

The Stinger

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION



Mar/Apr "To Do" List

Soon, our bee yards will resemble the photo above. Prepare now, to take full advantage of such abundance. Read full article on *Pg 2*

Association News

Association officers share news and comments with members. Also, new members of the Master Beekeepers program *Pg 3*

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Were the pyramids really beehives?

See page 8

March/April Reminders

Celebrate first day of Spring on Wednesday March 20

Plan an April Fool's joke

Tax returns are due on Monday April 15

Make a beehive gift on Earth Day, Monday April 22

Mark calendars for the Spring Picnic on Saturday May 4th



March/April Beekeeping To Do List

- If needed, begin feeding a 1:1 ratio sugar/water
- Perform "load balancing" if colonies did not survive the winter. Move their honey into other colonies
- Perform post-mortem on lost colonies. Look for signs of starvation, exposure, or mice.
- Prepare swarm traps using swarm lures or organic lemongrass oil
- Remove pollen patties if you've been using. When weather warms, unused patties attract hive beetles.
- Inspect for bees, larva, eggs and a queen. If poor brood patterns or colony not building up, re-queen or kill queen and combine colonies using newspaper method.

Buckwheat Honey (photo of flowers above)

Buckwheat honey commands premium prices.

Seeds can be sown after last frost of the year, and will produce flowers four weeks later!

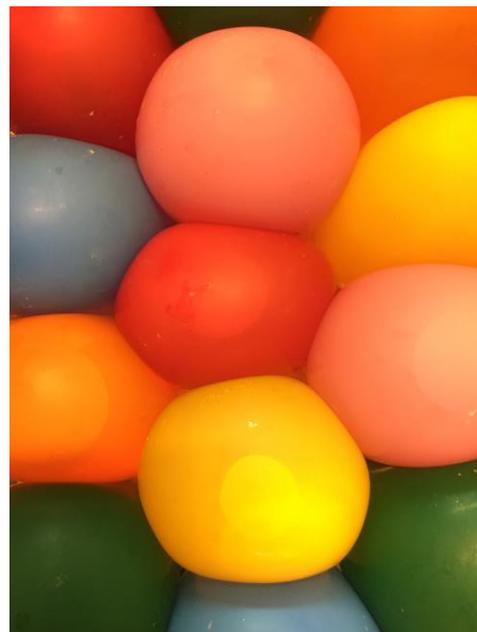
Plow under after nectar flow, to provide an excellent green fertilizer for your field.

How do bees know to make six-sided cells for honeycomb?

They don't. Bees naturally make round wax shapes. Compression by other cells above, below, and to the sides, will press the round shape into a six-sided shape.

To experiment, we filled balloons with water and then stacked them in a box. After only a few short hours, they created hexagonal shapes.

The water balloon fight afterwards was EPIC!!!



Association News

President Bill Evans	"I'd like to commend ACES and Jim Tew for the great Symposium they put together this year. It was the 26 th year, and I've been fortunate to attend all of them. Sadly, Jim announced it would be his last one. You set a very high standard, Jim. Now we know what to aspire to. Best wishes, and thank you for your years of service."
Secretary Heather Sinyard	"I was SO excited to see so many people at the ACES symposium, plus we had quite a few attendees register for the ABA. The next step is our Spring Picnic, which will include Honey Judging. Be sure to check it out."
Treasurer Wynelle Milstead	"Annual dues of \$10 were payable in January, but 377 people have not paid yet. Past due notices will be mailed in late February. To help save that expense, please print the online renewal form at www.AlabamaBeekeepers.com . and send it with your payment. If you cannot print one out, just mail a check to 1495 Sandcutt Road, Nauvoo, AL 35578. Be sure to include your name, current mailing address, phone numbers, and email address if not using the form."
Master Beekeepers Kathy Coleman	"We bid a fond farewell to Gerry Whitaker, our former Director, who retired in February. His phenomenal leadership will be an inspiration for me. I plan to continue the program's goals of self-education and growth in a welcoming, interesting, and informative environment."

Master Beekeepers

Congratulations to the newest members to successfully complete the requirements of their programs. "You are our ambassadors to the beekeeping community and the citizens of Alabama." Kathy Coleman

Apprentice	Journeymen	Master Beekeepers	Welsh Honey Judges
Jamie Beavers Ronnie Brannon Dustin Davies Bill Elliott Hunter Hall Brian Head Cristel Hixson Corey Matheson Norma Rawlings	David Brasher Patti Butler Kristen Irions Scott Lucas Wynelle Milstead Broderick Peters Katie Pugh Nicole Nygaard Dwayne Sayers Christina Snoddy Vince Wallace	Sandra Emery Troy Latham Patrick McCalman John McDaniel Heather Sinyard	Allyson Andrews Kara Bassett Sandy Good William Good Marilynn Parker

Earth Day

Earth Day is always celebrated on April 22nd, which will fall on a Monday this year. This will be the 49th year, since its inception in 1970. Over 193 countries participate.

In keeping with the day's goals of environmental awareness and protection, beekeepers individually, or in their local associations, might want to use that opportunity to make a gift of honeybees via a charitable organization. A monetary gift as small as \$30 will provide a family with a bee package, hive, box and training in beekeeping techniques.

A gift of honeybees increases a family's income through sales of honey, wax and propolis, and also helps with that family's crops and those of their neighbors. A healthy community increases the health of all members, after all. According to the Heifer Project International, "Healthy beehives can double fruit and vegetable yields of small farms." Other organizations, such as the Honeybee Conservancy, place hives in strategic locations not necessarily related to economic improvement, but for environmental reasons.

Organizations that will accept contributions earmarked for honeybees include:

Heifer Project International	www.Heifer.org
World Vision	https://donate.worldvision.org/give/bee hive
Send a Cow	https://sendacowgifts.org/bee hive
Honeybee Conservancy	https://thehoneybeeconservancy.org/beekeeping-grants/

According to the Earth Day Network:

- Bees exist in all climates, from the forests in Europe to the deserts of Africa to the Arctic Circle
- There are 369,000 flowering plant species, and 90% of them are dependent on insect pollination
- A colony with 25,000 forager bees can pollinate up to 250 million flowers in a day.
- One in four wild bee species in the US is at risk of extinction.
- Crops pollinated by bees make up 35% of global food production, with a value of \$577 billion.
- California produces 50% to 80% of the world's almond harvest. Spread across 80,000 acres, California's almond orchards typically need 1.6 million domesticated bee colonies for pollination..

Buzzworthy Fun



Why do bees have sticky hair?
Because they use honeycombs.

March and April Trivia

The March birthstone is aquamarine and flower daffodil.

March is fresh celery month, noodle month and peanut month.

When March comes in like a lion, it goes out like a lamb.
March winds and April showers bring May flowers.

Important March dates include City of Chicago incorporated in 1837, AT&T in 1885 and Yahoo! in 1995. Barbie debuted in 1959 and Julius Caesar exited (via assassination) in 44 BC. Someone shot JR Ewing in 1980.

The April birthstone is diamond (lucky people born in April!!!) and flower is the daisy

April is grilled cheese month, BLT month, and soft pretzel month. My favorites!!!!

Well, of course, we must remember April Fool's Day! What are YOUR plans?

April newcomers included Apple (1976), TV Guide (1953), Elvis Presley on the Milton Berle Show (1956), the first cell phone call (1973), the Pony Express (1860), Los Angeles incorporated (1850), Microsoft (1975) and discovery of the Venus de Milo in 1820

April losses include Dr. Martin Luther King (1968), the sun (first recorded solar eclipse, 648 BC) and Prohibition (1933)

Recipes

Propolis Tincture

1 part ground propolis (freeze and then process in a coffee grinder)

4 parts clear grain alcohol

Shake well and then store for 24 hours. Drain through coffee filter.

The resulting tincture is good for canker sores. Mixed with water and gargled will help a sore throat. Twenty drops added to one tablespoon of water will treat irritation after shaving.

Spicy Honey

2 cups honey

3 Fresno or red jalapeno chilis

Remove seeds from chilis. Do not chop. Heat honey and chilis over medium heat until simmering. Turn off heat and steep for one hour. If hot enough, strain, bottle and cool. If not hot enough, add some of the reserved seeds and let steep for another 20 minutes. Then strain, bottle and cool.

Bee Detective Tools

Our colonies are like babies—they can't tell us what is wrong with them. We have to be detectives. Luckily, there are several tools that can help us diagnose hive health in a timely manner, and then take action if something is wrong.



One tool we are especially excited about is the nurse's stethoscope, available from home health providers or on the Internet for around \$60. With a little practice, you will be able to use it to listen to your colony and evaluate size, activity, and position in the hive. Be sure to give the side of the box a sharp knock or two with your knuckles, which will generate enough movement and buzzing to make your assessment. Surprisingly, you will even hear individual bees knocking up against the wall of the box, as they move rapidly around. This tool is especially useful in cold weather, when we don't want to open the hive. Buying a stethoscope now will let you practice, and be ready for next winter.

The BuzzBox uses sensors and artificial intelligence to monitor colony health, including swarming, missing queen, sick colony, and weather conditions. Data is sent to your phone app. It is pricey, at \$199, but could prevent colony loss.

Hive scales can be electronic or mechanical and have visual or wireless remote reporting. Insufficient weight gain compared to other colonies can indicate a problem. Weight loss is a definite red flag. Rapid weight gain, resulting in the colony becoming "honey bound," will tell you it is time to add another super BEFORE the colony decides to swarm.

The best detective tool is always direct observation of the "crime scene." Be sure to visually inspect your colonies frequently, if possible. This will depend on numbers, of course. You want to look for evidence of the various bee diseases, brood pattern, honey stores, and amount of capped honey. The presence of larvae but absence of eggs indicates a recently departed or deceased queen. You might be able to requeen. If there are no eggs or larvae, the absence has been longer, and you might have to combine with a healthy hive.

Using the alcohol wash method to detect and count varroa mites is probably going to be the most accurate. That is because the more commonly used sticky boards might show larger or smaller numbers depending on where the colony is in the brood rearing cycle. If you are sensitive to this factor, however, sticky boards can be a good diagnostic tool.

Click on the photo at the right to watch a recorded webinar about monitoring skills to avoid colony losses. It is by Alex Zomchek, and includes a downloadable pdf file with all the slides.

For snail mail Stinger recipients, you can go to The Ohio State University website at <https://u.osu.edu/beelab> and then click on the link for the Alex Zomchek video.



Alex Zomchek, Ecology Research Center

Resources



Info about local Beekeeping Associations, Click [HERE](#)

T and A Bee Farm

Selling nucs, packages and various bee related supplies. Ted and Angie LeMay of Russellville, AL, ship to all locations. www.TandABees.com, or call 256-331-2337

Rear your own queens using cell punch method.

No tedious transferring of delicate larvae. Kit includes the cell punch tool as well as some other useful items to get started. Also 2 pages of instructions.

Send \$20 plus \$2.50 shipping to Will Montgomery, 1401 Lakemont Dr S, Southside, AL 35907
Include a shipping address! Will ship next day after receipt.

Spring NUCs for sale.

Limited number of nucs available for sale. Please call for additional information. Henry Rollins 256-859-1747

Lookout Mountain Honey Bees.

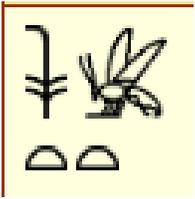
2 hives assembled & painted + 2-3 lb packages w/queen	\$500
Same as above, plus hat/veil combo, smoker, hive tool & book	\$575
1 hive & 2 supers assembled & painted, 1-3 lb pkg w/queen, hat/veil combo, gloves, smoker, hive tool, book	\$440

For more info or to order, give David or Lynne Kelton a call at 256-523-4767

The Ohio State University Beekeeping Webinar Recordings

Free videos on a large number of topics can be viewed at <http://u.osu.edu/beelab/webinar-recordings/>

Pyramids Really Beehives?



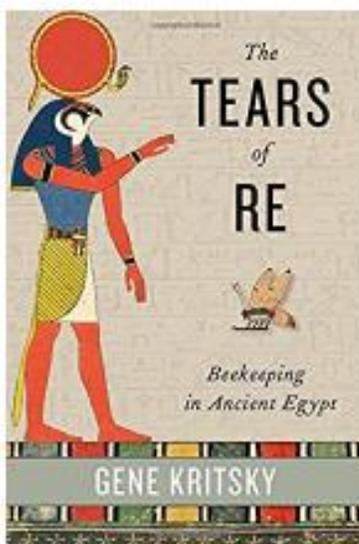
Honey bees were very important in ancient Egyptian culture. As early as 3,500 BC, the honey bee was the symbol of the king of Lower Egypt. When upper and lower Egypt were unified around 3,100 BC, the king was represented by the hieroglyph at the left. It shows a sedge and a bee. The sedge (a type of marshy plant) represented Upper Egypt, and the bee represented Lower Egypt. Typically, kings of Egypt had a “throne name” different from their birth name, much the same as the Catholic pope takes a name different from his birth name. The pharaoh’s throne name was always indicated in an oval cartouche, with the sedge and bee hieroglyph first, and then the throne name next.

Hives were made out of pipes of clay or Nile mud, stacked on top of each other into pyramid forms!!! Maybe the pyramids were built to honor honey bees ☺ The hives were then moved up and down the Nile on specially constructed rafts, to pollinate seasonal flowers. This practice continues to the present day. A picture in Niuserre’s sun temple, from the 25th century BC, shows beekeepers blowing smoke into hives as they remove the honey-combs.

Honey was used by all classes in Egypt, indicating it was not a luxury product but, instead, produced on a large scale. Conquered nations paid honey in tribute, and marriage contracts promised to deliver annual gifts of jars of honey. Domesticated bees provided most of the honey, but wild honey was especially prized. Honey hunters, often protected by royal archers, would search the countryside for wild colonies.

Sacred crocodiles were sometimes embalmed in honey. King Tut’s tomb contained a 2,000 year-old jar of honey, which was still edible! Egyptians believed that bees were created from the tears of the sun-god Re. “When Re weeps again the water which flows from his eyes upon the ground turns into working bees. They work in flowers and trees of every kind and wax and honey come into being.”

Sources: Planet Bee Foundation, www.PlanetBee.org and the personal website of Andre Dollinger of Reshafim, Israel, who has a fascination with Egyptian history. www.reshafim.org



Interested in this topic? Buy or borrow *The Tears of Re, Beekeeping in Ancient Egypt*, by Gene Kritsky.

Picture at right from the tomb of Rehmire, a nobleman in the time of Queen Hatshepsut, around 1400 BC. It shows a standing man smoking the hive, while the kneeling man removes the honey.



Spring Picnic



Submissions Policy

Do you have ideas, advice, photos, or items or services you'd like to buy or sell? If so, please write to TheAlabamaStinger@gmail.com or write to Denise Evans, 1031 County Road 50, Jemison, AL 35085 with your submission.

The Stinger will come out on the 15th day of February, April, June, August, October and December. The deadline for submissions is the 1st day of each of those months. Anything sent after the cutoff date will not be included.

Thank you! ~~ Denise Evans

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