



Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

The Tuesday October 8, 2019 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association will be held at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome. Membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year.

The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. It is important that we leave the Community Center the way we found it! Please lend a hand in straightening up the tables and chairs and cleaning up the refreshment area. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Don't forget about the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or you can seize the opportunity to get rid of stuff (beekeeping treasures) that needs a new home.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

Q: We've always wanted to keep bees and have decided to do it! Where do we start?

An A: Congratulations on your decision and joining our association. Attending beekeeper meetings is a great first step.

Our meetings start at 7:00 pm and are called to order at 7:30. We call the 30 minutes from 7:00 to 7:30 "social time" to afford the opportunity to meet other beekeepers, talk about keeping bees and maybe get answers to your beekeeping questions. Upcoming events are announced and we always try to go over a list of things happening in the beeyard this month. Our program and "show-and-tell" are intended to be educational and of value to both beginners and experienced beekeepers. (Our association does not meet in December, so there is only one more meeting in 2019.)

You need to target getting bees in early spring. You can buy packages (just bees and a queen) or nucs (started colonies of bees). It is a good idea to make arrangements to buy bees well ahead of time. The club is often contacted about honey bee swarms, so a common sense option is to try to get "freebees".

In the meantime, you'll need to be studying your new craft. There is a lot of beekeeping info on the internet, but it may not all be accurate or correct. Published material is a far better source. "Beekeeping for Dummies" is a pretty good cover-to-cover read to learn about keeping bees. "The American Bee Journal" and "Bee Culture" are monthly magazines offering a wealth of information for beekeepers. Especially helpful are the Q and A articles by well respected contributors. Subscribing to one or both magazines is highly recommended since the articles cover a wide variety of subjects and are likely to be more timely than books that may have been published years ago.

It is not too early to begin preparations for your bees. It is always recommended that you should have more than one hive. Two hives let you compare and contrast colonies and be a better beekeeper. Frames of stores or brood (no bees) can be used to help out weaker hives.

A big decision is the type of hive to be buying. Langstroth hives are recommended for new beekeepers, leaving other hive designs for when you are more confident with your beekeeping skills. You can choose either 8-frame or 10-frame boxes (the smaller boxes are lighter but less stable). They come in "deep", "medium" or "shallow" heights. Mediums and shallows are usually for honey while deep boxes are for

the brood nest. Some beekeepers prefer using all mediums (with two for the brood nest).

It is never too early to set up your beeyard and don't forget to make a wish list for Santa, maybe a bee jacket, smoker or hive tool.

Contest Winners

Below are the winners of our Photo Contest and Hive Decorating Contest held at our meeting last month:



Photo Contest Winners:
1st Herman Hoot, 2nd Margie Freed, and 3rd Danessa Yaschuk.



Hive Decorating Contest Winners:
1st Danessa Yaschuk and 2nd Lynne Jones

September Meeting Notes

We had 40 names on the sign-in sheets for our September 10 meeting. Don't overlook registering at our meetings since the sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk opened the meeting at 7:30 pm, gave an invocation and lead the Pledge of Allegiance. Danessa next made the following announcements:

Brazos Valley Beekeepers Association's annual bee school took place on Saturday in College Station. Lynne Jones attended and reported that it was a well-run event with sessions for all levels of beekeepers.

TBA Annual Conference is set for November 8 - 9 in San Antonio at the Hilton San Antonio Airport. Registration has started.

Lynne Jones distributed a handout of varroa counts.

The city of Simonton is starting a Saturday Round Up Market on the first Saturday (10am to 2pm) of October and November and then will do a Holiday Round Up in December (date TBD). If you are interested in being a vendor contact Erica Molina, 281-533-9809 or emolina@simontontexas.gov.

Lynne spoke with Steve Brackmann earlier today and he asked that everyone be reminded to check hives to make sure the queen has room to lay. He pulled 300 frames of honey from brood boxes over the weekend and made 150 splits yesterday. He has queens available if anyone needs any.

Orders with payment are being taken for FBBA t-shirts. The deadline for placing an order is at the October meeting. It is expected that shirts will be available for pick up at the November meeting.

Boone Holladay, our County Extension Agent, announced that volunteer beekeepers are needed to make short presentations to the school children at the Fort Bend County Fair. The days and times are Sep-

tember 30th - October 4th from 9:00 am to 11:30 am. Please contact him if you want to volunteer one (or more) of the days. He can be contacted at 281 342-3034 or jb.holladay@ag.tamu.edu.

Danessa went over the beekeeping tasks for September and October:

Now: We will usually have a short fall honey flow from ragweed, goldenrod and asters. Strong hives will store a surplus. Examine hives carefully and replace failing queens. Continue to supply water and feed colonies or nucs if needed. Do varroa mite counts and decide on treatment if needed.

Get Ready: By the middle of October there is usually a good pollen and nectar flow in progress. This nectar and pollen will remain available until the first freeze. This will be the last chance for bees to put up winter stores without being fed. Any colony found to be short on stores will have to be fed sugar syrup at the ratio of 2 parts sugar to 1 part water. Complete any varroa treatments. Combine weak hives with strong ones.

A short break was taken to allow everyone to view the Photo Contest and Hive Decorating Contest entries and to submit their vote.

Jeff McMullan gave a presentation on the background and purpose of the club's Mentoring Program. The program was developed by past presidents Nancy Hentschel and Darrell Scott, along with Wendy Chopin and Jeff McMullan. It was rolled out in July of 2015. The goal of the program, "fostering safe, responsible and successful beekeepers" was adopted as the mission statement of the club.

Most club mentoring programs are one-on-one, 12-month programs with defined mentor and mentee rolls. Our program is significantly different in that it is based on "mentoring teams" that learn about keeping bees together. The mentor serves as a coach while the mentees learn by doing. Like other programs, there is a list of the topics

the mentee should understand as they complete the program. The mentor and mentees are expected to have frequent contact by email, text, or phone.

The mentor and mentees receive a copy of "The Beekeepers Handbook", an excellent beekeeping resource. Mentees are required to subscribe to "The American Bee Journal". Additionally, the mentee receives a Beekeeper's Journal developed for the program. Learning to observe and then recording notes in a journal is extremely important. If you fail to take notes, you'll realize when you return to the bee yard that you've forgotten the details of your last inspections. Enrollment in the program costs \$25.00 actually less than the cost of the reference book alone.

After drawing for donated door prizes, the meeting was adjourned.

Treasurer's Report

Our August treasury balance was \$3,692.29. Since our last report we collected \$30.00 in dues, \$125.00 for mentoring registrations (\$75.00 was received and reported previously, but not deposited pending available mentors), and \$266.00 for t-shirt orders. The only expense was \$6.38 monthly website cost. The resulting balance is \$4,106.91 (\$4,056.91 in our checking account plus \$50 in cash to make change).

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