

Mason Bee Maintenance

Note: Remove and destroy any mason bee nesting unit that is aged, damaged, diseased, moldy, or infected with insects. Mason bees prefer a clean, healthy environment each year in which to lay their pollen/nectar mixture, and eggs, to ensure regeneration of their species.

Nesting Blocks (wood): Mason bees prefer clean, new habitat to last year's dirty nesting environment. Have ample new wood nesting blocks ready for each year's emerging mason bees. Remove last year's nesting blocks when it appears the last females have emerged. Inspect the previous year's wood nesting blocks to determine which ones you wish to keep. Discard those that are no longer usable. Last year's remaining nesting blocks may be recycled with a little care. Turn the wood block over with the entry holes facing down. Gently tap with a rubber mallet to dislodge debris in the nesting chambers. Turn upright, and re-drill with a sharp 5/16th inch brad point drill bit. A sharp brad point ensures clean cut nesting holes, which mason bees prefer. Turn the wood nesting block downwards again, with the holes facing towards the shop floor, and gently tap once or more with a rubber mallet to dislodge sawdust and drill shavings. Store in a clean, dry place to use next year.

Straws/Liners: Replace each year with either home made or commercially purchased liners and straws. Use a tweezers or hemostat to pull straws/liners from nesting units. Carefully slit straws/liners lengthwise, and spread open. Remove healthy cocoons. Discard rejected cocoons along with straws/liners. Store the saved cocoons for early, mid, and late March release.

Reeds/Bamboo: Reeds and bamboo tubes may be used several years if given proper care and storage. Use a small nylon bottle brush, available at your local hardware store, to clean the inside of reeds and bamboo tubes. Briefly soak the bamboo tubes and reeds in a mild liquid soap/bleach water solution to soften remaining cocoons, excrement, and mud caps. Remove and briskly shake to remove debris and water. Dry in full sun. Store in a clean, dry place to re-use next year.