

Raising Solitary Bees

Cane Style Home= Preferred home of Leaf cutter Bees

Various lengths of plant stems and cuttings that have a soft center core to the stem can be used. Cuttings from Raspberry canes, Forsythia canes, Rose bush canes and many others make good stock for solitary bee homes. This material is readily available during the normal cleanup of your garden. In some cases you will find evidence of a solitary bee already making their home in the material you are collecting. In such cases by gathering these stems you are saving the future generation of solitary bees as compared to disposing of them with the stem into the trash.



Materials needed

- Stems from plant material with soft center “pith” or hollow reeds such as Phragmite Reed stems .
- Nail- to clean/hollow out center of stem.
- String or wire – to bundle the hollowed stems together in a bunch.
- Gloves to protect your hands.

Fabrication Steps

1. Cut gathered stems to 6 to 8 inch in length. The dimension does not have to be exact and can vary from stem to stem.
2. If you suspect that the stem already contains a tenant you can skip the next step.
3. Push the nail down the soft center ‘pith’ to create a hollow center tube.
Caution- push the nail away from you and wear gloves so that you do not poke or impale yourself or your hand with the rod or wire.



Gardens4everyone.com 708-990-5490

Raising Solitary Bees

Just a shallow start is all that is needed to attract the bees to their new home. The deeper you go the harder it will get to compress the “pith”. Do not use excessive force or you risk splitting the stem.

4. You are not looking to create a hole the complete length of the stem. If you do there is not a problem and the stem is still usable
5. Gather a group of the hollowed stems and secure them together in the center with the string or wire to hold the bundle together.
6. Next for each end of the bundle secure it with a piece of the string/wire leaving a min of 6 inches length.
7. Tie together the two ends of the string/wire from both ends of the bundle.
8. Create hanging point in the center by twisting a loop in the wire or tying a loop in the string to hold the bundle level.
9. Mount bundle securely on branch or under shelter at the edge of the yard positioning the log to face southeast, allowing it to get morning sun.
10. The optimal location to hang your mason bee house is 6 to 7 feet off the ground.
11. As you develop a population that take up residence you can add some stems with bee larva from current bundles to the new bundles of nesting materials you gather to provide new clean homes for the next generation.