



NEWSLETTER



WELCOME TO THE FIRST SBN NEWSLETTER!

A few updates and thoughts from the past few months, and some tips on things to be doing for the future...

WHAT'S HAPPENED IN 2024

2024 saw the launch of The Solitary Bee Nursery, and the enthusiasm in the local area has been amazing. Groups like Nature New Mills, Friends of New Mills Station, The New Mills and Community Orchard and The Rock Mill Centre in particular have been amazing, to say nothing of the individuals who have got in touch to find out more about getting involved

Three nest boxes were put up around New Mills – two at New Mills Newtown station, and one in the Community Orchard. Sadly, no sign of nesting this year, but hopefully next year will start to see bees moving in.

I'm also starting to build up relationships with some schools and children's groups which is very exciting, and so hopeful for the future.



*Nest Box in
New Mills
Community
Orchard*

IT'S BEEN A COLD AND WET ONE...

Hatched Cocoons



The weather this year, it has to be said, hasn't been great, and this will have affected our solitary bees. I had cocoons that hadn't hatched even in May, which is unusual, and some of them needed a helping hand to properly emerge. On the plus side, this did give me the opportunity to film a Red Mason bee coming out of its cocoon – if you haven't seen the video, it's available on the website. It's truly a magical moment!

SUMMER SPRING CLEAN

June is when Red Mason bee nesting activity usually comes to an end, so it's time for a bit of a clean. It's time to remove and replace nesting tubes with any signs of Red Mason occupation. Although it is incredibly important that only completed tubes are removed from the tube holder while the bees are nesting, (i.e. tubes with mud caps at both ends), once activity has ceased, both completed and partially-completed tubes may also be removed.

As we move into Summer, different native pollinators appear on the scene – some of whom will also want to make use of the tubes.


We absolutely want to offer these other bees a place to stay, but it's best if we try to keep different species separate from each other. Not only will this prevent any pathogens and parasites spreading between the different species, certain Leafcutter species are known to destroy mason bee brood cells and 'evict' larvae from occupied tubes, before claiming them for themselves! Removing occupied tubes will avoid the potential for such conflicts.

Once you can be sure your Red Mason activity has come to an end, take all the nesting tubes out of your nesting site(s) and hold each tube up to the light to check for occupancy. Any tubes you can see through clearly can be put straight back, provided they are dry and in good condition – the inner layers do not need to be replaced if the tube hasn't been used. All obstructed inner tubes – those that don't allow light to pass through freely – should be removed, stored and replaced with a clean refill before the completed tube is returned to the holder.

Cleaning Time!



PLANTING FOR SUCCESS



Growing Food!

I'm getting a bit obsessed with having the right plants in the garden and have noticed that I have a bit of a fallow patch between May/ June in terms of nectar filled plants. Again, the weather probably hasn't helped with this. So, now is the time to start planning for next year, and I'm collecting together seeds ready to plant in Autumn, in the hope that they will be ready to flower early next year.

Red Mason bees in particular emerge early in the season, so having that nectar supply is really important. Orchards are a good place to start, so hopefully we'll have more boxes up there next year, but for those of us who don't have space for trees, we need to think about other early flowering plants. This year I've started growing Comfrey, Thrift (*Armeria Splendens*), Forget Me Nots, and Self Heal (*Prunella Vulgaris*) which should all flower in March/ April to add to the early bulbs and other early bloomers that I already have, so hopefully will have more colour in the garden right through the season next year.

Website Updates

The website is developing all the time, and I now have an FAQ section, which hopefully gives you a bit more on a insight into planting for bees, siting nest boxes and other areas of interest. Do feel free to check it out.

DIARY DATES...

I'll be taking in occupied nesting tubes from **1st September** and will give you full details on how to send them to us in the next Newsletter. If you do have occupied tubes to return, please do not send them before this date - the bees inside are still developing and it's not quite the right time to transport them yet. For now, keep them safe in a breathable container in unheated garage or shed.



Baby Bees inside!