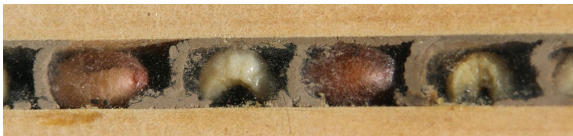


Most of the 3,600 native bees in North America are solitary bees. Solitary bees don't live in a hive and make honey like European honey bees. Each solitary female bee is the queen of her own nest. She does all the work herself!

She emerges in spring or summer, and in eight weeks or less mates, builds a nest, visits flowers to get nectar and pollen and lays her eggs.

A larva hatches from the egg. The larva has all the food and shelter it needs until it is time to come into the world as an adult bee the next spring or summer.



Mason bee larvae
Photo Credit: Ron Spendal

Mason bees, especially **blue orchard bees**, are some of the best-known cavity nesters. The mason bee gets its name from the mud it uses to build its nest. Mason bees are about the same size or smaller than honey bees. They have lots of hair on their tummy. Flower pollen sticks to their hair. People who have fruit and nut trees put up nest sites for mason bees because mason bees are great early spring pollinators.

Honey bees pollinate about 5% of the flowers they visit. Mason bees pollinate 95% of the flower they visit.

One mason bee can pollinate as many flowers in a day as 100 honey bees. That is a lot of apples, cherries and pears!



Female Mason Bee
Photo Credit: Ron Spendal

What is a pollinator? A pollinator is an animal that moves pollen from flower to flower. Bees usually collect the pollen for food, but as they fly from flower to flower, some gets left behind. If the pollen that is left behind is from the same kind of flower, the plant is pollinated (fertilized) and can produce seeds and fruit. Eight out of ten plants need pollinators to reproduce.

Don't forget the leaf-cutter bees!

Other cavity nesting bees include the **leaf-cutter**, **wool carder**, **resin**, and **cellophane bees**. They are usually smaller than the mason bee and are active in the warmer summer months.

Most cavity-nesting bees get their names from the materials they use to make their nests. They coat or line their nest with leaves, tree resin (sap) or a cellophane like substance from their body. All of this protects their offspring while they are in the nest.

Like mason bees, leaf-cutter bees and other native cavity-nesting bees need a place to make a nest and food for themselves and their offspring. When you leave plants with hollow stems in your yard you give these little female bees a place to lay a few eggs.



A small *Megachile* male
Photo Credit: August Jackson

Small carpenter bees make their nests by chewing tunnels in pithy plant stems like asters and raspberries.



Small carpenter bee (Ceratina spp)
Photo Credit: August Jackson

Leave 6-8” of stem standing at the end of the winter. The plant will grow around the cut stems in the spring and the cut stems will decompose.

When you grow flowers, especially native flowers that bloom in the summer you give native bees nectar and pollen. Every flower helps. Mason bees and other native bees may visit over 1,875 flowers to get enough pollen for just one egg! They are busy little bees.

Native bees are usually gentle. Males do not have a stinger and females usually will not sting unless they are being squeezed or crushed. Enjoy watching the bees. They will bring you hours of entertainment!

How can you help pollinators?

- Avoid harmful or unnecessary pesticides –chemicals that kills plants and insects.
- Plant flowering plants, especially native plants that bloom early and throughout the summer and fall when native bees are looking for pollen and nectar.
- Share what you learn with someone else!



Large flowered collomia
Photo Credit: Bobbie Allaire



130 Ankeny Hill Rd SE
Jefferson, OR 97352

ankenhillnaturecenter.org

Can You Help Bees Find a Nest?

Three out of ten native bees nest in tube shaped holes in plant stems or wood. Sometimes they nest in holes in between bricks. These bees are cavity nesters. People make nests for these little bees by drilling deep holes in blocks of wood or hanging up a bundles of wood tubes.



Mason bee nest
Photo Credit: Ron Spendal