

East Texas Beekeepers Association



April 2023

April Report by Jim Biles

All of you new beekeepers.....welcome to beekeeping season! March and April are very active months for most beekeepers. This is the window for building up hives, making splits, queen rearing, re-queening, beekeeping clinics, adding supers, last minute equipment buying/building, and a myriad of other activities. Here are some thoughts on how to navigate this frenzy without wasting your opportunities to succeed.

- Stay grounded in your plan. If you took some time during the winter to set goals and map a course, don't lose sight of the big picture. It's easy to get distracted by the excitement others have for various activities that just don't fit your objectives. Focus on the fundamentals and you probably won't go wrong.
- Stay connected with experienced beekeepers. There will be situations you encounter that you're just not prepared for. Building a relationship with someone who has made the mistakes and knows good beekeeping practices will serve you well when you're not sure which way to turn. To this end, I strongly encourage you to come to the monthly meetings and plan to attend a clinic. The people you meet will be a great resource for your beekeeping development.
- Learn from the environment. It took me awhile, but I'm finally able to recognize plants and trees that are important to honey bees. This is helpful in making decisions during your beekeeping (e.g. recognizing a dearth or knowing when to be ready to add supers). When you're outdoors, look for those blooms that have foraging honey bees.....and those that don't. And when you're inspecting your bee hives, pay special attention to what the bees are doing. Are they bringing in pollen? Nectar? Lots of activity? Not much? Flying lazily? Flying with purpose? The more time you spend around your hives, the better you will become at reading the "mood" of the bees.
- Most of all, have fun with your beekeeping! Relax and enjoy your hobby. All beekeepers make mistakes, it's just part of the learning process. What you're doing has value on several levels, so take pride in your work and enjoy the journey.

On a different note, I want to extend my thanks to Meagan Elzner for her work as Program Director for ETBA for the past several years. Meagan is leaving this role to spend time working with a state beekeeping program. We're fortunate to have had a number of wonderful speakers and programs, quite possibly the best of any local beekeeping organization in Texas! Thank you Meagan for your energy and commitment in making this a special part of the beekeeping experience for so many here in East Texas!

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Program Director — Meagan Elzner
Newsletter Editor—Jenifer Babyak
Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson



Next Meeting

April 6th

United Methodist Church
405 West Main in Whitehouse

6:30 PM

On the Web:

www.etba.info

FYI *by Meagan Elzner*



The April Program...

This month we have Heather McBride speaking from
McB's Bees.

Her presentation is called Rescuing the Bees: Bee Removals
and how to build a bee vacuum.

Heather is the program director for the Longview Club and
she and her family do removals and sell honey at farmers
markets here in East Texas.

We can't wait to have her removal tips and tricks!

You can find her company on Facebook under McB's Bees or
click this .link: <https://m.facebook.com/100064795953849/>

See you there!



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~ Meagan and Isaac Elzner ~





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Stanford Brantley will be celebrating his 94th birthday April 16. CONGRATULATIONS!!!

Mr. Brantley has been an active member of ETBA 35+ years as well as three other Beekeeping Clubs in Texas and Louisiana. And, of course an advocate for Texas Beekeepers Association. He also supports his community in the Fire Dept., Church and other organizations. He writes the article in ETBA newsletter each month which helps so many beekeepers across the state and beyond.

He has not been able to attend ETBA meetings recently due to bad weather conditions and having to drive 80 miles one way.

He was awarded The Silver Star for his service in the Korean War.

Mr. Brantley, we wish you the best and appreciate your services to others.

Your Friends at ETBA



Practical Experiences in the Bee Yard

by Stan Brantley



The East Texas nectar flow is a short one, typically lasting from March to late June. In 2022, when nectar started to be available, it seemed to rain every day or so. The frequent rains kept the honey bees from collecting the amount of nectar necessary to provide a honey crop for us. We need to keep our fingers crossed and hope that does not happen this year. The month of April will provide you with swarms of bees. If you did not plan ahead to prevent swarming, some may be from your own hives! You can help prevent swarming by making sure the queen has sufficient room in the brood chambers to lay her eggs. If you added your honey supers when the plum trees began to bloom, the bees should already be up in them cleaning cells, getting them ready for the nectar.

You can also reduce swarming by doing a hive split if you wish to increase your number of hives. However, this may mean you get little honey from the split hives this season.

Queen excluders are another of those beekeeping topics with differing opinions among beekeepers. Some beekeepers favor using them, some do not. Instead of bad mouthing the queen excluder, learn how to use it as it was intended. Its purpose is to keep the queen from laying eggs in the honey supers. If you do not have drawn comb in the honey super, the bees are sometimes not inclined to go through the excluder and draw out the foundation. In a very strong honey flow, they are more inclined to move up through the excluder and draw comb because of the need to store the abundance of nectar. If you find your bees are not moving up and drawing out the foundation in the super, remove the excluder for a few days. When you see the foundation is being worked, put the excluder back in place over the brood chamber. Do your best to find the queen. If she is in the super, move her back to the brood chamber. If you cannot find her, check the super again in a few days. If you see evidence of new brood in the super, find her and move her back below the excluder. Don't worry about any brood left in the super. After the brood hatches, the bees will clean the cells and fill them with nectar.

If you have package bees ordered to arrive in April or May, be prepared to spray them with a mixture of 1:1 sugar water. In the event the weather is too bad to install them, place the package in a safe and dark location, spray the bees again and hope the weather will allow for installation the next day.

To install the bees, remove the syrup can, place the queen cage between two frames of drawn comb (or foundation, if you do not have drawn comb), and shake some bees over the frames above the queen cage. The bees that do not shake out of the package container will readily join the rest of the bees in the hive body if you place the container in front of the hive and allow those reluctant bees to crawl UP and out of the container. Bees much prefer to crawl up rather than down.

As the nectar flow continues and six to eight frames in the honey super are filled, it is time to add another super. Many beekeepers will add the new super underneath the filled super, just above the queen excluder. Called "bottom supering", some beekeepers think it makes the hive feel less crowded since the bees do not have to carry incoming nectar through a filled super to find available storage space. The "less crowded" feeling may help reduce the urge to swarm. Bottom supering is more work for you since you have to lift that full top super but it may keep your hive from swarming.

I install nine frames in my honey supers. That little bit of extra space between frames lets the bees draw the comb and cappings out just beyond the edge of the wooden frame, making it easier to uncapped with a hot knife. A honey super with nine frames of capped honey will usually yield about nine quarts of honey -- a quart (three pounds) for each frame. A little more honey will drain from the cappings, possibly another quart or two. If you are thinking about planting some nectar bearing shrubs or trees, consider Vitex and the Golden Rain Tree. Vitex is shrub but can get as large as a small tree. It blooms all summer. The Golden Rain Tree blooms heavily but for only about 45 days. Both are great nectar sources.



Got Questions?

Question & answer group will meet from 6:00-6:30 before the meeting. Join us if you are a new beekeeper or just have beekeeping questions? We'll try to get you some answers!

Connie Collins - ETBA President

Dear Beekeepers:

The busy time of spring is upon us! Here are some of the upcoming events in the beekeeping community. I hope you enjoy them alongside your bee yard activities. If you have an announcement for future ETBA newsletters, please email me. I hope to see everyone at the April meeting. Happy spring!

Upcoming Beekeeping Classes:

Central Texas Beekeepers Bee School April 2023

Contact: Michael Kelling Centraltexasbeekeepers@gmail.com (979) 277-0411

East Texas Honey Beekeeping Classes Spring 2023

Contact Matt Thomas for details. (903) 279-7903

Upcoming Conferences, Clinics, and Conventions:

Central Texas Beekeepers Association Beekeeping School - Brenham, TX April 1, 2023

Texas Beekeepers Association Summer Clinic 2023 - June 17th Conroe, TX

TBA Members \$100/Non-TBA Members \$125/Students \$75

Register at www.texasbeekeepers.org

Brazos Valley Beekeepers Association Beekeeping School

Bryan, TX - Registration opens on July 15th

Texas Beekeepers Association Fall Convention November - Temple, TX



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Local Beekeeper Club's Meeting Dates:

Jacksonville Area Beekeepers

Third Monday of the month 6PM

Jacksonville First United Methodist Church-1031 TX-456 Loop, Jacksonville, TX 75766

Longview Beekeepers

First Tuesday of each month. 6 PM

Texas AgriLife Extension Office 405 E. Marshall St. Longview, TX 75601

Marshall Beekeepers

Second Thursday of each month. 5:30 PM

Cumberland Presbyterian Church 501 Indian Springs Dr. Marshall, TX 75672

Hopkins County Beekeepers

Third Thursday of each month. 6:30 PM

Hopkins County AgriLife Building 1200 West Houston, St. Sulphur Springs, TX 75483

Lamar County

First Thursday of each month. 6:30 PM

Lamar County Fairgrounds 570 E. Center St. Paris, TX 75460

Wood County Beekeepers

First Tuesday of each month. 7 PM Winnsboro Civic Center Hope LN Winnsboro, TX 75494

Caddo Trace Beekeepers

Second Mondays of each month. 7 PM - Titus County AgriLife Extension Building

North East Texas Bee Association Second Monday of each month. 5:45 PM

Canton Baptist Church 303 South Athens St. Canton, TX 75103

Kaufman Area Beekeepers Second Tuesday of each month. 6:30 PM

208 S. Houston Street Kaufman, TX 75142

Tish Kennedy-

Edibles in the Landscape

Tired of mowing, weed eating and fertilizing a lawn that doesn't give you anything in return but a sea of green? Ever thought about using fruits and vegetables in your landscape? Did you know that the average American spends around 75 hours per year maintaining their landscape? Why not get a return on your investment, it's called edible landscaping. As an added benefit, your bees can gather pollen from many of these plants.

Edible landscaping is gaining popularity all over the U.S. and not just in rural areas. Suburbanites are embracing this practice too. Whether you are starting new or just deciding to incorporate some edibles into your existing landscape, now is a great time to start. Experiment by starting with just a few edibles; start small. Try to choose herbs, vegetables and fruits that you and your family like to eat. Evaluate your space, take into account sun, water and drainage. Make sure when you plant that there is easy access to your plants. Also, keep in mind the size of the plants, height and width, at maturity, not at planting time. Be mindful but, HAVE FUN! Listed below are a few great edibles for any landscape.

Pepper plants; Capsicum can provide beauty and color. There are more varieties than I can count but , depending on your space and your taste, I am confident that you can find one to fit your needs.

Globe Artichoke; Cynara cardunculus var. scolymus have big showy buds and beautiful foliage.

Chard; Beta vulgaris is as versatile in the landscape as it is in the kitchen. Kale; Brassica oleracea is hardy, easy to grow and delicious. There are also a variety of edible flowers, hardy herbs, ornamental fruit trees and berry bushes that can be incorporated into any edible landscape.

There are also a number of books and online articles to help you as you go.

One of my favorites is

Landscaping with Edible Plants in Texas by Cheryl Beesley.

Another informative book is

The Edible Landscape: Creating a Beautiful and Bountiful Garden with Vegetables, Fruits and Flowers
by: Emily Tepe

Good luck and Happy Gardening!

Joe Laws - Vice President

What are your Bees trying to tell you?

One of the things new beekeepers are told is to observe your hive(s)/bees to monitor what is happening in the hive. That's great advice...but what do you look for? What do your observations mean? How do you read bee behaviors/activity? Much understanding will come with experience, but here are some behaviors that you might see this Spring.

One activity that makes new beekeepers nervous (but is actually an exciting time for the hive) is orientation flights. When a new beekeeper walks out to their apiary on a bright, sunny day and there are clouds of bees flying around the hive, some in circles in front of the hive. How can you tell if it is robbing or a swarm? All your bees leaving? This is a good time to stop and watch closely to see what they are doing. If they are walking out of the hive, walking up the front of the hive, then take off flying around the hive in circles that get bigger and bigger, then you are watching your young bees orientating to where "home" is before they take off on their first foraging trips. A Bee's GPS is an amazing thing! This is why beekeepers are told to move a hive no more than two feet or at least two miles away. If you move the hive 20 feet away the bees will return to original site of the hive and may not find it. Orientation flights are a very deliberate and methodical movement, not random as some other behavior may seem.

If you are observing your hive and you see lots of bees are coming and going and they don't seem to worry about you watching them, then it is a good sign that a honey flow is on. Your bees have one thing on their mind and that is to search out and bring back nectar, pollen and water to the hive as fast as they can while the resources are good. You may see some bees landing short of the hive, or in front of the hive and if you look closely you may see that they are heavily weighted down and are likely exhausted.

If you have a hive that is busy and bees are coming and going and another hive next to it with very little activity that will require you to take a closer look. Its possible that the inactive hive is just weak and could use a boost with a frame of brood and some nurse bees from your active and healthy hive. Don't move your queen from the strong hive. Her pheromone scent will just pull bees from the first hive and it will be weakened. If there is frenzied activity around a hive (not deliberate and methodical as was described for the new orientation flights) with bees flying around all four sides, trying to get into the hive through any crack or joint and fighting on the landing board, it is likely that your hive is very weak or dead and is being robbed by bees from other hives. These bees may also be very aggressive towards you. If you think the hive is just weak and you want to try to save it, throw a sheet over the hive and wet it down. Then make your entrance very small with only room for one or two bees to get through. Do NOT open the hive during the attack but wait for the frenzy to settle down. The next morning you can check your hive and see if it can be saved. Is it missing a queen? Does it have any brood? Could it benefit from a frame of nurse bees and brood? Or is this a situation where you just need to combine hives to keep what bees and resources in the hive are left? There are many books and online videos, etc. to learn about bees, but observing is oftentimes the best learning. Watch your hives and your bees will teach you.



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