

Summary Notes from All About Mason Bees Workshop

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What types of bees are there?

1. **Honeybees:** not the best pollinator, from Europe
2. **Bumblebees**
 - a. Make nests in the ground
 - b. Make only enough honey for themselves
 - c. Native
3. Native BC Bees: solitary & have nests (not hives)
Examples:
 - a. **Mining bees**
 - b. **Bumblebees**
 - c. **Carpenter bees**
 - d. **Cellophane bees**
 - e. **Sweat bees** (attracted to scent of sweat!)
 - f. **Leaf cutter bees**
 - g. **Mason bees**
 - 60 species of mason bees
 - Blue orchard mason bees can be purchased locally for mason bee hotels.
 - **450+ species of native bees in BC!**

Why are mason bees so great?

- Males don't have a stinger & females only use them when crushed
- Great pollinators (100X more effective than honeybees!)
- Only 6 mason bees are need to pollinate one apple tree

Male Mason Bees	Female Mason Bees
Hatch first	Hatch second
Smaller (8-10mm)	Larger (1.3cm)
Have a patch of white fur on head	Thicker & longer and have a blue tinge
Males only live long enough to mate and then die	Live about 2 weeks
Cocoons are in outer part of row in house	Cocoons are in inner part of row in house

What are some general tips for having mason bees?

- Always purchase mason bee houses that you can open up and clean
- Hang your house with morning sun (south or east facing)
- When it is consistently 13 degrees is when you should place mason cocoons out (March -end of April)
- Can release cocoons in stages every 2 weeks, so you have bees throughout spring
- Have a food source nearby (cherry, pear, apple bushes and early spring blooms)

- Can optionally provide mud (can also be purchased from a BC Bee Supply shop)

What is the mason bee life cycle?

- Mason places a mix of pollen and nectar in mason bee hotel tube
- Female mason bee lays egg on top of this
- Packs it in with mud
- Egg grows into larva
- Larva eats pollen & nectar
- Forms a cocoon
- Adult bee is inside the cocoon
- Cocoons can be removed in November for cleaning and storage
- Dormant over winter
- Cocoons hatch in spring

What poses a threat to mason bees?

A. Houdini flies:

- Highly invasive!
- Flies sneak in to lay their own eggs, which starve bees
- Move and look like fruit flies, but have red eyes.

B. Parasitic Wasps

C. **Chalkbrood Fungus:** Germinates in larvae's gut and starves it

D. Pollen Mites

How do you clean mason bee cocoons?

1. Sanitize your counter
2. Lay out paper towels
3. Open the mason bee plastic or wooden trays
4. Use wooden or metal angled-tipped scraper to scrape out the cocoons onto the paper towels
5. Use toothbrush to brush the trays and give them a bleach bath
6. With hands, pick cocoons and put them in a bowl
7. Any parasitic wasps, put in a bag, squish, and throw away
8. Wash & swirl cocoons in a bowl of cold water
9. Use slotted spoon to scoop out and repeat rinse 2-3 times to clean
10. Add a cap or two of bleach in a mixing bowl, soak for 30 sec-minute and then rinse off (this will kill any mold or fungus)
11. Air dry on a towel
12. Put in a clear dish and hold to the light to check if there are any larvae that didn't develop and dispose.
13. Store in back of the fridge in a container with airholes (small cooler)
14. Release in spring

Where can I purchase cocoons?

- [Mandeville Gardens](#) (Gardenworks)
- [BC Bee Supply](#) on Hastings in N. Burnaby