

THE BEE HERDER

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Association Officers

President: Paul Kosmos

president@medinabeekeepers.com

330-239-1379

Vice President: Peggy Garnes

vp@medinabeekeepers.com

330-723-6265

Secretary: Chris Fullerton

secretary@medinabeekeepers.com

330-242-2849

Treasurer: Tim Gacek

treasurer@medinabeekeepers.com

330-421-0612

Newsletter Editor: Tania Jarosewich

Tania@HinckleyHoney.com

Webmaster: Mike Rossander

webmaster@medinabeekeepers.com

Refreshments Coordinators:

Elle Jisa ejisa@roadrunner.com

Sheila Mauer spmaurer01@gmail.com

Directors:

2021: John Vrtachnik,

jvrtachnik@windstream.net

2022: Larry Watson,

mcbalarfry@aol.com

2023: Tim Moore

elkcreekhoney@gmail.com

Medina County Bee Inspector:

Ron Zickefoose

ronz@asap-homes.com

330-466-3642

State of Ohio Inspector:

Barbara Bloetscher

bbloetscher@agri.ohio.gov

614-644-5839

May 17, Neil Hunt, All About Swarms – Virtual Meeting

Neil, President of Kentucky's Pike County Beekeepers Association, established the club's demonstration bee yard and started a queen rearing program. He regularly mentors beekeepers and teach in a number of associations' beekeeping classes, including the Kentucky Queen Bee Breeders Association. He worked as a member of Chasing Feral Honeybees, hiking the mountains of Pike County searching for and capturing feral colonies of mite resistant honeybees.

Our June MCBA Meeting Will be In-Person!!!

The June meeting will be LIVE and IN-PERSON at our usual meeting location at Williams on the Lake! 7:00 – 8:30 pm; 787 Lafayette Rd, Medina OH 44256. It has been 16 long months since our last meeting. We are very excited to see all your smiling faces and meet some of our new members. We are planning to Zoom the meeting as well for the benefit of those who may be able to attend. Watch for further announcements about the June Meeting.

June 21, Laurene Keil, Safety in the Bee Yard

Laurene is a long-time member of Medina Beekeepers and has also served as President of Stark County Beekeepers. Laurene has combined her love of bees with her nursing background to create this discussion about safety in the bee yard. The last few years we have seen an increase in bee yard incidents, including reactions to bee stings and bees inside a veil. Those incidents are manageable provided we know what to do if something happens. Laurene will help us learn how to be safe if these types of incidents should occur.

Ten Minutes with the Bees

By Paul Kosmos, MCBA President

The Bee Yard in May

Some thoughts on treating Varroa in your hives.

I think it is safe to say that the majority of beekeepers will experience a swarm this spring or make some splits now or in the near future. That creates an opportunity to treat for varroa at a time that yields maximum efficacy (kills the most mites).

By now most of you know that approximately 70-80 percent of the mites in your hives are found in the capped brood. Unfortunately, there are few treatment methods that kill mites under the cell cappings. The only one at present is Quick Strips and Formic Pro (the newer Quick Strips). They are said to kill at least some of the mites under the cappings if you treat with two full strips. There is a risk to this method as it is hard on the bees and there is often some queen loss. Those risks are more challenging for newer beekeepers.



Swarm cells

If you can treat your hives for mites at a time when there is little or no capped brood in the hive **you can attain 90-95 percent efficacy!** Such a successful treatment would reduce your need to treat again for months (depending on time of

year). Swarms and splits provide just the break you need!

Let's do a little math again. The day your hive swarms (or if you make a split and let them raise a new queen) any queen cells are about 8 days old.

The new Queen should emerge in about 8 more days. She will need 7-10 days to settle in, mature a little, orient, and get mated. Finally, a few more days to start laying. That is a total of 18-21 days, and assumes good weather (often longer).

So, lets tie this to your swarm. Remember my swarm from April 28th? Using the figures above, the new Queen should emerge about May 6. Adding 7-10 days would be about May 16. And finally, another few days to begin laying. That takes us to May 19 -22. Again, the exact date may even be later due to things such as the weather.

The point to all this is that May 19th would be 21 days following the swarm. **There should be no brood in the hive by this date!** Even if the new Queen started to lay earlier, none of the larva would be capped (ten days to cap). If you treat using Oxalic Acid (vaporization), you should knock down nearly all the mites in your hive. If you prefer MAQS Strips you can now use only one strip instead of two, **with much less risk to your bees and queen.**

I know I keep hitting on the subject of varroa management, but it kills many hives each year. And cost beekeepers frustration and money.

It is also important to state that I do not agree with those who are telling beekeepers to treat every month to "play it safe". Or treat 6-8 times a year using different treatments. Maybe no mites, but what about the health of your bees? And especially the queen? Think about it... **if you have few mites in November, you CAN'T have a lot in February** as there is little brood for them to reproduce in. Be careful when you read about treatments. Do the math, know why you are treating, and it gets easier to treat for a reason!

Our Newest Members are Now Beekeepers!!!

Most of our newest members have received their packages and survived the excitement of installing those packages. Remember how exciting that day was? Some are still waiting on their nucs, which are being delayed a bit due to the April weather. We look forward to meeting them at the June meeting. So, bring your answer book as they will for sure have questions!

A Call for New Mentors to Help Out New Beekeepers

The board is preparing some guidelines to assist those who would like to help mentor a new beekeeper and to guide a new beekeeper's expectations. Much of our mentoring is accomplished "online" today thanks to social media. But there are times when something happens that requires a personal visit. Or perhaps inviting a new member to observe a proper inspection. If you have an interest please contact one of the board members.

The Northeast Ohio Bee Yard – May

New beekeepers, give your colonies a few weeks to settle in and then make regular inspections to monitor colony progress. Feed new colonies so they have sufficient resources to build comb.

Hang several wasp traps to catch wasp queens as they emerge in the spring. This might help to keep the wasp population low in the fall when they are particularly bothersome for apiaries.

The spring swarm season has started. Given the nice weather that we are expecting at the end of this week, we might have another rash of swarms. Set out traps to catch swarms. It's great when you can collect a colony of bees from a tree.

During your inspections, keep an eye out for queen cups along the bottoms of frames. There is no need to panic if they are empty. When an egg is deposited into a cup and the bees begin to elongate the structure, be more observant and make plans for how you will manage a potential swarm. If there are several frames with queen cells, consider moving one of the frames along with a few frames of brood, honey, and nurse bees into a nuc. If all goes well, in about a month, you will have a nice little colony with a young queen.

Our summer honey flow typically begins around June 1st, which, somehow, is just around the corner. Get your honey boxes ready. I have already placed honey supers on a few strong colonies to let the bees get to work tidying up last year's drawn comb. If your colony is still not fully filling out your two brood boxes, you might want to wait a bit longer to put on supers.

Plan for integrated pest management - put reminders in your calendar to keep on track. Conduct a mite check and treat if the mite load is over 2-3 mites / 100 bees, or 4 - 9 mites / ½ cup bees. Think about what treatments you might want to use over the season. Place orders soon for what you will need so that you have the materials to measure mite loads and treat at the times that you need them.



Swarm Trap ready for business

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). 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

- **May 23** - Mr. Geoffrey Westerfield - Bears, Pests, & Wildlife

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: _____

Gardening for Pollinators

We are excited to tell you about a new feature that we will be presenting periodically in our MCBA newsletter. Mary Simonelli, MCBA member and Ohio Master Gardener, will be writing about plants and flowers that help to support pollinator health. This first article discusses early spring sources of nectar and pollen.

Hello to all. My name is Mary Simonelli, and I've been invited to write an article for the newsletter from time to time from a gardener's point of view. Most of my gardening over the years has been for pollinators, not so much for vegetable gardening, so I lean towards pollinator plants that look good in the landscape (and I allow some weeds (wildflowers) to remain). Gardeners, with their devotion to plants, can be helpful to beekeepers so long as they do not use pesticides and herbicides. As beekeepers know, flowering plants for our pollinating bees are critical for the good health and survival of our honey bee colonies. In the Simonelli landscape, most of the trees and flowers have been planted for the benefit of honey bees, as well as our native bees and butterflies.



Winter aconite. Image by [Sabina Sjölander](#) from Pixabay

Early spring here begins with winter aconite (*Eranthis hyemalis*), a special plant to me, a true harbinger of spring, like the redwing blackbirds and those silly robins who always arrive when it is still way too cold. Winter aconite, a tuber, is the first to display its little green sprouts in my garden bed, faithfully reminding me that spring has almost arrived. Before long, I am greeted by bright yellow dandelion sized flowers barely 4 inches above the soil. There are always a few honey bees in my patch savoring the early pollen and nectar from the welcoming flowers.

If you decide to try some, plant in a well-drained sunny location and it will amaze you every year. It also spreads if it is happy, so you will get a larger patch with each passing year or you can share it with friends.



Snowdrops. Image by [Colin Behrens](#) Pixabay

A little later, snowdrops (*Galanthus nivalis*), with their wonderful white flowers with orange pollen and a little nectar, seem to pop their stalked flowers out of tufts of short green blade-like leaves, brightening the garden.

Speaking of orange pollen, colorful crocus (*Crocus spp.*) bloom not long after the snowdrops, allowing honey bees ample opportunity to gather much needed additional pollen. Honey bees actually seem to frolic in the crocus, looking as though they have been coated in orange pixie dust. Crocus, however, does not provide a nectar source.

By this time in the spring, red and silver and sugar Maples (*Acer spp.*) and Willows (*Salix spp.*) are sprouting flowers that will give honey bees a large amount of both pollen and nectar, assuring them a really good start for the year.

Trees are the real workhorses for pollen and nectar sources. A colony requires about an acre of blooms throughout the foraging season. It's difficult to provide enough flowers for a colony

to survive, much less thrive, without having flowering trees within its foraging territory.



Sugar Maple. Image by [Scottslm](#) from Pixabay

Maple trees are the stars early in the season. This year, we had strong gusty winds that seemed to destroy the maple flowers overnight. Sometimes trees produce new flowers if the old ones were damaged by wind or freezing temperatures. The tree has a goal of reproduction and if flowers are destroyed before seed can be set, it will use its energy to form new flowers to produce those seeds.



Purple deadnettle. Image by [SanduStefan](#) from Pixabay

Purple deadnettle (*Lamium purpureum*), a winter annual weed with furry little leaves and purple flowers, makes its appearance about this time in areas uncovered by other plant material. Years ago, I would pull it out, erroneously thinking it was not wanted in my landscape. After I started paying attention and saw several honey bees in it, I decided to allow it to reside in some areas.

It is an excellent pollen and nectar plant, producing red pollen.

Now, when I see purple deadnettle blooming, I like to go out and look for bumble bee (*Bombus spp.*) queens searching for nesting sites. I'll spot one flying very low above the ground zigzagging a bit, searching for an old rodent hole or crack to determine whether the space is suitable for her nest. She'll land on the ground and crawl around looking under leaves and plant debris to find a hole. Sometimes, I see a leaf move apparently on its own, and if I watch for a little while, a queen will emerge from beneath that leaf. Although bumble bees are considered social bees, only the mated queen survives the winter. She alone provisions her brood until the first new adult females emerge and then they take over the job of caring for the brood and other nest activities. Unlike honey bees who are the same size throughout the year, bumble bee workers who emerge later in the season are larger than earlier ones as there is more food available to feed the later workers.

OK, back to plants ... Those invasive pear (*Pyrus spp.*) trees are everywhere now with their stinky white flowers. I see many more small bees in them than honey bees, but they offer a lot of forage if there are no other preferred trees providing better quality pollen and nectar.

Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) flowers are abundant this time of year and are an extremely important source of nectar and pollen for raising brood. They will help your colony grow quickly. It is important to check your hive when you see dandelions blooming to be certain there is enough room for a growing colony. You don't want to lose your good queen and half of your foragers and honey to a swarm leaving your hive.

This is also the time to be thinking of plants for your vegetable gardens or herb gardens. Indoor seed starting for those of you who are so inclined should begin now, with cool season plants such as spinach and lettuce being transplanted outdoors in early May. Don't be fooled by early warm temperatures and plant warmer season plants like tomatoes and peppers outdoors. They don't like frost, and if planted into the ground when soils are too cold, they will not progress at all and may just rot. Better to wait till end of May, and even that can be "iffy."

While mentioning cold soils, I'll also suggest waiting until June to apply mulch to garden beds. Have some patience. Mulching too soon in the season can trap the cold moisture in the soil, delay the emergence of plants and prevent the soil from properly drying.

It is very early May as I am writing this, and we have had a hard freeze and two frosts in the past few days. The crabapples (*Malus spp.*) are near the end of their blooming time.



Crabapple. Image by [sifortner](#) from Pixabay

Wild mustards (*Brassica spp.*), summer annual weeds, are at the peak of their flowering. These mustards, called the "spring yellows" are exceptional in their value to a growing honey



Wild mustard. Image by [Rajesh Balouria](#) from Pixabay

bee colony. Mustard pollen contains all 9 essential amino acids necessary for honey bees. If your colony has any health issues, mustards will help give the nutrition required to lessen those issues.

Since this week's freeze, I have noticed that the dandelions still look great, the wild mustards still look great, the purple deadnettle is still blooming and now my common lilacs (*Syringa vulgaris*) are beginning to bloom. I wonder whether there will be fewer crabapples on the trees in the fall, due to the hard freeze during this critical bloom time. We shall see!

The cooler temperatures this week will most certainly slow the development of some flowers, but the expected rain, if it comes, will provide needed soil moisture for good nectar production in those flowers when they appear.

Let's hope for warmer temperatures, but not too warm, and ample rain, but not too much rain, through the season for us, as well as, all the pollinators out there. And, may our pollinating bees find plenty of the nutritious forage they require to thrive throughout the year.

Stay safe! Happy Gardening. Happy Beekeeping. Happy Spring.