

THE SKEP

COLUMBIANA & MAHONING COUNTY BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

When Will it be Spring? Keep Looking Up!

Mill Creek Park botanist Nick Avila says that while honeybees prefer flowers to trees, trees are usually first to blossom in the spring.

During the February meeting of the Columbiana & Mahoning County Beekeepers' Association, Avila, a botanist with Mill Creek Park, provided members with a sequence of nectar sources by blossoming seasons.

Avila said that sugar and red maple trees generally come first, followed by tulips, catalpas, honey locusts and cherry. While there are several others in between, everybody knows we finish the year with goldenrod.

Association President Bruce Deafenbaugh said a much more comprehensive list of nectar-source trees is available via the Arbor Day Foundation's website.



According to Ohio State University Extension's Bee Lab, honeybees and plants have a special relationship. Each benefits the other. Flowering plants provide food for honey bees; in turn, bees provide pollination for many plants, enabling them to reproduce.

Honey bees visit flowers to collect pollen and nectar for food. Pollen is essential to bees because it is their only natural source of protein. Without it, colonies would be unable to produce new bees and would eventually die. Nectar is the carbohydrate portion of the honey bee's food and is the raw material of honey. Bees convert nectar into honey by adding an enzyme which breaks down the complex sugars into simple sugars. During this time bees reduce the moisture content of nectar to less than 18 percent by fanning air through the hive. Honey bees also require water in addition to pollen and nectar for their survival.

To produce honey successfully, you must have your honey bee colonies at peak strength when the major nectar producing plants in your area begin to bloom. To properly manage honey bee colonies so that their populations will increase and peak at the correct time, you must have a working knowledge of the nectar and pollen producing plants in the vicinity of your apiaries. This knowledge will enable you to determine when to stimulate brood production, add supers, use swarm control measures, harvest honey, re-queen, prepare colonies for winter, and locate the most profitable apiary sites. If left on their own, most honey bee colonies don't begin increasing their populations rapidly until the major nectar flow starts. As a result, the nectar flow is usually over before the colonies are strong enough to produce a surplus of honey.

Honey bees may be kept anywhere in Ohio because there are enough nectar and pollen producing plants within flight range to produce some surplus honey. However, apiaries only a few miles apart are often found to produce honey crops varying considerably in size. Therefore, greater production and profit may result if you give more attention to kinds and numbers of nectar and pollen producing plants in any given area may change considerably over a period of years. These changes may be brought about by changes in agricultural crops and practices, rainfall levels, flood control projects and urban development.

Beginners in beekeeping frequently ask questions about growing crops or plants specifically for honey production. In general, it is not economically practical to grow a crop for the honey bees alone. Beekeepers are largely dependent on cultivated crops grown for other purposes or on wild plants. However, under certain conditions, it may be advantageous for beekeepers to use certain nectar and pollen producing plants in landscaping their home grounds and to plant certain crops on idle land. Either case would require selection of specific plants or crops adapted to, and suitable for, specific locations and situations.

CHANGE OF VENUE! The Association's next meeting will be held on Sunday, March 16, at the Whispering Pines Golf Course - 937 E Park Ave. Columbiana, OH 44408. The potluck luncheon takes place at 1 p.m. with the business meeting beginning at 2 p.m.



The Apiary Location

The ideal location for your apiary would be an area free of hazardous insecticides, and would contain an abundance of nectar and pollen producing plants blooming in succession through the spring, summer, and fall. Honey color and flavor are determined by the plant or plants from which the bees collect nectar. To produce honey for your table or the market, your bees must have access to an abundance of plants yielding large amounts of nectar that will make a high quality, table grade honey.

Nectar production and secretion are affected by many factors, such as fertility, soil moisture and acidity, altitude, latitude, length of day, the number of hours of sunlight per day, and weather.

Where bees gather nectar from several sources, including a variety of wildflowers, honey is usually dark with a strong flavor. This is generally the case with the fall nectar flow, which usually yields a dark, strong flavored honey that is not preferred by most consumers. However, this honey is usually suitable for wintering bees. Golden rod and asters are two fall-blooming plants that may yield such honey.

There are many other minor plants which are excellent for nectar and are good sources of pollen. These may be an important factor in the success of beekeeping in a particular area. A list of some major nectar and pollen producing plants of Ohio can be found at <http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/2000/2168.html>

Observe your bees closely to learn the plants from which they collect nectar and pollen. Keep records of dates when these plants bloom, because there is variation in the dates from one section of the state to another and also some variation from year to year. After a few years you will know when to expect your greatest surplus honey storage and what quality of honey to expect from various nectar sources.

Honeydew

Various kinds of insects, especially certain aphids, suck large quantities of sap from trees and other plants in order to obtain sufficient food nutrients. In so doing, they often obtain far more sugar and liquid than they can possibly use and they discharge the excess from their bodies. This sweet fluid is known as honeydew. Sometimes the insects are so numerous that the honeydew falls to the ground like a fine mist of rain. When nectar producing plants are scarce, honey bees often collect this honeydew and carry it to the hive where it is converted into honey. Honeydew honey is usually dark and poorly flavored and has a limited sales value. Most honeydew honey is suitable for brood rearing in the spring and summer but contains too much indigestible material to be good for wintering bees.

Beekeepers must have a working knowledge of both major and minor nectar and pollen producing plants in the vicinity of their apiaries for successful honey production. This knowledge will enable beekeepers determine when to carry out various management practices, such as stimulating brood production, adding supers, using swarm control measures, harvesting honey, re-queening, preparing colonies for winter and locating profitable apiary sites.

Even the list of nectar and pollen producing plants on the OSU website is not all-inclusive and all listings may not produce in all sections of the state. Beekeepers should observe their bees closely to learn the plants from which they collect nectar and pollen. Keep simple records of the dates when these plants bloom because there is a variation in dates from one section of the state to another, and also some variation from year to year. This information will enable beekeepers to manage honey bees for maximum production.

Spring Cleaning Your Bee Hives

Whether you raise bees for honey commercially or for your own use, the hives need to be cleaned thoroughly to prevent diseases from spreading and to make sure your bees have a healthy living environment. The best time to clean the hives is in early spring before the bees have begun to gather pollen and make honey. According to eHow.com contributor Bailey Shoemaker Richards, there are several different things you can do to clean old wax, bad honey, dirt and debris from your hives.

Instructions

1. Smoke the bees from the hive if necessary. Replace the parts of the hive that need cleaned with clean parts filled with fresh wax to allow the bees to return to their hive.
2. Work in a room at a distance from the bees so that they will not be attracted by the smell of the honey you're cleaning off of the hive.

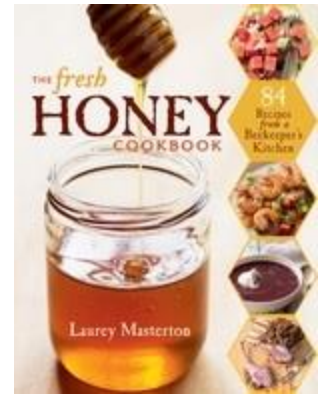
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3. Use a stiff-bristled scrub brush and hot water to remove built-up debris and wax from the parts of the hive you collected for cleaning.
4. Fill a 10-gallon bucket or tub with hot water and 2 cups of bleach or ammonia.
5. Soak the hive sections in the solution for 10 to 15 minutes in order to melt and remove remaining wax and honey. Scrub the sections again. Change the water once it becomes cloudy or dirty.
6. Use a blowtorch to remove any particularly hard to remove sections of build-up on the hive sections.

Noteworthy Books:

The Fresh Honey Cookbook: 84 Recipes from a Beekeeper's Kitchen

These 84 recipes celebrate the luscious flavors of honey. Each of 12 chapters focuses on a month of the year and a specific honey varietal (such as tupelo, orange blossom, sourwood, or sage) and offers a complete seasonal menu showcasing that varietal. In November, you might choose cranberry honey and serve a meal of Candy Roaster Squash Soup, Endive with Pomegranate Seeds and Shaved Parmesan, Turkey Roulade in Puffed Pastry with Cranberry Chutney, Baked Acorn Squash, Elsie's Cranberry Pie, and Hot Mulled Cider. Or in April, you might choose avocado honey and serve Guacamole, Borscht with Creme Fraiche, Avocado and Mango Salad, Rack of Lamb with a Coffee and Honey Crust, Glazed Baby Carrots, Rhubarb Cream, and Southern Iced Tea. The featured varietals are always optional; any kind of honey can be used.



Author Laurey Masterton is a beekeeper, café owner, caterer, and chef/spokesperson for The National Honey Board. Through her speaking engagements, cooking demonstrations, and classes, she is constantly in front of large audiences enthusiastically teaching the benefits of using and eating local ingredients including honey. She grew up in Vermont and now lives in North Carolina where she runs Laurey's Café.

President's Corner



By Bruce Deafenbaugh

Hello, Beekeepers! With the warmer weather starting to break, the bees are starting to fly, so be sure to have all of your equipment ready for another season.

I hope you had the opportunity to attend some of the recent seminars to pick up some new equipment and to see some of the new products and gadgets that are available. Let's hope that we can all learn something new methods and try them out this year.

The seminars provide us the opportunity to learn from the speakers, recognize our successes and mistakes, but they especially help us to learn from other beekeepers in attendance. One speaker remarked "Be proactive, not reactive," which is great advice considering that your new bees will be arriving before you know it.

If you attended one of the recent seminars and would like to share what you've learned with the membership by providing a discussion at our March meeting, there's \$20 in it for you. So bring your notebooks and come prepared to give a brief presentation.

The buds on the trees are beginning to swell. A master gardener told me that March 17, St. Patrick's Day, is the day to graft trees. I'll tell you more when I see you at the meeting the day before!

Special thanks to our generous suppliers who have provided us with catalogs and door prizes. It means a lot to these folks to hear back from you, so be sure to mention our club when doing business with them:

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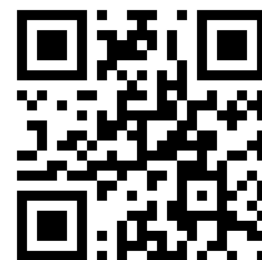
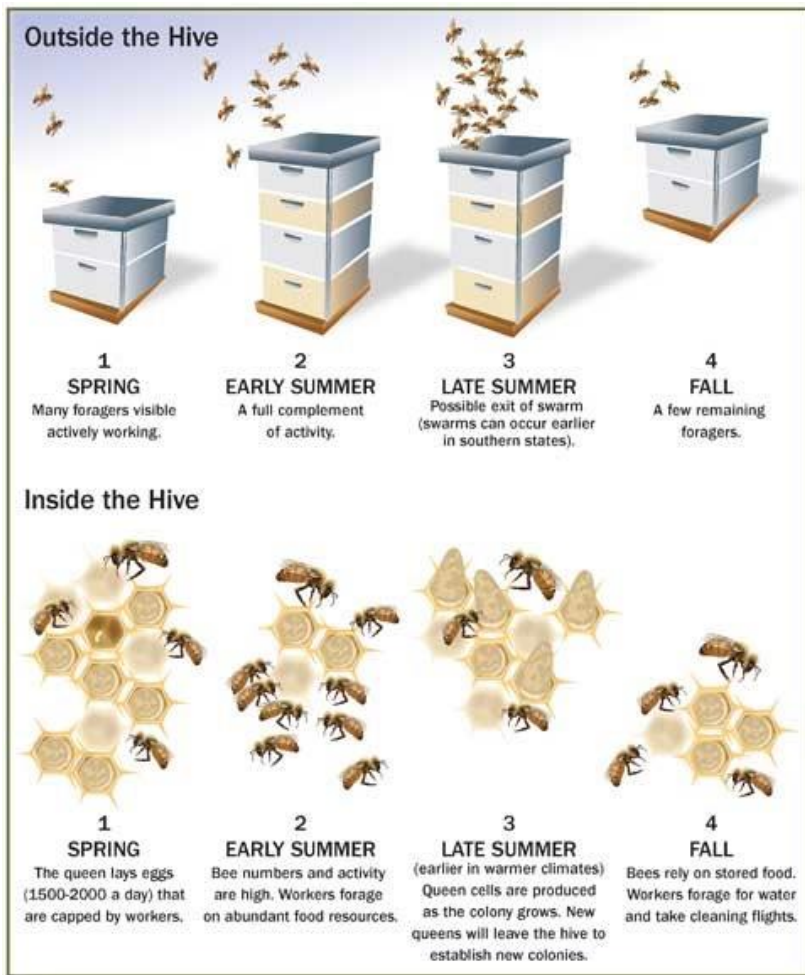
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