

THE BEE HERDER

Published by Medina County Beekeepers Association – March 2021

www.MedinaBeekeepers.com



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Join the MCBA to hear a great lineup of virtual speakers. Start or renew your membership [online here](#) or by sending in the membership form included later in this newsletter.

March 15, 7:00pm, Dan Conlon, Russian Bees and Queens

Dan Conlon is a pioneer and expert in the area of Russian bees. [Warm Colors Apiary](#) produces and sells honey, beeswax candles, products of the hive, queens, and nucs and pollination services. Dan will talk about Russian bees, their traits, and what makes them so desirable in your bee yard.

April 19, 7:00pm, Jennifer Berry, Oxalic Acid: Go with what we know works!

Parasitism by Varroa destructor is the number one reason our bees die. To be successful, we must manage these pests appropriately or else our bees are doomed. But how when there are so many options/choices/opinions? For several years we've been studying various application methods using oxalic acid. Results of our studies will be discussed along with a best course of action.

For over 20 years, Jennifer Berry has been the Apicultural Research Professional and Lab Manager for the University of Georgia Honey Bee Program. Her research objectives have focused on queen breeding, improving honey bee health, IPM techniques for varroa and small hive beetle control, sub-lethal effects of pesticides on beneficial insects, weeds for bees, and what best to plant in non-traditional horticultural landscapes to enhance pollinator populations and diversity.

May 17, Neil Hunt, All About Swarms

Details to follow

Ten Minutes with the Bees

By Paul Kosmos, MCBA President

The Bee Yard in March

It's March 3rd, 50 degrees, full sun, and less than 17 days to Spring! You can't help but get excited as you look around and listen.... Some of the birds are in song, my neighbor heard a couple spring peepers, we have Red Wing Blackbirds at our feeders, bees are flying, and my bees are hauling lots of pollen from the skunk cabbage. It's an amazing plant, under 9 inches of snow just 5 days ago!

Days in March above 50 and sunny are perfect to begin checking our bees. Just a quick glance under the inner cover to judge their strength and how they are doing on food. So today I opened all of mine to see how they are doing.



Weak Hive - Some bees with Pollen

The first one I checked is weak. I'm not used to so few bees this time of year. There were bees flying from the entrance, so maybe more below.

The second hive I checked is doing very well. The bees are covering about 7 frames, with lots of activity, including pollen. I checked their food supply and they have lots of capped honey. If you can't see if the cells are capped, insert the tip of the hive tool down into the comb. If it comes out wet they have honey.

Note that the flip side of a strong hive this early is the need to inspect and be alert for swarm tendencies. I will add two supers early so there is room to grow. If they've read the same book it can lead to a nice honey flow in the supers.



Really nice hive for early March

Even though all the hives have honey, I always chicken out and add a little fondant or candy bricks as cheap insurance.



Couple Candy Blocks for Insurance

Some feed pollen powder or patty, but be careful as it can lead to early build up and early swarming.

The Northeast Ohio Bee Yard – March

Spring is around the corner! Pussy willows and early blooming trees have started to bud and the days are noticeable longer. Bees were bringing in pollen these last few warm days – likely there is brood in the hive. What a great time of the year!

Roger Mittler shared this photo of bees in his crocus flowers. Marry Simonelli shared that the pollen that we saw coming in during the past few warm days could be from winter aconite, early witch hazel, crocuses, and hellebore, which are in full bloom. And maybe there are some dandelions already blooming where you are.



Bees in the Crocuses - photo by Roger Mittler

Welcome to the new beekeepers who currently participating in the Introduction to Beekeeping Workshop! We're looking forward to seeing you at MCBA meetings and hearing about your beekeeping adventures.

Here are a few tasks to consider to do on a warm day in March with colonies that you brought through the winter:

- Pop off the inner cover and see whether there is capped honey between the frames. If you don't see any, and if your hive feels light, check the February 2021 BeeHerder for Paul Kosmos' recipe for sugar blocks for emergency feeding. There is a recipe for a large batch as well as a smaller one. Paul makes his blocks about 1/2" thick so the shim and inner cover fit and cuts the blocks into about 50 small, 3-4 inch rectangular cakes.
- When the bees start flying, you can set out feeders with pollen substitute.
- When you see the bees bringing in pollen, you can stop feeding.
- Once it is consistently warm and/or if you see the bees backing up at the entrance, it is time to remove the mouse guard.

If you lost your colony over the winter:

- Do an alcohol wash of about ½ cup of bees to check mite levels.
- Take apart the hive and clean out the dead bees. If you do not see evidence of disease, scrape and clean the woodenware and frames to be ready for the upcoming season. If you do see signs of disease, check with your county bee inspector for advice.
- Call local bee suppliers to see if there are bees available for order this spring.

Ohio State Phrenology Calendar

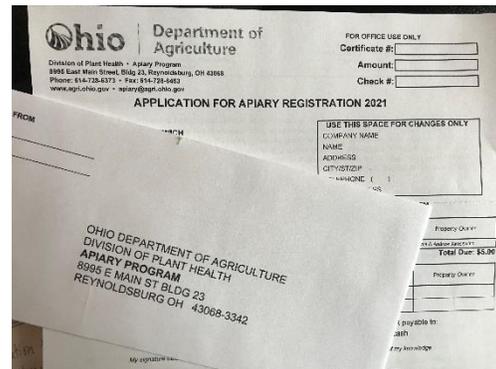
The Ohio State Phrenology Calendar is a great resource to see the trees and shrubs that are currently blooming and those that will soon be in bloom. [Click here for the link to the calendar.](#)

Medina County Soil and Water Conservation District Seedling Sale

Visit <https://medinaswcd.org/seedlings/> to see this year's offerings, which include trees, garden kits, bluebird houses, wildflower and cover crop seeds, and mushroom kits. Deadline for orders is April 2, 2021, but often seedlings sell out before that date.

Apiary Registration

Any person keeping one or more colonies of bees must register their apiary with the State of Ohio Department of Agriculture. The licensing period is June 1 through May 31 annually. The annual fee is \$5.00 per apiary (yard with one or more bee hives).



The image shows a form titled "APPLICATION FOR APIARY REGISTRATION 2021" from the Ohio Department of Agriculture. The form includes fields for "FOR OFFICE USE ONLY" (Certificate #, Amount, Check #) and "USE THIS SPACE FOR CHANGES ONLY" (Company Name, Name, Address, City/State/Zip, Home). A return address is printed: "OHIO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, DIVISION OF PLANT HEALTH, APIARY PROGRAM, 8995 E MAIN ST BLDG 23, REYNOLDSBURG OH 43068-3342". A fee of \$5.00 is indicated.

If you registered your apiary last year, you should have already received your renewal form. If this is your first year, [take a look at this website for more information.](#)

Learning Opportunities

Ohio State Beekeeping Association (OSBA) Live Webinar Training

The Ohio State Beekeeper's Association holds free, live Zoom conference calls on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month from 7:00-8:30 pm. [More information at this link.](#) Upcoming speakers include

- **Mar 14** – Mr. Graham Royle NDB – Microscopy for Beekeepers
- **Mar 28** – Mr. Bob Walters/ Mr. Curt Hadley – Field Watch
- **Apr 11** – Dr. Hongmei Li-Byarlay – Gene changes of Honey Bees in Response to Lethal Viral Infection

OSBA Scholarship Winners Picking up Their Equipment

It was cold and windy!



Partnership with the Medina County Park District

We are happy to have another article from our friends at the Medina County Park District. In this month's newsletter, Shelley shares an article the importance of flies to the environment.

For the Love of Flies!

Shelley Tender, Interpretive Services Manager
Medina County Park District
February 22, 2021



Flies definitely have a bad reputation. Some are pretty irritating, right? It is hard to love creatures who just seem to be out to annoy and bite you. Those biting gnats, mosquitos, and deer flies are the worst! But few people are probably aware of just how beneficial some of these little two-winged fliers really are.

The Order Diptera contains what are called the True Flies. Flies, gnats, and mosquitos are all part of this group. With over 160,000 known species found abundantly in terrestrial ecosystems across the globe, it is the second largest order of insects following beetles and preceding bees and wasps.

Flies do more than their fair share in helping to create a healthy, balanced environment. They provide pest control, are a food source for other animals like birds and fish, act as decomposers and soil conditioners, can indicate water quality, and are the second most important pollinating species of both wild and cultivated plants.

Yes, that is right. Next to bees, flies are the second most important group of pollinating insects! Bees visit flowers for nectar for themselves but gather pollen to provision their nests with food for their young. Flies have slightly different reasons for visiting flowers.

A family of flower flies, or as they are scientifically known, Syrphidae flies, are typically the pollinating flies of the group. Like bees, these flies may visit flowers for nectar and pollen. For flies though, this is food only for themselves so that they obtain the energy and proteins needed to reproduce. They may also visit to lay their eggs since the plant may provide cover and food for developing larvae. In very cold climates, some flowers provide a warm place to take shelter. Finally, flowers can also serve as rendezvous sites for mating. Any of these behaviors can result in the transfer of pollen between plants and end in pollination.

Research suggests that there are over 550 species of flowering plants that are regularly visited by flies, and more than 100 cultivated crops depend chiefly on fly pollination. You can thank flies for some of your favorites including pears, apples, strawberries, cherries, plums, apricots, peaches, mangoes, fennel, coriander, caraway, onions, parsley, carrots, and many more!

Some flies have specialized relationships with specific flowers, while other flies are generalists, feeding from a wide variety of flowers. A few of our early blooming spring wildflowers are good examples of specialization. The dark maroon color and putrid aroma of the flowers of red trillium, paw paw, and skunk cabbage all exhibit a deceptive form of adaptation that lures carrion flies to them by imitating the appearance of rotting flesh. Since the flies seek out

decaying meat in which to lay their eggs, they are attracted to the flowers. These flowers do not produce nectar. Instead, they reward the fly with a pollen meal.

In a similar fashion, Jack-in-the-pulpit flowers have a fungus-like smell that attracts fungus gnats. The “Jack” of the plant is called a *spadix* and houses the tiny flowers. The outer covering, called the *spathe*, is rather slippery, so after entering, a gnat may become entrapped – unable to crawl back up the slippery surface to get out. In order to exit, the fly must find the small opening at the base of the spathe, and in so doing, becomes dusted with pollen that it can then transfer to another plant. By entrapping the insect in this way, the plant ensures pollination.



Transverse-banded Flower Fly; photo by Bill Stitt

It is kind of a shame that with the important work these flies are doing, they often go unnoticed. Many flies employ mimicry coloration, leading them to be mistaken for bees and wasps a good percentage of the time. A close observer can easily distinguish a fly from its hymenoptera counterparts by first looking at its wings. As mentioned above, flies have two wings, or one pair, where bees and wasps have two pair of wings. You can also tell by the stout body shape with less obvious waist, large round eyes that cover much of the face, and the short often-hard-to-see antennae.

The next time you see what you think is a small bee, look twice as you may just be seeing a flower fly instead!

2021 MCBA Membership Application / Renewal

MCBA offers webinars and lectures by local and national beekeeping experts organized by the MCBA and other bee clubs, a monthly newsletter, and email updates with timely information. Membership is \$20 for emailed newsletters or \$25 for a printed newsletter mailed to your postal address. Membership provides one vote in MCBA club matters and includes one family member in activities other than voting.

Renew your membership [online here](#) or complete the form below, make a check payable to Medina County Beekeepers Association, and mail to Medina Beekeepers, PO Box 1353, Medina, Ohio 44258.

Membership Form - Please complete so that we have current roster information for the newsletters!

Member Name: _____

e-mail: (please print): _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone: _____ (Optional) # of colonies: _____