



Northern Piedmont Beekeepers Association

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IN THIS ISSUE

For New Beekeepers
Stinging Insects
Bee Forage Plants

MAY

Date: Thursday, MAY 21

Place: Cooperative Extension Service , corner
of Davis Street and South West Street
in Culpeper, entrance on West St.

Time: 7:30 PM

Program: Honey Extracting Demo

MAY PROGRAM

A great May program for newbees and all beekeepers. Extracting is fun. Come and see how to do it. Those experienced beekeepers can give suggestions and experiences.

With the current high interest in bees and beekeeping, the First Fridays in Warrenton can give the public a chance to find out more about bees.

HIVE WORKS FOR MAY

Colonies are still apt to swarm until the nectar flow is strong. Keep an eye on your colonies and reverse if necessary.

Watch those trees. Have those honey supers ready!

Remember to remove attendants in queen cages when introducing the new queen.

Maintain good ventilation throughout the hive during nectar flow. The bees have to evaporate the water in the nectar to produce honey.

Spring means grass and weeds are growing in your apiary. Mow so that your bees have a clear entrance for flight and a good working surface for you. Aim the mower discharge away from the hive entrance. You might need to wear a veil while mowing.

This is the month for drawing foundation. During a strong nectar flow you can sacrifice a bit of honey just to have a supply of new comb.

For those producing comb honey, remove the frames as soon as they are capped. Wrap up and put them immediately in a freezer for a week.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

At the April club meeting, Susan Ishmael, Joe Miller, and Lele Hankins talked about items made from honey and bee products, and discussed some pros and cons of different types of feeders. Hopefully you try and work with different feeders to see what works best for you.

A number of NPBA members attended the Virginia State Beekeepers' Association (VSBA) two-day spring meeting in Hampton, Virginia in mid-April. VSBA meetings are a great place to hear the latest news on current bee research, and meet other beekeepers and vendors from around the state. The spring meeting focused on natural and organic beekeeping, and hosted great speakers from several universities, including VA Tech, Penn State and Cornell. There were also presentations on other native bees, as well as some interesting research videos on honey bee swarming.

At our upcoming May meeting, we will discuss and demo honey extracting, talk about the "First Fridays" opportunity in Warrenton, and give a brief update on some of the information learned at the Spring VSBA meeting.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

At least our roller-coaster weather has brought us much needed rain. The dandelion crop looks very good here on the hilltop. I do hope those who attended the recent VSBA meeting are spreading the word about encouraging wildflowers, known to some as "weeds."

I wish we could go back to the original definition of a weed—a plant (of any size) that is growing in the wrong place. Thus, a tomato growing in a bed of roses could be considered a weed.

Yes, the dandelion is an alien plant but it provides honey bees and other insects with both pollen and nectar. The pollen is nutritious, lacking only one of the amino acids.

Although some plants that are highly invasive are good bee forage plants, I, along with conservationists, do not recommend planting them.

SO YOU WANT TO BE A BEEKEEPER...

Once someone finds out you are a beekeeper you have suddenly become a "bee" expert. You are now the source of information for anything that resembles a bee, wasp, bumble bee—in short, anything that might sting.

So let's take a tour of the stinging insects so that you can answer those phone calls that are starting the public's "stinging season."

At the moment the male carpenter bees are terrifying everyone. The carpenter bee looks very similar to a bumble bee, but it is not. The female is drilling her way into an unpainted beam of wood to lay about 6 eggs, provision them with moistened pollen and leave. The male is guarding the nest.

Males of stinging insects do not have a stinging apparatus and therefore cannot sting! Remember this fact.

So those male carpenter bees are doing their job of dive-bombing but they are not a threat. I like to stand on my deck for a few minutes to watch their incredible flights—and to give them something to do. Lots of fun.

At this time of year the mated queens of bumble bees, yellowjackets and wasps are searching for a new home. Males of these will not be produced until autumn approaches. These females will be seen cruising about looking for suitable places.

Bumble bees love old mouse nests of leaves and dry grass in quiet corners. Yellowjackets need shelter so they will search for a convenient space in the sidewalls of a building or in the ground. Or some will start to construct aerial nests. Paper wasps want eaves of barns and homes so their open comb is protected. Mud dauber wasps seek sheltered walls to construct their mud tubes that resemble organ pipes.

Generally between this flying about and searching period and later in the summer, around July and August, you will not hear from the non-beekeeping public. As the nest size grows and the insect's numbers increase, encounters with the public increase and panic sets in again.

more about stinging insects...

Swarm season of honey bees produces panic when someone see a ball of bees hanging from a tree or shrub or post. Reassure the caller that swarms do not attack! If the swarm is 20 feet up in a pine tree consider your safety before trying to capture it. Ask how long has the swarm been hanging there. So often beekeepers drive miles to capture a swarm that “just left” or what is worse “my neighbor came over and poured gasoline on them.” Whatever you do, explain to the caller that honey bees are important pollinators and should not be destroyed.

You may get phone calls about bees flying in and out of a hole or crack in a house’s sidewall. A swarm has moved in. If the swarm has been established for some time you know there is honey in some of the combs. If the honey bees are killed by the homeowner the wax moth will destroy the comb and the honey will drip or seep through the inside wall. A mess. It is best for the homeowner to contact a beekeeper who removes honey bees from buildings. But you can tell the homeowner that either siding will have to be removed or a piece of the interior wall will have to be removed. Then the homeowner may have a repair bill.

All of us need to know that the bumble bees and carpenter bees are important pollinators. Wasps and yellowjackets are meat-eaters and, being hairless, are only ineffective pollinators. But they are highly beneficial! Their “meat” is insects, caterpillars, other larvae that are chomping up vegetable and flower gardens. These yellowjackets and wasps are an important part of IPM—controlling harmful insects naturally.

However, sometimes these critters choose a nest site that does interfere with humans. At that time the nest may have to be destroyed by the homeowner.

It is your decision as to what to do about stinging insect removal. Remember—you are not an exterminator with license. You can tell the homeowner that holes and cracks need to be plugged up or caulked. Once a cavity smells “right” to a bee or yellowjacket it becomes desirable real estate. These critters really prefer a home that has that lived-in smell.

YOU NEED TO BE A PLANT WATCHER

We know that climate is changing around the world. Climate is not the same as day-to-day weather. But both of these together affect our bee forage plants.

Then we have to cope with micro-climates. What I have blooming at the moment on my hilltop can be completely different from what is blooming down in my river pasture. Or at your apiary.

You can read book after book and newsletters galore that tell you when a plant blooms—approximately.

As a beekeeper it is up to you to actually see what is blooming in your bee forage area. That area will have a number of microclimates within it. That extends your bee forage period of bloom. Lucky for the bees and your honey crop!

I always recommend a good wildflower (remember, not weeds) identification book like the Peterson and Audubon Society ones and a tree identification guide also.

Now these books are not going to tell you whether these are bee forage plants. So you will have to piece together information from bee-keeping books, newsletters and your own observations.

One book, the 1926 book *Honey Plants of North America* by John Lovell, is available from A.I. Root Co. Black and white photos are few. But the text is excellent. That is why you need the field guides.

Your own observations are important and fun. But you must realize that plants have their own lives. Pollen and nectar are produced at certain times of day. (Night-blooming plants are for bats and moths to pollinate.) Morning hours are popular for certain kinds of plants, but the blossoms may be producing for only two hours.

So as you wander around your property and hedgerows and pastures and see a honey bee on a flower, make note of the time of day and the time of the month. Use your books to identify the plant. Soon you will have your own bee forage guide.

COOKING WITH HONEY

May is strawberry month. Strawberries and honey are a perfect match.

STRAWBERRY HONEY PARFAITS

1-1/3 cups low-fat sour cream
1/4 cup honey
2 teaspoons lime juice OR
1 teaspoon grated lime peel
4 cups strawberries
1/4 cup coarsely chopped amaretti or biscotti
4 mint sprigs for garnish

Mix sour cream, honey and lime juice in medium bowl until well blended. Reserve 4 strawberries for garnish; coarsely chop remaining strawberries, about 3-1/2 cups. Gently fold chopped berries into cream mixture. Spoon into 4 (10 to 12 ounce) goblets or serving bowls. Sprinkle each with 1 tablespoon crumbs. Garnish with strawberries and mint sprigs. Serve immediately or refrigerate up to 6 hours. Makes 4 servings.

SWEETENED NATURALLY WITH HONEY
National Honey Board

STRAWBERRY FLOAT

1 quart milk, chilled
6 tablespoons honey
2 cups crushed fresh strawberries
1/2 teaspoon almond extract
1 quart vanilla ice cream

Combine all ingredients in blender container. Blend at medium speed for 1 minute. Serve in tall glasses garnished with scoops of ice cream.
THE HONEY KITCHEN ed. by Dadant

Cut up fresh strawberries; put in bowl. Drizzle with honey. Let sit for about 15 minutes, or even overnight. Enjoy.

WHAT'S BLOOMING?

- dandelions (a favorite of bees)
- garden flowers
- trees: oak, wild cherry,
- watch the black locust for bloom
- tulip poplar
- brambles
- wild mustard (awful honey)

JUST STUFF

At the April VSBA meeting in May Wyatt Mangum showed how important it is to remove the attendants in the queen cage when introducing a new queen. He mentioned a Queen Muff to help you with that as well as marking a queen. You can get a muff. See page 32 of the Brushy Mountain Bee Farm catalog.

Some gadgets in the various catalogs are just that -- a gadget. But some are useful! If you have discovered a truly useful gadget, share the information with us. You can do that at a meeting or you can e-mail Ann, the editor, to put it into the newsletter.

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Meeting dates for NPBA:

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|--------|--------------|
| | September 17 |
| | October 15 |
| May 21 | November 19 |

June 14 Sunday Potluck Picnic

No meetings in July, August, Decemeber

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

Eastern Apicultural Society Short Course August 3, 4, 5; conference August 5, 6, 7 at Ellicottville NY (near Buffalo).

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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!