

GUARDIAN NEWSLETTER

BY MASONBEES.CO.UK

WINTER 2018

BEE...ENVUE

If this is the first time receiving our Newsletter, may we offer you a warm welcome to our cocoon-sharing scheme! If you are a returning Guardian, thanks for sending back your capped tubes last year – or for getting in touch if your bees were unsuccessful.



We're delighted to report that overall, the bees we distributed to Guardians in 2018 had a very productive season and we received healthy cocoons back from over 75% of our participants. We aim to provide results to those who sent us tubes in the coming days, but if you have received this newsletter, rest assured that **we will be sending you a stock of red mason bee cocoons in the spring.**

If your bees have struggled to nest successfully this year, or if the number of capped tubes has declined from previous years, please read on and consider the **Common Problems** article in this newsletter – it is by no means an exhaustive list of all the factors that can affect the nesting process, but contains some of the more common issues we have come across, and solutions to help you avoid similar failures in the coming season.

NEW LOOK ONLINE

In addition to making a tube-full of aesthetic changes to our website, we've updated the FAQ and provided more information on the Guardian scheme and the bees themselves.

All the photos in our Gallery section are now free to download and we've also made a few videos available on our YouTube channel – just search for "MasonBees". Please click on over if you haven't already and let us know what you think by commenting, emailing or using the contact form on our website. We hope you like the changes and are looking forward to seeing more online content this year – we'd also love to hear any suggestions you have for more mason bee videos you'd like to see online, so let us know!

NEW...ISH ARRIVAL



It may have been on sale for a few months now, but we'd like to take this opportunity to introduce our Wooden Nest Tube Holder, the latest addition to the MasonBees equipment family. Hand-crafted in the UK, this sustainable birch plywood tube holder is a plastic-free alternative to our Original holder, that's just as tough! Available now for £14.99 (+P&P) from www.masonbees.co.uk/shop

COMMON PROBLEMS

We are confident that our bees will nest successfully in most situations, but we cannot guarantee that every bee will emerge from its cocoon, or those that do are able to nest successfully every time; such is nature's unpredictability.

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Still, the absence of any capped nesting tubes at the end of the season is always a great disappointment, especially if it isn't always clear why the bees have failed to nest.

We've listed below some of the most common causes for failure that we have identified this season, along with some discussion and a proposed solution. Unfortunately, the list is not exhaustive – new challenges appear from season to season – but we hope that the following will help you to help the bees make a home in your nesting tubes this spring.

1. *Poor/prolonged emergence.*

No nesting will occur if there aren't any bees around to nest, so making sure they come out of their cocoons is a big one to get right. We expect an emergence rate of over 95% from our cocoons and do everything we can to ensure they are in perfect condition when they are dispatched to Guardians, but how they are handled in transit is something that is always going to be out of our control.

It's important that the cocoons are handled correctly and kept in the optimum environment until the bees are ready to emerge. If the weather is cold and wet when your cocoons arrive, it is safe to keep them indoors until it improves – inside a garage/shed is ideal. *Do not keep them in the fridge.* Holding them at room temperature is essentially incubation and can speed up emergence but this could also

lead to problems if the outside temperature drops too quickly when bees are released.

The cocoons that will be dispatched to you in March/April have been kept at ambient temperature over winter, so it is not advisable to hold them for too long at room temperature. Our general advice this season is to **transfer your cocoons to the plastic tub and place outdoors in your Release Box as soon as they arrive.** They will be well-protected inside the box and begin to emerge naturally as the outside temperature increases.



Not all bees will emerge on the same day. If the period of time between the first and last bees is too long, their ability to mate and nest successfully could be impaired. If no bees have emerged, or there is only partial emergence by mid-May, get in touch with us via email.

2. *Nesting site too windy/exposed.*

If there is nowhere more sheltered available to relocate your nesting site, consider extending the length nesting tube holder by 30-40mm. Early versions of our Original Holder (pre-December 2019) may not be providing enough shelter for bees in unseasonably cold and/or windy conditions. Adding extra length to the holder seems to improve nesting rates in bad weather and is easily achieved at low cost with some lightweight opaque plastic, strong tape and

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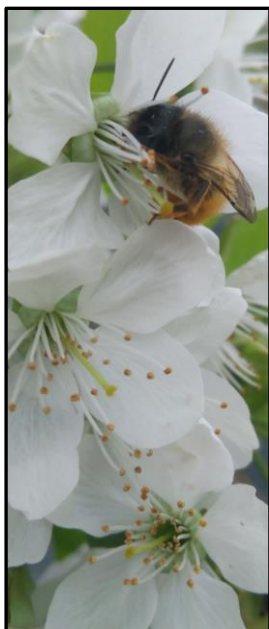
minor perseverance. However, if you don't have as much time on your hands as we do, you can bag yourself a discounted upgrade for a limited time. We've made our Original holder available to buy online for only £1 (+P&P) when purchased using the coupon code from our Upgrade Offer article, below.

Consider extending or using a longer nest tube holder or move the nesting/release site to an equally sunny but more sheltered area.

3. Pollen/nectar unavailable.

Pollen is essential in the nesting process, so if a source of pollen is not easily available after the bees emerge, they may move away and make their nests elsewhere, or not be able to nest at all. Mason bees seem to prefer tree pollens over most garden flower pollens but will collect either for their nests.

Ensure chosen nesting site is near an adequate supply of readily available pollen.



4. Oxford Bee Company equipment

It seems the amount of shelter or runway the nest tube holder has in front of the nesting tubes inside can affect nesting in certain weather conditions. To ensure the optimum distance is available to the bees, we recommended that only MasonBees equipment is used with our Nesting tubes.

Switch to a MasonBees nesting tube holder.

UPGRADE OFFER

To increase the effectiveness of our nesting tubes in unseasonable weather conditions, we increased the length of our 'Standard' size Original Nesting Tube Holder by 40mm at the

end of 2018. For a limited time, Guardians who own a 200mm holder can purchase the longer version for just **£1! (+P&P)**

To take advantage of this offer, visit our online shop and add a 'Standard' Original Holder to your basket. Enter the coupon code

UPGRADE at the checkout to apply the discount. (£4.99 total. Available until 1/3/19.)



OBSERVATION DRAWER



If you own a Bee Lodge™ and bees take up residence in the drawer this year, did you know that you can also send it to us along with

your capped tubes? We'll remove the bees and send it back to you, along with new cocoons in the spring! Just pop everything in one package and send it to us in September to our freepost address.

DONT BEE A STRANGER!

We hope you have found this newsletter an informative and an enjoyable read. If you have any questions or comments, please do drop us a line at contact@masonbees.co.uk



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