

# Expanded Care Information

## 1 Spring Pollination

**Stable placement.** The nest box should be placed outside on a wall, post, or fence. Mason bees don't like houses that move.

**Eastern orientation.** Put the nest box on an east or southeast wall that gets morning sun. **DO NOT** place on south or west facing walls because the heat could kill bees.

**Out of wind and rain.** The tunnel openings should face away from prevailing winds.

**Near blooms.** Place the nest box within 100 -300 feet of blooming trees and flowers.

**At eye level.** Place the nest box at eye level, so you can watch the bees in action!

**Provide mud.** Watch the "how to" video on our website at: [bentonswcd.org/programs/plants/native-plants/bee-buddies/](http://bentonswcd.org/programs/plants/native-plants/bee-buddies/)

## 2 Summer Nest Block Storage

**On June 1,** move the nest box to protected storage inside a sealed paper bag within a cardboard box. Store these containers in a garage or well-ventilated shed until autumn cocoon harvest.

**Pest control.** Summer storage prevents parasitic wasps, dermestid beetles, and other animals from feeding on the developing bees.

**Warm but not hot.** The larvae need summer warmth to complete development, but not too hot later in the summer.

**Handle with care.** Handle the nesting blocks gently while moving them. You do not want to jar the developing egg off of the pollen ball. Always carry the nesting block with the entrance facing up.

## 3 Autumn Cocoon Harvest

**Take care of cocoons** so you don't lose your bees to diseases and/or pests.

**Remove from wood trays.** Pull wood trays apart. Use a dowel, held at an angle, to gently lift the cocoons from the channels. Avoid crushing the cocoons.

**Separate debris.** Place the cocoons in a small container.

**Treat for chalkbrood.** Remove any spores by spot cleaning with solution of 1 tablespoon bleach in 1 gallon water.

**Wash.** Clean cocoons for 1-3 minutes in 1 gallon cold water with 1 tablespoon bleach.

**Rinse and dry.** Move the soaked cocoons to a bowl of fresh, cold water to rinse them off. Spread out on towels to dry overnight.

## 4 Winter Cocoon Storage

**Cold storage.** Cold temperatures keep bees from using their stored fats too quickly. Store in refrigerator at 34-40°F and at a moisture level of 60-75%.

**Ventilated container.** Put cocoons in Tupperware with holes poked in lid. Place a moist paper towel in a small dish within the container.

**Every two weeks.** Check the paper towel and moisten as necessary.

**Treat mold.** If you notice mold, rewash cocoons in the water/bleach solution. Dry overnight, then place back in refrigerator.

**The cycle begins again.** When outside temperatures reach 50-55°F, place cocoons in release tube and insert into nest box .

## Pollinators need help!

Caring for mason bees is one of many ways gardeners can aid our native pollinators.

Here are a few other ways to help:

- Avoid pesticides.
- Grow host plants like milkweed.
- Incorporate pollen and nectar plants.
- Keep some areas bare: mason bees need silty-clay mud.

### We're here for you.

We are here to answer your questions and would be happy to arrange presentations for your neighbors.

### Contact us.

If you would like to be a Bee Buddy and host one of our nest boxes in your orchard or garden, we'd like to hear from you!

### Call or email us.

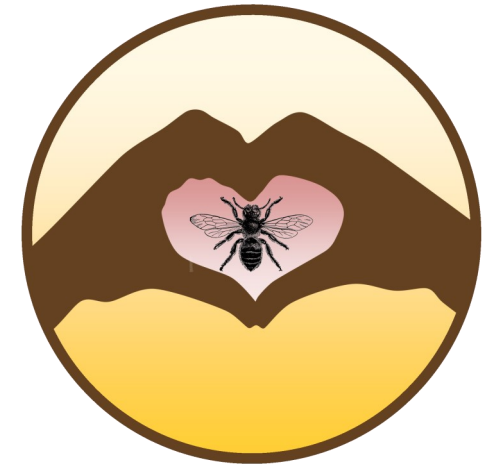
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### Visit

[www.bentonswcd.org](http://www.bentonswcd.org)

[bentonswcd.org/programs/plants/native-plants/bee-buddies/](http://bentonswcd.org/programs/plants/native-plants/bee-buddies/)

## Mason Bee Nest Box Care



Get to know the mason bee life cycle and how to care for your backyard pollinators.

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# Mason Bee Life Cycle and Care Calendar

## 1 Spring Pollination

**You:** Install nest box and release tubes as soon as temperatures reach 50-55° F for 3 days and plants are flowering.

**Bees:** Adults emerge from cocoons and mate. Females gather pollen, lay eggs on pollen balls, and seal chambers with mud.

## 2 Summer Nest Block Storage

**You:** On June 1, place nest block in a paper bag in a cardboard box to avoid mortality due to parasites. Place the closed box on a warm shelf in your garage or shed.

**Bees:** Eggs hatch into larvae, feed on pollen, rest, then spin cocoons and change into pupa.

## 3 Autumn Cocoon Harvest

**You:** Harvest and clean cocoons. Wash in solution of 1 tablespoon bleach to 1 gallon of water for one to three minutes and rinse with cool water.

**Bees:** The fully-developed adult overwinters inside the cocoon.

## 4 Winter Cocoon Storage

**You:** Store cleaned cocoons in ventilated container with moist paper towel in your refrigerator crisper. Check every two weeks.

**Bees:** The mason bees hibernate until the spring.



Cocoons in ventilated container with moist paper towel in a cup.



Store in crisper.



Nest box



Egg chamber: mud wall, pollen ball, egg, mud wall...



Foraging mason bee



Clean cocoons



Harvest cocoons from tunnels.



Enclose nest block in bag and box.



adult pupa larva

The pupa develops into an adult by fall.

