



Northern Piedmont Beekeepers Association

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August 2009

IN THIS ISSUE

For New Beekeepers

AUGUST
NO meeting

Next meeting is
September 17

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

And may all your honey jars be full.

This month is the start of the bee's New Year. Preparations for winter, including planning, will take place this month.

Your efforts during the next two months will be reflected in what you find next spring and your 2010 honey harvest. Imagine that!

HIVE WORKS FOR AUGUST

With all the rain and, until now, cool weather the bees should be finding something to eat. However, check hives throughout August to be sure they have enough food.

Keep those weeds and grass down in front of the hive so the bees do not have to fight their way through overgrown plants.

Robbing can be a problem in August, so be careful in opening up and inspecting your hives.

Plan September requeening. You can order fall queens now for delivery during the first two weeks of September. Please ask for them to be marked.

Ventilation is so important during the hot, humid days of August. With screen bottom boards you have excellent lower ventilation. Prop the inner cover up about a half inch to create a draft to help bees keep the hive cool.

Do not be alarmed if a "bee beard" forms on the outside of your hive. It means the population is big and the field bees do not need to crowd inside, raising the temperature. If the night cools down they will go back inside.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

While we have had some rain recently, our weather has been hot and a good bit drier the past month or two. Don't forget to check your bees to see if you need to feed them, and remember to watch those mite loads and treat if needed.

Lele Hankins, our secretary / treasurer, has informed me that it now costs about one dollar to print and mail each hardcopy of the NPBA newsletter. We have twelve newsletters a year, and dues are currently \$10 a year... I'm no math whiz, but that doesn't look good! While Lele has sent out several emails asking if folks would be willing to get the newsletter via email, the majority of the membership still gets their monthly newsletter printed and mailed.

I understand for some that email might not be an option—some beekeepers do not have a computer. I know that having a dial-up modem can make it extremely difficult to receive big email attachments, since this is my situation at home! However, I have been receiving the newsletter via email for some months now, and the pdf file is small enough that I can get it in just a few minutes, even with a dial-up connection. If you do not have Adobe Acrobat Reader software, it is available to download for free if you go to <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>.

While no decision has yet been made, it looks like some sort of increase in membership dues will likely be necessary for next year. The more members who are willing to receive their newsletter via email and print it out themselves, the more likely it is that we can keep any dues increase to a bare minimum.

If you are currently getting your newsletter by email, thank you !!! In addition to saving printing, envelope and mailing costs, it also saves Lele a lot of extra work. If you still receive a printed version of the newsletter and can get it via email instead, please email Lele at hankins77@comcast.net and let her know asap.

Editor's comment: Even big-time newspapers are considering going to email editions instead of printing on paper. Consider it saving a tree. You can print it or parts out if you wish.

ROBBING

I am not talking about old-fashioned stagecoach robbing but old fashioned hive robbing by honey bees.

Since August is a month when few bee plants are blooming, the bees will find much honey available for snatching right in their own backyard.

Keep inspections to a minimum, doing only when necessary. Keep the hive open for as short a time as possible.

An old damp towel can be used to cover up the parts of the hive not being inspected. Some of the bee equipment suppliers sell an inspection cover—heavy canvas with a slot in the center that will cover everything except the frame you select to remove.

Removing several frames and leaning them against a hive can initiate robbing. Spilling honey or sugar syrup can initiate robbing.

What to do if robbing begins? Well, you have a few choices. But whatever you do, do it fast! You can lose a whole colony, all the bees, during a full-scale robbing event. You can cause massive robbing and lose more than one colony.

One tactic is to quickly close up the hive being robbed. Grab handfuls of green grass and green leaves and stuff them into the entrance. Do not worry that some robbers are trapped inside. The bees will take care of them. The grass will eventually dry and shrivel and blow away. By that time robbing is forgotten.

Another tactic is to put the hive being robbed back together but do not put the inner cover and the teleccoping cover on. Then run throughout your apiary removing the telescoping cover and the inner cover from every hive.

Almost by magic the beeyard becomes quiet. All the bees return to their home hive—to defend it! Yes, I know it sounds wacky but you are using the bees' natural instinct of defending the nest.

Above all, keep your cool.

IT'S TOO SOON FOR WINTER

No it's not. Let's see why August is the New Year for bees and why you should be thinking about the coming winter while you are melting in August heat.

By this time of year, in our area, the bees are just living off the diminished nectar plants. Of course brood is being raised but you may have noticed a decline or at least a difference from the ever increasing brood of spring.

As far as the bees are concerned they have stored their winter food supplies. But you did harvest honey from your hives (unless you are a first-year beekeeper). With our wet early summer and many showers during the end of July the autumn flowers will be in good supply for the bees to continue to store winter food.

Considering the weather and the plants and the danger of robbing you can probably put off food storage inspection until September.

However, now is the time to review your records—oh! you are keeping records aren't you? How is your queen doing? How old is your queen? Do you like what the queen is producing—calm, gentle workers, hard workers, hygienic workers? Review all the factors of this colony as you have worked with it during the spring and summer months.

The first two weeks of September are the best time for requeening in our area. More food is available with the fall flowers so the danger of robbing is reduced. Also with an improved nectar flow, queen introduction is easier. We'll work on requeening in the September issue.

What you need to do now is determine whether you need to requeen some of your colonies. If so, you need to order queens. If available locally that is good but don't wait until the last minute!

If you are at loose ends you could build or buy a solar wax melter. You want to be sure that it is the correct size to hold a queen excluder. If so, let the hot August sun melt the wax from your excluders. Then they will be clean for next spring. Now sit back and relax until September. It will be here before you know it.

SELLING YOUR HONEY

You took your share of the bees' honey back in July, let it settle to remove foam and bits of things, and put it into bottles or other containers. Now you realize that you have more than you can use in a year.

First I want you to consider where you are storing that honey. For reasons unknown to me, many beekeepers think that "a cool place" is the best place to keep honey. They may be quite wrong.

The optimum emperature for crystallization of honey is 57°F. So if you have your honey stored in a cool cellar, get a thermometer and see what temperature that cellar really is.

The ideal temperature for storing honey is:
room temperature of about 68-70°F OR
in a freezer at about 0-5°F

Since you do not know whether this year's crop of honey will crystallize quickly or slowly, you don't want to put labels on your containers until just before selling. Then if you need to reheat to liquefy you won't ruin a label. Label adhesive is tough stuff! It's hard to remove a ruined label.

If you are selling liquid honey you should be using a small label, on the back of a jar, telling that crystallization is normal and how to reliquefy. Otherwise the consumer thinks the honey has "spoiled."

Are you putting your honey in canning jars to sell it? If so, are you using one-piece labels? If you are using the two piece (rim and lid) that is for canning—stop it! They are a mess for consumers. You can buy one-piece lids in regular and wide mouth sizes from bee equipment suppliers or the "storage lids" from the local hardware store. Use those and keep your customers happy.

If you insist on canning jars—which are not the best way to display your beautiful honey—at least buy some with one side smooth enough to put on a label. The raised lettering on some jars is on all four sides and the label looks as if it is covering the Rocky Mountains. Stop it!

COOKING WITH HONEY

Right now everyone's garden is full of summer squash and zucchini. So use honey and zucchini!

SWEET AND SOUR ZUCCHINI

1 pound zucchini
1 small onion, chopped
2 tablespoons oil
handful of chopped parsley
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 tablespoon honey
salt and pepper to taste

Slice the zucchini fairly thin. Sauté the onion in the oil until it starts to turn golden, then add the zucchini and sauté for a few minutes, turning the slices so oil coats the surfaces. Then cover the pan, lower the heat and cook for 5 - 6 minutes. Stir in the lemon juice, honey and season with salt and pepper. Turn up the heat, uncovered, and cook until zucchini are tender, but not soft and there is small amount of syrupy glaze in pan. Serve sprinkled with chopped parsley.

ZUCCHINI SICILY

3 cups zucchini slices
1 teaspoon oregano leaves, crushed
1/4 teaspoon pepper
2 tablespoons honey
1 medium onion, sliced
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/3 cup margarine or butter
1 medium tomato cut into wedges

Sauté zucchini, onion and seasonings in margarine. Add tomato and honey. Cook 5 minutes or until vegetables are tender.

Both recipes from COOKING WITH HONEY
Kansas Beekeepers Association

WHAT'S BLOOMING?

garden flowers	white Dutch clover
vegetable gardens	Mint family
Queen Anne's Lace (not popular with bees)	
chicory	herbs
daisy-like flowers	vitex (in gardens)
some wildflowers (look around)	
early goldenrod (not used by honey bees)	
ragweed	Spanish needle
Boneset	Comeflowers

IMPORTANT STUFF

Virginia State Beekeepers Association
VSBA operates on a fiscal year of July 1 through June 30 of the following year. So your membership needs to be renewed in July.

If a member of a local association (NPBA is one) dues are \$10. (If not a member of a local, dues are \$12.)

If you are currently a member of VSBA and wish to renew, or if you would like to become a member, you can download and print out a membership form from the website:

www.virginiabeekeepers.org or mail name, address, phone and e-mail to:

Karen Hunt, Treasurer VSBA PO Box 213
Amissville, VA 20106. PLEASE PRINT! and indicate NPBA is your local association.

Questions? contact Karen at 540-937-4792
or at kahu9@juno.com

Meeting dates for NPBA:

September 17
October 15
November 19

No meetings in August, Decemeber

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VSBA autumn meeting Saturday, November 7
at Blue Ridge Community College, Weyers
Cave, just off I-81.

Website info:
Northern Piedmont Beekeepers
www.npbee.org

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For information about Virginia State Beekeepers
Association go to the website:
www.virginiabeekeepers.org

C & H BEE BOOKS

If you are interested in bee books contact
C & H Bee Books for a list of books available.
Call Ann to request a book list.

We cannot accept credit cards
but checks and cash are just fine!