



THE HONEY POT

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

UPCOMING EVENTS

Dec 14, 6:30-8:30p

Holiday Party

*Home of Jill & Frank Mccowen
13305 Cleveland Dr, Rockville*

Main entrees and drinks provided by MCBA

Please bring your favorite dish to share according to the first letter of your last name:

A-K: Appetizers

L-N: Salads & Sides

O-Z: Yummy Desserts

This is a BYOB event at a home, so please drink responsibly.

There is an optional gift exchange. To participate, bring a wrapped gift of a \$10 value.

***Volunteers Needed:

- bake a turkey or ham*
- purchase drinks*
- bring a cooler of ice*
- clean up

*Cost covered by MCBA

To volunteer, please email Jill McCowan at jillnewburger@yahoo.com

Our Season Has Ended, Now What?

by Tim McMahon

The weather has turned and our bees have finished all that they will be doing for this year. They are clustered at night and even during some of our colder days now. There is not much left for a beekeeper to be doing at this time of year. For me, this is the time that I spend reflecting upon what I think worked and what I think did not work for me this past year. For the most part, I think I had a good year with two of the yards that I keep. My third yard that is farther away -- and I did not get there as much and only did one Varroa mite treatment this year -- did not fare as well. Whether this was because I did not get a second treatment on or some other issue, I can never be sure. But what I am sure of is that I have a plan for next year to get more treatments on the hives in that yard.

I encourage all of you to spend some time in reflection on your management practice from this past year and rethink what you did and what you did not do. Make a plan for next year and start to get your ducks in a row now so that you can implement that plan next year. Most of us can easily come up with some things that we did not do well this past year, such as not keeping good records, not testing enough for Varroa mites, not treating enough, spending too much time in our hives when inspecting, taking our honey to late, not getting our honey show entries ready in time and so on. Each of us has a management philosophy that we use, even if we have not codified it to ourselves. But this management philosophy of ours should always be under review and refinement. We will never know all there is to know about our bees and we will never have the perfect management plan for dealing with our bees so we should always be trying to be better beekeepers!

Also at this time of year I find myself with enough time to do some more reading about my favorite girls. There is more than enough books out there to please anyone palate so read away, you can only get better as a beekeeper by doing this. The bottom line in my mind is that this is not the time

of year to take a break from beekeeping, but a time to invest in things that we help us be better at our hobby going forward.

Reminder that our next meeting will be at the Holiday Party on December 14, 2016 that will be at Frank McGowan's house in Rockville, we will be doing an oxalic acid treatment demo in the bee yard sometime in November also for those that are interested.

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2017 Board

President Leon Vandenberg
Vice President Jim Fraser
Treasurer Paul Erickson
Secretary Maureen Jais-Mick
Board Member Frank McCowan
Board Member Marie Rojas
Board Member Pam Hepp
Board Member Peter Soukup

President's Letter

by Leon Vandenberg

Every year in November, our association elects its new board members. This year I accepted the nomination and was elected President. I hope I can follow in the footsteps of our past presidents, most notably Tim McMahon who has been our president the past 3 years.

The New Year will begin with the advertising of our Short Course, which normally fills up within two weeks. We hope to begin this course on Tuesday, February 7. I am thrilled that Tracey Waterman has once again agreed to lead the course. She has done a real bang up job with this over the last couple of years. It will be held at the Holiday Senior Center and I invite each of you to try to attend at least one class, as the new bee keepers will have questions. You might be surprised at what you also may learn.

Over this year I do have a few goals, one is our website. We have a nice website; however, a lot needs to be updated and I feel we can provide much more information to someone searching our site than currently. I have had members ask me about labeling laws and if they need to look for insurance on the honey they sell. We are beyond the mosquito season this year; however, what will next spring and summer bring. Will our county be spraying for mosquitos and if so, how are they going to spray. Will the spray affect our bees? These are just some of the concerns I have heard. Hopefully the new board will be able to find speakers able to answer these and other concerns our membership has.

We are planning our annual Holiday Party on December 14. I hope to see many of you there. It will be a great time and Frank McCowan and his wife are gracious enough to host it at their house.

Finally, as many of you are aware, I have been one of the extractor czars over the past couple of years. I need to give that up and am looking for someone else to take it over. It would be good if someone in Silver Spring, Rockville, Olney or down county area would be willing to accept the czar ship. Frank McCowan the other czar and is farther up county. We both have 3 extractors and the equipment to go along with the extractors. The new czar should be in place by March, April at the latest. Our members start requesting extractors as the bees come out of winter. Please consider taking this on if you feel you have room for the extractors.

Meeting Recap: Planting for Honey Bees (and other insects), presented by Marie Rojas

by Maureen Jais-Mick

Marie Rojas, a MCBA member, has been providing Integrated Pest Management services for nursery growers and homeowners through her company, Borders and Butterflies, for more than 18 years. She serves on several green industry boards, including the Environmental Program Advisory Committee for Montgomery County Public Schools, and has been a Montgomery County Master Gardener since 1994.

For our November program, Marie delivered the presentation that she would give at the November 12th meeting of the Maryland State Beekeepers Association – much appreciated by those of us unable to travel to Annapolis.



Marie also provided information on a variety of plants (annuals, perennials, bushes, trees) for all seasons, along with their nectar ratings. Most helpfully, she has kindly shared a copy of her presentation to help us select appropriate plants for our gardens:

<http://montgomerycountybeekeepers.com/plantingforhoneybees/>

While we usually concern ourselves with honey bees, there are many other beneficial insects, and we need to garden with not only *apis mellifera* in mind, but also the other pollinators – including the 400 varieties of native bees, butterflies, moths, etc. – as well as the predatory insects who feed on the destructive insects. These beneficial insects include species of spiders, beetles, lacewings, flies, and parasitic wasps. Recognizing them as welcome visitors to our gardens and not as invaders to be destroyed or discouraged, is key to pollinator-friendly gardening.

Honey Bee Power Plants

by Marie Rojas



Wildflower Meadows

This month, I would like to share my experiences with planting “wildflower” meadows.

I’ve been planting some form of flower meadows for pollinators for the past 15 years at my farm. Initially, I planted the Newsome Wildflower Mix from Newsome Seed, in Gaithersburg. The mix includes both annual and perennial wildflowers and was formulated using research from the University of Maryland. The benefits of a perennial mix is that it comes back year after year.

What I found in my own situation is that year one was very nice, as there were annuals that grew up and bloomed. Years two and three were also good, as the perennial flowers began to bloom. The downside is that by years three and four, the weed plants started to infiltrate to the point where they began crowding out the perennials. The takeaway – unless you are dedicated to either hand-pulling weeds (impossible for me due to size) or selective herbicide sprays (kind of defeats the purpose of attracting the pollinators), your perennial meadow will eventually be more weeds than flowers.

A better solution that I have found is planting annual flower mixes. With just some very simple bed prep – light

tilling of the topmost soil to loosen the ground and take out the vegetation, seed broadcasting, and light raking to cover the seeds – the annuals emerge and grow very rapidly and crowd out nearly all of the weed plants. Yes, you have to replant them, but you can usually get at least 2 years’ worth of good flowering before having to do that.

Some annual seed companies I’ve order from

include Wildseed Farms (the Firecracker 234 Mix is awesome), which has seed for sale in small amounts starting at ¼ pound, and Ernest Conservation Seeds (the Annual Wildflower Mix), in large amounts starting at 1 pound or more.

The interesting thing that I have noted with flowers, is that honey bees seem to go to them as a last resort, much preferring shrubs and trees! They

usually don’t start showing up on my meadow flowers until late summer and fall. However, you will be getting visits from many of the local native bees, bumble bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects all season long. The other great bonus is that once you’ve planted an annual meadow, you’ll have flowers popping up in any fallow areas, as the birds eat and distribute the seeds!

Make plans to tuck in a flower meadow somewhere in your yard next spring! Even a small plot will provide a wealth of nectar sources for your honey bees, once the big nectar flow is over.



A first year annual flower meadow at my farm.



Some of the many flowers that bloom summer to frost.



Year 2 annual flower meadow's early bloomers.



A honey bee (hopefully one of mine!) visiting a cosmos.

September Letter from the South

by Bill Miller

While it may be fall by the calendar and the quickly shortening day length, somebody forgot to tell the Alabama weather. Today's high temperature in Dothan was 93 F, and the heat index was 100 F. We have also been without rain, so everything is bone dry. I have to be super careful with my smoker, lest my beekeeping suddenly become "exciting" in a bad way.

The good news is that the goldenrod has started to bloom, and around here we have plenty of vacant land that is filled with goldenrod. Some of the folks in North Florida say they regularly super for goldenrod and get a decent crop, so I put boxes of drawn comb on some of my 2-medium colonies to see what would happen. My first check found that the bees are indeed putting nectar in the new boxes, so I suppose it is possible to get a crop of goldenrod honey here in the South. I don't particularly want to harvest a crop of goldenrod honey (the stuff crystalizes while you watch), but the filled honey frames will make useful winter feed. At any rate, I did learn something about how much goldenrod nectar is available.

The fall goldenrod flow usually coincides with a fall aster flow, but so far that has not been the case. I haven't observed any asters in bloom, and the hives haven't had the typical aster stink.

The Bee Aware program sent me their monthly mite survey request. While they would have liked testing via sugar roll, I did 24 hr. sticky board surveys as I don't like to keep hives open for any length of time during hot weather. The counts this month were about what I expected: 8 of my colonies had at most 1 mite on the board (most had 0 mites) and one colony had 40 mites. The high mite count in that colony was not unexpected; the colony had an Apilife Var® (thymol) treatment installed. I take the high mite count as proof thymol does get rid of mites. I'll have to check again in October to see if the mite count in that colony is now at an acceptable level.

By the way, I like to use different treatments to slow down the mites developing resistance to one treatment. The next treatment I propose to use will be formic acid (Miteaway Quick Strips®).

My exciting beekeeping news for the month did not take place in the apiary; it took place in a courtroom. You will recall that my neighbor is suing to force my bees off my property on the grounds the bees are a violation of covenants. Yesterday (Sept. 22) was the day for the plaintiff's (my neighbor) summary motion hearing. This is one of those proceedings where the attorneys do all the talking and the defendant (me) just quietly sits there and listens. The plaintiffs argued that because bees are animals (they are in the animal kingdom), they fell within the meaning of a "no animals except household pets" clause in the covenants. The defense (my attorney) countered that using the plaintiff's definition of animal, humans couldn't live on the property because humans are animals too. There were other arguments too, mostly about whether or not covenants have a statute of limitations (my bees have been on the property for 9 years).

The real action came after the formal hearing and was in the judge's chambers. The report I got back from my attorney was that the judge had found the plaintiff's argument seriously flawed, and so denied their summary judgment motion that my bees violated the covenants. The case now goes to mediation with me in the strong position.

Of additional interest was the judge's remark that he has a bunch of similar beekeeping cases coming up through the court system. My case is the lead, and will therefore set the precedent for the other cases.

Watch this space for further developments in the case.

October Letter from the South

by Bill Miller

The entire state of Alabama is currently in a drought. The part of the state where I live (southeast corner) is listed as being in severe drought (I expect that will be elevated to “extreme drought” in the next week or so), while parts of the state (northeast corner) have already gone all the way to “exceptional drought”. We haven’t had significant rainfall since the end of May. Also, we are still getting high temperatures in the upper 80’s; that’s about 10 F higher than normal for the end of October.

Mary and I were out in Colorado for the first part of October, so when we came home to fields of dried up goldenrod in the middle of the month, my first thought was that this year’s fall nectar flow was a complete bust. However, on inspection I learned that the stronger colonies had each gathered about 10 pounds of goldenrod honey before the plants dried up. That goldenrod honey plus the honey already stored means these colonies will not need to be fed for a while during the winter, and I am hoping that the winter will have normal moisture so these colonies will not have to be fed at all. One of the nice things about South Alabama beekeeping is that in a normal year there is always something coming in, even if it is not enough for the bees to make a surplus.

Of course, beekeepers aren’t the only folks affected by the drought. The cattle farmers have had to start feeding hay 3 months earlier than normal (and this with a less than stellar hay crop this year), and the row crops have also suffered. To illustrate the

drought, I’m including a picture of our pond; in a normal year, the stump in the middle would be completely covered with water.

On to more other beekeeping items- I did my October *Varroa* sticky board checks, and I am pleased to report none of my hives came even close to the “treatment required” threshold (<http://www.brushymountainbeefarm.com/Resources/VarroaMites.asp> has the thresholds for the various sampling methods). That’s a relief for me, because with the current daily high temperatures, treating with either formic or oxalic acid would be a disaster, and even a thymol product (Apilife Var® or Apiguard®) would be iffy. Still, I do have some concerns. I used Apivar® (amitraz) strips during the summer, and it now looks like the next time mite

treatment will be needed will be next summer. Summer temperatures limit my treatment options to Apivar®, and that means using the same product twice in a row. That’s how you get treatment resistant mites.

Actually, I have decided to try Miteaway Quick Strips® (formic acid) in mid-February. I’ve never used it before, but I consider that a plus. My rationale is that we really don’t have a broodless period in South Alabama, formic acid is supposed to get the mites in capped brood, and the treatment period is only one week. Mid-February temperatures

here are normally in the low end of the permissible range.

In other news, our local fair (a.k.a. the National Peanut Festival) starts next week. I’ll only be entering two classes this year, but that will be fun.

I’ll let you know how I did in my next letter.



What do you do to prepare for winter?

Diego Gaudenzi:

Here is what I have done so far in preparation for the winter:

- Inverted the inner cover to rim side down so moist air can escape through the rim hole
- Installed a mouse guard (Mann Lake 10 Frame Mouse Guard)
- Screen bottom board partially closed
- Hive slightly tilted forward so water runs out of the door

and this is what I might do too:

- Wrap hive with roofing felt to raise temperature inside a few degrees
- Insulation on top of inner cover (straw, corrugated paper, cedar chips)

Frank McCowan:

Many of my colonies are several years old, well established, and because of this, these 'rules' don't apply to first year hives.

First you need to know that I don't feed in the summer unless absolutely necessary (July/Aug). The reason for this is to give the queen a small break from the high egg production of the spring flow and to cut back some on the size of the colony in order to help conserve food stores.

Next, come about mid Sept. (when the really hot weather breaks) I carefully watch the colonies for robbing and, if I find it, I put entrance reducers

on the affected colonies to make it easier for them to guard the colony's stores. At the same time, I weigh all my hives to make sure they are not too light (heft test).

Any hives that are light get fed a mix of about half sugar/water by volume...and I treat all colonies for V. mites (I rotate treatments throughout the year) if needed (but they have always needed it).

At the same time, I will consolidate the hives, removing excess supers and condense the remaining supers so that there are not a lot

of empty frames in the boxes. I try to get all the more established colonies down to 2 deeps and a medium (or 3 mediums) some of

the newer colonies I will over winter in either 1 or 2 deeps, as I prefer to keep smaller colonies in a smaller area so that they have less drafts

in the winter...Starting in about mid October I feed with a communal feeder (5 gallon chicken waterer w/carpentering in the trough) all they will take until they stop taking it because the weather is too

cold (around the first of December). This feeding is a 1/1 mix by volume.

The first 2-3 fills of the communal feeder have fumagillin added (2 years on 2 years off)

as I have found that this treatment gives me much higher winter survival rate and that the colonies come out of the winter much stronger than when I didn't treat.

Mouse guards are added in December and then I don't disturb the colonies except to lift the tops to see if the clusters are at the top of the super until spring time frame.

www.MontgomeryCountyBeekeepers.com

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