

## Leaf Cutter Bee

For the Willamette Valley- check with your extension office for dates in your area.



- They use cut semicircular plant fragments to line their nest cells.
- They are about the size of a honey bee, but darker in color with lighter bands on their abdomen carrying pollen on specialized hairs on their abdomen.
- They are solitary native pollinators - no worker bees.
- Does not make honey.
- Their foraging distance is about the same as Blue Orchard Mason Bees-100 yards.
- Females build and tend their own nest.
- In nature they nest in cracks, crevices of wood or rock, in beetle holes and pithy stems.
- It should be high enough to be above the splash zone, but don't install it too high- you will want to watch the bees in action!
- The bee house should be placed on a wall that receives morning sun, such as the South-East wall of your home. If you don't have great morning sun, give them as much as you can, bees survive in the wild without this. Your bees just do better with that morning sun!
- You also need to think where the afternoon sun is as you do not want the nesting box to be in direct sun in the afternoon. It will get too hot for the bees and may kill them. **This is important.**
- The opening of the bee house should face away from prevailing winds and rain as much as possible: to keep the holes dry.
- Place the bee house away from your bird feeder, bees make tasty morsels, especially to woodpeckers and flickers.
- Have a water/mud supply nearby but, don't place the bee house over a pond or water source.
- They are a little smaller than the size of a honeybee and somewhat darker in color and have lighter bands on their abdomen.
- Leafcutter bees **are not aggressive** and will not sting or bite unless they are being handled. In the wild, leafcutter bees' nest in soft, rotted wood or in the stems of large pithy plants and use cut leaf fragments to form nest cells, which is where their name comes from.
- Leafcutter bees are more efficient pollinators than honey bees in alfalfa seed fields because the honey bee is worried about being struck in the head when they trip the reproductive structure of the alfalfa flower; this is not a problem for the leafcutter bee.
- Both Megachile and the genus Osmia belong to the family Megachilidae, meaning "large jaw," referring to their large mandibles.
- One non-native species, **Megachile rotundata**, is managed commercially in Oregon for the pollination of alfalfa. There are approximately forty species in Oregon.

TIP: You can put a mesh screen about 4-6 inches over the opening of the house to help keep birds from getting to the cocoons. Wire mesh with about 1" holes allow the bees to easily fly through.

<https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/pnw692>

<http://oregonberrybee.blogspot.com/2010/11/2010-osmia-aglaia-yields.html>

<https://www.oregon.gov/ODA/shared/Documents/Publications/IPPM/ODABeeGuide.pdf>

## Calendar for Leaf Cutter Bees

### Mid May- June 1<sup>st</sup>

Put your leaf cutter blocks in your bee house- you can do this before you take in your tubes/blocks for the Blue Orchard Mason Bee. Just do not move **any** of the blocks. You can also you can put your block on top of the nesting house. Put foil tape on the back of the leaf cutter bee block and place the block inside the bee house.

Note: The front edge should be at least 2" inside the bee house.

### June- Sept

**Leaf cutter bees are active.** Evidence of their activities are semi-circles cut out of a leaf (especially on smooth leaves like rose, lilac and serviceberries.)

### Oct 1<sup>st</sup>

Put blocks in a paper bag with the top folded over and stapled shut. Put the block in an unheated garage or shed until late spring.

### Oct-May

The leaf cutter is at the pre-pupa and pupa stage during this time. The pupa inside the cell will develop into an adult leaf cutter bee during spring.

### Thanksgiving

You can put your block or carefully harvested cocoons in the vegetable bin of your refrigerator, or you leave them in an unheated garage or shed for the winter. Leave it there until early summer.

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