



BeeAware! Milk Carton Bee Houses



To make:

Materials:

- Cleaned Milk/Juice Cartons
- Twine
- Duct Tape (optional)
- Nesting Tubes (Paper/Plastic Straws)
- Scissors
- Packaging Tape
- Printed and cut out Bee Aware Caution Sign (see image below)



Instructions:

1. Take a cleaned cardboard and wax milk/juice carton and cut off the top.
2. Poke a hole in one of the bottom corners and run your piece of twine through it and (so that it comes out the front and goes through the back). Tie the string together to allow it to be hung. (More holes can be made in the different corners to better secure the house).
3. Take your paper and wax straws and fold-over one of the ends, basically sealing the end. This will also make the straw is shorter than the carton edge when placed inside (so that the tubes do not get wet!). You want the straws to be 6-7" long.
4. Stuff your milk carton full of straws so that they are secure and do not slide out when tipped over.
5. Print, fill out, cut, and tape the informational Bee Aware Caution Sign to the bottom of the carton with packaging tape. The expiration date is one year after you install it (once all of the bees have emerged!). Use this expiration date if you cannot maintain the house-[this is to ensure that we are in control of the bee diseases/parasites/fungi/bacteria without having to thoroughly clean everything!].



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6. -Optional- Wrap the outside of the milk carton with duct tape. (Note- this helps to further weatherproof and decorate the house, however it makes the house no longer biodegradable!).

Instillation:

Ultimately, secure the house (so that it isn't moving around in wind) about 3-5 feet above the ground facing the morning sun. This is so that the bees can receive the most sun to warm them up. Make sure that the house is slightly angled down so that rain will trickle off and not into the nesting tubes.

To Maintain:

Ideal Maintenance:

Once the bees have finished nesting- meaning that the tubes are sealed and there is no activity in the late fall/September- it is best to shelter the house from the snow by storing it for the winter inside a cardboard box in an unheated shed or garage. The baby bees inside the house hibernate throughout the winter and need the cold temps- but they cannot get wet! In the early spring, clean the milk carton with a mild bleach-water solution (or simply make a new one), replace the old straws with fresh straws, and install outside. Place the sealed and occupied straws next to your bee house to allow the bees to emerge naturally. Discard the used tubes once emptied.

Minimal Maintenance:

At the very least, after the bees have initially emerged **you absolutely need to remove the used tubes and replace them with new tubes. If you are unable to maintain, if broken, or if the house is disease ridden, PLEASE discard the house and tubes altogether (and you can replace it with a new one!)**

The Importance of Maintenance:

If these bee houses are left out for too long without being cleaned, bacteria, diseases, parasites, and fungi can all find their way into your houses and end up growing out of control and spreading to all of the bees living inside! In this way, the houses could eventually become a death trap instead of a safe haven... eek! Think of it like this- when you go to a hotel, you want the room to be clean, right? Imagine if the hotel rooms were never cleaned between guests and how gross that would be! The same thing goes for your own little bee hotel- make sure to be a good hostess!



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---> I would much rather you not put up your bee house rather than leave it up for a long time and have it not be maintained! I know that we can all be busy bees ourselves, but it is your responsibility to make sure that you are beeing kind to these bees by maintaining the houses!)

Native Bee Season:

The new bees emerge from their nests in early spring (around May), then they are all out and about making their nests and pollinating through the summer until the late fall (around September), and then they hibernate all winter until it's spring again!