

# YOUR ORCHARD MASON BEE MOTEL

by John Holbrook

**Osmia Lignaria:** an urban and rural, wild, native-to-Montana (and elsewhere), super solitary pollinator.

- These gentle, gregarious, non-aggressive pollinators enjoy each other's company but live and work alone.
- They do not make honey and there is no queen bee. Their sole purpose is to prepare and provide for a next generation of bees.
- Both sexes are metallic deep green-blue in color, the females larger than the males. The males' antennae though, are much longer than the females.
- Males emerge from their nesting holes before females—when average daytime temperatures reach 57 degrees F.
- Males die after mating with females, the latter resting for a couple of days feeding on nectar building up fat reserves and while their ovaries develop.
- The mother bee makes 25 individual foraging trips, each time visiting up to 75 different blossoms, before she's collected and stored enough nectar and pollen for a single egg.
- During her short four to six week life span, she may lay up to 36 eggs. The math says ( $25 \times 75 \times 36$ ) that during this time of intense activity she is capable of pollinating some 67,500 blossoms!
- Mason bees are not plagued with the same kind of problems facing honey bees. They do not experience "colony collapse" nor become infested with blood draining trachea mites. They are devoid of debilitating viruses as well.

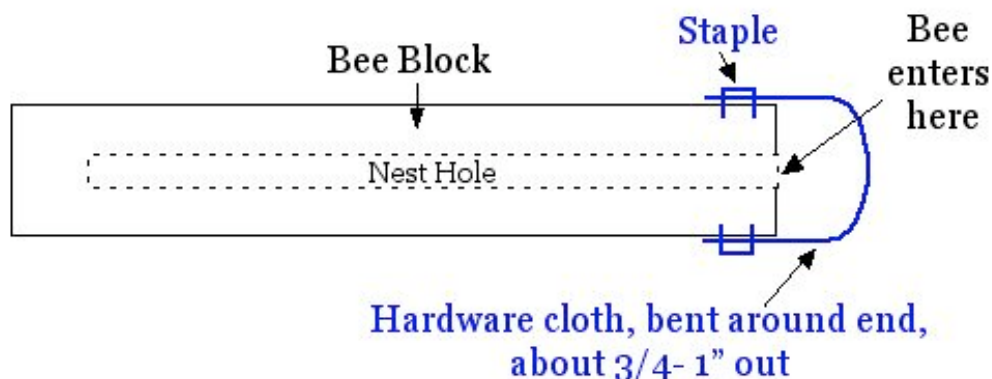
## Bee Motel Placement & Requirements

- Remove blue masking tape exposing nail hole for hanging in back and row of nesting holes up front for hatching bees.
- Place bee blocks facing early morning sun. Place under eaves or other shields to protect from rain and/or sprinklers.

- Bees may forage up to 300 feet. They are especially attracted to early blooming fruit trees like Nanking Cherry, peach, cherry and apple, yard flowers and Norway maples later on.
- Have ample deposits of dampened soil nearby for cell building and plugging off finished nesting holes with wads of mud. Sandy or heavily organic soils can't work because they do not pack or hold their shape when dry.
- **Watch for pests:** smush small wasps and spotted beetles, jumping spiders.
- Avoid mice by not placing blocks on ground or tops of stumps.
- Hardware cloth or chicken wire attached to the front of the block deters woodpeckers and squirrels (see sketch below; attach before mounting).

### Orchard Mason Bee Motel (looking at top)

#### How to attach hardware cloth or chicken wire



### FURTHER QUESTIONS?

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GOOGLE provides lots of info. These safe, delightful creatures bring much joy, fascination and satisfaction into your yards and lives. Thank you and Enjoy