



Solitary Bee House Contest - TIPS for the BEE HOUSE

House/ Hotel Design:

- Natural, untreated wood is best. If you are going to paint the house, make sure you allow plenty of time (about a month) for the paint to cure – because the smell of wet paint or stain can repel bees. Avoid particleboard or anything that will disintegrate in the rain.
- Mason Bees: Depth should be at least 6 -7 inches to accommodate tubes, stems, or blocks that are the same length. Leafcutter Bees can have a shorter depth of 3-4 inches. Height, and compartments can vary. Design can be simple or creative!
- The house should have a protective roof overhang (for wind and rain).

Types of Nesting Material & Design:

- DO NOT USE BAMBOO REED. This is too hard to crack open / harvest or clean.
- DO NOT USE DRILLED IN HOLES IN WOOD. This is a one and done type nest. Once these have been used, they cannot be cleaned, thus they promote the spread of disease and pests to the next generation of bees.
- DO NOT glue in the nesting material.
- YES – use nesting tubes or inserts made from paper. You can use cardboard tubes and then line them with the thin paper. (Do not use plastic straws) Or just use paper lined in the drilled holes.
- YES – use natural reeds! Hollowed stems plants, pithy stems – bundled together.
- Yes- use pull-apart nesting blocks or stacking trays. When making or drilling holes, holes should NOT breach the back of wood nest blocks. Sizes of nesting holes vary based on the Bee. Typical size: Mason bee nests: 8mm diameter & 6” long. Leafcutter bee nests: 6mm diameter & 3” long. Make sure to take a piece of sandpaper and smooth out the holes (rough edges can harm the fragile bees). Drilled blocks that cannot open could be used with paper insert tubes.
- Optional: Predator guard (wire mesh guard ... the mesh opening should be 2” inch - the right size for allowing mason and leafcutter bees to fly through unimpeded). Experienced bee ranchers simply recommend using the largest chicken wire you can find and waiting until you know you have a bird problem before you actually use it. To ensure that birds can’t reach through the wire, leave a couple of inches of space between the chicken wire and the nest entrances.

Location & Installation

- Mount to a solid object. (They don’t like swinging in the breeze!) And Face SOUTH or Southeast to receive sunlight in the morning. Bees need to warm up!
- House should be about at eye level. – 5 ft high.
- MUD is a must! (for Mason -Bees) They need mud rich clay – 50 ft close to help them build their nests. Most wild bees will only fly 300 feet searching for nectar & pollen, so make sure there is food available! Dandelions are dandy.
- Mason Bees are SPRING BEES, emerge from hibernation when temps reach about 55 degrees F. A female will lay about 15 eggs in her short lifetime of just 4-6 weeks!
- Leafcutter Bees are SUMMER BEES, emerge when temps are a consistent 75 degrees F for about 2 weeks. A female will lay about 30 eggs in her short lifetime of just 4-6 weeks!
- Keep them HEALTHY! NO chemicals. Weed-killers and Pesticides harm our pollinators! Also, protect the Mason Bee cocoons and Leafcutting Bee nesting larva from predators. Ants, spiders, pollen mites, Chalcid wasps, Houdini Flies, and Chalkbrood fungus should be monitored.



Solitary Bee House Contest - Scoring Guidelines

- **Built with Effectiveness – 40%**

The Bee House is built with correct solitary bee standards and will make a proper bee home. Safety precautions and measures have been taken for the bee's wellbeing. It can be made for either Mason Bees, Leafcutter Bees or a combination.

- **Conservation Message – 30%**

The Bee House decoration conveys the NACD (National Association of Conservation Districts) Annual Conservation Theme – in 2025 it is “**Home is Where the Habitat is**”.

A list of wonderful study materials and ideas can be found online at <https://www.nacdnet.org/general-resources/stewardship-program/> Look under Education Resources!

- **Originality - 20%**

The bee house demonstrates creativity and fresh ideas.

- **Universal Appeal -10%**

The overall design and bee house should appeal to a broad audience while also serving a purpose.

All entries will be judged by Wayne SWCD and before the 2025 Wayne County Fair. The top 3 Winners will be awarded cash prizes.

1st place –

2nd place-

3rd place-

Award Winners will be invited to attend the Wayne SWCD Annual Meeting , Breakfast and Supervisor Election on November 6th at Sonnenberg Village in Kidron.