

Osmia Bees

Blue Orchard Mason Bee (*Osmia lignaria proprinqua* Cresson)

An early spring, cool weather, solitary bee that pollinates fruit trees (apple, cherry, pear and plum), holly, early blooming nut trees (almonds), berries (blueberries, blackberries, strawberries, and raspberries), and flowers (azaleas, begonias, camellias and rhododendrons). Blue Orchard Mason Bees live six to eight weeks, and lay their eggs in 5/16th inch nesting holes. Only six Blue Orchard Mason Bees are needed to pollinate one fruit tree, and achieve 95-percent pollination success; while 60,000 to 120,000 honeybees are needed to pollinate an acre of apple trees, compared to 250 to 750 Blue Orchard Mason Bees.

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Horned-Faced Mason Bee (*Osmia cornifrons* Radoskowski)

The Horned-Faced Bee is a native of Japan. It is extensively used for commercial fruit (apple and cherry) pollination, and is 80 times more effective than honeybees at pollinating apple trees.. They were originally introduced to North America on the east coast in the 1960's. Despite difficulty surviving severe winters, the horn-faced mason bee is now established in the east and Midwest; and, more recently, in the Pacific Northwest around the suburban areas of the south Puget Sound and Portland, Oregon. Horned-Faced bees are much smaller in size (2/3's) than the orchard mason bee. They establish cells in smaller nesting holes, but will readily adopt 5/16th inch orchard mason bee nesting holes.

Oregon Berry Bee (*Osmia aglaia*)

Osmia aglaia are native to western Oregon and northern California. They pollinate cultivated blueberries and Himalayan blackberries. Karen Strickland, PhD (www.pollinatorparadise.com), is conducting a research grant on cane fruit pollination with the Oregon Berry Bee at the Sturm Berry Farm near Corbett, Oregon. The Sturm's raise blackberries, raspberries, black raspberries and blueberries.

Summer Mason Bee (*Osmia californica* Cresson).

The Summer Mason Bee pollinates vegetables and flowers from early summer to fall. They prefer flowers such as daisies, nasturtium, coneflowers, dandelions, dahlias and sunflowers. This solitary bee does not require straws, as they live in 5/16th inch nesting holes. Release the Summer Mason Bee just after, or about the same time the Orchard Mason Bee concludes its six to 8-week annual pollinating season.

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Blueberry Bee (*Osmia Ribofloris*)

This solitary bee pollinates high bush blueberries. It is native to both the east and west coasts of the U.S., and is three times quicker at pollinating blueberries than honeybees. Only 300 of these bees are needed to pollinate an acre of blueberries.
