



CrownBees

BeeMail Newsletter



WHAT'S IN THIS MAY 2016 ISSUE

- MONTHLY TIPS & REMINDERS - Mason bee action!
- LEAFCUTTER BEES ARE AVAILABLE NOW
- MONTHLY TIPS & REMINDERS - Leafcutter bee action!
- SUPPORT OTHER HOLE NESTERS IN YOUR YARD
- AVON LAKE ROCKS WITH NATIVE BEE SHARE PROGRAM

MASON BEE MONTHLY TIPS & REMINDERS



- **Counting full holes is fun!** Hopefully your mason bees have finished a hole or two and you've become well acquainted with these awesome pollinators. Behind each mudded-over hole is about 6-8 eggs that have been glued to the gathered pollen/nectar mass. Some of the earliest laid eggs have hatched and you now have really tiny larva consuming the food (pollen) around them.

- **Not enough holes?** Mason bees can be very clever with their use of mud and their need for a hole to use. If a mason bee can't find a new hole, they can build little adobe huts of mud to protect their freshly laid eggs. In this picture to the right, this series of cells was laid by one or two mason bees building *underneath* a cabin house. Each mud cell has the yellow pollen mass and an egg laid in it. (Thanks Steve Westberg) You may also find mason bees nest between filled tubes. This can be frustrating when pulling out tubes for summer protection... you wind up dislodging little larva from their pollen mass. The bottom line... *have enough holes!*



- **Look at your cocoons.** If you still have cocoons that are unopened, there are only three reasons:
 1. The mason bee ran out of stored fats (energy) and died.
 2. The mason bee has run out energy and can't emerge itself.
 3. The cocoon is full of **mono**, the parasitic wasp, that is getting ready to emerge and attack your freshly laid eggs.

What to do... either throw the cocoons away in the trash, or rescue the low energy bees. See this [video](#) on how to rescue the bees with a pair of scissors.

- **The month of May should have the mason bees slowing down.** Remember that solitary bees only live about 5-6 weeks. In May, your bees are focusing on their second hole and may not live to completely fill a final hole. If you find little activity with your spring mason bees, remove the holes and store them.
- **Storing cocoons for the summer.** Please read this carefully... **PROTECT YOUR BEES**. Pests can sneak into your secure-looking holes. Birds can peck at the front of the holes and parasitic wasps can sneak through seemingly strong tube walls.

Place full holes into a **BeeGuardian bag**, store the mudded entrance vertically up and then place the bag into an ambient temperature space like a shed or garage. The larvae are fairly robust, moving the holes around isn't going to harm them. Don't keep them cool, as your bees need the warmth to develop into adult bees over the summer. Check on them occasionally as a mono may have already infected a cocoon and emerge *inside* the bag. They have a short lifecycle and can re-infect many mason bees.

BUY LEAFCUTTERS NOW



Here's what you need for leafcutter bees:

- Bees
- Smaller holes
- Pollen
- Your mason bee house will work just fine (Missing one? Consider a kit!)
- Warm temps upper 70's - 90'sF (23-32C). You tell us when to mail them to you.

LEAFCUTTER BEE MONTHLY TIPS & REMINDERS



Finally! Leafcutter season is upon us. We have thousands of bees in our incubation chamber and will begin shipping them out on May 16th. We will have these gentle pollinators available through early August.

For those who have nested leafcutter bees from last season, here's how to prepare them for your garden:

- Your bees overwinter as larva. They need to develop into adult bees.
- Plan when you want your bees pollinating your yard. Realize that these bees fly best in the upper 70's - 90'sF (23-32C). It may take your bees 4-5 weeks to change from larva to adult bee.
- Harvest your cocoons from reeds, paper tubes, or the wood trays. If you are unsure how to open holes up, look at the instructions found on each product in our website. Hole products are found [here](#).
- Place the harvested cocoons within a [BeeGuardian bag](#) and close it up carefully. Leave no hole for bees to escape from.
- Store the cocoons someplace about 84F degrees (29°C) or so. A utility room with a water heater might work well? **Do NOT allow the cocoons to warm up in direct sun as you will kill them.** If cooler than 84, the bees will take longer to mature.
- Around 9-15 days, the [pteromalus](#) may appear. It is a very tiny parasitic wasp similar to mono. (You can see a [video](#) by our teammate George Pinkerton in the UK here.) Squish these pests. Their lifecycle is very fast and can show up again within a week in the bag.
- You may find other critters show up. larva, red bugs, and other crawly things. They laid their eggs in the pollen while the leafcutter bee was out gathering her pollen and leaf bits. Remove them from the bag.
- It might take longer, but around days 21-30, your first male will show up in the bag.
- At that point, maybe wait one more day and then place all cocoons **BEHIND** or on top of the [6mm leafcutter holes](#) in your mason bee house. (Your mason bee holes should already be removed from the house by now and are stored elsewhere.)
- That's it. Happy pollinating!



Correct leaves are important

First, understand that in nature, leaves serve multiple purposes. One to help the plant, and another to act as a source of food or shelter for insects. Yards should have holes in their leaves. Leafcutters use them and create round holes and caterpillars nibble on them. (Bird food!). Remember, without prey, your predators have no food. Holes in leaves is the sign of a balanced and healthy yard.

Leafcutter bees have to be able to cut and carry their leaf. Leaves that are too flimsy can't be carried well. Too thick of leaves or very veiny leaves can't be cut easily. A great example of a perfect leaf is that from roses.



Support other hole-nesting backyard pollinators!



Photo by Oregon Berry Bee Project

We've heard from multiple gardeners about other strange bees and solitary wasps nesting in their holes. They find different "egg chamber separators" of grass plugs, greenish muddy end plugs or downy cotton from plants.

That's awesome. Solitary wasps are as gentle as mason/leafcutter bees. They parasitize their prey, stuff them into the back of a hole, lay an egg in that chamber, and seal the chamber with something.

Not all bees nest in the same size hole. Small bees and wasps use small holes, and larger will use the 8mm mason bee holes. I'd like to encourage you to place out a **variety pack of holes/reeds** to see what might be nesting in your yard. If you are successful, take a picture of the bee/wasp nesting. We'll work with you to identify this bee through our researcher teammates.

If you have larva from last year that nested in your holes, incubate them like you do leafcutters above. See what emerges and let them flourish in your yard!

Avon Lake adopts the Native Bee Share program



We have a program for community outreach to teach the public about native bees. We sell this product at a discounted rate for approved community organizations and agencies. (**Read more about the program.**)

Here's an email from Jennifer in Avon Lake, Ohio that says it all:

Beth and I are pleased because opportunities opened up for us telling the BeeGAP story.

The Superintendent of Schools said, "Yes" to our request to place a solitary bee house at the Community Garden that is located on school property.

The Library said, "Yes" to our request to place a solitary bee house at the Children's Garden at the library.

The Mayor and Law Director said, "Yes" to our request to place solitary bee houses on City property at six locations.

The Parks and Recreation Department requested that Beth and I teach one of the Children's Summer Camps about Solitary Bees this summer.

The County Metro Parks said, "Yes" to our request to place solitary bee houses in Avon Lake on Metro Parks land.

A business heard about the project and wants to help promote the program.

Next we are reaching out to the area nurseries and orchards.

All in all we are having a bee-utiful time!

Best regards,

Jennifer

Thanks Jennifer and Beth for "Beeing" the local champions in Avon Lake!



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