

# East Texas Beekeepers Association



## *May is Auction Month!*

*Come join us this month for our annual auction. Bring your bee related donations and support our scholarship program. We have our auctioneer back for a night of fun and games to support the education of our future beekeepers!*

*Hope to see you there!*

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Next Meeting

**May 2nd**

Whitehouse Methodist Church  
405 West Main in Whitehouse

**6:30 PM**

On the Web:  
[www.etba.info](http://www.etba.info)

## *Practical Experiences in the Bee Yard*

by Stan Brantley



May nectar sources become more abundant and varied. This spring seems to have gotten an early start with many of the roadside flowers appearing by late March or early April. I first notice the edge of the highway pavement becoming red with the crimson clover, perhaps due to the warmer ground next to the pavement. As the roadway bloom seems to peak, the fields begin to shine with blooms. If you are in East Texas, the highway medians turn pink with the Indian Paint Brush.

Beekeeping gets more exciting in May as the nectar flow increases. The pace of life inside the hive is at its highest of the year. The beekeeper's tasks in the apiary are also at their peak.

Inside the hive, a process begins that results in swarms becoming more numerous. An abundance of nectar is being brought into the hive. The bees start looking for room to store the fruits of their foraging. As storage in the super becomes full, the bees start putting the nectar in the brood nest. The queen is in full laying mode and looking for empty brood cells in which to lay eggs. As available brood cells diminish and the queen feels like she does not have enough room to lay, the colony senses her stress and gets the swarming urge. Once the colony decides to swarm, there is not much the beekeeper can do to prevent it from happening. I would suspect that by making two-frame or three-frame splits, there would be on of the splits that would still feel like they needed to swarm.

When you get a swarm call in the middle of the day and are able to get the bees into a catch box, don't forget that many "scout" bees are flying around looking for the swarm's new home. I prefer to leave my catch box at the swarm site until dark and let the scouts come back. If you don't do this, you may get another call the next day saying there are still a lot of bees in the area. Let all the bees come home at night before you move the box.

There will be some frames of honey capped in May. If desired, you may extract these frames and return the "wet" comb to the super. This action in many instances will excite the bees to refill the extracted comb with more nectar, providing a bigger harvest later in the year.

New colonies can be started in May. Queens need numerous drones with which to mate. The colony will usually produce sufficient drones during May and June to meet that need.

It is also a good time to get new comb drawn. New frames of comb are always needed to replace the old dark comb that has been in the hive for years. A general rule is to add frames of foundation below the excluder to encourage the bees to draw it out. This may result in the queen beginning to lay in the freshly drawn comb. Another method that I have used to keep the queen from laying in the new comb is to turn the excluder 90 degrees and place it back on the brood chamber. This "excludes" the queen as she moves about the center of the brood nest but leaves a two or three inch space "not excluded" at the front and back of the brood nest. This encourages workers to easily gain access to the foundation and begin to draw it out. When you see that the bees are working the foundation, you can turn the excluder back to its normal orientation covering the entire brood area. Check to make sure the queen is not trapped above the excluder.

I suggest you consider a mite count in the early part of May. If the count exceeds the three mites per 100 bees threshold, you may need to do a treatment to keep the hive from crashing before you can extract honey. If a high mite infestation causes a decrease in bee population, the hive could be taken over by hive beetles and result in the sliming of your honey supers. I hope this never occurs but if it does, about all I can say is, "What a waste" and start cleaning up the mess. If you decide to do a mite treatment before extracting honey, you must carefully choose the right miticide and follow the product instructions. Make sure the product you choose is safe to use with unextracted honey in the hive.



### *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!*



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