

REMOVING MASON BEE COCOONS

We've designed our tubes to make removing the bees inside as simple and safe as possible. 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 October before opening 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. Return to finish unravelling the tubes by hand. Any healthy mason bee cocoons inside 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.

REMOVING OTHER COCOONS

Unlike the red mason bee, not all species overwinter as an adult in a waterproof cocoon, so using the above technique may not be suitable if you have found another species occupying your nesting tubes.

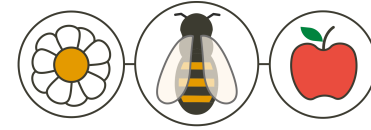
Fortunately, it's entirely possible to unravel our tubes *without* soaking them in water first – just find a split in the paper at one end of the tube and unpick it with your fingers. The layers of paper which make up the tubes can be peeled one at a time until you reach the cocoons inside. Once extracted, store cocoons as above – in a breathable container, at ambient temperature, in an unheated garage or shed.

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 and if you can't find an answer there, send us an email: contact@masonbees.co.uk

Additional tubes and refills are available from our website.

To purchase, visit: www.masonbees.co.uk/shop



MASONBEES.CO.UK
FINDING SOLITARY BEES A HOME



SOLITARY BEE STARTER KIT

WELCOME

Thank you for purchasing your MasonBees Solitary Bee Starter Kit!

By installing this nesting site in a garden, orchard, allotment or greenspace, you will be providing a much-needed sanctuary for visiting solitary bees... but your involvement doesn't end there!

It's vital to understand providing a home is **not enough on it's own** to truly help our bees. Really, it's just the first step in the process. Once this nesting site is in place and in use, it's incredibly important that you take an active role in managing and maintaining it, in order for nesting bees to get the most out of their new accommodation.

CONTENTS

Your Starter Kit should contain:

- 1 x Nesting Tube Holder (Original / Wooden / Lodge™)
- 30 x MasonBees Nesting Tubes
- 10 x MasonBees Nesting Tube Refills

SITING INSTRUCTIONS

Nesting equipment should only be placed outdoors when solitary bees are active, usually April – October in UK & Ireland. Keep everything indoors at all other times to ensure it remains clean and pest-free.

- 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.
- 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.

It's *vital* for all bees to have a range of pollen sources in close proximity to their nest, but individual species do have different nesting preferences. Red mason bees prefer tubes placed in sunny locations, but other species like shadier spots. If activity in the tubes is low, changing the site's 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 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 seal the bees place on the end of 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.