



Northern Piedmont Beekeepers Association

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DECEMBER

Remember—NO meeting in December and
NO meeting in January.

Mark your new calendars for 2011:
Mark down the third Thursday in February,
March, April, May. Then September, October
and November.
Picnic in June.

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CONGRATULATIONS!

First to the new set of officers. Give them your support and volunteer to help with meetings and other events. Next to all the beekeepers who found their way to the new meeting site.

OUR THANKS TO...

Mike King for serving as President of NPBA.
You were a good President!

Thank you Lele Hankins for all your work as Treasurer of NPBA for many years. We hope to see you at NPBA meetings.

VIRGINIA STATE BEEKEEPERS

Meeting will be June 17, 18, 2011
Keep watching for news of place and speakers.
Plan to attend.

HIVE WORKS FOR DECEMBER

Put some beekeeping books in your letter to Santa Claus. Winter is an excellent time for reading.

Really important -- November's weather has had some unusually warm days. This means that your bees have been active. Check your winter stores to make sure the bees have enough.

Subscribe to the two beekeeping journals.

Check your smoker. If the bellows are leaky, you can buy just new bellows from the equipment suppliers.

Don't worry if you see bird seed, sawdust and other strange things at the hive entrance. Bees collect some funny things because pollen is not available. The hive bees just throw it back out.

Give honey, honey cookery and recipes for Christmas gifts.

Eat honey!

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

We had a good November meeting - thanks to Ann Harman for her presentation on Reducing Stress for Honey Bees, and to Chris Akers and Ron Buchner for being our official ballot counters for the annual election. A big "thank you" to Deb, Ann, Craig and Karen for being willing to step up and serve the club as officers in 2011, and to Karen for again coordinating the bee class registration and other class details. I know I leave the club in capable hands.

As I finish up my term as president, I want to thank all those who have participated in NPBA by attending meetings, the annual picnic and the bee classes, those who have become new beekeepers and mentors for "newbees," those who ran the club farmer's market stand, and those who supported the club raffles by either donating items or buying tickets. All of you help make the club a welcoming, positive place for beekeepers.

I'd especially like to thank a few folks who regularly give that extra bit to benefit NPBA and their fellow beekeepers - Ann Harman for doing our monthly newsletters and being such a great resource; Mike Wilson for managing the website; Susan Ishmael for all her fundraising help and meeting key pick-ups; Bob Stowe for picnic donations and meeting sign-in lists; Craig Williams for newsletter distribution and managing the extraction equipment; Lele Hankins for serving so capably as treasurer for years (while juggling two young children); Ann, Billy Davis and Dr. Snyder for years of support with the bee classes; and Deb Parker and Karen Hunt for key support and help with so many things I can't begin to list them all so I won't even try.

Remember that we have no meetings in December or January, so I hope see you all in February 2011. Have a good winter!

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

I welcome suggestions for topics in the newsletter. I attempt to keep most topics seasonal. The winter months are good ones for an assortment not necessarily seasonal. Just email me your topics and I'll see what I can do.

SO YOU WANT TO BE A BEEKEEPER...

You will hear and read that you need to inspect your colony. Just what is a hive inspection? How often? When? Why?

First—and most important— you must have a purpose before you even puff a bit of smoke in the entrance. Here are some purposes:

- look for disease, pests
- look for queen performance
- look for honey and pollen stores
- look for signs of swarming

These are just some and not necessarily in order of importance.

With a purpose in mind, your hive inspection will be quick, efficient and less disruptive to the entire colony.

Do you need to see the queen? No, unless you suspect supersedure. If eggs (hard to see) and young larvae (shiny white stuff in bottom of cell) are present, so is the queen, at least within the past few days.

Do you realize that lack of young larvae in end of March and into April indicates swarm preparations? Lack of young larvae in late October means normal winter preparations. Relating what you see of normal colony activities to the time of year means you are "reading" the colony accurately.

So you are going to look at food stores. You should know that bees store food over brood. The brood area should show a band of various colors of pollen next to the brood and honey, capped or not, over the pollen band. Can you relate food stores to the seasons? If so, then you know when to feed and when to stop feeding.

Can you tell the difference between a strong colony, one "boiling over" with bees and a wimpy colony. The wimpy colony needs investigation. A wimpy colony requires more investigation time to discover the probable cause and arrive at a solution.

Get help to identify suspected disease in your colony. In addition wax moth larvae and small hive beetle larvae look somewhat similar but are destructive in their own ways. Get help.

BE A WEATHER WATCHER

I've attended a number of beekeepers meetings in the past few months and also have fielded some phone calls that all point to a lack of paying attention to the weather.

To be a good beekeeper, even if it's just two hives, all beekeepers need to be able to "read" the weather to know what to do for their bees.

Feral bees have to cope on their own. And not all feral bees stay alive.

You are the provider for your bees. You have given them a dry home. You think there is bee pasture for them. You try to take care of their problems with varroa and small hive beetle. But until you relate the weather with bee pasture you do not have a complete picture of their needs.

Bee pasture means flowers. Flowers means plants with leaves and roots. What do those plants need? Sun. So plants can manufacture their own food. They cannot fly or run to find it. Water. Water transports the plant's food to all parts. (Strange - that's what we need to transport our food to the parts of our bodies.)

A lack of rain stunts plant growth and can reduce blooming and a shortage of nectar. Now think! Do you need to provide something for your bees?

Day upon day of rain, little to no sun. What are the bees doing? They are staying at home. In order to stay alive what are they doing? That's right—eating up the honey they brought in earlier when the weather was nice and sunny. Do you need to provide something for your bees?

Look into the hive! Look! Remember one of the bees' mottos is "food above brood." Do you need to provide syrup? You will never know until you look.

Now take one of your nice new 2011 calendars and label it "Weather Calendar." Jot down just important facts about the weather. This is to make you more aware of weather—by the day, week, month, year. You will become a Weather Watcher and a much better beekeeper!

THE AVERAGE BEEKEEPER

Students from Bardley University in Peoria, IL, conducted a survey to find out what sort of people are beekeepers. They sent out their survey and received 1300 replies from 5 continents. Here is what they found.

The average beekeeper is a 52-year-old male who has been keeping bees for 9 years and has 4 hives.

It is interesting to note that he prefers to use essential oils, powdered sugar or drone trapping to control varroa.

Of those that answered the survey, 92% were small-scale beekeepers with 2 or 3 hives. Some commercial and sideliners did answer the survey.

The beekeepers were well-educated. Most had some college or had earned a 4-year degree. A substantial number had graduate degrees.

Beekeeper's personalities differed from that of the general public. Beekeepers are conscientious, less extroverted, more open to new ideas, more emotionally stable and more agreeable than the general public.

Well, are you an average beekeeper?

THE 2-OUNCE SQUEEZE BEAR

Those of you at the last meeting saw the cute little new container - the 2-ounce bear (plastic). So this "commercial" is for those who were not at the meeting.

This little bear is a great marketing opportunity, one that can increase both your sale of honey and the price you receive for it.

Where can one sell this bear? Sell in quantity: contact wedding organizers (souvenir for each guest), banquet planners, organizations that may have a gathering and want souvenirs, give to kids at Halloween, kid's parties, party planners, large offices that have a celebration, baby showers, anniversary parties. Or use as giveaways as samples of your honey. Look for events in your area. Make use of the cute bear!

COOKING WITH HONEY

December is always Cookie Month. Bake some for yourself, your family and for gifts. Cookies made with honey mail very well because they are not crisp. So they don't crumble when the post office elephants stomp on them.

BEEHIVES

1/4 cup honey
1 egg, beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 cups shredded coconut
1 cup coarsely chopped walnuts
1 cup chopped pitted dates
2 tablespoons flour

Combine honey, egg and vanilla in medium bowl. Beat until well blended. Stir in coconut and nuts. Coat dates with flour in small bowl. Add to mixture and stir to combine. Drop batter by tablespoonsful onto greased baking sheet. Bake at 325° for 12 minutes or until slightly brown. Remove from pan and cool on wire racks. Makes 2-1/2 dozen.

SWEETENED WITH HONEY

National Honey Board

SPICE COOKIES

1 cup honey
1/4 cup butter or margarine
1/3 cup chopped pecans
grated rind of 1 lemon
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom
2-1/4 cups flour
2 teaspoons baking powder

Heat honey and butter together for about 5 minutes. Add remaining ingredients except baking powder and mix thoroughly. Partially cool, then sift in baking powder and mix again. Let stand overnight. Roll out thin on floured surface. Cut into desired shapes. Place on greased baking sheet. Decorate as desired. Bake at 350° for 8 to 10 minutes.

NATURE'S GOLDEN TREASURE HONEY COOKBOOK

Joe M. Parkhill

WHAT'S BLOOMING?

sun, rain, snow (?)
Christmas Trees
witch hazel
not much of anything else

GOOD STUFF

Meeting dates for NPBA

No meetings in December and January

2011 Beekeeping Course

NPBA will again offer a Beekeeping Course for 2011. Classes begin on Tuesday February 8, 2011, at the Depot in Culpeper. It is a seven-week course, with classes each Tuesday evening from 7 - 9 pm. The fee is \$100 per person or family, and includes texts, handouts, a student disc and a one-year membership in NPBA. **Advance registration for the class is now open and being accepted.** Student text packages are limited, and reserved on a first come, first served basis, so register early!

A pre-class Meet-and-Greet will be held on Sunday February 6, 2011, from 2 - 4pm. Each year, we ask NPBA members to attend to meet the new class participants. We need volunteers to bring desserts and/or snacks. If you can attend and/or bring food item for the event, please call Karen Hunt 540-937-4792 or Deb Parker at 540-854-4883. For more information about the class or a class registration form, contact Karen Hunt (540-937-4792 or kahu9@juno.com).

BOOKS

If you like to spend a chilly afternoon reading a bee book, I can recommend several.

Bees in America by Tammy Horn
The history of bees and beekeeping in the U.S.
A very readable and interesting book.

Three books by Larry Connor: *Increase Essentials* (about nucs), *Bee Sex Essentials* (biology of queens), *Queen Rearing Essentials* (lots of photos about raising queens).

There are a number of so-so books and a few really bad ones. Contact Ann for more info.

VIRGINIA BEE SUPPLY

Local authorized Brushy Mountain dealer offering a complete selection of woodenware and bee supplies. Save shipping costs. Contact Jerry Headley at 540-905-5563 or www.virginiabeesupply.com.