

# Cleaning & Storing Mason Bee Cocoons

## Getting Cocoons out of liners and laminated blocks

- Tear liners open – like opening a tube of biscuits. Gently remove contents.
- With tool gently push cocoons out of laminated blocks - keep tool parallel to block.
- Gently separate the cocoons and brush off frass, mites, pollen balls, etc.

## Washing the Cocoons: **2 oz. Bleach - 1 gallon water - 2 minutes**

1. Prepare COLD water for washing the cocoons.
2. To one gallon of COLD water, add 4 Tbsp (2 oz.) of bleach. More is not better.
3. Put cocoons in the cold water for 2 MINUTES. No longer! Bleach dissolves part of the outer silk cocoon so the use of a timer is important.
4. Swirl cocoons around – you can gently massage off some of the frass and mites (brown and yellow residue).
5. Take cocoons out of bleach water after 2 MINUTES.
6. Rinse the cocoons in COLD water to remove bleach. This can be done in fresh water and/or a cold stream of water at your sink. You may want to use a strainer of some sort to contain the cocoons while rinsing. RINSE TWICE!

## Drying Cocoons

After you have rinsed cocoons, put the cocoons on a dry paper towel(s) and let air dry for about 1 hour. Do not use hair dryers or other sources of heat.

## Storing Cocoons Over the Winter: **Vegetable drawer in fridge, Oct- March**

1. Put a damp (not dripping wet) paper towel in a small container.
2. Put a dry paper towel on the bottom of a larger container.
3. Put the small container in the larger container
4. Put cocoons on the dry paper towel
5. Cover large container- lid slightly open or punch holes in lid.
6. Check cocoons periodically for mold. Re-rinse in a light bleach solution (1/2 tsp per quart) for under one minute if you find mold. Air dry again.
7. Check damp paper towel periodically. If it is dry, add a new damp towel.

*Note: Most refrigerators are frost free. The vegetable bin is usually more humid. The extra dampness of the paper towel adds more humidity.*

## **Putting your cocoons out in the Spring - Usually Mid March to Mid April**

- Subscribe to "Bee Notes"- Get reminders of when and how to put out your cocoons. Subscribe at: [LinnMasterGardeners.com](http://LinnMasterGardeners.com)
- Watch weather. Wait for several consecutive days with 50-55 degree temps and no heavy rains forecast before putting out your cocoons.
- Put out 1/2 to 1/3 of cocoons at a time, but a minimum of 25 cocoons out at each time. Wait a week before putting out the next batch (hedging our bets on weather). Do not fill the emergence tube more than half full.

### **Final step: BLEACH WASH YOUR TOOLS & LAMINATED BLOCKS TOO.**

Add 4-6 tablespoons of bleach to 1 gallon of water and scrub away residue. Do not soak, as that will lead to more warping .

NEW: Dry surfaces with a hairdryer on high temp and then clamp laminated blocks back together to help eliminate warping.