



East Texas Beekeepers Association

September 2, 2021

September Report by Jim Biles



This month we'll be focusing on getting ready for the East Texas State Fair. Just as we have in previous years, the ETBA is hosting a booth at the fair to help educate the public about honey bees. Here are some things to be aware of.

- We'll have the signup sheet at the September meeting so that members can sign up for times to work the booth. If you're a new beekeeper, don't worry! The public knows less than you and there will almost certainly be other beekeepers around to help you with the tough questions. See the table at the back of the room to sign up.
- If you'd like to sell some of your honey at the fair, you can bring it to the September meeting. Please make sure it's properly labeled (call me with questions about this), 1 lb. plastic bottles. If you elect to wait to bring your honey, you'll need to arrange with me to deliver it to my home before the fair starts.
- Saturday, Sept 11 is our scheduled workday to freshen up the booth (painting, etc.). Anyone interested can come to the fairgrounds at 8 am to help. We'll be meeting at the warehouse across the alley from the E. TX State Fair offices to move our booth to the display building and complete the necessary work.
- Just a note about Covid: The word from the Fair officials is that the fair will proceed as planned. However, we still want our members to be safe. If you are not comfortable being around crowds at this point, please don't volunteer at the booth. If you do volunteer,

Continued on next page

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Next Meeting
Sept. 2nd

United Methodist Church
405 West Main in Whitehouse
6:30 PM
On the Web:
www.etba.info

- If you will be volunteering.....we'll be recommending that proper precautions are taken including masks, social distancing, and of course vaccinations. The ETBA officers are monitoring the situation closely and it's possible that we may scale back our booth activities. If so, I will send a separate note out to our members to let them know any changes to plans. I just ask that everyone stay flexible until we are able to communicate final plans.

We'll be discussing all of this in more detail at the September meeting.



F.Y.I. by Meagan Elzner



The September Program.....



This month's presentation will be by Jennifer Caldwell. She owns Heavenly Harvest Apiary. She will be teaching us how to make **wildflower seed bombs**, so that we can all go forth and make our own to spread wildflower seeds to help feed the bees. She will also have seed bomb making kits for sale after her presentation for those who want to make seed bombs at home.

See you there!
Meagan, Program Director



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~ Meagan and Isaac Elzner ~



Practical Experiences in the Bee Yard by Stan Brantley



High temperatures and humidly indexes are the norm for the last part of August and will probably show little decline in September. Your bees may need your assistance to cope with this hot dry period. First, make sure water is available nearby. Bees will use a lot of water to help cool the hive. Secondly, make sure the bees have food. There will most likely be very little forage until the fall wildflowers start blooming, assuming we get enough moisture to have a good bloom. Do not allow the bees to starve during this period of dearth. The bees need adequate food to produce the new bees that will carry the hive through the winter period and into next spring. A queen will diminish her egg laying if there is not enough food available in the cells to feed hatching brood. Feeding sugar syrup will allow the hive to continue producing brood and move into a winter configuration. A 2:1 mixture will probably be more readily stored than thinner syrup. A check of the brood frames will show what the bees are doing with the food you provide.

- ⇒ Any extracting not completed should be finished before the Goldenrod bloom begins, usually by mid to late September.
- ⇒ Mite counts should be done in time to treat high-load hives before winter. Hives entering winter with heavy mite loads are much more likely to fail. If you are not familiar with doing mite counts, check the internet for instruction on the various methods. If your mite counts are high, treatment should be applied. Some treatments are heat sensitive. Be sure to carefully read and follow package instructions before applying.

In September, you can make 2-3 frame splits if mated queens are available. These splits need to be fed until they contain at least three frames of capped brood. Utmost care will need to be taken to prevent them from being destroyed by larger hives in the area. Splits/Nucs started this month should overwinter quite well and provide a source for increases next spring. Trying to make these splits without a mated queen will probably not succeed due to the lack of drones to mate with a virgin queen. Because of the lack of drones, I do not advise letting the split hives try to raise their own queen. Before you make late splits, check to see if you can get a mated queen. Check online, American Bee Journal or Bee Culture magazines, or with your local bee club for sources.

Consider replacing queens with spotty brood patterns now rather than allowing that queen to fail and the hive to also fail before spring. Weak hives should be combined with stronger ones. If you are concerned about the weak hive's queen becoming the dominant queen after combining, find and remove her when you do the combining to ensure the queen with the better brood pattern becomes the "queen mother."

A change in long-standing beekeeping procedures no longer allows a beekeeper to medicate sick hives without the assistance of a licensed veterinarian. The veterinarian must write a prescription, called a Veterinary Feed Directive, for any antibiotics used in the hive. Unfortunately most veterinarians are either not familiar with this issue or do not incorporate bees into their practice. If you are unable to locate a veterinarian who can help, check with your local bee club for advice or contact your state inspection service.

If you suspect the hive is contaminated with American Foul Brood (AFB) or European Foul brood (EFB), Texas beekeepers are required by law to report this condition to the Texas State Apiary Inspection Service at Texas A&M College Station (979-845-9713). They will arrange for an inspection of your hive to determine its condition and take the necessary action to prevent any spread of the disease that might be found. Beekeepers in other states should contact their state's inspection for assistance.



THE GOT QUESTIONS?

**The group will be open 6:00-6:30 before the meeting.
Join us if you are a new Beekeeper or have some beekeeping questions.
If you have not joined us before, ask someone to point you to the
"Got Questions? Room".**



Hello Beekeepers!

I hope everyone is having a great summer. I have been enjoying my brief break from my beekeeping calendar. After working our tallow flow in the Beaumont area there is a period while our bees are in North Dakota making canola honey allowing me a break where I can travel to places and visit people that do not require me to wear a bee suit.

During this time, I can reflect on the events of the year so far. Every year has things that stand out for different reasons. In particular, something has caught my attention this year. Many beekeepers are not quite sure how to light a smoker. Once you get used to it, it may seem simple, but I will tell you at one time this task seemed daunting to me as well. I remember feeling intimidated while working with my dad and other experienced beekeepers. It's easy to start the fire but to achieve that long-lasting thick smoke was another thing altogether. This year while helping out beekeepers and speaking to others, I noticed others struggled with this task as well.

I have seen many different approaches to lighting a smoker, but they all are essentially the same. To begin, you will need a smoker. I recommend one with a heat shield. Smokers get very hot, and when your glove gets hot too, there is no place for your fingers to go. The heat shield will help this problem. I also would be wary of the bargain smokers available on Amazon, some of these have bellows that do not push enough air into the canister. I would buy one from an actual beekeeping supplier such as Mann Lake or Dadant.

After acquiring a smoker, you will need a lighter. Which lighter you choose doesn't matter. Although I prefer a butane torch, it gets the fire going very quickly and lights a lot of the fuel at once. As to what fuel you use, that is a matter of preference. I have seen many different things used, such as wood chips, wood pellets, pine needles, leaves, green cedar, cedar chips, cow chips, and even bits of logs found on the road—all work. I have used all of them. When you have to light a smoker quickly, in the rain, or after you have left all your supplies in another truck, you do whatever and use what you can. When I have everything at hand, this is what I like to do and use.

First, you need to make sure your smoker is empty. Clean out all ashes from any previous uses safely. Then you will need a starter fuel that is light and easily lit. I like newspapers or cedar chips. Do not fill your smoker full with fuel at first, as that will make it harder to light. In your empty smoker, light a small section of the newspaper, get it burning, and then add more slowly, making sure each piece catches fire. At the same time, you need to be pressing the bellows softly to get air going through the canister. Do not blow your fire out by puffing it too fast at this point. Once you have a nice little fire going with the newspaper, it is now time to add heavier fuel. If I have my choice, I love to use wood pellets at this point as they burn for a long time. Whatever you choose to use should be added slowly onto your fire at this point while still puffing the bellows. Allow the fuel to catch fire. Once the fuel has caught, you can start puffing the bellows faster. At this point, you can pack down the fuel hard into the smoker, adding as much as you think you will need. If you are only doing a quick check of your hives then only add a little. If you are in the bee yard for a while I recommend filling the smoker up. I always fill it up given even quick checks can run longer than expected. Always add enough to keep the fire in the bottom and enough full on the top to allow for the smoke to pass through and cool down before exiting the top. While using it the fuel gets low you will see sparks coming out as well. If you are not sure if your smoker needs more fuel, open up the canister and check it out and add fuel as needed.

Once finished with your smoker, you need to put out the fire. Unless you have an approved smoker box, you need to extinguish the fire before leaving the bee yard. We do have smoker boxes on our trucks, but we still carry fire extinguishers in all of our trucks as well. If you have been using your smoker for some time it will be hot! So, I recommend doing this with your bee gloves still on. The ashes need to be removed from the canister away from any high grasses and then extinguished. No one wants you burning down a field. The easiest way is to carry a bottle of water and pour it over the hot ashes. Once your smoker is empty, and you extinguish the fuel, store your smoker in a safe place. *Remember, it will most likely still be hot.

Once you have practiced and kept bees for a while, this will all become second nature to you. Just be sure to practice safe smoker habits, and help out anyone that may be struggling with lighting their smoker too. I hope everyone has a safe and fun time for the rest of the summer, and I will see you all during the next meeting. Happy Smoking!

