



Northern Piedmont Beekeepers Association

Volume 31

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IN THIS ISSUE

For New Beekeepers
Equipment
Honey Plants

MARCH MEETING

TIME: 7:30 PM
DATE: March 18
PLACE: Culpeper Cooperative Extension
corner of Davis St and West St
entrance on West St
PROGRAM: All About Queens
SPEAKER: Keith Tignor, Virginia State
Apiarist

V. I. P.

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LAST CHANCE !!! - DUES REMINDER

Memberships were due January 1st. If you haven't renewed your membership, please send in your dues in **now** to continue receiving monthly newsletters. Membership renewal is \$10 (payable to NPBA), and can be mailed to Lele Hankins, 18182 Pine View Drive, Culpeper, VA 22701.

VIRGINIA STATE BEEKEEPERS

Meeting is April 16, 17 at Wytheville
Community College, Wytheville, VA, just minutes off I-81
Info at: virginiabeekeepers.org

HIVE WORKS FOR MARCH

After the winter we have had, check the tilt of your hives. You may need to straighten them.

Clean up any beeyard debris and tree branches.

Check your bear fence! Bears will be waking up hungry and wandering around.

March goes cold and hot and back to cold. How is your bees' food supply. Go and look!

The queen will be laying at about peak now. Since you want maximum work force May first, those eggs will be laid March 15.

Keep an eye on the plants and the weather. Let them guide you in your management.

If you are feeding 1:1 sugar syrup keep on the lookout for swarm preparation towards the end of the month.

Reverse as soon as the bottom hive body is empty. Keep reversing until nectar flow starts.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Thanks go out to Bob Wellemeyer, our Regional Inspector, for discussing aspects of commercial beekeeping at our February meeting. Understanding some of the different considerations of commercial beekeeping is not only interesting, but also offers some helpful perspectives that can apply to sideline beekeeping. For instance, Bob's information about his need to conduct pretty quick hive inspections in order to look through 50-100 hives at one time can help us smaller beekeepers become more efficient with hive inspections in our own beeyards.

At our next meeting on March 18th, our State Apiarist, Keith Tignor, will be the guest speaker. Keith will discuss introducing new queens more successfully, queen failure, as well as other beekeeping topics. This is a good opportunity for new beekeepers to meet Keith, as well as to meet other experienced beekeepers that have not been in the audience at the beginning beekeeping course.

A big "thank you" to Jerry Headley of Virginia Bee Supply, who has graciously offered a **complete** 8-frame hive as a raffle item. Please see the "Raffle" column on p. 4 for additional info on how to get your raffle tickets and support the club.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

You beginning beekeepers are so fortunate to have a great Bee Course to get you started! At this time of year I get phone calls from well-meaning people—"where can I buy some bees?" Or perhaps "I just bought some bee stuff, hive things you know, so now I need to find some bees." They may or may not have a book. And if so, it may not be appropriate. They have no idea what the hive parts are called. Some think all they need is a queen and then magically she will produce all the bees needed. I try to guide them to their nearest local association and encourage them to get help immediately. If not, it is almost certain they will fail, never reaching the end of summer with a working hive.

So, beginners! Thank your teacher, your mentor and the members of your local association.

SO YOU WANT TO BE A BEEKEEPER...

The weather has a great effect on the various plants used by bees. For example with the profuse snows this past winter, there is plenty of moisture in the ground. However temperatures will affect the bloom times—early or late, as well as the ability of bees to collect their food.

When the early trees such as willow and maple are in bloom and the weather is warm enough for flight, the bees can collect early pollen and nectar. Pollen is the bees' source of proteins, minerals, vitamins and fats. Young adult bees consume pollen in quantity during the early part of their lives. Pollen is the first food they eat after emerging from the cell. During the early weeks of adult life the bee's need for protein is the highest. Their glands and other internal organs are still developing.

When adult bees become field bees, their need for pollen decreases greatly and honey becomes their chief diet.

You have probably noticed the different colors of pollen coming into the hive. The field bees will gather pollen from a wide variety of plants. No one plant pollen contains all the necessary proteins, vitamins and minerals. Therefore a pollen mix is essential for a balanced diet.

The most nutritious pollen comes from fruit trees, willow and clover. The second most nutritious comes from elm, cottonwood and dandelion. Alder is only a fair source of nutrition. Although bees gather pollen from wind-blown pollen such as pine trees and corn, these are the least nutritious.

It has been estimated that a strong honey bee colony uses a minimum of 44 pounds of pollen a year.

Fresh pollen can be stored in a freezer. However, it gradually loses both attractiveness and nutritional value. Pollen stored for two years will not support brood rearing.

Bees place pollen in the brood nest right next to brood. Here it is easy to reach for the emerging brood. Fortunately we live in a pollen-rich area that lasts through the bee season, spring to fall.

EQUIPMENT

All the shiny new catalogs are coming out and will be in your mailboxes soon. They are a wonderful textbook on available equipment.

Unfortunately most beekeepers do not realize that some of the items are gadgets that have little use. Beekeepers are inventors. Unfortunately some of the inventions are not practical. However, these gadgets do get sold.

Small-scale beekeepers, with two or three hives, have the time to fiddle with various gadgets and actually invent some of their own. A new gadget that works for two hives may be totally impractical for 10 or 20 hives.

Read through the catalogs! It's lots of fun. Then before you purchase something, ask several beekeepers what their thoughts are on a particular gadget. Then you can make a better decision about what to buy and not buy.

Do you know where your hive tools are stored? You would benefit from having two—one is the regular hive tool and the other is the Maxant or J-hook style. Both are handy.

An electric uncapping knife is worth the investment. However, this is really a very fragile tool. Do not get in the habit of knocking it against your uncapping bucket to free it of cappings and honey. The heating element will break. (I know someone who managed to break 3 in a row.) Treat the hot knife gently but keep it free of scorched honey. For those hard-to-get places on combs you will want a simple, inexpensive tool known as a cappings scratcher.

Straining material can be easily obtained at a fabric store. Use the white "glass curtain" nylon material. A coarse weave for first straining out of the extractor, then a fine weave for the final straining. The fabric easily washes clean with a spraying from the garden hose.

Build yourself some stands so that extracting operations take place at a convenient height.

You should have a collection of various sizes of hive nails for repair. Use nails designed for bee equipment.

HONEY PLANTS

This would be a good year to learn more about the honey plants of your area. Unfortunately there is no one book you can use to become familiar with all the plants. You can go to the public library to check out books or buy some field guides on identification of trees, shrubs, vines, and wildflowers. However, these identification books do not tell you whether bees use the blossoms for anything.

The identification books are very useful for telling you where you are apt to find certain plants. For example one of our earliest pollen plants is skunk cabbage. It likes to grow in damp places. You will find bees visiting the rather odd-looking flowers that appear before the plant gets "cabbagey." Do you recognize skunk cabbage.

We will find various plants that are used decoratively in gardens, planted to attract butterflies and humming birds that also attract honey bees as well as bees of other types. You will see bees feeding on herbs that are blooming in herb and vegetable gardens.

Trees that are common to our area are willows (several kinds), maples, oaks, redbud, black locust, tulip poplar, fruit trees of various kinds. Basswoods are frequently planted along streets or towns or as a shade tree. Sourwood is found as an understory tree in the forests but is also planted as a decorative tree. Alders are small and are found along streams. Persimmon does grow wild in our area. The wild cherries are very popular with bees.

Some of the smaller trees are sumac and ailanthus. This latter tree is considered an undesirable weed tree but it is widespread along roads. The honey from it is also undesirable, being rather bitter. You need to recognize it since you may not want your bees to be in an area with many ailanthus.

Some good honey and pollen plants grow wild in our area. Blackberry and raspberry are in abundance. Huckleberry is found in acid soil.

Do you recognize these plants? If not, get busy on a plant project this year.

COOKING WITH HONEY

It's still chilly. Let's have a nice hearty dish.

HONEY-PECAN CHICKEN THIGHS

1/2 teaspoon salt
 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
 1/2 teaspoon ground red pepper
 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
 8 skinned and boned chicken thighs
 3/4 cup honey, divided
 3/4 cup Dijon mustard, divided
 2 garlic cloves minced or pressed
 1 cup finely chopped pecans
 1/2 teaspoon curry powder
 Italian parsley sprigs for garnish

Combine salt, the peppers and thyme; sprinkle evenly over chicken in a shallow dish. Stir together 1/2 cup honey, 1/2 cup mustard and garlic; pour over chicken. Cover and chill 2 hours. Remove chicken from marinade, discarding marinade. Dredge chicken in pecans; place on rack in baking pan and bake at 375° for 40 minutes or until done. Stir together remaining 1/4 cup honey, remaining 1/4 cup mustard, and curry powder. Serve sauce with chicken.

RECIPES FROM THE HIVE

Clinch Valley Beekeepers Association

Get ready for spring asparagus.

ASPARAGUS WITH HONEY-GARLIC SAUCE

1 pound asparagus
 1/4 cup Dijon mustard
 1/4 cup dark ale or beer
 3 tablespoons honey
 1/2 teaspoon minced or pressed garlic
 1/4 teaspoon crushed dried thyme leaves
 1/4 teaspoon salt

Cook asparagus your favorite way until barely tender. Drain. Combine sauce ingredients and mix well. Pour over cooked asparagus. Makes 4 servings.

SWEETENED NATURALLY WITH HONEY

National Honey Board

WHAT'S BLOOMING?	
willows of all kinds	chickweed
skunk cabbage	dandelions
red maple	oaks
alders	jonquils
crocus	henbit

GOOD STUFF

Meeting dates for NPBA

March 18	September 16
April 15	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!)

WOW! WHOLE HIVE RAFFLE

In the spirit of supporting NPBA, Jerry Headley of Virginia Bee Supply has graciously donated a complete 8-frame hive for another special NPBA raffle. Equipment includes screened bottom board with mite tray, entrance reducer, three medium hive bodies with frames and foundation, inner and telescoping cover, with a retail value of \$125-\$130.

Tickets are \$1 each and are available at the Beekeeping Classes on Tuesday nights, the meetings, or by mail (please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the return of your tickets). If you are not able to make it to either the bee classes or the the next meeting on March 18th but would like to purchase some raffle tickets, you can mail your check (made payable to NPBA) to Karen Hunt, PO Box 213, Amissville, VA 20106, and I'll mail your raffle tickets back to you. If you have any questions, you can call me at 540-937-4792.

Drawing at April meeting. You do not have to be present to win.

<p align="center">VIRGINIA BEE SUPPLY</p> <p>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.</p>

<p align="center">C & H BEE BOOKS</p> <p>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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