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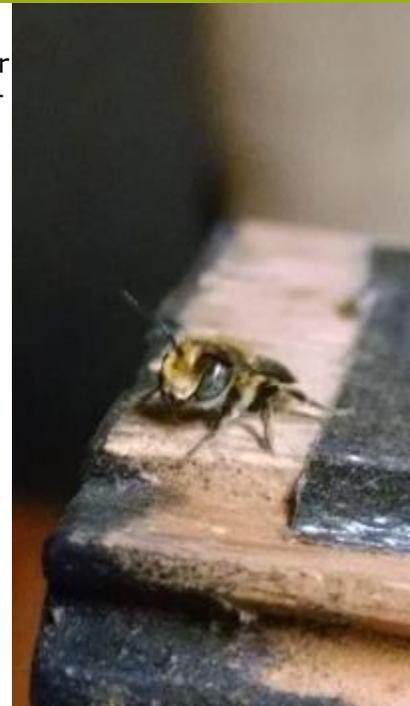
Mason and leafcutter bee activities

Your spring mason bees have all perished, their eggs have hatched, eaten the pollen/nectar provided for them, spun their cocoons, and are now sitting still in a dormant stage lasting 1-2 months before they begin their development into adult bees in August/September.

Leafcutters are **BUSY BEES** just now. I have their house near my garden and find the bees on my zucchini and peas. We may have a few too many zucchinis this month. Any takers?

We'll carry these [gentle bees](#) through early August.

We find people asking us what the difference between mason and leafcutter bees is. Here are my thoughts:



	Mason Bees	Leafcutter Bees
When available:	Spring	May-early August
Size:	Medium	Smaller
Aggressiveness:	Gentle	Gentle
Lives how long:	4-6 weeks	4-6 weeks
Nesting separator:	clayey mud	Cut out leaf circles

Afraid of people?:	Not really	Slightly timid
What they pollinate:	Most all flowers	Most all flowers
Overwinter as:	Adults in cocoons	Larva in leafy cocoons

What else is nesting in your tubes?

About 130+ species of North American solitary bees and wasps use holes to nest in. Here's an email we received recently from Jen and Bob in Northeast Ohio.

Hi Dave/Crown Bees,

Hi from Northeast Ohio!! I had a solitary wasp use some of my reeds this year. I believe it is some kind of potter wasp, best guess from Bugguide.net as a Ancistrocerus gazelle?, Vespid /Eumeniae family, European introduced beneficial solitary wasp, Potter/Mason Wasps.

Here's a picture (left) of the wasp carrying a caterpillar into a reed (I marked the ones the wasp used).

Jen



The right picture (by *Cirrisimage.com*) is a bit clearer of the wasp.

She wasn't sure when the wasps came out as she had placed all nesting holes into a BeeGuardian bag for protection and found several of the wasps had emerged.

What other bees/wasps are using your holes? Wasps have no hair on their bodies as they aren't carrying pollen, but parasitized insects. Remember that having smaller AND larger holes will have both large and small beneficial insects using your nesting holes. We carry the [pollinator pack](#) with a wide variety of hole sizes if you're interested in exploring what other bees/wasps may nest in your yard.

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A free giveaway!

Farmer's Almanac, one of our supporting partners, is hosting a giveaway of our new Cabin, twin small wood trays and leafcutters bees.

Click the link below to enter to win. Good luck to you all!

[Farmer's Almanac giveaway](#)



Congratulations to Jessica C. and Tracy P. for winning products in June on the [BeeWithMe Facebook page](#). (We'll be giving away more products here monthly.)

Permaculture... a lesson in what's natural

Imagine that you take a 3 year trip to visit an aunt in Iowa and upon returning, you are able to walk into your back yard and gather food that you planted before leaving on your trip. No one else tended or watered your gardens while you were gone. This is possible through permaculture.

I had the pleasure of visiting and speaking at a permaculture design course last week in Missoula, Montana. My topics were "why we need pollination" and "how to pollinate with mason bees and other native bees." Speaking was easy, but more importantly, I was able to listen, observe and question a neat bunch of people in the permaculture community.

Paul Wheaton, founder of [permies.com](#), is known as the "Duke of dirt" for a good reason. Never have I encountered someone so in tune with the science of observing nature and blending our growing/living practices to maximize our planet's resources with minimal impact.



While there, I took a few hot showers where the water was heated by running water hose through a huge compost pile. The internal temperature of decomposing organics heated the water nicely! Here's an [example](#) (left picture) of the principle I found on the internet.

Bill Mollison, whom Paul feels is "one of the greats of the permaculture world", provides this definition:

Permaculture is a philosophy of working with, rather than against nature; of protracted & thoughtful observation rather than protracted & thoughtless action; of looking at systems in all their functions rather than asking only one yield of them & of allowing systems to demonstrate their own evolutions.

I'm an engineer by degree, and really like the fact that we can work with nature rather than against it. How efficient! I aim to learn many of the simple principles so that as we build out

BeeWithMe, we'll be able to help gardeners and farmers adjust practices to be wiser with water, soil and food.



Here's one last concept that had me studying it closely. **We don't need to water our gardens to grow food if we follow hugelkultur.**

Through creating a berm with wood/logs buried in it, the moisture and heat from the deteriorating wood keeps the pile perfectly suited for plants within the correct growing zone.

Paul's website, permies.com has one of the finest permaculture forums in the internet. It's well organized, well followed,

and very useful. Paul's contributors are wonderful teachers within the forums.

Permies also has a unique honey bee setup. They keep the honey bees elevated for the hive health and insulate it with hay bales in the cold winters. The yellow insulators on the corner posts are part of a solar powered electric fence that keeps black bears away from the hives. A year after building... no issues!



Learning lessons from researchers

Crown Bees is part of a co-op to pollinate orchards with mason bees. Our intent is to be consistent with what we say to the farmers, how we raise the bees, and how the bees should be used in the orchards.

Through consistency, we're able to find flaws and nuances in our practices between cherries in California vs. Washington, or when pollinating pears and kiwis using mason bees.

Our problem:

In many orchards bees were pulled from refrigeration and placed into PVC release tubes for a 2-5 days. Whether we were in late February or March, the bees didn't emerge that well. The bees were all healthy, but didn't emerge from the cocoons in time to pollinate during "peak bloom." We really scratched our heads over this.

Solution:

In a conference call with Dr. William Kemp (USDA/ARS/Fargo Bee Lab) and Dr. Theresa Pitt-Singer (USDA/ARS/Logan Bee Lab), we learned a really simple lesson on mason bee physiology after only 5 minutes into the call.

Mason bees, as they finish developing into adult bees within their cocoons, absorb nutrition from stored carbohydrates. For about three or so weeks *after* they've reached the adult stage, they transition to absorbing nutrition from stored fats, which they consume slowly until spring. (I didn't know this.) If you shift them too quickly from "finished adult" into a refrigerated environment, this three week transition period is interrupted and the bees don't emerge quickly when faced with warm temperatures in the spring. My peers and I didn't understand this transition period and placed our bees into refrigeration way too quickly.

The bees were healthy, but were slow to emerge. We're changing our "winterizing" process and will be passing this information to the farmers who now have mason bees. As a result of collaborating with our peers and research teammates, we're a step closer to being able to help our regional farmers be more successful using this wonderful pollinator.

How this impacts you:

I have rewritten information on our website to reflect these changes. We'll tell you in the October BeeMail to not place your bees into a refrigerator until November.

My personal lesson:

Nature does things right. When we modify nature's processes, we can make errors. Before altering what's natural, we need to ask "why are we doing this step?" and really think it through.

Million Pollinator Gardens

A large group of influential nonprofit organizations have teamed together to create a wonderful project. It's called the [Million Pollinator Garden Challenge](#).

Here's what it's about:

The Million Pollinator Garden Challenge (MPGC) is a nationwide call to action to preserve and create gardens and landscapes that help revive the health of bees, butterflies, birds, bats and other pollinators across America. We will move millions of individuals, kids and families outdoors and make a connection between pollinators and the healthy food people eat.



It is wonderful to see the awareness of pollination spread. We hope to support their needs in any capacity possible.

Through their website, you'll be able to add your yard on a map to show that you care.

What I see in news each day...

I scan for the word "bee" in an internet alert each day to see who's saying what. By doing this, I'm able to understand the big picture of bees, comment where appropriate, and forward relevant links on Facebook and Twitter.

Sadly, about three quarters of the "bee news" every day is negative. (*I find a lot of sports teams with bee in their name...*) Here are headlines from Wednesday/Thursday last week:

- [Mother stranded in forest gives birth, fights bees, survives on apples](#)
- [Texas Farmer "Shredded" to Death by Goddamn Bees](#)
- [Why are bees dying in Pettygrove Park?](#)
- [Escaped bees in Wichita](#)
- [Un-bee-lievable scenes in Dublin as bees buzz for new home](#)
- [Bees are literally worrying themselves to death. Fascinating read on ...](#)
- [Bees catcher Bandy named to Triple-A All-Star roster](#)
- [Colony of Over 15000 'Aggressive and Dangerous' Bees Takes Over Family's Home](#)
- [Why saving the honey bees may be necessary for everyday life](#)
- [Bees spilled along Washington-Idaho border expected to die](#)
- [Swarm Season Brings Throngs Of Bees To City, Suburbs Alike](#)
- [Bees invade disabled veteran's home in east Houston](#)
- [The secret work life of bees](#)
- [Texas Farmer Killed After Tractor Disturbs Bee Hive](#)
- [Bees keep Bartlett workers at bay](#)

Wow!!!

With this type of news shouting at the everyday reader/viewer, I can understand the fear many people have about bees. I also see that people could be dejected by issues continually impacting our honey bees.

What can you and I do to change opinions? Actually, quite a bit. When you hear bad or sad news about honey bees, this provides you an opportunity to help people learn that:

- 90% of the worldwide bees are solitary, and therefore are gentle.
- There are better, more efficient, less aggressive pollinators available than the honey bee... share your own bee raising experiences!

Slow and steady *positive* messaging will hopefully open peoples' eyes and minds to an optimistic future involving solitary bees. I choose to look to the future with hope.

BeeWithMe Update



Behind the scenes, we're busy working on the web "framework", or the coding that makes the BeeWithMe website work.

While meeting with Paul Wheaton's permaculture team last week, I was able to borrow his class one evening for a brainstorming session in their barn. I asked "what simple topics should every gardener from California to Quebec consider when analyzing their yard's health?"

Here are topics we came up with:

- Growing food
- Composting
- Reducing toxins
- Reducing water usage
- Raising bees and encourage other beneficial insects
- Reducing lawn size



I believe this will be useful. In BeeWithMe, we will promote global earth-friendly changes in both your yard and your community. We will develop simple self-assessment actions with each of these topics.

If you're interested in helping me develop these topics, send me an email (info@crowbees.com) and I'll coordinate a time to talk with you. This is really important and I want to get it right.

In our next issue...

- We'll introduce bats as pollinators
- BeeWithMe update

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

Dave Hunter, Owner

For archives of previous editions click on [Crown Bees Newsletter Archives](#)