

Orchard Mason Bee

Osmia Lignaria Propinqua Cresson



Mason bees are friendly native bees in the yard. They are great pollinators, especially fruit trees. Easy to keep. They don't sting, normally.

Mason bees are a solitary bee. They live on the west side of the Rocky Mountains in the U.S. and Canada. Have about 139 species.



ID dependent on species.

- Color variations -shiny black, dark blue or green metallic.
- All hairy. Males have some white hair on face. Females have longer hair on underside to carry pollen.
- Size about ¼ to ½ inch (7-15mm). Females are larger than males.
- They have 4 wings (2 sets) that fold in rest.
- Have antenna. The male antenna are longer.
- Note: Flies have two wings and no antennae.

Food

- Mason bees feed on nectar & pollen.
- They feed in about a 300 foot radius of their nest.



Life/Nest



- One female per nest (tube) but do nest in same area.
- They use tubes – or hollow spots. Prefer wood. Mud is used to make nest plug (close off).
- Nesting holes run from ¼ to 3/8 best is about 5/16 with a 6 inch depth.
- Cell is (mud plug, food -nectar & pollen, egg). Each cell has one egg to hatch in the spring.



- Tube nest= repeat cell several times. They tend to have about 6-8 eggs per tube. 2 or so females then 3-4 males. Predators get males first.
- Females lay about 34 eggs.
- Life : Egg few days, larva eating food about 10 days, cocoon pupate till emerge in spring (March /April). Emerging happens over a few weeks. Life span about 30 days.
- Note: plug is rough for Mason bee. Wasp is smooth.

Care

- Houses (wood) and paper straws can be made or purchased for the Mason bee.
- Place in full sun (morning best). Keep out of rain and wind. Against a wall is good, tree posts are bad.
- Make sure they have wet mud 25 feet or less away. Do not move for the season.
- Mid-June they are done – cover with fine screen to protect from predators.
- Mid-September -Clean for winter and storage in cool (33°-38°) location.

Photos curtsy of: Debra Langley-Boyer, Amy Bliss-Miller, Victoria Scavezze, Miya Edwards, & Eppi Muhr

Resources: [The Orchard Mason Bee](#) by Brian L Griffin.
 WSU Extension “Orchard Mason Bee” article.
 Crown Bees www.CrownBees.com

