

# Healthy Home and Garden Tips

## What's the buzz?

It's time to welcome back to my garden one of Oregon's native pollinators – mason bees (also known as blue orchard bees). Each spring I watch in delight as they buzz from flower to flower to feed on nectar and pollen. Mason bees are one of the first bees to emerge from their winter slumber, playing an important role in pollinating early spring flowers, vegetables and fruit trees.

There is lots to rave about when it comes to mason bees. These garden helpers have extraordinary pollination skills, pollinating about 95 percent of the flowers they visit. Unlike honey bees, mason bees are solitary creatures that use mud to build chambered nests in small cavities. Without a hive or queen to protect, they rarely sting, making them kid and pet friendly.

Maximizing the pollination power of mason bees is easy. Natural or homemade nesting tubes and blocks, flowers for food and a mud source provides garden habitat that helps mason bees thrive. To keep mason bees healthy and safe, I also avoid the use of any insect sprays in my garden. I have even eliminated the natural ones since they have the potential to inadvertently harm bees and other beneficial insects.

### Insect sprays to avoid in the garden

- Commonly used, neonicotinoids are a class of insecticides known to harm pollinators and other beneficial insects.
- Avoid products with a bee symbol on the label warning of harm to pollinators.
- Visit [xerces.org](https://www.xerces.org) to learn more.



### Create a home for Mason bees

1. Make nesting blocks out of untreated wood. Using a 5/16 inch drill bit, drill holes 4-6 inches deep into the wood.
2. Place paper tubes in the holes. This will allow the bee cocoons and nesting block to be cleaned easily at the end of the season.
3. Place nesting blocks and tubes in a Southern facing spot that is raised and protected from rain.
4. Plant a diversity of flowers (native flowers are the best) that bloom from spring to fall within 300 feet of the nesting blocks.
5. Add a mud and water source with lots of small pebbles for bees to rest on.
6. Avoid insect sprays that can unintentionally harm pollinators.

### Learn more:

View the mason bees at the Oregon Zoo:  
[https://youtu.be/n3lX\\_PSeV4E](https://youtu.be/n3lX_PSeV4E)


# Reducing paper in the home

The average American uses about 680 pounds of paper every year and a huge amount of this (about 26%) ends up in landfills. These staggering statistics changed the way I think about how we use paper and dispose of paper products in my home. While my family has always made a conscious effort to recycle, we realized we could do more to protect the environment by reducing the amount of paper we use each year. Our efforts began with an audit of our home paper use. Once we had a better idea of the kind and volume of paper waste generated, we were then able to take steps to cut back. We started using reusable bags at the grocery store, opted out of junk mail, changed to “paperless” billing, stopped using paper towels and found creative ways to turn paper into useful household products like plant pots. Although there is still room for improvement, these simple changes allowed us to significantly reduce our unnecessary paper use.

**Tips for reducing paper in your home**

- Print or write on both sides of the paper whenever possible.
- Use electronic storage to save important documents on your hard drive.
- Use reusable bags instead of plastic or paper at the store. Invest in ultra-compact reusable bags that fit inside a pocket or on a key ring so they are always available when needed.
- Opt out of junk mail.
- Switch to e-books and magazines. Many of us like the feel of a good old paper book, but a wealth of literature is available to read online or download, and is easier to carry around.
- Use washable rags to clean up spills instead of paper towels.



Recycle or Not?	
Use the chart below for information on what paper products can be recycled at home.	
Recycle	
	Milk cartons, juice containers and soup boxes, well rinsed if possible
	Envelopes with cellophane windows, junk mail, magazines and newspapers
	Shredded paper in a paper bag is recyclable, but is difficult to sort and recover. Consider using a shredding event or service for confidential documents.
Trash	
	Cash register receipts, freezer boxes, takeout containers, books and drink cups

[oregonmetro.gov/garden](http://oregonmetro.gov/garden)  
[oregonmetro.gov/healthyhome](http://oregonmetro.gov/healthyhome)  
[oregonmetro.gov/askmetro](http://oregonmetro.gov/askmetro)  
[youtube.com/user/OregonMetroGov](https://www.youtube.com/user/OregonMetroGov)

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