



THE HONEY POT

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept 9, 7:00pm

MCBA Monthly Meeting

Holiday Park Senior Center

Dr Marian Frasier, Penn State

Improving Your Odds; Factors

Impacting Overwintering Success

Our Club Bee Yard

by Tim McMahon

Last year we sent out a survey online to our club members about what else they would like our sweet little club to do for them. The most popular responses were about more hands-on and opportunities with the bees to expand the concept of mentoring. So with that in mind, we decided to bring back the club bee yard which was shut down years ago when work was being done next to the spot where we used to have our club bee yard. The old club bee yard was shut down over six years ago when stream reconstruction work was being done next to the parking lot at Brookside Nature Center and the yard was never set back up. The old site was always wet and the bees never did very well at that location.

This past spring we had young Andrew Fraser build a gorgeous new bee yard for our club in the meadow up the hill behind Brookside Nature Center as his Boy Scout Eagle project. Andrew Fraser put in a mountain of work to get this done and with the help of some 30 boys from his Boy Scout Troop, we now have a very fine new fenced in bee yard. Into the bee yard we placed 6 Langstroth type hives of various sizes and two top bar hives built by our own Leon Vandenberg. Two of the hives in our club bee yard were donated by the wife of the Dave Povtak, a club member and former MCBA Board Member who passed away very unexpectedly this past year.

In the spring we installed both packages and nucs into this hives at open field days. We demoed how to install both packages and nucs to new beekeepers and let them take part in the process. Our club bee yard is also part of the University of Maryland's Sentinel Hive project. In the Sentinel Hive project, we have one hive on a hive scale to take weight measurements every 15 minutes; we have one hive with a pollen trap attached to take pollen samples every two weeks. For the Sentinel Hive project we sample bees from each hive every month and send them to the University of Maryland for analysis of both Varroa mites and Nosema.

We also had a Varroa mite testing and treatment day in July where we had club member get a chance to learn how to sample their bees for Varroa mites using the sugar shake and alcohol wash methods. We demoed treating the hives for Varroa mites using three of the most popular treatment methods, Mite Away Quick Strips, Apilife Var and Apivar.

All in all, the club bee yard has been a huge success this year. I would estimate that we have had over 200 visits to the bee yard during our open yard days. We have many more days planned in the yard with a fall Varroa mite testing and treatment day coming up. Next year we hope to also demo how to remove bees from honey supers for our new beekeepers, something that we could not do this year as we had no honey supers.

If you have any requests or ideas of what you would like to have done or demoed in the bee yard please let us know.

Reminder that our next meeting will not be at the Brookside Nature Center but at the Holiday Park Senior Center (3950 Ferrara Dr., Wheaton, MD 20906) at 7pm on Wednesday September 9, 2015. The world renowned bee researcher Maryann Frazier from Penn State University will be speaking.

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EAS 2015 in Guelph Ontario

by Tim McMahon

EAS (Eastern Apicultural Society) 2015 weeklong beekeeping conference was held in Guelph Ontario and it was a fantastic time. EAS holds a weeklong conference each summer somewhere on the east coast and this year we were in Guelph Ontario, which is about one and a half hours north of Niagara Falls. The University at Guelph has an extensive beekeeping program with a vast amount of research being done there. There were 570 beekeepers there for the weeklong conference taking part in over 100 different seminars. The conference was full of practical beekeeping sessions in the bee yard and informative sessions in the classroom. The session's speakers were researchers from around the world and many from the program there at Guelph. Many of those in attendance stayed at local hotels, but some of us stayed in the dorms there on campus. Staying in the dorms on campus allowed us to be never more than a few steps away from the action and allowed for some great interaction with other beekeepers. Multiple times those of us in the dorms hung out late into the night talking, and the talk was mostly about the bees, something the normal spouse does not want to hear about all night long.

I attended multiple sessions on field studies on the uptake of neonics by colonies in the field and studies done in the lab. Almost every time, the results that were obtained in the lab using neonics were never reproduced by the researchers in the field when looking at real life situations. One interesting fact I learned about neonics is that they will bind with organics in the soil so that if not taken up by the plant, they are detectable but not available to the insects at that point.

One of the most interesting sessions that I attended was by a researcher who was using honey bees and bumble bees to transport fungicide from their colony entrance, by making the bees crawl across a tray of the fungicide powder, to the bloom of such plants as sunflowers and blueberries. This was an example of researchers thinking out of the box, by not trying to keep the bees away from these items, but using the bees as the application mechanism for a fungicide.

The bee yard had 50 colonies in it and there were sessions each day for beginners, those interested in IPM and a weeklong group working on queen rearing. I attended sessions on different means for sampling your colonies for Varroa mites and sessions on how to apply a wide variety of

miticides (multiple formic acid products, multiple thymol products, oxalic acid, and amitraz) to the colonies. There was even some entertainment in the bee yard with a Bee Games held with events such as “Find the Queen” and “Shoot the Drone”.

We had multiple social events in the evenings to allow us beekeepers to get together and rub shoulders with each other and learn from each other. I meet one beekeeper from Sakatuwan, just north of the North Dakota boarder who runs 60 hives of bees. The forage there is so good that he removes honey suppers up to three times a year and he says he averages over 300 pounds of honey per hive. That makes for over 9000 pounds of honey a year, and this guy did all the uncapping by hand! That’s more work than I would ever want to undertake.

An interesting twist this year at the EAS conference was the Thursday Tech Tour, where they took everyone in attendance on buses for the day for trips around Ontario. We visited Niagara Falls, a massively large Butterfly exhibit, Niagara College for lunch and a wine tasting. The best part of the Tech Tour was the visits to two different commercial beekeeping facilities. We got to stand next to an automated 200 frame extractor while it was running. It took three guys working nonstop to keep frames of honey moving onto the extractor line and we got to stand so close that we could touch the frames as they moved past us. The poor guy who drew the short straw was the guy loading the suppers into the process. The suppers were all deeps, full of honey and still had lots of bees in the boxes. I believe the guy loading the boxes was getting stung at least once every minute or so and they run the processing lines for hours at a time. The second commercial facility we went to also have an extracting line but that was not running that day, but we did get to see their commercial queen rearing operation in action, which was a real eye opener. For

the average backyard beekeeper, these are things you only read about and never normally get a chance to see up close and personal.

I’ve gone to EAS each of the past six years as my beekeeping vacation. I always learn things that surprise me to no end and I meet some of the nicest people in the world. I hope that you will consider attending an upcoming EAS conference and enjoy the fun. Next year the EAS conference will be held at Stockton University in New Jersey, a short drive for most of us here in Maryland. The EAS conference in New Jersey will be held July 25 to 29. Plan on attending!

Late July Letter from the South

by Bill Miller

I send greetings from Dothan, AL, where the heat index today topped out at 110 F. Opening up a hive in these conditions will turn me into a sweat ball, and the bees aren’t too happy about being disturbed either.

With the heat shutting down hive work, Mary and I used the middle two weeks of July for our vacation. We attended the Heartland Apiculture Society’s conference at Albion College in Albion, MI. When you look Albion up on Google, you’ll find it is the southern part of Michigan about on the state’s north-south centerline. No ridiculously high heat indexes there – the average daily high temperature was about 80 F. This was perfect beekeeping weather.

Of course we talked to several of the Michigan beekeepers, and I was impressed with the differences between Northern and Deep South beekeeping. The equipment may be the same, but what gets done when is way different. For openers, for the Northern beekeepers hive beetles are not a concern, indeed they are only spotted occasionally while working hives. For us in the Deep South, you ignore the hive beetles at your peril. I offered to send my surplus hive beetles to the folks at the conference, but they declined.

Even the bees being kept are different. Sure, both of us keep *Apis mellifera*, but the folks in the north are getting into breeding their own stock in a big, organized way. Moreover, they can do their queen rearing in July and get them mated; I might be able to raise queens in July, but there are few drones around now for mating with them.

The Heartland conference packed over 100 different classes in a 2 ½ day period. Mary went for the craft programs, and I went for the queen grafting and Bee Informed Partnership programs. I guess you all know about the Bee Informed Partnership; if you don't log onto www.beeinformed.org. Dennis vanEngelsdorp gave those presentations, and they were an eye opener. The Bee Informed partnership sends out two surveys a year about colony losses and management practices, again, I trust get them and fill them out. One of the more interesting findings was that old brood comb is not as bad as we thought. Other findings were that Amitraz (sold as Apivar®) is currently the go-to chemical for mite control, and thymol products (Apilife Var® and Apiguard®) also worked. None of the other chemical treatments produced statistically significant better colony mortality than doing nothing; small cell size comb and dusting the whole hive with powdered sugar also didn't work. Incidentally, this year I'm using Apivar® as my mite treatment.

The recommended mite treatment threshold is still 3% of the adult bees having a mite, and 5% of the bees having mites is considered the damage threshold.

Speaking of the mite threshold, the University of Michigan was selling sugar shake mite sampling kits as an apiary fundraiser. For \$20, you got everything you needed to do sugar shake mite surveys, including a little box to store all the gear in. While I normally do my mite surveys by the sticky board method, I bought one of the kits and look forward to trying it out.

I've taken many queen grafting courses, and have generally been spectacularly unsuccessful in my efforts. This year at Heartland was the breakthrough. Of the 5 grafts I did, 4 were takes. Moreover, I wasn't the only one to have good results. The photo shows a beekeeper from Ohio

admiring her first successful grafts. I think the success came from listening to all the little tricks I heard in all the queen grafting classes I took over the years. Should you wish to raise your own queens (and I encourage you to try), the message here is to not give up quickly in the face of failures, and go to several queen rearing courses. Every instructor will cover a few different details of the process, and eventually you will learn all the details you need to be successful.



All too soon the Heartland conference was over, and Mary and I took a drive around Lake Michigan before heading home. It is a pretty state in the summertime (I'm not so sure about the winter). Oddly enough, even though we drove through a lot of agricultural areas, we only saw one apiary.

Next year's Heartland Apicultural Society conference will be in Bowling Green KY, and that is about a 10 hour drive from Maryland. Non-beekeeping attractions include Mammoth Cave and various bourbon distilleries. Do try to come. I'll be there.

Late August Letter from the South

by Bill Miller

For those of you who are longtime members of the Montgomery County Beekeepers Association, you may remember that the first Letter from the South in 2006 started with "Ever hear of a swarm in August?" That letter featured a picture of me staring at a swarm gathered in the Plant Farley fence. Well, the Farley bees struck again in the middle of August, this time gathering on a fire system valve. Valves have lots of little nooks and crannies for a bee swarm to get into, and the only tool I had to get the bees into my

box was a piece of cardboard. The job took a long time, but I was successful. That swarm is now living in a nuc box in my yard, and the one week inspection found them already raising brood. The swarm is now established in its new home.



Although the bees in that swarm do not realize it, they were fortunate to be collected by a beekeeper who likes a challenge. Why a hive would elect to swarm in August is beyond me, as August is a nectar dearth time here. Swarms start with nothing but bees, and August normally would provide them with little to use for comb building and such. I daresay that swarm would not have lasted if they tried to make a colony on their own.

To help this swarm along, I hived them on drawn comb and have kept up a continuous feed with 1/1 sugar. Also, while I normally hive swarms into 2 10-frame medium boxes, this swarm was hived into a 5-frame medium nuc box; that way they wouldn't have as much space to defend against hive beetles. Also to aid in the colony's defense, I have reduced the entrance to about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch. The colony can be moved to larger quarters with a full entrance when they have raised enough brood to outgrow their nuc box; I estimate that will be towards the end of September.

I've included a picture of the new colony, and you'll notice the nuc box doesn't have a conventional cover. By good fortune, the half-size plastic signs that advertise all sorts

of things by the roadside are just the width (9") of a 5-frame nuc box. For folks like me who use top feeders, just cut a small hole in the cover for the feeder, put the feeder on the cover and you are done. When you take the feeder off for refilling, you can cover the hole with a brick. With the added weight of the feeder/brick, the cover handles storms nicely (the bees also will propolize the cover to the nuc body), and using old signs recycles that which would otherwise be trash.

Not much else has happened in my beekeeping world during August; I try to stay out of my hives as much as possible during the heat of August. My Apivar® (Amitraz®) mite control strips are due to come off in the first week of September; I'll do an "after" mite survey to see how well they did. The first goldenrod blooms have appeared; they herald the start of the fall nectar flow. Fall is much the nicest time of year down here, and I plan to spend much of it working on my bees.

The Montgomery County Fair 2015 Version

by Tim McMahon

Well we made it through another year at the county fair and I think we all had a really good time. We sold lots of honey and bee items and we interacted with thousands of people from around Montgomery County. I'd like to thank all those people who volunteered to work a session at the fair at the honey sales, in Old McDonald's Barn, the Manager of the Day and at the Gazebo. A big thank you to all those who entered items into the Honey Show or brought honey and items for sale. A very special thanks to Martin Hindel who handled all the sign-ups and passes this year, a massive job that he handled perfectly. My biggest thanks goes out to Jim Fraser and his family who put in several hundred hours combined working and preparing for the fair. We had lots of first time volunteers who got a chance to shine this year talking to the public about honey and honey bees. I always walk away with some great memories and one that we stay with me from this year was when I saw Jeff Beck answering one question after another from a little four year old girl whose final question, as she looked at our observation hive, was "Have you named them all?" I can't finish talking about the fair without giving some people their rightful dues, Jim Fraser did in fact beat me this year in the cut comb and chunk honey categories in the Honey Show. I will just add that he was the one who hired the honey judge, if you know what I mean!!!

Photos from the 2015 Ag Fair

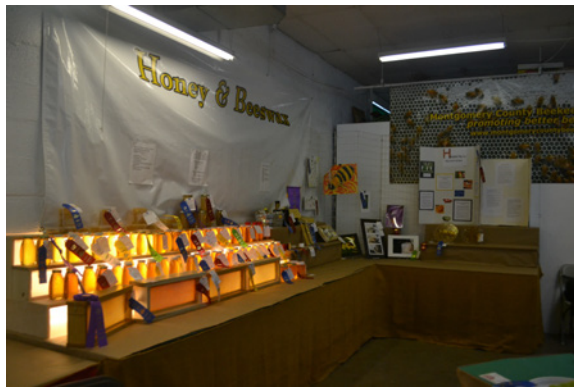


by Marty Hindel

A judge evaluates honey entries



by Pam Hepp



by Mary McQueen



by Mary McQueen



by Mary McQueen

The club's new interactive display



by Marty Hindel

Genevieve Howard and Elaine Fraser inspect honey

Honey Bee Power Plants

by Marie Rojas



Goldenrods – *Oligoneuron (Solidago) species*

A little botany lesson this month: sometimes (when taxonomists are bored I think) plants get renamed. This becomes a huge problem for everybody, in that we've all gotten used to a particular name for a plant! So it is with the goldenrod, which used to be called ***Solidago***, but which has been renamed ***Oligoneuron***. Sometimes nurseries ignore the new name and just use the old. Others jump right on board and only use the new name. Me, I cite the new name, but like to put the old familiar name in parentheses so that we're all on the same page!

- Native, 12" – 4', depending on species/cultivars.
- Blooms late summer to fall.
- Late season nectar and pollen source for honey, bumble, leaf-cutter, long-horned, mason, mining, and sweat bees, among others.
- Good attractiveness for hover flies, tachinid flies, lady beetles; predatory and parasitic wasps.
- Of all the varieties out there, ***O. rugosa*** 'Fireworks' is the most attractive to honey bees, with a 4 star nectar, 3 star pollen rating. Other species/cultivars are rated 2 star nectar and pollen sources.

All goldenrods like sun to part shade and well-drained soil. I like to grow mine alongside asters for a nice contrasting display.



O. 'Crown of Rays' is a great compact goldenrod, 2-3' tall with fluffy yellow plums, that blooms mid to late summer.



O. rugosa 'Fireworks', in my garden. It's one of the latest-blooming goldenrods, starting in late September and continuing into October. It's also one of the prettiest, with delicate, horizontal flower heads that appear to float above the foliage.

Honey Harvest Festival Near You !!!

Brookside Gardens has a yearly event called "Children's Day" and this year's theme will be pollination. The MSBA holds a yearly event called the "Honey Harvest Festival" which will be held in combination with the "Children's Day" this year. The Maryland State Beekeepers Association (MSBA) 8th annual Maryland Honey Harvest Festival will be on **Saturday September 19 from 11 am to 4 pm**. This year it is returning to the site of our first festival: [Brookside Gardens](#) and Brookside Nature Center in Montgomery County. The address is: 1800 Glenallan Avenue, Wheaton, 20902. This is a really fun, family-friendly, free day to celebrate bees.

It's a lot of fun, and there are a variety of ways to help out. There is the observation hive, mock apiaries (where you can show folks empty hives and tools and such), set up, take down, a sales table, bee information stations, open hive demos, candle making, and more. As beekeepers, we bring many valuable perspectives to our craft and science; your voice would be a tremendous example of that. Brookside Gardens and Nature Center provides us with beautiful facilities and access to a gorgeous setting. The "Wings of Fancy" Butterfly display will also be open during the festival, and this year - the Honey Harvest Festival will be held with the park's annual Children's Day, which this year has a pollinator theme.

We can use some donations for the auction - items such as photography, art work, gift baskets with beeswax products, baked goods, etc. would all be appreciated!

If you would like to sell your honey at this one day event that would be fantastic (this would work much like the county fair where you would get a percentage of the sales commission).

To volunteer, or if you can make donations, please contact Lindsay Barranco at lbarranco@comcast.net or me (Tim McMahon) at timcmahonbeekeeper@gmail.com.

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