

## GUARDIAN COCOON-SHARING SCHEME

If your mason bees nest successfully in the tubes, you can participate in our Guardian scheme by sending any mud-capped tubes back to us each Autumn. We'll open your tubes, screen for parasites, remove any cocoons inside, wash and sort them, before storing them safely and monitoring them over the winter months. We'll let you know what we found inside your tubes and send ready-to-release cocoons back to you the following spring, along with a tube/refill for each we received.

There's absolutely no obligation to return your occupied tubes to us, we're more than happy for you to take on the mantel at home.

*NB: Only returning Guardians qualify for additional cocoons each year.*

## REMOVING COCOONS AT HOME

Mason bees can be extracted from the tubes once they have spun their cocoons (10-12 weeks after starting out as an egg), but we recommend waiting until at least October 1<sup>st</sup> before opening occupied tubes.

To remove mason bee cocoons, place only the inner layers of any mud-capped tubes in a large bowl of lukewarm water and leave them to soak for 1-2 hours. The glue holding the paper together will dissolve and the tubes should begin to unravel on their own. Finish unravelling the tubes by hand - any healthy mason bee cocoons inside will float free to the surface, whilst mud, unused pollen and other detritus sinks to the bottom of the bowl. Discard all used tubes after extraction.

Use a sieve to remove the floating mason bee cocoons and rinse with clean water to remove any excess mud/detritus. Transfer clean cocoons to a paper towel and dry at room temperature for at least 3-4 hours. Once thoroughly dry, transfer your cocoons to a breathable container and store in a pest-free garage or garden shed over the winter months.

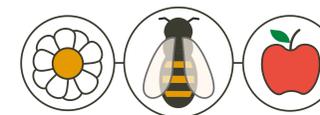
**\*DO NOT keep cocoons in a fridge or inside your house at this time.\***

## QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS?

Most product or solitary bee management queries can usually be answered using the comprehensive FAQ we've provided online – we recommend first visiting [www.masonbees.co.uk/faq](http://www.masonbees.co.uk/faq) and if you can't find an answer there, send us an email: [contact@masonbees.co.uk](mailto:contact@masonbees.co.uk)

Additional tubes and refills are available from our website.

To purchase, visit: [www.masonbees.co.uk/shop](http://www.masonbees.co.uk/shop)



**MASONBEES.CO.UK**  
FINDING SOLITARY BEES A HOME



# GUARDIAN KIT

## WELCOME

Thank you for purchasing a MasonBees Guardian Kit! Included is everything you need to release and shelter a population of Red Mason bees in a pollen-rich garden, allotment or greenspace. Once installed, it's **incredibly important** to take an **active role** in managing/maintaining this nesting site to ensure nesting bees get the most out of their new accommodation. Bee hotels can be incredibly useful conservation tools, when used appropriately, but can cause more harm than good to native bees if left unmanaged.

## CONTENTS

Your Guardian Kit should contain:

- 1 x Nesting Tube Holder (Original / Wooden / Lodge™)
- 50 x MasonBees Nesting Tubes
- 25 x MasonBees Nesting Tube Refills
- 1 x Cocoon Release Box

*Red Mason bee cocoons are supplied separately.*

## SITING INSTRUCTIONS

Your equipment should **only** be placed outdoors when solitary bees are active, to ensure everything remains clean, dry and pest-free. Generally speaking, this will be from the start of spring until the end of summer – your equipment should be kept indoors at all other times.

- Position your tube holder with the entrance facing **south/south-east** and secure to a wall, fence or post 1.5m above the ground.
- Angle the entrance slightly towards the ground to assist drainage and prevent nesting tubes inside getting wet. Bees can't survive in wet tubes so keeping them dry is of the utmost importance!
- Place all 30 tubes as far into the holder as possible, ensuring that the ends of the tubes are all in contact with the back wall.
- We strongly recommend placing the tubes into your holder as provided, i.e. bundled with rubber bands into bunches of ten. This helps to keep the tubes secure and should prevent birds and other predators from pulling out individual tubes.

NB: Red mason bees prefer nesting sites placed in sunny locations. If activity low, changing location may help to encourage nesting.

## CORRECT NESTING TUBE PLACEMENT

Tubes should touch the back wall of the holder. Tube layers should also line up with each other at the entrance to the holder, like this:



## NESTING TUBES

Our Nesting Tubes are perfectly sized for British Red Mason bees (*Osmia bicornis*) but are also commonly occupied by Blue Mason bees (*Osmia caerulea*) and a number of Leafcutter species, (e.g. *Megachile centuncularis* and *Megachile ligniseca*).

If solitary bees nest in the tubes successfully, they gradually fill the tube with their young and seal up the entrance when there's no more room. The type of end seal the bees place on the tube can help to identify which species has used it – e.g. mud caps denote a Mason bee nest, whereas Leafcutter nests are sealed with leaves.

Regardless of the species, once any female bee has sealed the entrance end of her tube, she won't return to it again. This allows us the opportunity to remove occupied tubes virtually as soon as they are completed. Removing the tubes and storing them out of harm's way offers the bees a huge advantage against the predators and parasites that would otherwise be able to attack them left in situ.

## NESTING TUBE REMOVAL & REFILLING

You should look for signs of nesting activity on a regular basis during the period your nesting equipment is in use. If you notice any completed tubes, carefully remove the inner layer – they should slide out easily by hand. Once removed, slide a clean refill tube into the empty outer layer and return the completed tube to the holder.

Each outer layer can be re-filled multiple times within a season!

Occupied tubes should be stored until Autumn in a cool, dark, pest-free location - an unheated garage or shed is ideal. We recommend storing occupied tubes vertically at this time, i.e. with the entrance of the tube pointing upward. This ensures any developing bees inside are kept in contact with their pollen ball after being moved.