has pests and beneficial insects side-by-side. When you kill the pests, the beneficial bugs die with them. When the pests show up again, your yard is defenseless.



Broad spectrum insecticides are an absolute death to all insects. Please tell this to your friends, family, and neighbors.

Here's what we're recommending to all people looking to create a bee haven:

1. Plant one native flower that is appropriate for your zone. Talk with a nursery.
2. Grow one food. A tomato? One bean plant? A fruit tree?
3. Throw away one chemical. Don't give it away. Dispose of in a hazardous recycling place if possible.
4. Try raising solitary bees.

Our most popular FaceBook post of all talked about clover in our lawns. [Read about it](#).

If you see this bee...



This is a European Wool Carder.

Although it might be considered invasive, and now naturalized in North America, it's quite interesting.

Back when we all sheared our sheep and "carded the wool" to straighten it out, that's what this cavity nesting female does to down off flowers. She flies with the down and stuffs it into mason bee tubes and other holes. The down is the "mud" that she packs her gathered pollen/nectar into and lays her egg gently in the mass. (She'll use a normal sized mason bee hole.)

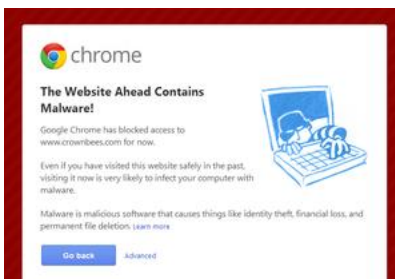
The males in this species are bigger than the females and live 6 weeks. They are really nasty to other bees flying in their small "owned" 10' x 10' area. If another bee gets within this turf, he smashes/squashes them with his three-pronged abdomen in mid-flight. Of course, he lets the female wool carder into this turf with open arms.

Is this a bad bee? It IS invasive, but there's not much we can do about it. They do pollinate, and the males are good pollinators as well. I don't believe a human should have any concerns with getting stung. The bees are solitary, and thus gentle. ...unless you're an innocent bee flying through HIS space.

The joy of getting hacked...

About two weeks ago, our website crownbees.com, was hacked into by someone in Russia. Not only did he/they pull down our website, but Google Chrome, Microsoft IE, and a few others wouldn't show our bug-ridden site at all. (Which is a good thing!)

Many dollars later, it's now fixed, but we have about 50,000 hits per day on our website from that same person(s) trying to hack it again. 😊



As a result, we're shifting our website to another "host" and are actively rebuilding it again. Our shopping cart will be much better.

Stay tuned!

What you missed in Facebook...

You're really missing out if you don't follow us in [facebook](#), [twitter](#), or [pinterest](#). I should be blogging, but most of my daily thoughts on the world are there for you to read and share.

Here are a few topics we covered:

- Why is clover considered bad?
- Wilsonville bumble bee analysis
- My yard taking that "first step"
- Chemicals... they do a lot of damage to our bees
- Links to a few great articles

In our next issue...

- A new partnership that will increase the awareness of mason bees
- Discussion of what else is flying around you

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

Dave Hunter, Owner