

Mason Bee Home Basics

Mason Bees will live any number of places and lucky for us they are very resourceful! They do have their preferences though. We can help them and foster the growth of their local populations by offering suitable habitat and natural elements.

Mason Bees prefer holes that measure 5/16" in diameter. We have tried to replicate that by creating pencil wrapped tubes. A depth of 6" is ideal. A shorter tube creates more male bees.

Parchment Paper is the most durable/appropriate of created materials. It withstands the outdoor elements best and is not wax coated or treated in any way.

Mason Bees need mud to construct the cells in the tubes. They would love to have you provide some clay and some water for mud construction. Dig a narrow hole down to clay in the garden area.

The Bees would appreciate having a little overhang to keep some of the rain off their "front door".

Provide a structure that has a back. The solid back will provide safety from predators (like birds) who like to eat bee larva.

The preferred location for your Mason Bee home would be in a sunny place with a bit of protection from the wind. On the side of a shed or building, a bit under the eave, is perfect. Consider mounting it at the students' height and building a bit of roof shelter above. Do not put it on a fence post, arbor or tree.

Mount the Bees' homes close together, they are very gregarious!

Mason Bees will become active (emerge) when the temperature is a consistent 55 degrees and the sources of pollen and nectar are present. One of their absolute favorites, and one of the first to bloom, is *Pieris Japonica*. Perhaps adding one to the school garden will draw "your" first population of Mason Bees.

Do not move the Bees' nesting habitat during the nesting season (March – September).

DO move the nesting habitat after mid-September. The Bees will prefer an unheated out-building or a refrigerator and should be stored at 33-38 degrees over the winter. Remember to move their home gently!

Put the Mason Bee houses back out in spring, mid to late March.

When you are sure all the bees have emerged in the spring, burn the old nesting tubes. This will eliminate mites, various fungal growths, bacteria, and parasitic wasps that hijack the bee cocoons.

*Most bees emerge from the nesting holes from 10:00-11:00 in the morning, on any given day.

New tubes can be rolled and re-inserted in the Bee House for the next season of native pollinators.

Most importantly, locate your bees where you can enjoy them! They will not bother you in any way and they are very entertaining.