



July 2014 Bee-Mail 



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

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Our website is being rewritten again...

- Why, what's different, and when will it be available

Spring Mason Bee Activity

What's going on?



Your cute little larva are spinning cocoons, or have finished and are pausing in their development cycle.

In this picture to the right, the upper left larva started spinning a few hours before this photo. Note the little black pellet on the freshly spun silk. That's larva poop that he/she didn't want inside its home. I wouldn't either...

Upper right finished her cocoon the day before and is slightly pink. Upper middle finished her cocoon the week earlier... and that is much darker. As the bees mature, we'll see the color darken significantly!



One of our mason bee producers in the NW sent back their “full” wood trays to us. “Sorry about the woodpecker damage...”

In general, we don’t plan woodpeckers, flickers, and other beautiful birds finding our bees until AFTER the damage has occurred.

Please take your developing bees out of the environment and keep them safely tucked into a shed/garage, etc. where the bees will be subjected to normal temperatures.

The [BeeGuardian bag](#) that we sell is a great stop to insects, but would not stand up to a sharp beak...



Summer Leafcutters

Mark Drake, one of our new leafcutter customers, wrote:

“Hi,

I would like to extend my purest thanks to all at Crown Bees. I never thought I would (or could) appreciate nature more than I already did.

Watching the Leafcutters get going has been truly amazing. When I captured this photo I thought I would not witness anything better... *(first photo below)*

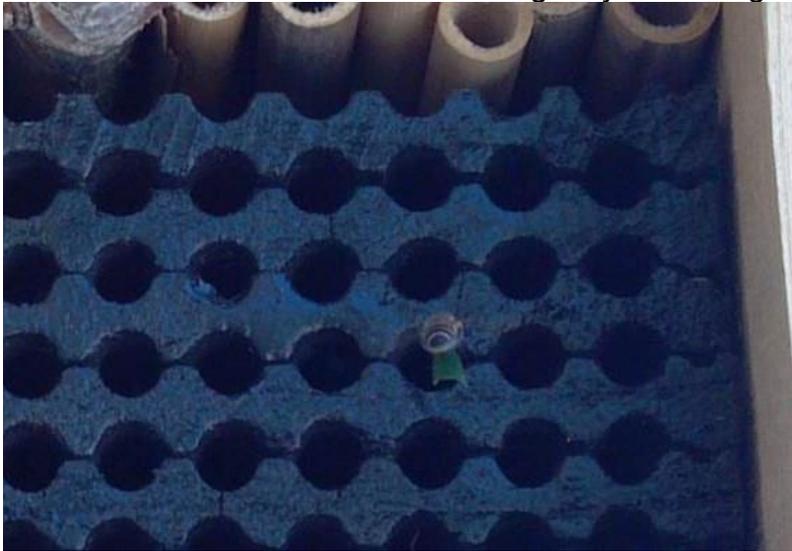
But then something far greater happened....

The zip file is a collection of photos cropped out of some high res photos. I'm sorry they are not better, I only had my camera phone.

They are of a newly emerged female doing her mating dance....and the male that brings it full circle.

Again, thanks to all at Crown Bees for enlightening me.”

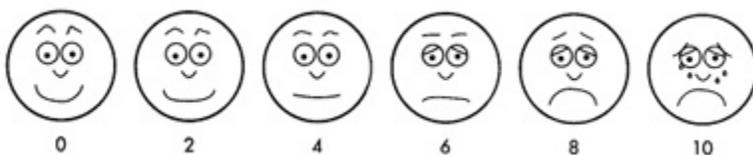
Emails like this make what we're doing very rewarding!





We also learned a really great lesson in leafcutters. Nearly everyone of your peers are buying the [leafcutter premies](#). We've done all of the incubation for you and the bees are nearly ready to fly once you receive them. Our [complete kits](#) are still available, or just change out your spring mason bee nesting material for one of leafcutter set of holes. We also have the [small wood leafcutter trays](#) that fit into the BeeAdventure!

How gentle are bumble bees?



If a mason bee is a “1” on the gentle to aggressive scale and a Africanized Killer Bee is a “10”, I’d place honey bees somewhere between a 6-7 and bumble bees between a 3-6 depending on the species and time of day.

With social insects, I believe a healthy hive, well fed, and not stressed by heat, noise, or vibrations are less likely to be aggressive. In sophisticated hives, like the honey bee with 25-30,000 bees, there are bees whose only job is to patrol a hive and repel inquisitive or aggressive animals/insects. (That shows a well run organization!)

In less sophisticated species with far lower numbers (100-200 bees), there are no patrols... rather all workers are just gathering pollen/nectar or taking care of the hive & young. Bumble bees, if provoked with a stick or shaking of a house will come out to defend things. However, in general, they’re fairly gentle.

With *Bombus impatiens*, the eastern bumble bee that we carry, I understand it is a fairly non-aggressive species. However, I would also locate bees in as a stress-free area as possible. You want your bees pollinating, not worrying about where the next attack may be coming from.

Stress-free = in afternoon shade, an open area, probably not near a loud speaker blaring rock and roll. Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov’s *flight of the bumble bee* might be allowable? 😊



Photo of Meg Birney’s yard. (Note the BumbleBarn on the left and leafcutter Chalet on the right.) Perfect!

Other Hole-Nesters

With more and more gardeners learning that there are other bees buzzing other than honey and bumble bees, we receive a lot of “what do you think this is?” pictures. I’m sorry to report that in most cases, we can only help you think through:

- Social/solitary
- Ground nester/hole nester
- Bee/Wasp/Hornet

Later, as we learn more from active teammates, we’ll be able to help more.

Today, we’re learning with you. When you see something going into one of your holes, take a picture. Send the picture to us and help us understand where you live, when the picture was taken, and what nesting medium it was using. (mud, grass, leaf bits, etc.)

We’ll be compiling these pictures and have them on our website at some point. The more we learn about nature around us, the wiser we’ll be in making decisions with our yards.

Growing A Greener World with Joe Lamp’l



I had the honor of teaming with Joe Lamp'1, host of *Growing A Greener World*, to teach his viewers about mason bees.

This show will air on PBS this July 26th. We were able to view an advanced copy and were extremely impressed with what they produced.

I learned a few lessons:

- I'll never be an actor!
- Thank goodness for takes and retakes. I think Carl (camera expert on left) was getting a bit exasperated with "Take 38" on one segment. 😊
- Working with professionals is very rewarding. Joe pulled a great script together after a few calls. Joe's personality brings out the best in all people he works with. Carl is truly an expert in both camera work and editing.
- Even though I feel hair on top of my head, I'm still bald.

You hopefully know our mission: *Help the backyard gardeners (you) be successful raising mason bees enough so that we can shift your extra cocoons to other gardeners and orchards in your region.*

We need your help in spreading the word about mason bees to your friends, family, clubs, and work mates. Within 7 years, our goal is to have 1 million gardeners actively producing excess cocoons. It's a big goal, but our food supply will demand this.

If you have time, look at this [link](#) and find out when the show airs in your TV network. When I saw our Seattle schedule this morning, I found that the 26th isn't published yet. We'll have a link on our website on the 28th of July.

Please help your friends learn about gentle mason bees. Better yet, encourage them to raise them!

Crown Bees.com... Version 5 is coming up!

Due to Joe's PBS show airing this month, we're confident our website will break due to the volume of traffic that will hit it. Thus, we're rewriting it again. This time, we've reached out to experts rather than trust that I know how to design a website. We've reached out to experts with "user interface" skills and will have our site hosted on a server that is significantly more robust than what we have today.

By the end of this month you will see a very differently written website.

- The entire Bee School will be on one page with some really neat features.
- The speed of the site will be fast. Loading pages will be fast.
- We believe that entry level mason bee users will learn quickly. Experienced users (many of you) will still be able to find things to learn with relative ease.
- You'll find more options to become involved with correcting what we're doing to our planet.

We'll continue to expand what we're doing. We'll have a student site, a farmer site, and also a rewritten wholesale site for nurseries by end of the year.

My team and I are feverishly thinking through exactly what's needed, where, and how to word it succinctly. The experts are laying out the web design and infrastructure... It is fun working with teammates who care.

Stay tuned!

In our next issue...

- What's going on with our cocoon spinning bees
- Mason Bees will be highlighted on PBS...

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

Dave Hunter, Owner