

45 Minute
Activity
For
Everyone

Helping Pollinators

Did you know that approximately 80% of all flowering plants require help with pollination. Bees are the top species that help spread pollen from plant to plant, strengthening the health of our ecosystems. Unfortunately, bees and other pollinator populations are declining as a result of habitat loss. Below is an activity for you and your family to help replenish bee habitat and increase their population numbers, ultimately helping our ecosystems thrive.

There are over 400 sub-species of bees found in Ontario with 27 of those bee species belonging to the family of 'Mason Bees'. A Mason Bee is different than your typical bee. These bees are solitary which means they don't congregate in large hives. Rather they live, feed, reproduce, and nest on their own. The most common nesting places for Mason Bees are in hollow plant stems and cavities as well as under rocks.

Why do Mason Bees prefer long hollow tubes to nest?

Unlike honeybees that congregate in a large hive to live and reproduce. Mason Bees live on their own and reproduce by making multiple nest sections. The Mason Bee will collect a small piece of pollen and put it in the back of the tube or stem. They will lay an egg then gather mud to block off that section. The process will continue until the tube is filled. In the Mason Bees lifetime they will lay approximately 20-25 eggs. The process can be seen in the below photo.



(Photo from: <https://www.flickr.com>)

Click the video link below to build your own Mason Bee home, using simple household items.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGAEdmIh2U8>

Questions to Ponder

- Were you surprised to learn about the decline in pollinator populations? Why do you think this is?
- What other species do you think are great pollinators?
- How do you think the decline of pollinator populations are affecting ecosystems near where you live?
- How can you encourage others to help pollinator populations grow and become sustainable?
- What other actions can you do to help support the increase of pollinator populations?