



# Northern Piedmont Beekeepers Association

Volume 31

Number 5

May 2010

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For New Beekeepers  
Nectar Collecting  
Total Hodgepodge

### MAY MEETING

**TIME:** 7:30 PM

**DATE:** May 20

**PLACE:** Culpeper Cooperative Extension  
corner of Davis St and West St  
entrance on West St

**PROGRAM:** More about Queens

**SPEAKER:** Ann Harman and members of  
NPBA including the Bee Course students.

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### FARMERS' MARKET

NPBA again has a club stand at the Culpeper Farmer's Market, which is held Saturday mornings from 7:30am - noon at the end of Davis Street near the train depot in Culpeper. The market runs through October. Several club members are again represented at the market, and anyone wishing to participate can contact Mike King at 540-937-4792 for more information. IT'S FUN—PLEASE JOIN US!

### VIRGINIA STATE BEEKEEPERS

Info at: [virginiabeekeepers.org](http://virginiabeekeepers.org)  
Put November 6 on your calendar of events right now and come to Blue Ridge Community College for the VSBA autumn meeting.

### HIVE WORKS FOR MAY

Keep an eye on those plants! This is our nectar flow month. COMB-DRAWING TIME!

It's supering time! But NOT if you just installed a package.

If supering with foundation put on only one super with **ten** frames (OK 8 if you have the 8-frame hive). The bees will start drawing it in the area over the cluster so be prepared to move the frames around.

Queen excluders DO work with a strong (production) hive on a strong nectar flow. If drawing foundation, leave the excluder off for a few days to get the bees into the honey super and doing something.

Spring showers make grass and weeds grow rapidly. Keep them cut, especially in front of the hives so that the bees have a clear flight path.

Remember to have good ventilation so the bees can remove water from the nectar.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Thanks go out to Mike Wilson, Susan Ishmael and Bob Stowe for coordinating the April meeting while so many of us were at the VA State Beekeepers' two-day conference in Wytheville. I understand Richard Krammes provided a wonderful discussion, and I'm sorry to have missed it! I hope to see you all at our next meeting on May 20th where Ann Harman will discuss more about queens and requeening. Also, mark your calendars now for the NPBA annual picnic June 13th at Verdun.

The Virginia State Beekeepers Association's spring meeting held April 16-17th in Wytheville was a good one. "Hat's off" to two of our new, first-year beekeeping students, Walter and Marilyn Price, who have jumped in with both feet (and maybe head first, too!). In addition to getting bees for the first time, they also attended their first VSBA conference. For those of you who missed it, the next VSBA meeting will be November 6, at Blue Ridge Community College, Weyer's Cave, VA. It is right off I-81 and relatively close to all of us here. Watch future newsletters for information.

To our new beekeeping students who got bees this spring, I hope your package installations went well. I hope to see you at our May meeting!

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

A 13 year-old boy scout and beekeeper from Oklahoma, Christopher Stowell, is petitioning the Boy Scout Council for reinstatement of the Boy Scout Beekeeping merit badge that was discontinued in 1995. To sign the letter and petition, go to "The Buzz" page at <http://www.helpthehoneybees.com/#buzz>. There is also a petition you can sign at The Experience Project website to show your support - [www.experienceproject.com/helpthehoneybees](http://www.experienceproject.com/helpthehoneybees).

Christopher has enlisted the help of beekeeping organizations across the country for their endorsement and pledge that they will help train the boy scouts interested in beekeeping. Haagen-Dazs Ice Cream has also joined forces with Christopher.

## SO YOU WANT TO BE A BEEKEEPER...

One theme I want all beekeepers, particularly new beekeepers, to keep in mind is:

### **Bee biology governs bee behavior which governs management.**

So you are standing alongside your hive, tool in hand and wondering SHOULD I...do this, that, or nothing? Have you started backwards with management? which will lead the bees to try to right your wrong?

Start with what you observe the bees doing, or have done. Think about their actions. Think about what is making them do that particular action. THEN, consider the management practice you were about to attempt and see if it fits in with what the bees can do.

Yes, we all goof. Yes, the bees will carry on in spite of our goofs, right our wrongs and go happily on their own way.

Where can we find out about bee biology? bee behavior? By being observers at the hive. By keeping up with bee journals. By reading books. By attending beekeeper meetings. By willing to ask others—and by not being afraid to question the advice of others.

Over the years, including just recently, I hear about "bees dying from the cold," "guess they had no queen," "must have been poisoned from insecticides." Beekeepers love to make "medicines" for their bees and are happy to recommend them to any beekeeper who will listen. "Don't waste your money on the expensive treatments, use my stuff."

Unfortunately much advice is poor or even dangerous. Bee scientists in our universities and USDA bee labs spend much time researching diseases, treatments, genetics, bee behavior, and other topics. When research results are published in the scientific journals the information is examined by other researchers. So there is a check on results. Beekeepers should look to those research results for answers to questions and recommendations.

Information is available. Use it.

## NECTAR COLLECTING

This is the time of year that honey bees are getting busy collecting nectar. Why? They want something to eat. The honey made from nectar is the carbohydrate part of their diet. Plus the bees need stores of honey for winter. Several factors combine to make successful nectar flows for the bees.

First is the availability of nectar-producing plants. Fortunately we live in an area that is rich in many different plants, some of which are profuse nectar producers. From the trees of spring—black locust, wild cherry and tulip poplar—to the summer flowers of sweet clover, white Dutch clover and wildflowers, much nectar is available for a considerable period of time.

However, nectar plants have their needs. Weather plays a vital part in nectar secretion. A drought severely decreases a plant's growth and nectar production. Too much rain will keep the bees inside the hive. Some plants will produce in cool weather, others during the heat of summer. Anything abnormal in temperatures will decrease nectar production. So keep track of weather to understand what the plants—and therefore your bees—are doing.

Colony population is necessary for a good honey crop. A small colony will simply collect for its own needs because there is not enough "bee power" to make much of a surplus. The more bees you have, the bigger the field force, the more nectar can be collected. The colony also has to be *oe* with a vigorous queen—producing adequate queen pheromone to keep everyone happy. And during the spring and summer drones are necessary for morale. Not too many, such as from a drone-laying queen, and not too few because you killed them. Let the bees decide what they need.

Then the bees must have somewhere to store the nectar and subsequently the honey. Nectar occupies more space than honey in the hive because of its high water content. When the water is evaporated the bees can consolidate the honey stores. But beekeepers must give the bees plenty of room during nectar gathering.

Remember—honey is an agricultural crop!

## LOTS OF LITTLE THINGS

If you have tall grass, shrubs and weeds around your beeyard, watch out for ticks. Lyme disease seems to be rampant. Don't become a victim. Keep your apiary surroundings mowed.

Recommendations are for feeding Fumagilin-B® in both spring and autumn. However it is too late now to do that if you have honey supers on.

If you haven't done so earlier now is the time to train your bees to a water source.

Myth: horses and bees don't get along. Nonsense. I've had horses and bees since the mid-1970s. But the hives are not in the horse pasture nor in the cattle pasture.

Learn something about other stinging insects—bumble bees, carpenter bees, wasps, yellowjackets because the non-beekeeping public thinks you know something about them. (You love and keep a stinging insect - right?)

Top Supering, Bottom Supering. What do those terms mean? Well, it's quite easy. Top supering means that you are putting an empty honey super on top of one(s) already on the hive. Bottom Supering means that you take off the honey supers already on, put the empty one on, then return the supers being used on top of the empty one.

If you have small hive beetles (SHB) be very careful in your use of both pollen patties as a food supplement and grease patties for tracheal mite control. The SHB love them. Grease patties on in mid- to late October and off in early March. Pollen patties only if needed and then in February and possibly March.

Myth: Feeding bees makes them lazy. No. You feed bees when they need to be fed to keep them alive. Nectar from flowers is preferable to your offered sugar syrup.

So you keep deeps for brood chambers and mediums or shallows for honey. How to get new deep-size comb to renew brood boxes? Use a deep with 10 frames for a honey super. Ugh—really heavy! But you now have 10 new combs.

## COOKING WITH HONEY

May is the beginning of strawberry season. Recipes with strawberries and honey give you the perfect combination.

### STRAWBERRIES WITH BRANDIED HONEY

1/2 cup honey  
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice  
1/4 cup Cognac or other brandy  
2 baskets strawberries, halved

Mix honey with lemon juice and Cognac. Pour over berries and chill several hours. Spoon into glasses and serve with something creamy.

Makes 6 servings.

STRAWBERRIES Maggie Waldron

Let's make a proper shortcake for the berries.

### STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE

2 cups flour  
1/2 teaspoon soda  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/3 cup shortening  
3/4 cup buttermilk  
2 tablespoons melted butter  
1/4 cup honey  
1/2 pint whipping cream  
1 quart fresh strawberries, sliced

Combine flour, soda, salt. Cut in shortening. Stir in buttermilk to form a soft dough. Roll out 1/2 inch thick. Spread half of dough in 8-inch square pan. Brush with melted butter. Place other half of dough on top and pat down evenly. Brush with melted butter. Bake at 400° for 20 minutes. Whip cream, adding honey in fine stream. Split shortcake and put berries and whipped cream between and on top of layer.

NEBRASKA'S HONEY COOKBOOK

Nebraska Honey Producers Assoc.

Just drizzle your favorite honey over sliced fresh strawberries and enjoy. If you have any orange blossom honey from Florida, use that.

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| <p><b>WHAT'S BLOOMING?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>black locust</li><li>tulip poplar</li><li>wild raspberry</li><li>wild blackberry</li><li>wild cherry</li></ul> <p>mow dandelions to keep them blooming</p> |
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## GOOD STUFF

### Meeting dates for NPBA

September 16  
October 21  
May 20 November 18  
Sunday June 13 Potluck Picnic  
No meeting in July, Aug, Dec and Jan.

**Virginia State Beekeepers Association** Fall meeting November 6 at Blue Ridge Community College, Weyers Cave, a few minutes off I-81.  
**Eastern Apicultural Society** Short Course and Conference August 2 - 6, Boone, NC (in the cool mountains!)

### AND THE WINNER IS...

David MacMahon, one of our new beekeeping students. Thanks to all of you who purchased raffle tickets in support NPBA, and thanks to Jerry Headley for the donation of a complete 8-frame hive. David is really off to a good start. Since the rest of you didn't win, come to the picnic and try your luck at the Chinese Auction.

### PRE-PICNIC NEWS

I just want to give you a heads-up on the June NPBA Picnic -- held rain or shine! The Pavilion has a roof so even if it rains please do come.

Save the date - Sunday afternoon June 13. From 4 to 6 PM.

IF weather cooperates (not raining, sunny but not 100°) we can do some open hive demos from 3 to 4 but you must bring your veil and any other protective gear you wish.

Save your money now for the Chinese Auction.

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| <p><b>VIRGINIA BEE SUPPLY</b><br/>Local authorized Brushy Mountain dealer offering a complete selection of woodware and bee supplies. Save shipping costs. Contact Jerry Headley at 540-905-5563 or <a href="http://www.virginiabeesupply.com">www.virginiabeesupply.com</a>.</p> |
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| <p><b>C &amp; H BEE BOOKS</b><br/>If you are interested in bee books contact Ann for a list of books available. We cannot accept credit cards but checks and cash are just fine!</p> |
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