

Osmia Cocoon Harvest, January 2020

"Wow! Look inside this box. It's filled with Osmia cocoons! Tell me about what we are seeing here; I don't know anything about what we are doing today!"



Wes Newcomer explained that we were carefully removing pollinator bee cocoons from the nesting boxes that he had built. Last spring bees had entered the tunnels placing a plug of mud at the end, then laying a tiny egg and then packing in pollen food. She did this mud, egg, pollen method over and over until the tunnel was filled. The eggs emerged into the larval stage, ate the pollen and then turned into the pupal stage in the cocoons that we saw.



Our job was to remove the cocoons, clean off the mud dividers and count the cocoons. They then would be refrigerated until Spring when they would be reintroduced into the pollinator boxes located in the Wetlands and Lehman's Woods here at Landis Homes. Since the honeybee populations have been dwindling, this is a way to produce other pollinators which are so important to our environment.



On January 16 at 9:30 twelve excited helpers were as "busy as bees" in the Wood Shop removing these tiny cocoons and counting them. They were: Wes Newswanger, Leon Weaver, Rhoda Nolt, Jonah Lin, Charles Longenecker, Tom and Janet Kline, Terry Nixdorf, Barbara Watts, and Chuck Seidel. Clair Kauffman and his helper, David Lantz, joined the group from Kauffman's Fruit Farm. They were interested in learning about this project to help with the pollination of their fruit crops. Clair said that they are in the process of bringing back hedgerows in their orchards to provide habitat for insects. They

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bring in honey bee hives which are very expensive, and they were hoping to learn about ways they can increase their fruit yield with Osmia pollinators.



We worked together for over two hours using a wooden tool to carefully push the cocoons onto the table, cleaning the mud away from the cocoons, placing them on the counting paper and then gently putting them into a container that will be refrigerated. Exclamations could be heard throughout the room: "Look at all these cocoons in this box!" "Oh, no! Look how a predator got all these cocoons!" "How many do you have from your box?" "Are we going to put out more boxes this year?" "How hard these bees must work making the mud dividers and collecting all the pollen!" Along with that, we learned to know new people and where they live here on campus.



The total number of cocoons harvested on January 16th was over 4000. Last year's harvest was about 1000. Now we wait for Spring for these bees to emerge and begin their important job of pollinating the flowers here on the Landis Homes campus.

~Janet Kline