



Learning to Do What's Natural



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What's in this Issue:

1. NIFA Meeting: Inform the USDA about Native Bees
2. Tips and Reminders - Summer Leafcutter Bees
3. Tips and Reminders - Spring Mason Bees
4. Bee Defender is Here!
5. Farm Testimonials from Tennessee
6. Listen to Our Interview on the Survival Podcast
7. Celebrate the 4th of July with Leafcutter Bees

Please read, click to our online comment page, and comment.

Dave attended the USDA-NIFA listening session on Native Bee Monitoring and needs your help.

Hi Reader!

First, it was quite fun to walk the halls of our nation's USDA headquarters. In particular, as I walked through their cafeteria walking to the rear conference room, there were really cool signs on the wall talking about sugar in our prepared food, why balanced

meals matter, etc. These are the people that created those words and cared about what they meant. Maybe a trivial point, but it awed me nonetheless.

Second, the leaders from NIFA, ARS, National Forest Service, and other groups actually cared about what was said. They wanted input from those willing to travel and speak, from those that were on the call, or those that will write in comments. In talking with the manager running the event, he said that he and the team read every single comment. Wow.

My third observation was that most input about the native bees to date was from researchers, not gardeners or farmers. As a result, my discussion and comments were seemingly different than what they had heard in the past. *A simple voice at a meeting can alter what we may do to monitor and manage our vital bees in this country.* That observation made the cost of the flights and hotels worthwhile.

I hope that I represented you at this session. If you've been following Crown Bees for a while or are new, I hope you understand our energy and direction is to protect the ecology around us not by just words, but through action. Your action to raise bees is part of this vital mission. Food matters, and bees are the primary pollinators for most of our nutritional food. Native bees pollinate significantly better than honey bees. This session is part of that national change in understanding their value.

Please do me a favor. Click [here](#) or on the picture of me below. It will take you to our website for a quick survey. You can choose to watch what I said, or skip that and look at the words in a survey for you to just agree/disagree with and comment if you feel moved to do so.

On July 11th, I'll download all comments and forward them to the USDA for their review. I hope to be included on this committee in the future.

I will be reaching out to many people that I met or heard on the call. There potentially is \$75 million already in the current Farm Bill set aside for monitoring of bees. I will look to steer this money to various universities and ARS labs to begin looking for our nation's hole-nesting bees. From there...(watch my video)

Please pass this [link](#) to as many of your gardening friends as possible. It would be great to have 5,000 of our 25,000 followers comment!



The listening session asked for input on these three questions. I gave a bit more insight of what we're actively doing on the end of talk.

1. Why is a national monitoring plan for native bees important;
2. What kind of information/data is needed; and
3. How would the information be used?

~ Dave Hunter, Owner, Crown Bees

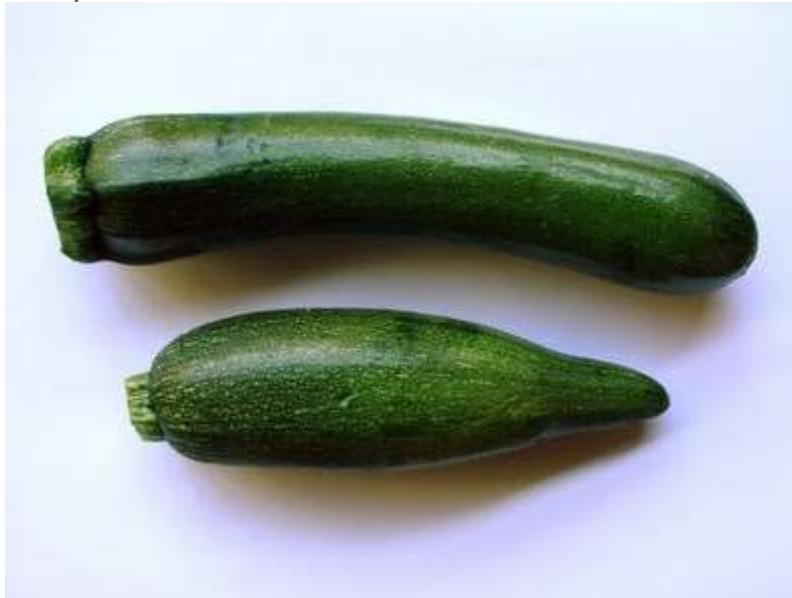
Tips and Reminders - *Summer Leafcutter Bees*



Leafcutter Bees: Summer Farm & Garden Pollinators!

We've spoken with several farmers this summer... "what crops are you placing your leafcutter bees on?"

Leafcutter bees are not picky and they will pollinate everything that is within about 300ft of their bee house. Summer leafcutter bees are perfect pollinators of **squash, tomatoes, peppers, peas, and melons!** Below is a photo shared with us by Dr. Jim Cane of the USDA-ARS program, it shows what an under-pollinated zucchini looks like below a well-pollinated zucchini. Leafcutter bees will help your garden yield LOOK better!



Our leafcutter bees fly best in warm summer weather when daytime temperatures are consistently above 75°F. Choose your leafcutter bee shipment to match when your garden's crops start blooming.

Setting out nesting materials for leafcutter bees. Reusable wooden trays (6mm holes) should be placed as far back in the bee house as possible. Loose 6mm nesting holes should be arranged a little haphazardly, if possible. Spray our [Invitabee](#) (it really does work well) for leafcutter bees onto the front of the nesting materials and wait a few minutes before placing out leafcutter cocoons.

Releasing leafcutter cocoons. It's easy and only takes a minute. Leafcutter bees arrive in a small mesh bag, place the bag into the fridge for 10 minutes to calm any emerged bees. Put the bag on top of 6mm nesting holes or in the attic of your bee house. Gently open the top a bit. Watch this [quick video](#) to see how easy it is to set up and release leafcutter bees.



Tips and Reminders - *Spring Mason Bees*



If your mason bee season is late, you can read our [BeeMail](#) archives to follow our previous tips and reminders.

Remove filled nesting holes. You should protect the filled nesting materials from birds, ants, and parasitic wasps by removing the filled nesting materials. Place filled nesting materials with the capped end facing up inside of a [BeeGuardian](#) bag. Ants and parasitic wasps cannot get through the fine mesh material. Keep filled nesting material in a location that has similar warm temperatures to the outdoor weather, like an unheated garage or garden shed. Mason bee larvae need the warm summer weather as they feed and develop.

- For reusable wooden nesting trays: Wait until all female bee activity has stopped before removing and protecting.
- For reeds and cardboard tubes: remove each filled nesting hole as they are completed. Wait until after dusk, this will help any remaining nesting female to reorient to the look of her new home in the morning. Store loose reeds and tubes capped end facing up inside of a jar or box within the BeeGuardian bag.

Update on our mason bee development! We have a special observation nesting tube in our office and we've been checking in on the larvae's growth. The mason bees are pretty quiet right now since every larva has spun their cocoon. Currently they are in the waiting stage before they start metamorphosis. This is a delay phase before they start to pupate. You can still see the white bit of larva body sticking out of one end of the cocoon, this is where their heads will form that nipple-shaped side of the cocoon.



Identifying mono, the parasitic wasp.



Monodontomerus, also known as mono, is a parasitic wasp that may have laid eggs in the mason bee larvae last summer. Today, they will lay eggs through the weak spot on the side of a tube, a small crack in a reed, or even through the end of a mud cap. In a few



weeks, they'll emerge again to do more damage. The [Bee Defender](#) is our best solution to stop this.



Bee Defender is Here!

Have you seen monodontomerus or pteromalus wasps flying around your bee house? Do you want a new way to protect your bees from these parasitic wasps?



Parasitic wasps and other pests are attracted to the same pheromone that attracts solitary bees to their nest. Knowing this fact, we've designed a scented lure that attracts the pests into glue traps, while fine netting prevents the bees themselves from entering. The Bee Defender comes with two glue traps, two lures for mono wasps, two lures for pteromalus wasps, and one fine net bag. Depending on which bees are flying, set up the lure that you need and put it near your bee house.

For mason bee nesting materials that are capped and in your BeeGuardian bag, we suggest placing one glue trap with the black mason bee lure (no netting needed) into your BeeGuardian bag. Your larvae are spinning cocoons and are not going to interact with the trap. Any mono wasps that attacked your nesting materials will be trapped in the glue. Or you can save this glue trap for use next spring.

Here's a [video](#) showing how to use the Bee Defender.



For leafcutter bees, set up the glue trap, green lure, and net bag and place near your bee house. In three weeks, place the second green lure into the glue trap to refresh your attractant's scent. Pteromalus wasps emerge at the same time as our leafcutter bees from their cocoon and the Bee Defender will protect your bees for several weeks.

Our BeeWithMe Facebook Group is hosting a giveaway of 2 Bee Defender kits. Enter the [contest here](#), ends July 5th, 2017.

Farm Testimonials from Tennessee

Jay Williams, our Director of Farming Operations, has been introducing farms across the country to our gentle hole-nesting bees. Here are two stories of farms in Tennessee that are excited to see the benefits of Crown Bees on their flowers.

1. Green Door Gourmet, Nashville, TN

Here at Green Door Gourmet, we take our pollinators very seriously! Since certain crops are better pollinated by various species of bees, we are thrilled to have not only the glamorous honey bee, working hard here at Green Door Gourmet, but also the lesser known but still amazing mason and leafcutter bees. The mason bees are especially handy at pollinating strawberries. Since we farmed 9 acres of strawberries this year, that is a very important job at our farm. When it's time for the mason bees to relax, the leafcutters come into action, taking care of pollination of many of our summer crops. Green Door Gourmet has certainly seen the results of what hard working pollinators can do for farmers!



2. Stoney Creek Farm, Franklin, TN

When Jay Williams approached us about a pollination test for solitary bees (mason & leafcutter bees), we didn't really know what to expect, but he made it very easy. Jay basically did all the work and we reaped all the benefits. One bee house was in the area of our U-Pick Community Garden and the other bee house was in our rental gardens. Jay placed approximately 1,000 leafcutter cocoons and bees at each bee house for the test.

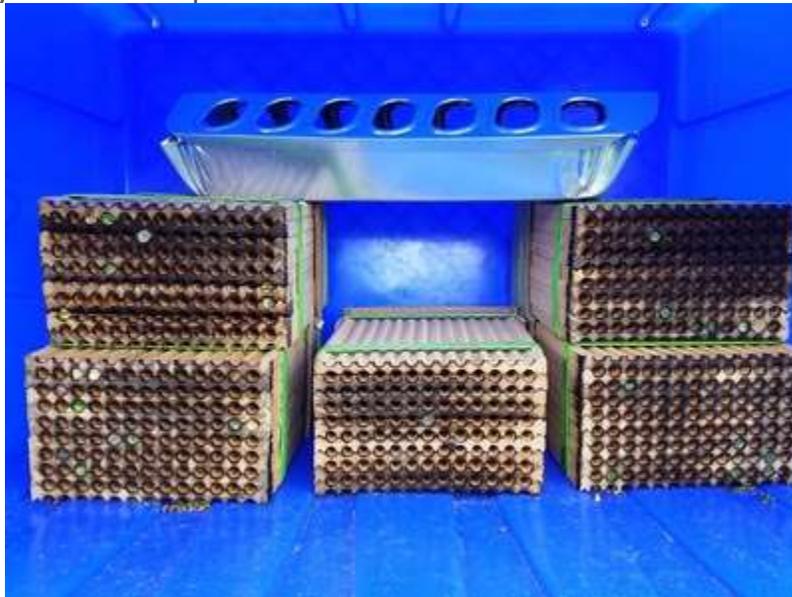


He placed the bees in early June and we have never seen anything like it before! We are only estimating, but feel that they at least tripled our pollination rate. We began to feel overwhelmed because we do not have a large enough staff to keep up with the production of vegetables we were picking every day...much more than in the previous 5 years we have been open. We started out with 6 rows of green

beans and we were not able to pick all of the green beans on two of the rows before they got dry on the vine, there were just so many beans. We are determined next year to be more prepared because we lost a lot of veggies, we just couldn't harvest it all!

We sold more squash, zucchini, tomatoes, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbage, and berries than any previous year we have been open and we feel it is due in a large part to the increased pollination of the leafcutter bees.

We opened the garden in mid-June and closed in 6 weeks, 2 weeks earlier than usual. Increased pollination may have played a part, but the heat and excessive rain definitely accelerated plant deterioration.



Even though we closed two weeks earlier than usual, we still increased our sales 35% above 2015 (and 2015 was higher than any previous year). We had more produce than we could sell, so we also donated almost 1,000 pounds of produce (estimated worth of \$1,000) to OneGenAway (www.onegenaway.com) which distributes food throughout our community to the needy and homeless. We felt very blessed this year!

Needless to say, we ordered our own box of leafcutter bees for the 2017 season and are looking forward to another great pollination season.

Listen to Our Interview on the Survival Podcast

The Survival Podcast: [Link Here](#)



It was truly an honor to have been invited onto the show with Jack Spirko. As an avid listener of his, when we received his interest to have us a part of it, the feeling was overjoyed. Jack helps to educate the public on everyday useful tips of small transformations in lifestyle and habit to ensure a healthier quality of life and one in which becomes full of knowledge of solutions of survival. It was great to be able to speak to his listeners about the importance of providing native bee habitats for ecological balanced environments and as important, increase food production in our gardens and farms. I'm looking forward to another invite to his show.

~Charlie Mohr, aka The Bee Guy

Celebrate the 4th of July with Leafcutter Bees!



Leafcutter bees are on sale for \$29.95 for 100 cocoons, June 30 through July 7, 2017. Replenish your leafcutter stock or give these gentle hole-nesting beauties a try this summer for pollinating your squash, tomatoes, and pepper plants!

Have a happy and safe Fourth of July!



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