

Autumn is all about Mason Cocoon Harvesting

Harvesting cocoons helps to ensure your bees' health by reducing pests and disease and is a key component of the management of beehotels. You can also spread awareness to your local friends and family by sharing cocoons!

October 2017 BeeMail

Spring Mason Bee - Tips & Reminders

Why harvest mason bee cocoons? If you're new to raising mason bees you may be wondering why you should harvest their cocoons. If you've been following Crown Bees advice you may be tired of hearing us say it again. Well, we are passionate about the health of our bees and the only way to reduce the spread of pests and disease is by opening nesting holes, keeping healthy cocoons, and discarding pollen mites and chalkbrood.

Left unchecked, pests and disease can completely wipe out your mason bee house population. Our man-made mason bee houses are an artificial situation and the nesting holes are very close to each other. It should be our duty to open, inspect, clean, and replace nesting holes to ensure the health of our mason bees.

Read our [Pests, Chemicals, & Drilled Blocks of Wood](#) page to get to know pollen mites (they starve mason bee larvae), chalkbrood (a deadly fungal infection), and monodontomerus (parasitic wasps).

How do I harvest mason bee cocoons?

Harvesting cocoons is easy and doesn't take long. It can be a little messy, just put some newspaper on your table. You can invite friends and family to come help you open nesting holes and kids who love insects get to see some interesting stuff!

Steps for harvesting mason bee cocoons:

1. Open your nesting holes. Tear open the tubes or inserts, crack your reeds, or unstrap your wood trays.
2. Using your finger, Philips screwdriver, or something similar, gently scrape out all cocoons and debris.
3. Sort out the cocoons and throw away the debris: mud, pests, larva feces, pollen balls.
4. If you find **large white larvae** instead of cocoons, those are summer bees or beneficial wasps. Close that hole up and store them in someplace cold for the winter (treat them like summer leafcutter cocoons). We'll tell you what to do in April.
5. Wash your cocoons in cold water, they are waterproof and can stay in the water for 15+ minutes. Rub them carefully between your fingers to get most of the mud, feces, and mites off.
6. IF you find chalkbrood, add bleach, 1TBL bleach to 1 cup water, and rinse afterward.
7. Pat cocoons dry and continue drying in a cool area for an hour or so.
8. Place clean cocoons in a HumidiBee into your refrigerator. Add 1 TBL of water to the HumidiBee. We'll remind you about keeping them moist each month.

For more detailed instructions, check out our [Harvest Cocoons | Step by Step](#) page. We show you how to open cardboard tubes, lake reeds, and reusable wood trays. Our [How-to Videos](#) page is another great resource.

Summer Leafcutter Bees - Tips & Reminders

As the weather cools, the time for leafcutter bees will come to an end. Weather that is cooler than 60°F (15°C) is too cold for these bees to fly.

Winter storage of leafcutter bee nesting holes. It's time to protect leafcutter bee nesting material as soon as you no longer see female bees working. To protect leafcutter bee cocoons against ants,

birds, and mice, place filled materials with holes facing up into the fine mesh BeeGuard bag and store in an unheated garage or shed.

- For more protection, try hanging the BeeGuard bag or placing everything into a mice-proof and breathable container.

When do I harvest leafcutter cocoons? Leafcutter cocoons are not waterproof and they are not good candidates for winter storage in your fridge as the leafy cocoons mold easily. We recommend harvesting leafcutter cocoons in the early spring. Leave your leafcutter nesting materials intact over the winter.

Summer Leafcutter Bee Testimonial

“I think the bees did their job this year... this is my haul from 5 plants. Leafcutter house is beside the tomatoes. And we have already made a couple batches of tomato sauce before this picture was taken.”

Thanks for the story, Adam! If you have a garden harvest testimonial that you'd like to share with us, please email outreach@crowbees.com

Bee Product Recommendations

Running low or need something new?

[BeeGuard Bag](#): Over the winter, protect developing bee larvae from harmful parasitic wasps, ants, earwigs, and carpet beetles with this fine mesh bag. Large enough to hold 2 large nesting trays or 400 loose nesting tubes! Also a great bag for incubating leafcutter cocoons next spring.

[HumidiBee](#): Store your clean and harvested mason bee cocoons in this specialized container. Storing cocoons over the winter in the fridge, at a consistent temperature, helps ensure your mason bee survive. But today's frost-free fridges are too dry for cocoons. The HumidiBee is an easy way to keep your cocoons moist but not wet. Simply add a tablespoon of water every month (we'll remind you in BeeMail during the winter!).

[Total Accessories Package](#): Everything you need to raise spring mason bees in one convenient package.

Includes a HumidiBee, BeeGuard Bag, Mason Bee Mud Mix, Invitabee Plus+, and our handy Native BeeGuide booklet. Attract, protect, and store your mason bees.

News & Events: 2017 Harvest Parties

October 5, 2 pm PST, Online: We'll have a [FB Live webinar](#) about how to harvest mason bee cocoons. Dave Hunter will show you how to harvest, wash, and store cocoons and answer your questions. Don't worry if you miss the webinar because the video will be available to watch after the broadcast.

October 14 in Seattle, WA: Our annual open house [Mason Bee Harvest Party](#) is Saturday, October 14, 2017, from 10 am to 2 pm at our headquarters in Woodinville, WA. Bring your own mason bee nesting materials and learn how to open them with experts and other gardeners. Never raised mason bees before? No problem! You can come and volunteer to help a gardener harvest their mason beecocoons. We will have products for sale and you can participate in our BeeBuyBack program.

October 28 in Portland, OR: [Portland Community College](#) Southeast Learning Garden is hosting a harvest party on October 28 from 12-5 pm. Dave Hunter and our new Operations Manager Kirk Peterson will be attending and teaching gardeners how to harvest mason bee cocoons along with volunteers and staff from Portland Nursery and PCC. If you live in the Portland OR area, please join in on the fun!

BeeBuyBack Program

We'd like your excess mason bees shared with other gardeners and farmers throughout your state.

The backbone of our company is to advocate for mason bees raised in yards and community gardens shared with us, which then can be re-homed to other yards and orchards and farms.

To share your excess cocoons, please go to the [BeeBuyBack](#) page, fill out the form, and send your bees to our headquarters in Washington State.

You'll have three options: You can gift us the bees, we will send you a gift certificate equal to \$0.25/cocoon (if harvested) or we'll pay \$0.15/cocoon (if not harvested).

This program allows us to get the right bees to the right environments. Bees of Michigan will be re-homed to Michigan or surrounding states. To be adequately pollinated, an acre of strawberries needs about 500 mason bee cocoons and an acre of cherries needs about 1,000 mason bee cocoons.

More scientific studies are showing that mason bees are phenomenal pollinators. Farmers are only now beginning to ask questions about native pollinators. Our biggest drawback will be available mason bees in the years to come. That's where **YOU** come in to help!

We have set our target goals to meet. When we have enough cocoons, we'll close the program down. For now, it's open!