Crown Bees
Your complete Mason Bee Resource

June 2013 Bee-Mail

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Shifting from one bee to another! Tips for success!

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Pollinator Support Movement needs your help!

We need your financial support please.

Until next week, there has been only news on the honey bee decline. Although this is very important and a huge worldwide food issue, it is equally important to begin looking towards alternatives.

In Albuquerque on Monday & Tuesday (3/4 June), Pollinator Support Movement and I have coordinated 4 distinct panels to wrestle with questions that haven't been publically discussed ever. The focus is to consider pollinator alternative solutions for our future food supply.

The panels will unwrap topics and have these available for media to experience. Gardeners need to hear from the media that there are wild bees that can be easily raised in their yard and used for our food supply pollination. The panels are each 1.5 hours and will be recorded for private viewing later. *We may have live footage as well, though that last detail is being worked out this week.* If you are local to Albuquerque, tickets are available here.

- **State of the BeeS Address**. How are the bees in our farms and orchards really doing? Honey bees, bumble bees, leafcutters, and mason bees. What's going right, what needs improvements, where should there be additional research conducted?
- **An Analysis of 4 Bee Industries**. Honey, bumble, mason, and leafcutter; how is each industry run, and what are the peculiarities of the bee that has us managing them adequately today? What might work better for each industry resulting in healthier bees, good pollination, and profit for all?
- **A discussion of today's practices from the perspectives of the farmer and the pollinating contractor**. Today, most farmers rely upon outside expertise for pest and chemical control. If the

farmer uses a bee other than the honey, many current practices will kill off all other bees. Here, we'll debate alternative practices.

- **BeeGAP as a keystone home garden solution**. Is it possible for the gardener (you) to assist your regional farmer with pollinators? What will it take to change this paradigm? Are there other solutions? What might we modify within BeeGAP to ensure our food supply has alternatives?

Panelists include:

- Dr. Steve Peterson (Researcher, pollinator with leafcutter, honey, and mason bees)
- Paul Wheaton (Founder of Permies, master gardener, The Duke of Dirt)
- Dr. Valerie Solheim (Researcher with honey bees high energy zones)
- Carole Sevilla Brown (Natural wildlife and habitats for pollinators expert)
- Suzanne Wainwright (Beneficial insects expert, Buglady Consulting)
- Sean Ludden (Organic NM farmer)
- Dr. Bruce Milne (Dir. of UNM Sustainability Studies Program)
- Denise Qualls (Owner, Pollinator Connection and expert with honey bee industry)
- Thomas Urrea (Honey bee contractor understanding organic methodology)
- Shirley Tretreault (National Garden Club New Mexico President)
- Dave Hunter (Owner of Crown Bees, OBA President, BeeGAP founder)

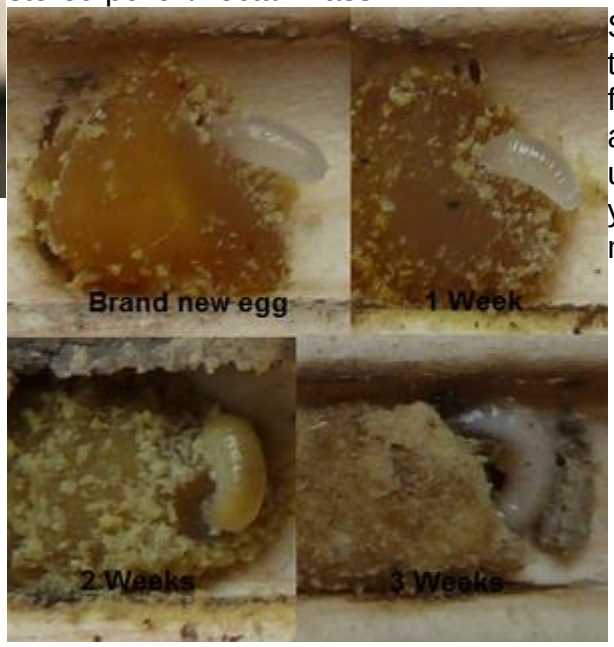
To get these visitors from various parts of the country is not cheap. I need your support in gathering about $8,000 to reimburse their flights and hotel costs as well as camera/media support at UNM. **Please consider supporting this program today**. We expect PSM (in application right now) to be a non-profit business by August. Crown Bees has a variety of means available to accept your donation. All donations will be provided with a link to these recorded 4 panels as well as additional keynote speakers (Paul Wheaton and Valerie Solheim).
Although this is a small request, your donation is extremely important. Thank you for supporting this.

What your bees are doing now

For most of North America, this is the time of year for the torch to be passed on for our spring mason bees. Our pollinating females should be about complete with filling in their last holes.

All bees live about 6 weeks excluding a few social queens like the honey and bumble bees. Their wings can flap only so many times before they become frayed and torn. I find it amazing how many thousands of flowers, fruits, and nuts these gentle bees have pollinated!

Each of our mason bee queens has laid many eggs over their short life. The eggs have already hatched (they hatch within a week) and are busily consuming the stored pollen/nectar mass.



Surprisingly, the larvae are fairly robust and unlike an urban myth you may have heard, they can be moved quite easily.

See the next section!

Protecting your developing bees!

About now, the parasitic wasp begins to emerge from their hiding place. Typically, that means they are located in mason bee cocoons that they hijacked early last summer.

If you have ANY cocoons unhatched right now,**THROW THEM AWAY.** There are quite a few pests that you want to protect your developing bees from. The parasitic wasp, carpet beetles, ants, birds, and any other creature looking for quick treat. We recommend placing your developing mason bee larva in a fine mesh bag like our BeeGuardian. Its tough fabric which will stop most insects. Gently store your completed tubes and reeds in the bag and place it someplace where the temperatures are similar to “normal” temperatures around you. Thus, a garage, shed, or back porch will be fine.

We want the bees to adjust to your local temperatures. Super-hot temperatures aren’t normal. If you can keep the high temperature lower than mid-nineties, that would be best.

What cavity nesting bee is around you now?

There are over 130 cavity nesting bees in North America. A cavity nesting bee, similar to the spring mason bees, nests in a hole, but typically uses some other type of “mud”.

Many bees use chewed up leaf bits, some use tree resin, some will gather “flower down” and stuff that into holes for pest protection. The leafcutter cuts circles and carries that for her pollen/nectar/egg chamber.

We have leafcutter bees available now. A gentle solitary bee, they are general pollinators that are great for gardens. These warm-flying bees are larva now and take about 4-5 weeks to develop into adult bees. They fly best in upper 70′s°-100°.

With the chemicals that your neighbors and farmers apply, the native bees and wasps are having a tough time. I encourage you to consider your yard as an oasis for nesting bees and other beneficial insects.

What to do:

Provide habitats and see what bees/wasps uses them. We have the summer mix of tubes/reeds available. With a variety of sizes you’ll find small bees use small holes and larger bees; larger holes. You may also find beneficial solitary wasps using your holes as well… gathering caterpillars, spiders, aphids, and other bugs for their young.

Add a few pithy canes into the mix… there are a few bees that tunnel out the soft inner core to nest in.

A healthy yard has bees buzzing in it all season long!

The cherry orchard did ok…

Crown Bees conducted two trials in Eastern Washington orchards this season.

A pear tract had absolutely no bees nest in there. 10,000 mason bees vanished to all parts of the compass. We know that mason bees will pollinate pears. What went wrong? It’s very possible that the mud was not adequately available, however to have no bees nest says something else to us. Chemicals weren’t used while the bees were there… it was windy for many days, but we’re truly stumped. That was a lot of bees from yards in the Puget Sound area to just toss into the air with no results. 😆

The cherry tract (8 acres) initially didn’t do so well due to a mud issue we had. We were able to catch the mud situation before it completely failed. One challenge we have is that these orchards are a three hour drive from the Seattle area, and we don’t have adequate resources to camp there for a week to observe. We expect back about 2,000 bees from the 11,000 we placed there.

We’re interested to hear if there was a difference in pollination of the honey and mason bee tract vs. just honey bees.

What you missed in Facebook…

We're continuing to gain more followers in facebook, twitter, and pinterest. Our intent is to continually educate all gardeners about gentle solitary bees.
Here are a few topics we covered:

- Orchard information
- Various pictures of mason bees in action
- How to paint your house with mason bees
- Chemicals… they do a lot of damage to our bees
- Links to a few great articles

In our next issue…

- Recap from the Albuquerque BeeSWeek panels
- Discussion of what else if flying around you

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