



The Honey Pot



January 2007

Montgomery County Beekeepers Association

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Upcoming Meetings and Events



Join us for the monthly meeting!

January 10 7:30 pm

Brookside Nature Center

1400 Glenallan Ave, Wheaton, MD

February 14, 2007 7:30 PM

Honey Tasting at Brookside
Nature Center

March 1, 2007 – Short Course

Short Course begins at Holiday
Park Senior Center

Article Submissions

Submissions for Honey Pot due by
the 25th of each month. Send to:

Amazing.bee@verizon.net or to

MCBA, 26626 Howard Chapel Drive
Damascus, MD 20872

President's Notes

by David Bernard

Creamed Honey Workshop

In the winter months, when the bees are clustered and there is little to do in the apiary, MCBA tries to schedule less traditional meetings. This month we have a workshop style meeting planned, where each person will be making their own bottle of creamed honey! And the person to lead us through this process is David Simmons, the Churchville Maryland beekeeper who taught the lip balm and hand cream workshops in the past. I expect that David will not only have us perform the steps but will share his practical advise and tips making the process simple. Why creamed honey? In 2005 we sold over 100 pounds of creamed honey at the fair but this past year we had NO creamed honey to sell! If you want a special niche market item, this could be a meeting for you!

Short Course

This year's short course will be held at the Holiday Park Senior Center (at the intersection of Connecticut Ave and Veirs Mill Road) where we have a larger room which can accommodate our increasingly popular short course. Enclosed is the flyer with more details. If you have friends or family who have always shown an interest in your bees, give them the flyer and encourage them to attend.

Draft Bylaws

MCBA has begun the process of writing bylaws and defining officers to help solve some of the organizational challenges that our growing club faces. In the next month or two, I fully expect that the draft bylaws will be ready to circulate and bring to the membership for approval.

Upcoming Events. Mark your calendar

January MCBA Monthly Meeting: January 10th 7:30 PM Brookside Nature Center

7:30 - 7:50 Welcome and Announcements David Bernard

7:50 - 8:10 Refreshment Break

8:15 - 9:30 **“The Cream of the Crop”**

Hands-on Creamed Honey Workshop by David Simmons



Spotlight on the Speaker: David Simmons

David Simmons began keeping bees with 2 hives in 1988, the year he moved to Churchville in Harford County.

Currently he has about 10 hives with a maximum capacity

of as many as 40 over the years that he rents for apple, pear, strawberry, cucurbit and pumpkin pollination. Saturday mornings from May to October, David can be found at the farmers' market in Havre de Grace, MD, selling honey and items made with beeswax. As superintendent of the Bee Products Department at the Harford County Farm Fair and judge at various other fairs, he is a big advocate of honey shows, especially for new beekeepers. David has held many offices in local, state and regional beekeeping organizations. At the local level, David served as vice-president, then president of the Susquehanna Beekeeper_s Association from 1990-1994. He also began the Susquehanna Beekeepers_ newsletter and served as its editor from 1995 until 2002. Between 1992 and 2000, David served as a director, local vice president, 1st vice- and then president of the Maryland State Beekeepers Association. At the regional level, from 1998-2001, he represented Maryland beekeepers on the board of the Mid-Atlantic Apiculture Research and Extension Consortium.



In addition to his routine beekeeping experiences, David participated in bee research at the Aberdeen Proving Ground for the Department of the Army from 1996 to 2001. This research project, run by Dr. Jerry Bromenshenk of the University of Montana, used honey bees and their hives to monitor pollutants, particularly in the vicinity of environmental cleanup.

MCBA Meeting February 14th 7:30 -9:30 pm.

Varietal Honey Tasting and MCBA Open House

Join us on Valentines Day for a varietal honey tasting, Open House and social event. Welcome the incoming Short Course students and show off your honey, hive products and bee crafts. Tables will be set up for displaying the many facets of our shared hobby. Bring what you have and see what new ideas our other members can inspire in you! In addition there will be a short talk on varietal honey and their production with many samples to compare! Please contact MaryEllen Kirkpatrick (in the MCBA Membership Directory) for more information

Thursdays in March: MCBA Beginner's Short Course

The annual short course will be held on every Thursday evening in March (1,8,15,22,29) from 7:00 – 9:00 PM at the Holiday Park Senior Center, 9850 Ferrara Drive in Wheaton, MD. The two live-bee field sessions will be held on Saturday March 31 and April 14 from 1-4PM at Brookside Nature Center. See our website for more details.

For Sale:

50 pound bags of sugar for \$20 each, while supplies last. Contact Don Kolpack at 301-725-4732 or DKolpa@yahoo.com

Membership Directory

The Member Directory is available to be picked up at monthly MCBA meetings. The majority of members requested that the directory not be distributed electronically nor posted on the MCBA website, so this request will be honored. If a member would like to make a mailing that is of interest to the membership of the MCBA (such as members who sell nucs and queens), they may request mailing labels for members who have chosen to be included in the directory. If a member does not wish to receive these mailings, please email Mary Fendrick at mary@fendrick.com with that request.

MCBA WEBSITE AND EMAIL LIST : Remember to visit our website, at:

www.montgomerycountybeekeepers.com. If you have any ideas about the Website, please contact Woody Medina at wmedina@pragmatiq.com Are you on the MCBA email list? Our association's bulletin board is a great place to post your bee questions and share you experiences. If you are not yet signed up for the list, email Beemoderator@gmail.com to be included. The email list includes announcements of events and opportunities, discussions of the local beekeeping situation, and questions and answers about beekeeping from our local beekeepers, as well as a place to share our beekeeping photos.

Review of the Annual MCBA Dinner

by Bill Fuentesvilla

Montgomery County beekeepers met at El Golfo restaurant Wednesday night, December 13th in Tacoma Park for their third annual MCBA dinner. The MCBA annual dinner has been very popular, and this year was no exception. Nearly 50 people attended, including experienced members, new beekeepers, spouses and family. We were especially glad to have the company of our youngest beekeeper, Elsa Bell, who recently celebrated her first birthday and who has been attending meetings all year.

The dinner was a wonderful experience for all of us, and its success was due to the enthusiastic contributions of MaryEllen and Doug Kirkpatrick, Toni Burnham, Marc Hoffman, Barry Thompson, Kameha Bell, Wynett and Donald Isley, and Jim Fraser. MaryEllen organized this year's dinner and her thoughtfulness set the tone for a very pleasant and sociable evening of gracious hospitality. Barry Thompson and Toni Burnham pulled together the many last minute details that always beg attention before an event like this one. MaryEllen, Doug, Toni, Kameha, Wynett, Barry, Marc, and Jim all contributed wonderful crafts and practical gifts to help us celebrate. Marc Hoffman kept us entertained throughout the evening handing out the favors and prizes. Last but not least, the dinner was superb and the staff at El Golfo could not have been more accommodating.

Linganore Winecellar Review

by David Bernard

Thank you to Anthony Aellen of the Linganore Winecellars for MCBA and also to Len Grieg for arranging the tour and wine tasting. On December 2nd about a dozen beekeepers and family members gathered for a two hour tour, show and tell, and question and answer session at the Linganore Winecellars. Anthony Aellen, one of the owners and operators, gave a tour of the impressive facilities at Linganore and described the winemaking and mead-making process, starting with the grape harvesting, fermentation and through bottling. We had the opportunity to view the computer controlled, conveyor driven bottling room, which any beekeeper could only dream of installing in their honey house! We ended the tour with a tasting of the various Linganore wines and mead. A number of beekeepers were seen leaving with their arms loaded with their newly purchased spirits!

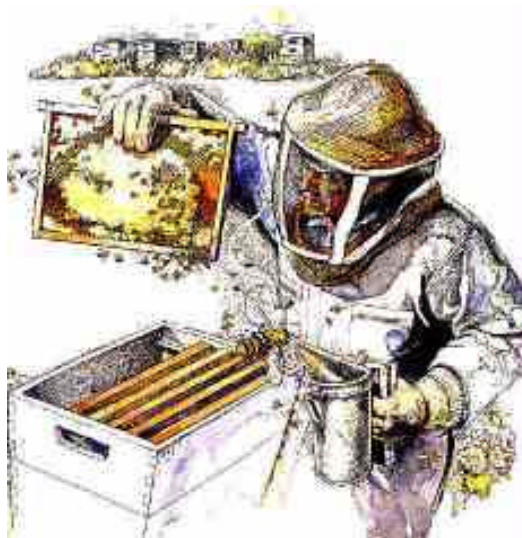


Hiveworks :January In The Beeyard Winter Cluster Dynamics

by MaryEllen Kirkpatrick

While there is little activity out in the beeyard in January, the bees inside their hives are busy clustering for warmth. Maintaining the proper nest climate at any time of year is a very dynamic and complex task. Not only must the bees react to the small fluctuations that occur from moment to moment in a given day, but to the enormous fluctuations that would occur from season to season while nest activities are changing as well. Consider also that a honey bee colony made up of tens of thousands of individual bees controls the climate on the combs in their hive without the benefit of any centralized leadership. Bees have in place no hierarchical decision making structure or governing body, nor can they, given the widely dynamic nature of their environment, be following any ingrained or instinctual master plan.

The winter cluster is made up of hot, cold and comfortable bees. Despite the fact that regulating the temperature within the nest is an activity that requires the participation of the entire population, researchers do not believe that the bees are working cooperatively. Research indicates that each individual bee in a cluster could be basing her behavior on nothing more complicated than her own body temperature at any given moment. The temperature within the winter cluster is not uniform. The bees on the outside of the cluster, called the mantle, are colder than the bees toward the center, or at the core of the cluster. Clusters are not necessarily spherical in shape either. Each bee seeks to keep her own body in a comfortable temperature range. If a bee's body is in the comfortable range, she is free to engage in a bee



activity other than thermoregulation. If her body is cold, she seeks to get warm, and if she is at the center of the cluster and she is warmer than is comfortable, she will seek to move to an area where she can cool down.

To conserve food reserves, bees in a winter cluster seek to maintain their body temperatures lower than they would in the summer or in the other seasons when they are actively rearing brood. Winter bees hold more fat in their bodies than bees at any other time of year, and there are differences in their hemolymph from that of their summer sisters that make it easier for winter bees to tolerate a lower temperature range. During the coldest periods, the bees in the cluster generate heat metabolically by shivering, but it is not the shivering alone that increases the temperature in the center of the cluster. The bees on the mantle cling more tightly together and move less as the ambient temperature decreases. Tightly packed bees that are not moving provide better insulation than a looser layer of moving bees, so the cluster becomes more resistant to heat loss and the temperature in the core of the cluster continues to rise. Bees at the core become overheated and in moving to cool themselves, they relieve the heat at the core by circulating the heat. This natural movement of the bees helps to prevent the bees that make up the mantle from going into a chill coma and dying, and all of this takes place without the bees from the core of the cluster communicating with the bees in the mantle.

MCBA T-Shirts

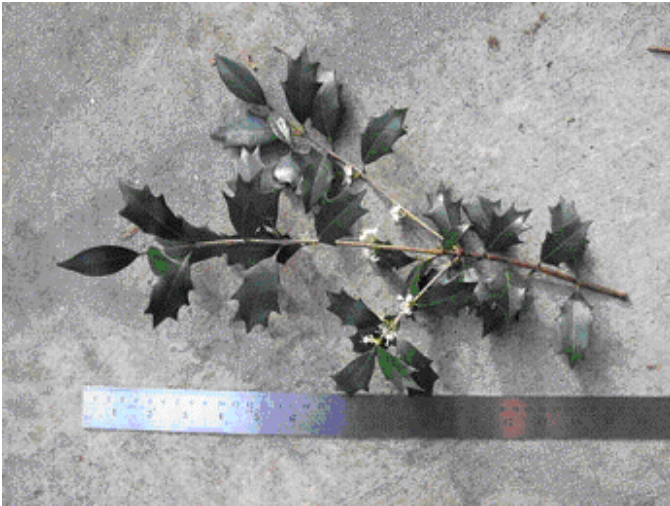
We will have T-Shirts featuring our new MCBA logo at the upcoming meeting. Cost is \$10. The holidays are approaching and this shirt makes a nice gift for a beekeeper!!

Bee Forage Osmanthus

by Laura Costas

Osmanthus x heterophyllus

A spiny and unassuming plant grows in a hedge near my back door. It's dark there, shaded as it is by the neighbor's house on one side, and our house on the other. There's a tall, wooden privacy fence that abuts the trunks of the plants, and the branches hang down over it sheltering the little pen where our Eastern Box Turtle lives in the warmer months. Every spring around the end of April a family of catbirds returns to this hedge to nest, throughout the summer many birds use the spiny, dark tangle for shelter. I've been trying for years to improve the appearance of the thick, leggy growth, and I've often thought of cutting the plant back to the ground and having done with it. Leaves from the oak and poplar trees get stuck in the center of the plant, and fishing them out is a scratchy, prickly nuisance.



I get a little tired of ducking under and wrestling with it along the path at the side of the house where my newbie hive and compost is. But it makes a nice screen from the windows of the neighbor's house, and I'd really miss the catbirds, so it has stayed. This year it my patience was generously rewarded! During the first two weeks of November, while the plant was in prolific bloom, it filled the air with a powerful jasmine-like fragrance, and it thrummed with bees!

Thanks to Toni Burnham for sending the info that finally clinched the identification!

The plant is called *Osmanthus x heterophyllus*, a member of the olive family, and was very tricky to identify. I'd always called it osmanthus, but then when I looked it up for a more positive I.D. I found pictures of a plant whose foliage looked nothing like what I have in my yard. The *heterophyllus* in the name should have been a clue that there are several forms of the foliage, but I moved on and tried to find it among the many hollies which it most resembles.



Osmanthus is a very carefree plant to cultivate. It grows to about 15' and makes a very dense hedge. It likes shade or partial sun, moist, well-drained soil of almost any type, and it stays glossy dark green all year. My plants haven't complained in the 8 years that I've been wrangling (and cursing) them, and I've cut it back hard in places. The plants may have been invigorated by this activity as this year was the first that the bloom really took off. You can keep it pruned to about 6' or so if prefer a smaller plant. It has a woody stem and very small and inconspicuous white flowers.

Osmanthus heterophyllus also bears a small fruit which I haven't yet seen on my plants, but suspect that the bees' activities may change that. I think that the plants in my yard are quite old, possibly as old as the house itself which dates from the mid-1950s. In my yard the bloom is most prolific in the areas that are exposed to more sunshine. Cutting now, just after flowering will increase the bloom the following year.

This little story isn't finished for me yet, since it's the first year that I've had bees--pollination may yield fruits next year. Clearly, though, this plant and its fragrant flowers were most welcome by the bees in my yard, and weather conditions allowing, could be a fairly important source for them at a time when nothing else is blooming. Next year at bloom time I'll take more photos and include the bees!



Here are a couple of *osmanthus* resources: Other names for the plant include: False Holly, Holly Olive, Tea Olive. The *Plants for a Future* website provides much information about cultivation etc: <http://www.pfaf.org/database/plants.php?Osmanthus+heterophyllus> Here is a link to the variety which resembles the olive:<http://www.biologie.uni-ulm.de/systax/dendrologie/Osmahetfw.htm>

There are cultivars which are variegated and multi-colored but these may not produce the flowers that your bees will be looking for.

This month's Honey Recipe submitted by MaryEllen Kirkpatrick
Basler Leckerli

This is a traditional Swiss holiday cookie. I have cut this recipe down from the enormous batch that I make.

1 1/3 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 tsp. baking soda
1tsp ground cinnamon
pinch ground cloves
pinch ground nutmeg
1/3 cup dark honey
1/3 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup chopped almonds
1 1/2 Tbsp candied orange peel, chopped
1 1/2 Tbsp candied lemon peel, chopped
1 tsp grated lemon zest
1/4 cup kirsch
3 Tbsp sugar for syrup

Mix together the flour, baking soda, cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg and set aside. In a heavy pan combine the honey and the sugar and bring to almost boiling, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Add

the almonds, candied fruit peel and zest, and remove from heat. Beat in 3/4 cup of the flour mixture. Sift the remaining flour mixture onto a work surface, make a well in the middle and pour in the warm mixture. Quickly blend it all together using a bench knife. Roll or pat the dough to 1/2 inch thick in a greased and floured jelly roll pan. Cover loosely with waxed paper or parchment and leave the pan out to mature at least overnight, and as long as a couple of days. When ready to bake, preheat the oven to 400° and bake for 15 minutes. Slice with a bench knife or sharp knife while the pastry is still hot and lift out of the pan with a spatula to cool on a wire rack. Make a syrup with the 3 Tbsp sugar and 2 Tbsp of water, and boil it to the thread stage (about 235°) and brush this lightly over the warm pastry. Leave to cool and dry. Store in airtight containers. They also freeze well but you may find you'll need to make a very large batch indeed to have enough left over to freeze!

This article is the second in a series focused on winter feeding. In the previous article, I discussed how to recognize the signs of a starving colony. In this article, I will discuss how to feed your bees during the winter months.

To understand what works (and what doesn't work) about winter feeding, I will need to first describe what happens to the bees when the weather is cold. To survive through cold weather, honey bees cluster together and generate body heat collectively. While clustering, the bees are able to maintain a temperature at the center of the cluster of 93° F even when the outside temperature gets really cold, provided that there is ample honey for them to consume. The size of the cluster will depend on a number of factors including whether there is brood present or not, the number of bees in the hive and how cold it is. Generally speaking, the cluster size will shrink as it gets colder and expand when the weather is warmer.

An individual honey bee cannot survive by itself in cold temperatures for very long. The muscles that bees use to fly cease to operate once the temperature of the thorax drops to 10° C (about 50° F). When their body temperature drops to 7° C (about 45° F), honey bees become immobile. (Note that the temperatures cited are the body temperature of the bee, not the outside temperature.) From this, you can probably guess that an individual bee does not venture away from the cluster when the weather gets really cold.

Clustering only works while the bees have enough honey. The bees need this nourishment to provide them energy to maintain the cluster temperature. The cluster will move upwards as it needs to in order to make sure that honey is always nearby. This movement is always upwards – not side to side. Eventually, the cluster may work its way all the way to the inner cover. This may happen even when there appears to be available frames of honey on either side of the cluster. Unless the honey is directly over the cluster, the bees will not find it. When your bees are in this condition, they are in dire need of feeding.

There are several mechanisms you could use to feed your bees. **Not all of them work in cold weather, however.** If it is important enough for you to feed the bees, then it is also important that you provide the feed to them in a manner that will allow them to reach it.

If the weather has turned chilly, but daytime temperatures are in the 50's, you can feed with pretty much any type of feeder. However, as the temperature gets colder, you must use a feeder that will allow the bees to reach the feed without leaving the cluster. In plain English, this means that the food must be in direct contact with the cluster.

How do you do feed the bees when the weather gets super cold? Well, here are a few ways. When reading, keep in mind that the assumption is that the cluster has moved all the way up to the inner cover.

1. **Frames of honey that you stored away:** Of course, if you have any frames of honey that you are storing in your freezer, you can use these frames. Open the hive and place the frame directly next to the cluster. Be careful not to disrupt the cluster as you add the frame. I would recommend that you defrost the frame before you added it to the hive. Why make life more difficult for the bees? Also, make sure you use only honey from your own healthy hives. Honey from other sources could be tainted with American Foulbrood, and you don't want to add that to your hive.
2. **Jar or Pail type feeders:** These can be purchased or homemade. To make your own, obtain an empty glass pickle jar from your local deli (the large ones that hold about a gallon). Poke a few holes in the lid using one of those nails that you use to assemble frames with. Fill this with the sugar syrup. For emergency feeding, you should use thick 2:1 sugar syrup for these feeders. Invert the jar and place it directly on the top of the frames directly above the cluster. You could also place the jar over the hole in the inner cover. Place an empty deep hive body (or two empty medium super) around the jar to protect it, then place the telescoping over otop.

- 3. Hard Candy:** Hard candy is a good way to feed bees when the weather gets cold. See the attached listings of recipes for making hard candy. I have seen some MCBA members pour the hard candy mixture directly into a frame. To do this, start by adding wax paper to one side of the frame and tape it in place. This wax paper will keep the candy mixture from leaking while you are pouring the first side. Pour the hot candy liquid mixture into the frame on the side that has the wax paper. Once it solidifies, trim the wax paper, turn the frame over and fill the other side of the frame. By adding the hard candy to a frame, you can add the frame to the hive directly adjacent to the cluster. Again, be sure not to disrupt the cluster when doing so.

This discussion would not be complete without discussing the reasons the other feeders do not work in cold weather. The reasons for failure of these feeders are all the same – the bees will not be able to travel the distance from the cluster to reach the food source. It has been shown that bees will not travel more than a couple inches away from the cluster during cold weather.

In hive top feeders, the bees must travel up 4 inches into the feeder, then down an additional couple of inches in order to reach the sugar syrup. With baggie feeders, the bees must travel to the top of the baggie to reach the opening in the bag. Division board feeders require that the bees leave the cluster to go to the feeder, and then travel down the feeder until it reaches the food source. Boardman feeders require that the bee travel all the way down to the feeder in order to reach the food source. All of these distances are too great for the feeder to be effective in the winter months.

Even the three successful methods I mention above have disadvantages to them. For the “honey stored away” method, you will have to open the hive in order to place the frame in. The “hard candy” method has this same disadvantage. In addition, the bees need water to help dissolve the hard candy. This water can be obtained from the moisture from their respiration that has collected on the inner cover, but it will still require that the bees travel to the inner cover in order to get to this moisture. If the bees are already at the inner cover, this is not really a problem for them.

Feeding in winter is not just about defending against starvation. In the late winter/early spring you can begin stimulative feeding in order to induce the hive to start raising brood. I will address this in the next couple of months.

Winter Bee Feed Recipes

Hard Candy Recipe Stovetop Method

15 lbs granulated sugar
3 lbs white corn syrup (3 pints)
4 cups of water

Combine all ingredients in a large pot. Heat the liquid until the sugar is dissolved. Continue to stir the mixture until the temperature of the mixture reaches 242° F. Let the mixture cool to 180°F, then beat the mixture until it is thick. You must use a candy thermometer to verify the temperatures)

Pour into molds. It will harden as it cools.

Hard Candy Recipe Microwave Method

In a 1 qt or larger microwaveable bowl, mix thoroughly 1_ cups of granulated sugar and _ cup of light corn syrup. This is a 3:1 ratio of sugar to corn syrup.

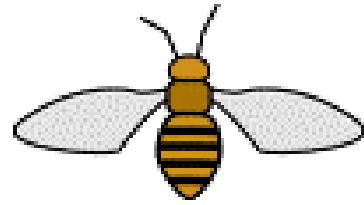
Microwave on high until bubbles the size of your thumbnail (or a little larger) appear. This will take about 10 minutes. Stir the mixture every couple of minutes. Stop cooking immediately if the mixture starts to turn brown.

Pour the mixture into a mold and let it cool. When it cools, it becomes brittle (hard). You can then place this hard candy in the hive directly over the cluster.

Recipe from <http://outdoorplace.org/beekeeping/feeding.htm>

PLEASE POST

Montgomery County Beekeepers Association



LEARN TO BE A BEEKEEPER!

2007 Introductory Beekeeping Class Begins March 1

At Holiday Park
Sr. Center
3950 Ferrara
Drive
Wheaton,
Maryland

Near Veirs Mill



- Register in advance.
- Course materials fee \$45 includes text, annual dues and handouts
- 7 sessions:
 - 5 Thursday evenings, March 1-March 29, 7:00-9:00 pm
 - 2 Saturdays, Mar. 31

Registration: www.MontgomeryCountyBeekeepers.com

Or call 301 414-2317

Dues: Annual dues of \$15 payable to “MCBA” are collected in January of each calendar year. Dues entitle members to monthly editions of the *Honey Pot* newsletter, monthly educational meetings, and inclusion in special events, such as field trips, live bee sessions, honey sales opportunities and more.

**2007 Montgomery County Beekeepers Association
Dues and Contact Information Update**

Member Information:

Name: _____

First

Last

Address: _____

Street

City/Town

State

Zip Code

E-mail: _____

Phone #: (____) _____ - _____ or (____) _____ - _____

Would you like to receive your newsletter electronically? Yes: _____ No: _____

\$15 annual dues for 2006, payable to MCBA, should be mailed to:

MCBA

26626 Howard Chapel Drive

Damascus, MD 20872-1243

Montgomery County Beekeepers Association

www.montgomerycountybeekeepers.com

C/O David Bernard

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**David Simmons
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