



# East Texas Beekeepers Association

Vol. 28 No. 9

September 5, 2013

## *September Report by Dick Counts*

Once again, a great August crowd in attendance, 93 members and guests! Thanks to all that came to hear Eddie Collins share his presentation about how to split hives. Several people commented about how much they learned. Thanks Eddie, for sharing your hard-earned knowledge with us.

We now have about a dozen new and old beekeepers that are willing to mentor other beekeepers. Notice I said "mentor OTHER beekeepers" not "mentor NEW beekeepers." Truth be known, almost all of us need a little assistance from time to time. Sometimes, we might just need another strong back or helping hand, or help researching something on the Internet, or maybe someone to help deliberate on a problem. Just because you have not been keeping bees for 20 years does not mean that you can't help a fellow beekeeper.

In keeping with our focus on mentoring and helping others, we will do something a little different with seating at the September meeting. Each table will have a sign listing cities or groups of cities where we have members. Find your table and introduce yourself to members from your area. Share your beekeeping experiences and problems with your neighbors.

It is time to begin preparing for the East Texas Fair. We will start setting up on September 17<sup>th</sup>. We will need to staff our booth 10 hours a day for 10 days, which is 100 hours. However, it is much better to have at least two persons present, so we have at least 200 volunteer hours to fill. Please make plans to work the booth. If you plan on selling honey, I will need it no later than the 19<sup>th</sup>.

Also, the Texas State Fair in Dallas will be starting soon. We need volunteers for the TBA booth. We will talk more about this at the meeting. If you want to participate but will not be at the meeting, call me.

Bill Baxter, our Texas Apiary Inspector, will be the speaker at our September meeting. Bill has been in the business for 26 years, has seen just about anything that can happen in an apiary, and provides an indispensable service to Texas beekeepers. Come and meet Bill and enjoy his presentation.

President—Gus Wolf

Vice President—Mike Rappazzo

Treasurer—Tammy Lenamond

Secretary—Lanette Lanchester

Ex. Director and Reporter—  
Dick Counts

Honey Queen Chair—Vi Bourns

Directors-at-Large—Stanford  
Brantley, Randy Bobo

Program Directors — Joe  
Mekalip, Gus Wolf

Webmaster—Ken Wilkinson

**Next Meeting**  
**Sept. 5**  
**United Methodist Church**  
**405 West Main in Whitehouse**  
**6:45 PM**  
**On the Web: [etba.info](http://etba.info)**  
**Or on the phone: (903) 566-6789**

## *HONEY QUEEN REPORT* by Vi Bourns



First, let me remind you to check your hives for any pests. I found a number of SHB running around in two of mine. If you read Martha's article, there is one more critter on the scene to check for that I have not encountered except in my bluebird house that was mounted on a tree. So Beware!

Our Queen and Princess will be working the East Texas Fair in Tyler. I hope MANY of you are planning to help them and the club with the ETBA booth at the Tyler fair and the TBA booth at the State Fair. Your support is appreciated.

Senior Day at the Tyler fair is Sept 20<sup>th</sup>. In the past, they have had free samples for seniors! Kids days are Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Hayden and Martha will do presentations from 8am to around 1-2pm on Kids Days.

Dates for the State Fair of Texas are Sept 27- Oct. 27. Hayden and Martha will give two cooking with honey demos each day on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> of October.

The Texas State Convention will be in Plano, Texas Nov. 7-10. Both ladies will be involved in many of the Convention activities also. It will be a busy fall season for them. Keep them in your prayers.



Hello beekeepers and happy September to you all! This last article in my series on neonicotinoids is about **“how you can avoid harming bees in your own backyard and what you can do to help”**. Here are six different things you can do:

First, buy organic seedlings, bedding plants and ornamentals. According to a recent study, over half of the seedlings and landscaping plants sold at garden centers nationwide are treated with neonicotinoids. Here's the full article: <http://www.foe.org/news/news-releases/2013-08-bee-die-offs-new-tests-find-bee-killing-pesticides>

I could find only two garden centers in East Texas that sell organic plants. **Blue Moon Gardens** in Chandler sells some organic vegetable seedlings, herbs, and seeds. However not everything they sell is organic. **Athens Organic Garden Center** in Athens carries only organic products. They said “if it isn't organic, we don't sell it!” They carry everything from organic fertilizers, soil amendments, and organic pest and weed management products to a variety of organic seeds and a few seedlings. They also have an organic landscaping service.

2. If you can't find organic seedlings, you can always grow them from untreated seeds yourself! If you decide to grow them yourself, plant a few extra to give or sell to a friend. A wonderful organic potting soil to get your plants started can be made using two 5-gal buckets of peat moss, one 5-gal bucket of composted cow manure, and 1½ cup Lime. Just mix it all together! You may also want to get untreated grass seed, as grass seed is often treated with neonics. I have listed a few good places to buy OG seeds on the reference sheet on page 6.

3. Don't use any herbicides or pesticides. There are plenty of natural alternatives that won't harm your bees. The OG websites that listed on the reference sheet have alternatives and recipes for organic weed and pest control.

4. Garden organically. Organic gardening can seem a little daunting, however, with a few good resources and tips it can be easier than non-organic gardening. Here are some of my favorite websites for organic gardening and organic pest control tips: [www.dirtdoctor.com](http://www.dirtdoctor.com) Howard Garrett (the dirt doctor) is the best resource for organic gardening in Texas and has practically all the information you need to have a successful organic garden. Two essential books for organic gardening in Texas, both by Howard Garrett, are: **“Texas Gardening the Natural Way, the Complete Handbook”** and **“Texas Bug Book, the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly”**, the latter helps you identify and control insect pests organically. Both are indispensable resources! [www.naturalgardeneraustin.com](http://www.naturalgardeneraustin.com) has organic gardening recipes, growing guides and info sheets. They also produce “Lady Bug Natural Brand” ([www.ladybugbrand.com](http://www.ladybugbrand.com)) soil amendments, and organic weed control products which are available at some garden places here in East Texas (just type in your zip code on the site and it will bring them up). Two other informative websites for weed and insect control are [www.pesticide.org](http://www.pesticide.org) and [www.beyondpesticides.org](http://www.beyondpesticides.org).

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## President's Letter *by Gus Wolf*

National Pollinator Week. It went right by me like a rocket sled. I missed it, unaware that it was coming or that it even came by! Every year for the past 6 years, the United States Senate has designated a week in June to be National Pollinator Week, NPW for short. It is a time to celebrate all pollinators, particularly honey bees and bumble bees as they appear to be imperiled.

At the start of NPW this year, in Wilsonville, Oregon, a suburb of Portland, there was a problem with aphids infesting the Linden trees in a Target parking lot. The trees were in full bloom and aphids are not pollinators. To control the aphids, someone came in and sprayed all the trees with a product called "Safari". The "Safari" did the job but a little too well. It also killed between 25,000 to 50,000 Bumble Bees, said by some to be the largest bumble bee kill on record. "Safari" is, you guessed it, a neonicotinoid. The chemical name is Dinotefuran. It is both a contact and systemic insecticide and the labeling does state that it is highly toxic to bees.

This alarming incident has heightened awareness of the widespread use of these neonic products and their probable effect on the pollinator population. It is the incident that led an Oregon Federal legislator to introduce the "Save America's Pollinators Act of 2013". The act would seek to ban or limit the use of neonicotinoids similar to what the European Union has done. With such indiscriminate and pervasive use of these pesticides, their effects on our pollinators needs to be better understood. And, from the anecdotal evidence, it does not look good.

Last month, I promised a natural herbicide recipe to those who asked for it. A half dozen or so members contacted me. Some of my return email bounced so here, for the benefit of all, is the recipe. The best product to use is "Horticultural Vinegar." Spray it directly on the plants. You spray it on straight, undiluted, although you can add a teaspoon of soap like Ivory or Dr. Bronner's Castile Soap to make it adhere better to the leaves. You can also add a half cup of Orange Oil to the vinegar to make it even more effective. It will supposedly even kill poison ivy.

Horticultural vinegar is much stronger than the vinegar you buy in the store. What you buy in the grocery store is diluted to 5%. Horticultural is 10-20% or even up to 30-40%. Be careful -- it is a strong acid and can damage you and your clothes. Protect your eyes and don't breathe the fumes. Horticultural Vinegar may be found at feed stores or lawn and garden stores. You may have to have them special order it. Here are some web links that give recipes for regular household vinegar that should also work:

<http://www.garden-counselor-lawn-care.com/vinegar-weed-killer.html>

<http://voices.yahoo.com/diy-organic-weed-killer-1393951.html?cat=32>

Here at the house, the local bees have taken up residence at the bird bath in our front alcove. I would call it the community pool but you know they don't swim. They come there for the water. It's a source of interest to watch them and see bees of various colors coming to garner water to take back to the hive for cooling and reliquifying honey. Now and then a cinnamon wasp comes to visit. If I see them, they don't last too long! Yes, I know they help control spiders, but I'll let the mud daubers take care of the spiders. At least they are not irascible! Make sure you have water for your bees and be certain that they have enough honey or sugar syrup to make it through this time of dearth.

With the weather man saying we will have 100+ temperatures this week, it is hard to think it will soon be time to prepare for the cooler weather, time to repaint and repair all your equipment during the winter. But, until then, we can just be hopeful that the cooler temperatures are coming, perhaps soon!

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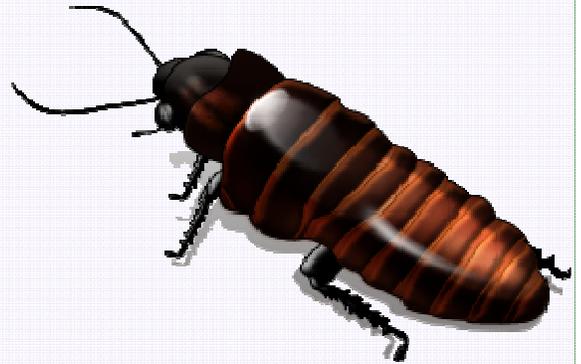
5. Lastly, support the "Save America's Pollinators Act of 2013" to ban the use of neonicotinoids in the US by calling your representative and asking him to support it! I've provided a website on the resource page that gives you a script of what to say when you call your representative. Here is the link to the actual bill: [http://blumenauer.house.gov/images/stories/2013/Save\\_Americas\\_Pollinators\\_One\\_Pager.pdf](http://blumenauer.house.gov/images/stories/2013/Save_Americas_Pollinators_One_Pager.pdf).

There is a plethora of gardening websites, books, videos, and info on organic gardening which can be found on the Internet. All this information is at your fingertips, all you have to do is look! Have a wonderful month! ~Hayden



## Unwelcome Visitors!

Hello, East Texas beekeepers! In last month's article, I described how I control small hive beetles in my hives. This month, I'd like to share about another pest I've found invading my hives,— unwelcome cockroaches.



My first sighting of a roach invader came four months ago when I was inspecting a hive in my backyard. This particular hive had come from a swarm that my dad collected in Tyler. At first, it had seemed an average-sized cluster of bees, covering about six frames. However, after a few weeks, the bees' population hadn't boomed as I expected. Instead, they had shrunk to covering only about five frames. As I lifted the outer cover one day in late April, I saw a cockroach scurry across the inner cover and scuttle down into the hive. I didn't think much of it until I pulled off the inner cover and saw several other roaches crawling down into the empty frames of foundation on the left side of the hive. Since the bees themselves were healthy and their combs undisturbed, I closed up the hive and moved over to check the next one. When I came back a few weeks later, the small issue of roaches burst into a much larger mess. Opening the outer cover, a dozen roaches sped from the center of the inner cover to the corners and hole. I used my hive tool to squash as many of the nasty intruders as I could, but once inside the hive, I found at least another dozen roaches left to kill, mostly wood roaches, but with a few German roaches mixed in for good measure. Undeterred, I kept smashing away and killed most of them but I still have a hard time forgetting that disgusting scene.

I haven't seen roaches like that in any of my hives since. However, I have researched how to handle and prevent roach related hive problems so I can defend my hives better next time. Although cockroaches do not usually damage the bees directly, they do leave droppings inside hives, eat unprotected honey, and create a disturbing spectacle for the beekeeper. Generally, roaches only enter weak hives, so finding roaches *inside* the boxes is a red flag that the hive needs attention. No need to worry about an occasional roach on the inner cover – they can't do much damage there, and strong hives will keep them from proceeding further down. Some beekeepers suggest putting those common small, square roach traps inside the targeted hives to kill the roaches but I worry about the insecticides in the roach traps killing my bees. Others say to put the legs of the hive stand in water or oil to discourage roaches from climbing up them. But, firstly, roaches can fly into the hive, and, secondly, that would encourage the hive stand to rot.



So far, the best advice I've seen suggests stacking one or two empty hive boxes with a lid on a bottom board placed near the invaded hive. Then, stick several glue traps for the roaches on the inside walls of the boxes. Since roaches are nocturnal, during the day they like to hide from the light. The trap box seems to be the perfect spot because it is more



accessible than the occupied hive with guard bees defending it. The roaches enter and die. The person who suggested this method said that he finds four or five roaches in his "trap hive" every day. At that rate, you could wipe out the majority of your roach population in a matter of weeks! Of course, if you have not had a roach problem in the past, the best way to defend against one in the future is to keep your hives strong and remove any empty boxes from them immediately.

Since that first roach scare, I haven't seen a single roach in my backyard hive. I have, however, glimpsed quite a few scuttling around near the hive, so I plan on setting up a roach "trap box" soon. If you have had any experience with cockroaches in your bee hives, I'd love to hear about your method of attack at the upcoming meeting. Until then, happy beekeeping!

~Martha



## *Practical Experiences in the Beeyard by Stan Brantley*

I am starting to see some small patches of Goldenrod blooming along the road and in the fields. A good day of rain will certainly help get the fall bloomings started. With some rain, we should expect to see some nectar flow during September and early October, giving our bees a chance to forage natural nectar and build stores for the coming winter. In the interim, be sure to feed as needed.

By now most of us have extracted honey for the season. We should be looking into the hive and assessing the condition of our hives and their queens. I am still hearing from people about hives in trouble. The heat and drought have been hard on our bees. Lift the back of your hives and feel for the weight of adequate stores. If you can lift the hive with only two fingers after breaking it loose from the hive stand, it may not have enough honey and pollen to support your bees. Open the brood chamber and look inside. If there are not several frames of honey and pollen, start feeding with 1-to-1 sugar syrup. Look for the presence of eggs, larvae and capped brood. If you do not see two or three frames with a good covering of brood, start feeding and look again in a couple weeks. A good queen will start laying again when you provide adequate food. If the queen does not start laying after a couple weeks of feeding, you may need to consider replacing her. Queens can still be found but you will probably have to order them from other states.

Hives that have no nectar coming in may resort to removing larvae from the hive in order to conserve what limited stores that are available. I checked a hive last week that was carrying larvae out of the entrance. The larvae did not appear to be diseased or damaged but the bees were removing it anyway. I added a hive-top feeder with 1-to-1 syrup. If lack of stores was the reason the bees were removing larvae, I should see a change in behavior in a few days. If they continue to remove larvae, I will need to look closer for other causes.

I want to share a "Lesson Learned" with you. I was asked to try a new Mann Lake product, Honey Bandit, for pushing bees out of supers during the honey harvest. Honey Bandit is a new formulation of a product used on a fume board to make bees leave a super so you can easily remove it from the hive. I have successfully used other products in the past. Honey Bandit claims to not have the strong unpleasant odor typical of other products. I spritzed several shots of Honey Bandit on my fume boards and placed them on top of a couple of supers. In less than ten minutes, bees were boiling out of the hive entrance. Quickly removing the fume board, I pulled the honey supers and closed the hive. After extracting the honey, we returned a couple hours later to put the wet supers back on the hives. By then, bees were covering the front of the hives. They were not even enticed back into the hive by the smell of honey after we installed the wet supers. By the next day, bees were dragging larvae out of the hive and the beetles were already starting to slime the frames. Shortly thereafter, the bees absconded. Here is the Lesson Learned: Always read and follow the directions when using chemical products in your hive. The Honey Bandit instruction sheet said, "Do not use too much Honey Bandit on the fume board. If the bees run out of the hive, take the fume board off until the product dissipates." I did not follow the directions and the result was not good.

This hot and dry time is the optimum time for the Small Hive Beetle. You should have beetle traps in your hives, a couple in each hive box is good. When placing or inspecting beetle traps, do not spill the oil inside the hive as it will attract beetles. If you are a newer beekeeper, be aware that the traps are effective and can accumulate a lot of beetles. Be careful about feeding pollen patties until later in the fall because beetles like to lay eggs underneath the patty where the bees cannot get to them. If you have a double brood hive and the top box is full of honey, do not reverse the brood chambers at this time of the year. The beetles can take over the hive while the bees are in disarray.

If you find some frames with SHB larvae, lay them on the grass in the sun for about 15 minutes. The larvae will crawl out of the cells into the grass to escape the sunlight. Move them a couple feet way and turn the other side to the sun for about 15 minutes. Moving to a new spot prevents the larvae from crawling back into the cells. Place the frames in the freezer for 24-48 hours to kill any remaining larvae and eggs. Allow the frames to thaw and warm before you put them back into the hive. This time of the year, you will not have to rush to replace the combs to prevent the bees from filling the space with burr comb. However, if you cannot return the frames to the hive in a few days, be sure to put other frames, preferably drawn comb, in their place.

Got Questions? New to beekeeping? I will be at the meeting early and will try to help. Look for me in the classroom just inside the double doors on the far side of the Friendship Hall. Join us 6:00 to 6:30 with your beekeeping questions.

### Hayden's Organic Gardening Resources

**Athens Organic Garden Center** Texas 31 East, Athens, TX 75752 (903)-675-1999 [www.athensorganicsupply.com](http://www.athensorganicsupply.com)

**Blue Moon Gardens**, 13062 FM 279, Chandler, TX 75758 (903)-852-3897 [www.bluemoongardens.com](http://www.bluemoongardens.com)

#### Seed websites:

High Mowing Organic Seeds (802)-472-6174  
[www.highmowingseeds.com](http://www.highmowingseeds.com)

Bountiful Gardens (707)-459-6410  
[www.bountifulgardens.org](http://www.bountifulgardens.org)

Organic Seed People (541)-632-4577  
[www.organicseedpeople.com](http://www.organicseedpeople.com)

Territorial Seed Company (800)-626-0866  
[www.territorialseed.com](http://www.territorialseed.com)

### Gardening websites:

[www.naturalgardeneraustin.com](http://www.naturalgardeneraustin.com) –OG recipes, growing guides info sheets, Lady Bug Natural Brand

[www.dirtdoctor.com](http://www.dirtdoctor.com) –Howard Garrett -question/answer forum, organic guides and recipes, virtually everything you need to know about organic gardening in TX

[www.Beyondpesticides.org](http://www.Beyondpesticides.org) -weed control

[www.pesticide.org](http://www.pesticide.org) –insect and lawn/weed control fact-sheets (look under home and garden toolbox)

#### Save America's Pollinators Act of 2013 HR 2692:

1. <http://www.pesticide.org/home/tell-us-about-your-call/> -call your representative

<http://www.credomobilize.com/petitions/tell-congress-stop-the-pesticide-that-is-killing-bees?akid=8420.5756241.ftcNq&rd=1&t=4>

## *Don't Underestimate Varroa*

Most of us read a lot about Varroa Mites but seldom feel that our hives are in jeopardy. If the hive looks full of bees, we don't worry too much about varroa. We might do an occasional powdered sugar dusting to make us feel that we are keeping the varroa numbers down but we seldom treat with commercial miticides. We tend to see varroa as a problem for commercial beekeepers, particularly those who truck bees to large farms and orchards for pollination.

Mid-August this year, Ron Boerm was inspecting hives in his beeyard. Most hives looked good but two appeared weaker than the others. On closer inspection, Ron noticed widespread deformation of the uncapped larvae. The young larvae were misshapen and appeared to be writhing in the bottom of the cell. His first thought on seeing the misshapen larvae was foulbrood.

Ron called Dick Counts, who suggested that he contact his county agent since there was a possibility of a contagious disease. The county agent contacted Bill Baxter, Texas Apiary Inspector. Bill arrived the following day to assist Ron. Together, they inspected the hives. Much to Ron's relief, the problem was not foulbrood but a severe infestation of varroa. Bill showed Ron that the misshapen larvae were being desiccated by immature varroa mites sucking fluids from the larvae. Using a toothpick, Bill removed larvae from cells, both open larvae and capped larvae. A surprising number of the removed larvae had a mite on the underside. Bill also used the toothpick to open caps on some cells of hatching bees, gently pulling the out hatching bee. Several of the emerging bees were dead or dying even at the moment of hatching. While inspecting some of the frames, Ron and Bill observed adult varroa running across the frames, indicative a very severe infestation. Bill advised Ron the two hives would most probably die unless treated with a miticide. It was agreed to first treat with Apiguard, readily available from Dadant. Ron will share with us the outcome of the treatment later.



Reflecting on this experience, Ron shared some thoughts. "Check your bees regularly. The status of these hives changed rapidly as varroa began to multiply. Looking for changes since the last inspection is a key to knowing if something is going wrong in a hive. When you pull a frame, look at the brood, both open and capped. Pull some drone and worker larvae from cells and check for immature varroa. You will often find it on drone larvae but be concerned if you start seeing it on worker larvae. If you see things that don't look right, call someone for help. Ignoring a problem just allows it to get worse." Though preferring to be a chemical-free beekeeper, Ron said, "These hives were dying. When faced with applying chemicals or seeing two hives die, there was no real choice. I ordered the Apiguard."



*Bobby Howell will be back next month with  
The Bee Gardner column*

