

BEE HOTEL MAINTENANCE

Proper maintenance of a bee hotel is essential not only for the health of the bees that use it, but also to extend the life of the hotel itself. Because bee hotels have many tunnels close together, fungus and mites may spread more easily than they would in natural environment. You wouldn't want to stay in a dirty hotel, and neither do bees! Take care to clean and maintain your bee hotel each year to give it the best chance at success.



CLEAN OR REPLACE TUNNELS

Once you are sure that your hotel is empty, you can clean or replace tunnels.

If your bee hotel contains natural stalks or paper straws, simply dispose of these after they have been used and replace them with fresh stalks.

If you have holes drilled into wood blocks, tunnels should be cleaned in the spring, after the bees have emerged. Keep an eye on your bee hotel in the spring to see if bees have emerged. The tunnel will no longer be capped off, but debris will remain inside the tunnel. You might even see a bee come out of the tunnel.

Clean out the tunnels thoroughly—to remove the material inside, use a pipe cleaner, small straw brush, or by blowing compressed air inside. You could even re-drill the tunnel to clean out the old material. Once the tunnel is clear of debris, sanitize the tunnels of mites and parasites by spraying or pouring in a 10% bleach solution, then left to dry. An alternative method of sanitation is to roast the blocks in the oven at around 200F for 3 or 4 hours. Monitor your oven closely. After a couple of years, replace the wood blocks in your bee hotel with fresh ones.

TIMING

Many different species of bees use your bee hotel, and they all hatch at different times. You can clean your hotel when you see that the tunnels have emptied, or if you are unsure, you can use an emergence chamber as described on the next page.



MAINTENANCE KIT

Bee hotel maintenance kits are available for purchase on EALT's online shop.

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EMERGENCE CHAMBER

An emergence chamber is a dark sealed box or container with a few small holes just big enough for a bee to fit through. You can use an emergence chamber when you have loose cocoons, or for pieces of your hotel that may still contain living bees. Remove the blocks from your hotel over the winter or in early spring, and place them in the emergence chamber. When bees hatch in the spring, they will be attracted to the light coming in to the dark container and crawl out. Leave the blocks in the emergence chamber until mid to late summer to be sure all bees have hatched. After they have emerged, clean out the leftover materials from the chamber.

CLEANING COCOONS

While not always necessary, it is possible to remove the cocoons from your bee hotel and clean them. This is easiest when your tunnels are made of stacking blocks created with a router or dado blade, or lined with parchment paper which can be pulled out. This should be done in the fall.

Use a sieve and brush to rid the cocoons of debris. Take care not to squish them. Then place the cocoons in a jar with clean sand and gently run the sand over the cocoons to rid them of mites and other pathogens. Store them in an unheated garage or shed over the winter and put them in an emergence chamber in the early spring.



OVERWINTER

Your bee hotel is fine where it is –really! However, you can take your hotel down and put it in an unheated garage or shed for the winter. Remember to put it back outside when temperatures start reaching above 0°C, so the bees can escape!



**Thank you for
helping protect
our pollinators!**