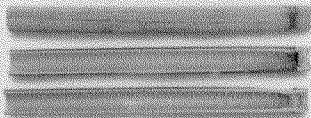


# HOW TO HARVEST MASON BEES

## 1 Use nesting houses that allow access to the cocoons

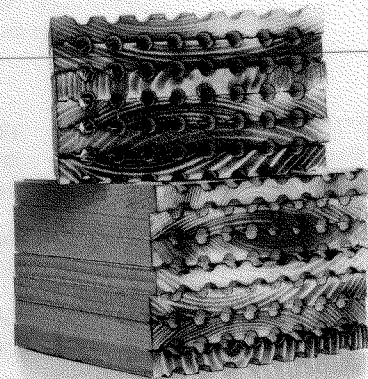
There are three common types of "holes" recommended for nesting mason bees. Here's how to open each:



**NATURAL REEDS:** Unlike bamboo, natural reeds split open easily with a kitchen knife. Place the blade across one end of the reed, forming a T, and gently slide the knife in just enough to turn the blade sideways.



**PAPER TUBES:** Most kraft tubes, like EasyTear Mason Bee Tubes, are spiral wound and tear open easily. Use scissors to start the tear, then unwind them.

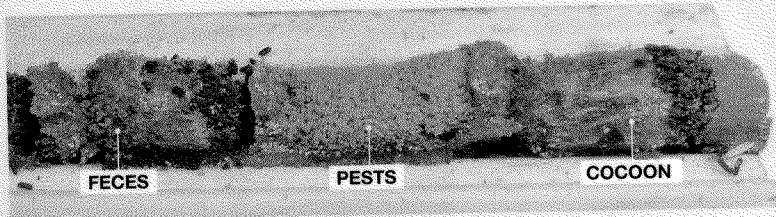


**WOODEN TRAYS:** Straps hold the trays tightly together. Just loosen the straps, and pull the trays apart. It's that simple.

## 2 Sort the good from the bad

Cocoons are durable, so don't be timid about handling them. Pick them out, and throw away everything else, including:

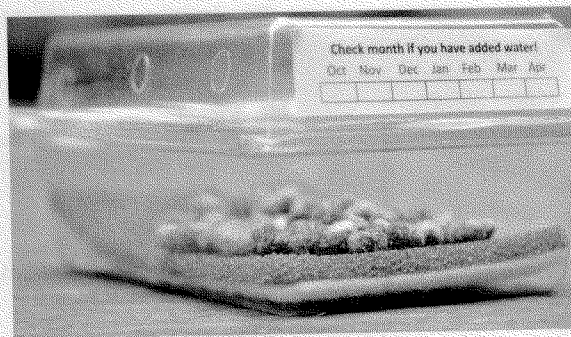
- **Larva feces**, which are the black curly specks outside each cocoon
- **Mud** separating each cocoon
- **Pests** living in what looks like mounds of sawdust



## 3 Store the cocoons

You now have a pile of healthy cocoons. You can wash them to remove any remaining mites or dirt, but that's optional. Cocoons are waterproof and can soak in cold water for 15 minutes without harming the hibernating bees inside. Once washed, let them dry for an hour in an unheated area, and place them in a rodentproof container with air holes.

Although you can keep cocoons in an unheated garage or shed, the best place to store them is in the refrigerator. If you do use a refrigerator, keep the cocoons in the crisper or a humidity chamber (available online); otherwise, the bees will dehydrate.



## 4 Release the bees in spring

Storing the cocoons in a refrigerator is the only way to ensure that the bees won't wake up before you're ready. Solitary bees, such as the orchard mason bee, emerge naturally when daytime temperatures consistently rise above 50°F. After a warm spell, start releasing your bees. Bring the cocoons outdoors, and set them on top of or behind their nesting house. The bees will crawl over the holes and should know to come back to nest. To guard against unpredictable weather, bring the bees outside in three batches, waiting two weeks between each release.

