



How Can We Help Bees at School?



Try to ensure that your school facility crews are not using pesticides (for human health as well as bees!). Bees need habitat, so increasing the availability of flowers is critical. Native plants are most likely to successfully attract native bees but many easy to grow flowers such as sage, thyme, zinnias, sunflowers and lavender are also attractive to bees. Don't forget that 'weeds' such as dandelion will provide early nectar sources. Plant groupings of flowers to ensure a good supply of nectar. Spring blooming trees and shrubs are also a great option for mason bees. Mason bees are very gentle and have to be severely provoked to sting.

Activity idea: Have students spread the attached black-eyed Susan seeds (our state flower) on patches of sunny, bare soil in planting beds around the school.



Activity idea: Plant a sunflower seed to grow to help bees (ensure it is not a pollen free variety - Lemon Queen is a bee favorite). Each child can grow a sunflower from seed in a small paper cup in class and then take home to plant. Remind students that if they plant flowers to attract bees, their family should avoid using chemicals to kill bugs in their yard as these kill bees too. Observe bees that visit and take part in citizen science projects such as The Great Sunflower Project and <https://www.bumblebeewatch.org/>. Protect sunflowers from deer.

Activity idea: Have students create posters to educate others about our native bees and their importance.

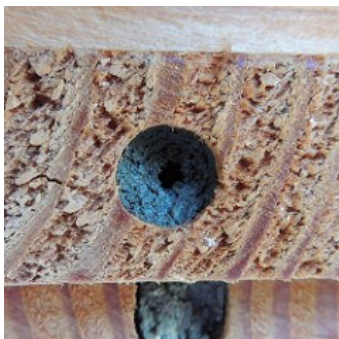
Activity idea: Plant a pollinator garden. Information and advice can be found on the Department of Natural Resources website. It is fine to start small: <http://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/Education/Schoolyard-Wildlife-Habitat.aspx>

Planting recommendations for pollinators: http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/MidAtlanticPlantList_web.pdf

Activity idea: If you already have an area with spring flowers (mid-April through mid-June), make a mason bee home. Drill holes in untreated lumber:

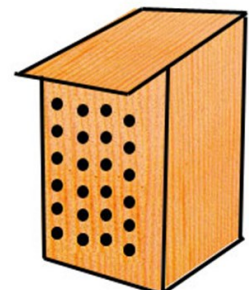
<http://www.nwf.org/Garden-For-Wildlife/Young/Build-a-Bee-House.aspx>.

These blocks need to be retired after 2 years to prevent the buildup of pests. To avoid this, line with fresh wax paper each year:



Mason bees need mud to seal the nest chambers

Remember to provide an area where mud can be collected too.



Instead of a wooden mason bee home, build a simple bamboo nest in a bucket:

<http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/tunnel-nest-management-xerces-society.pdf>



Xerces.org

Detailed care information for your bee homes

Lots of information can be found about mason bee and other bee homes in these two publications by the Xerces Society and the Oregon Extension Service:

http://www.xerces.org/wpcontent/uploads/2008/11/nests_for_native_bees_fact_sheet_xerces_society.pdf<http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/tunnel-nest-management-xerces-society.pdf>

https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/catalog/files/project/pdf/em9130_0.pdf

The most important details are:

- If you build your own nest, do not use treated wood.
- Cover the holes with chicken wire to help keep birds away from the bee house (woodpeckers can find the bees a tasty treat).
- Place 3-5 feet off the ground. Attach firmly so the house doesn't swing.
- Place east or south-east facing in a place where you can easily observe it, so the bees can get warmed up quickly by the morning sun.
- You can place several houses in locations around your schoolyard but each needs to be near a source of flowers and mud as mason bees don't fly far.
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Find out more about native bees:

Bee Basics: An Introduction to our Native [Bees](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5306468.pdf) https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5306468.pdf

Bumble Bees of the Eastern United States <https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/documents/BumbleBeeGuideEast2011.pdf>



Larry Hogan, Governor

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