

MASON BEE NEST KIT

For Our Native Orchard Mason Bees

Attract these friendly pollinators to your garden. They pollinate:

- Fruit trees
- Blueberries
- Strawberries
- Raspberries
- Many other Spring flowering fruits and ornamentals

AT RIGHT: Mason Bee House in use. The full mud-sealed tubes hold over 300 Masons for next Spring.

INSET: A busy Mason Bee working on her nest tubes.

Images: © KINSMAN COMPANY 2008



Take the Sting out of Bee Keeping— and increase your fruit harvest.

Masons vs. Honeybees

Our native Mason bees have lived in America for millions of years. We call them Masons because they work with mud to build and seal their nests. Honeybees were introduced by Europeans just 400 years ago—and we all love their honey. But lately, honeybee numbers are much reduced through parasitic mites and mystery diseases that are wiping out their hives.

These ailments largely haven't affected our native American bees. They do a grand job pollinating orchards and gardens, especially since they are active in colder temperatures and their hairy bodies carry more of the pollen that fertilizes your blossoms. Though they won't give you honey, they won't ever chase or sting you either—unless severely provoked. They're fun to watch as well.

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Attracting Mason Bees

In the wild, Masons build their mud sealed nests in natural tubes like reeds or holes in dead trees. Sometimes they'll make homes between wood shingles on houses and barns. (They do no damage—they just build their mud homes in sheltered cracks.)

Now extensive research by the US Department of Agriculture has proved that the Mason bees' task is made much easier if we provide 6" cardboard tubes $\frac{5}{16}$ " in diameter, that are somewhat weatherproof and contained in a protective shelter. The smooth tubes mean the female Mason has a lot less prep work to do on her nest—and she can channel that extra time and energy into laying more eggs.

Position Nest Kits firm and level in a dry, sheltered spot, facing East or South, where it won't be disturbed. Under the eaves of a shed or garage is ideal, 6 to 8 ft. high.

Other Native Bees

Besides the Orchard Mason Bee (*Osmia lignaria*) you may attract a couple of leaf cutter bees as well, depending on where you live. *Osmia montana* uses chewed leaves as a building material—so it looks green. *Osmia californica* uses a blend of leaves and dirt. They're helpful pollinators too.

The Mason Bee life cycle

Those mud sealed tubes contain the whole future population of Masons, males and females. All of last year's adults have completed their lives by the end of the previous Spring. Each 6" tube contains 6 or 7 separate compartments, each with one egg and a food store pellet of pollen and nectar. In summer, the eggs hatch and the grubs feed. By September, they are transformed into adult bees that stay in their snug mud home until blossom time the following Spring.

Cleverly, the Mason Bee mothers have laid female eggs in the 4 or 5 most protected inner compartments—and just a couple of male eggs near the outside. The males chew their way out first into the warm Spring sunshine and eagerly await the coming out of the female debutantes. Mating is over quickly and the females devote the rest of their short, busy lives to finding a nest site, locating mud, making one cell at a time, provisioning it, laying one egg, sealing with mud—and on to the next one.

Because they are so docile, you can stand close to the tube and see the females going in frontwards with either mud or food pellets—then backwards in order to lay their eggs. Sometimes, they'll just sit on the front porch of their tube and visit in neighborly fashion. Though each female is in complete charge of her own house and nesting arrangements, they're quite gregarious and seem to like living in groups.

Grow a big Colony of Mason Bees in just a few seasons!

Your population of Mason Bees can quadruple each year, if you provide plenty of fresh, clean nesting tubes. Choose from:

65-tube Standard Kit • 110-tube Jumbo Kit

Bulk replacement tubes also available.

Kinsman Company, Pipersville, PA 18947

Assembled in USA
from USA bee tubes
and imported eco-
friendly, biodegradable
housing made from
bamboo and rice hulls.