



CrownBees
BeeMail Newsletter



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MASON BEE MONTHLY TIPS & REMINDERS



Your mason bees are nearly developed. If you were to open a few cocoons, you'd see a partially formed bee that looks similar to this picture to the right. Close, but not quite finished!



Don't harvest your cocoons just yet, rather wait until next month. For new mason bee fans, "harvesting" is when you open up your nesting holes and separate healthy cocoons from cocoons with pests. We'll have pictures and videos available in next month's Bee-Mail to guide you through this simple process.

A new type of Harvest Party!

Consider hosting a cocoon harvesting party for your neighbors or garden club members. This is where you, any friends who raise mason bees, your children, grandchildren, and neighbors join with you to share the adventure of touching one of nature's special pollinators. What a great way to introduce others to these gentle pollinators and to show them just how easy they truly are to raise and care for.

If you reside in the greater Seattle area, consider joining us for our Harvest Party open house on Saturday, October 8th from 10am to 2pm. This is a great opportunity to see what we do day-to-day, plus you'll be able to get hands-on help harvesting your own cocoons.

Keep an eye out for our upcoming [Facebook Event](#) for this year's Harvest Party.

LEAFCUTTER BEE MONTHLY TIPS & REMINDERS



Your summer leafcutter bees should have finished their activity about now. If you find that they are no longer active, bring them into a cooler protected spot such as a garage or shed for them to begin their winter hibernation.

My wife and I have had an abundance of peas, beans and squash this summer. I'm thankful for summer bees!!! We received many similar testimonials from first-time leafcutter bee raisers who raved about the increased yields in their gardens as a result of the efforts of these amazing pollinators.

Teaming with NY Bee Sanctuary

Crown Bees' mission is to help the world produce more food through the use of native hole-nesting bees. Today, we're still a small company but our impact is growing. We hope to accelerate this impact by partnering with groups that share a similar vision.



The [New York Bee Sanctuary](#) has a common mission to protect our food, pollinators, and native habitats. We especially like their programs of CARE (Conservation, Advocacy, Research and Education). They appreciate our "doing" actions to raise bees and actively help people be successful when and wherever possible.

Our first joint program will focus on farms that share their food through the model of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) for next year. Through the use of either mason or leafcutter bees in an organic polyculture farm, CSAs should see an increase in food produced. This should result in existing CSA members receiving more food or new members being allowed to join.

If you're a member of a CSA group, send us an email. We'd love the opportunity to team with your local farmer. You'll hear more about this program in future Bee-Mails.



(Picture from greenflamingoorganics.com)



Zika insecticide spray has hidden impacts

Last week a [sad story](#) came out of South Carolina. Apparently Dorchester County decided to conduct aerial spraying to get rid of mosquitos using Naled, a broad spectrum insecticide in use in the US since 1959. Juanita Stanely, an owner of 46 honey bee hives, lost all of her bees to this insecticide spray. We feel sorry for her loss.



From our perspective, this is a complex issue. While the news focused solely on the honey bee loss, we further investigated the insecticide from a [Cornell University link](#). In summary,

- Naled is moderately to highly toxic to birds
- Naled is toxic to most all aquatic life
- Naled is highly toxic to honey bees. [Native bees](#) fare worse than honey bees when exposed to Naled.
- Most importantly, Naled can be harmful to humans.

The [EPA](#) suggests that Naled should be sprayed between dusk and dawn when honey bees aren't flying. To date all focus has been only on honey bee hives that can be covered or smoked to keep the bees protected. North America's 4,000 food-making native bee species, flying insects, and fish have no such protection.

Humans are the top of the animal kingdom and the zika virus is a growing concern for pregnant women. We should do what we can to stop the spread of this virus. It is our hope that a vaccine can be quickly created and dispersed to minimize the effects of this virus.

While the damage has already been done in SC, our hope is this honey bee loss causes governmental scrutiny to look at the effect of our actions. Tragedies help us stand back to potentially see what we're doing, why we're doing it, and if we can/should alter our practices.

No bees = less food. Do people in critical decision-making positions understand this simple fact? We're sure many do, but people in critical positions tend to focus on just the problem on hand. Crown Bees doesn't have an overall solution. While we may be small

and have a quiet voice, we will continue to speak and advocate for change when presented the opportunity. Our hope is that decision-makers begin to learn from mistakes made and apply holistic ecological solutions.

An alternative natural solution:

An ecological alternative is to provide housing for bats. While bats won't eliminate *all* mosquitos, they can reduce the mosquito numbers. Remember, if there is no food for a predator, then the predator moves on. A bat needs fresh mosquitos and other nighttime bugs each night to eat. One brown bat can eat 600 mosquitos per hour. (Bats also pollinate!)

Our bat house is selling well. We are presently awaiting certification from Bat Conservation International. You can purchase one [here](#).



Yellow jackets, Bumble bees and Honey bees; a thought from Dave Hunter

I'm always trying to find patterns in nature. I had an epiphany a few days ago observing yellow jackets trying to steal food from my dinner outside. *Yellow jackets in August are similar to honey bees in their need to gather all the food they can to support a massive hive.*

A few years ago I learned that yellow jacket wasps were similar to bumble bees in their lifecycle. They start their season as just one queen who hibernated through the winter. In the spring, she finds a place to create her nest in the ground or under an eave and begins a hive. She lays eggs to create workers to do her work, thereby expanding the hive.

In August, the hive is mature and the queen lays a few queens for the following year. These new queens mate and then fly off to hibernate for the winter. The old queen dies as does her entire hive.



The honey bee connection is interesting. A yellow jacket hive in August is huge and to feed this high number of adults they likely strip their local foraging area of all prey (aphids, caterpillars, other bugs). There simply may not be enough prey available which makes them hungry and aggressive. Your dinner is a welcome meal!



We've recently learned from a [Swedish scientific study](#) that honey bees do this same thing with pollen. Feeding a honey bee hive requires huge amounts of pollen; every grain of pollen is vital to provide food for the 1,000 laid eggs a day. Honey bees are extremely efficient at gathering their pollen which is stuck to their hind legs. With most pollen gathered by honey bees, our native bees find less pollen and can't feed laid eggs for next

year's bees.

If you've experienced pesky yellow jackets vying for *your* food, you now have an understanding what it might feel to be a native bee searching for pollen under the shadow of a healthy honey bee hive. When people have multiple hives in a small area, they're exasperating the starvation problem.



Please help your friends understand that honey bees and native bees can get along, but we risk losing our native food-making bees in a garden or field populated with too many honey bees. As with many things in life, balance is key!

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

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