



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 2025

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

I hope all of you had a wonderful holiday and a great start to a happy new year! I love this time of year, I get to see my kids and grandkids but usually not all at the same time because my son is a Lt on the Algonquin Fire Department and his schedule rarely lines up with the others over the holidays. This year we all spent it together and watching the kids and grandkids all playing games and laughing together was like striking gold!

Well so far (knock on wood) this winter has been mild with very little snow which has all melted. This might cause your bees to eat their stored reserves more quickly but the nicer weather should not hamper your ability to get out to check on them more regularly and add food before they run out. Hopefully this will help more of you get your bees through the winter! The people I've spoken with recently were telling me that their bees were doing well which is encouraging.

The NIBA Board is working on bringing in some new speakers this year so we can learn more from them. If you have a speaker that you'd like us to try to have speak to us please let us know.

We're looking for someone to oversee the mentor program, you wouldn't have to be at all of the mentor days or do it by yourself. If you want to help with the mentor program, please let me know, we can use several people to teach the newbees what is going on in a hive. Last year Ryan did a great job with the mentor program so let's build upon that success and improve the program this year.

If any of you don't have bees of your own but would be interested in putting bees on property somewhere in the area let me know, we get people who own property and want bees on it contacting us throughout the year.

Happy New Year!!
Tom

Bee classes offered

at McHenry County College in Crystal Lake, Illinois... again.

This is the 25th year.

It is time to begin bee classes for 2025. McHenry County College and I have been offering beginning beekeeping classes as well as special honeybee topics for 25 years. We still draw aspiring and perspiring beekeepers. We must be doing something right. Here is the flyer for the upcoming offerings that begin February 5 with Beekeeping 101.

When we were forced to go to Zoom for the pandemic, we learned that an online class has unique advantages. Now with the world open again, we add that online option to most of our in-person classes. Not only does that allow students to attend from a distance, but it also offers the opportunity for the in-person student to avoid travelling to class in poor weather. The classes are recorded allowing students to attend at a later time and offers the option of relistening to classes at their leisure.

The number of classes has been increased this year. Check the new Varroa Mite class. Consider joining us.

Beekeeping can be a lonely endeavor – just you and thousands of bees. McHenry County College offers both the beginner and the veteran keeper the fellowship of others of a like mind. More information on classes -

<https://www.mchenry.edu/community/q1-ce.pdf>

The bee classes even made the cover picture this year.



Free bees for military veterans

Hi all,

*Are you a military veteran who is looking to get into beekeeping? Or do you know a veteran who wants to start keeping bees in 2025? If you answered yes, then please fill out this [form](#) for a chance to receive a free nucleous colony in 2025. I'll be offering up to 20 free nucs in spring 2025, and while no one is excluded from applying, **high priority will be given to those who belong to a beekeeping association and have taken a beekeeping class in the past 2 years.***

In the past I've received way more requests that I had nucs available, so I had to put in some guidelines to accommodate those who want to actively engage in beekeeping beyond "cool thing to do few times a year".

Thanks and happy beekeeping in 2025!

Marcin



The spirit of the season

Larry Kregel

Are things calm in your beeyard? They should be. The die is cast for the winter. Most things the skilled beekeeper does for the next few months are not for the bees, rather for the beekeeper. Even in bygone years when bees were taken in the cellar or barn for winter protection, the beekeeper seldom opened a hive until March. A good description of that can be found in C. C. Miller's *Fifty Years Among the Bees*.

Now what? This could be a good time to make a bit of mead. The method is simple. With just a little encouragement honey will ferment into mead and this is a good use of some of last season's honey crop and if one starts it now, it can even be consumed "green" before the spring beekeeping chores. I have only experimented with mead having three batches to my credit. I made *Viking mead*. That means I did not use any fancy yeast from the brewing store. Native yeast exists everywhere in the environment and I took advantage of it. The real wine makers (and mead is a wine) heat the honey/water mix to kill off any native yeast and add the fancy stuff. I did not. Yeast exists in raw honey and I allowed that yeast to grow my mead. Unheated honey also retains its healthful elements. I wonder what the fermentation process does to the enzymes and phytochemicals that make honey so unique? I don't know.

When Vikings made mead (the drink of the gods) they were of the habit of drinking half of it early (green) and letting the other half age... for their grandkids, they said.

If this adventure sounds alluring, required equipment is minimal and you, being a beekeeper, have the honey in the pantry. An interesting article on Viking mead –

[Make Wild-Foraged Mead Like a Viking - The Cook's Cook \(thecookscook.com\)](http://thecookscook.com)

A sip of Bucky



Occasionally we buy Buckfast bees and queens, developed over nearly a century of breeding at the Buckfast Abby in southern England by Brother Adam. Later in Brother Adam's tenure at the Abby, the brothers created their own mead from their local honey. The Buckfast Abby became known for its *Buckfast Tonic Wine*... colloquially known a "Bucky". Originally meant as a medicinal wine, not quite pure mead, it became commercially available in the UK. A visitor can still buy Bucky today. The brothers became entrepreneurs. Interestingly, at one time there was a move to ban the sale of Bucky in Scotland (home of Scotch whiskey) because it was thought to encourage disruptive behavior in the pubs. I have indulged in Bucky. I did not become disruptive. Let's not blame that on the honey of those Buckfast bees.

Larry

Chores of the Month – January 2025

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

John Leibinger

HAPPY NEW YEAR

What's happening in the hive?

December was warmer than the average December in northern Illinois and we did have a couple days in late December that reached the 50 degree mark and the bees were flying. From what I observed, they were anxiously looking for water. For those who ventured in the bee yard, you were given a pretty good idea of whether or not your colonies were still alive or had already succumbed to the many stressors bees have to cope with. It looks like the temperatures are about to shift back to more typical seasonal norms.... actually much colder for the first week or two of 2025.

As normalcy returns, temperature-wise, the bees will be clustering to maintain colony warmth for the next several months. Slowly working their way up the hive, they will be consuming the food that they have stored away specifically for this time. At colder temperatures, bee activity slows and leads to a tighter cluster. On the plus side, they may consume fewer stores during this time, but they also have less ability to move around within the hive to access stored honey. If they are not in direct contact with frames of honey, they are at risk of starvation.

Note: A mild winter generally allows the bees to be a little more active in the hive. The result is they consume more of their stores. This may have been happening during our warm spells in December. **Stay conscious of the weather.** Be aware, especially this year, that they may need additional emergency feeding, particularly as we enter February when low levels of brood rearing commence.

There are heater bees at the inside of the cluster that will be producing heat and the bulk of the rest of the workers will be surrounding them, maintaining layers of insulation to minimize loss of that precious heat. Some of those outer bees will perish and fall to the bottom board. Undertaker bees will periodically push the bodies to the front of the hive (possibly blocking off hive egress at the bottom entrance). The bees will slowly rotate from the colder outside layers of the cluster to inner layers to warm up. This will continue throughout the winter. The cluster itself will also very slowly migrate around the hive in an effort to stay near stored food. They are in survival mode.

For All Beekeepers:

Unless we have a few days of unseasonably warm weather in later January or you perceive your hive weight being unreasonably light, this is not the time to be breaking into the hive bodies and disrupting the seals or the winter cluster.

Periodically walk out to your hives and take an external look at them. Remove snow (it will come eventually) from around the entrance and look to see that there haven't been any pests causing a problem.

Try to get an idea of the remaining stores by 'hefting' the hive. Lift up the rear of the hive and feel the weight. If fairly light, you may need to provide some emergency feed, i.e., winter patties, fondant, sugar cakes, dry sugar, etc. (dry feed, not wet). Another indicator would be if you see the cluster high up underneath the inner cover (if you are looking on a warm day). Emergency feed should be placed directly above the cluster, under the inner cover, in direct contact with the tops of the frames. (Restrict your activity to the top of the hive and avoid breaking into the hive bodies.)

Make sure that if you utilize an upper entrance/exit, it is clear of snow and debris. It helps with ventilation and it is an easy egress point for bees to take cleansing flights in the winter. (assumes you utilize the ventilation hive philosophy)

If you are managing your hives with the condensing hive approach, be sure that your entrance is not plugged with dead bees. Clean out as needed.

If you have been a conscientious beekeeper throughout the 2024 season and have monitored and controlled varroa mites, left the bees with sufficient stores, ended the year with healthy bees and a young queen (less than a year old), you have provided your bees with the chance of surviving and thriving in Spring 2025. Still no guarantee, but you have shifted the odds in their favor.

Some odds and ends to keep you active and engaged this winter:

Melt down beeswax. During this time, excess comb, bits, scraps and older wax from frames can be melted down to form blocks of beeswax for future use.

Make beauty products. Lip balms, lotions, creams, salves and scrubs are all fun things you can learn how to make, use, gift or sell.

Make candles. The beeswax that was melted down can be turned into homemade candles.

Research new techniques. Beekeeping is a field that continues to grow. New hives, alternative feeding methods, and integrated pest management techniques are always adapting and improving.

Repair and replace old hives. This is a great time to repair and paint your extra woodenware, and replace worn frames and/or foundation. It's also time to assemble new hives.

Prepare for spring splits if you want to increase your hive count. Most hives that come out of winter with strong numbers can be split (or they may split themselves, i.e., swarm). Learn how to make splits and what equipment is necessary. Alternately, learn some swarm mitigation techniques, e.g. spring queen replacement.

Build a swarm box. Be ready to catch a swarm this spring with this fun project. Learn about tanging and give it a go...let me know how it works out or better yet record the experience and we can play it at a meeting for the entertainment of all. (you've probably guessed that I am not a believer.....and I'll never do it again!)

Train new beekeepers. Volunteer to share your experiences to help train new beekeeper

Start preparing for the 2025 season:

Pay your association dues for 2025.

Renew your annual Apiary Registration with Illinois Department of Agriculture.

Clean up any dead outs that you have experienced this season.

Launder your bee clothing. Over the course of inspecting hives clothing picks up honey, propolis, dirt, and most importantly, bee venom. The venom odor with its accompanying alarm pheromone sets you up for upsetting the bees before you ever open a hive. This should be done routinely during the beekeeping season, but at least let's be sure to get a clean start to 2025. **Note:** Use a scent free detergent.

Continue to increase your knowledge of bees and beekeeping:

- Read and study about bees and beekeeping
- Attend beekeeping meetings and/or consider attending one of the major Beekeeping events in January (North American Honey Bee Expo in Louisville, Kentucky (probably too late by the time you read this), American Bee Federation meeting in Reno, Nevada, or the Midwest Honey Bee Expo in Waukesha, Wisconsin)
- Increase your knowledge of local plants and trees. Learn about the relevance of Degree Days.
- Form a small group of beekeepers to meet for lunch and talk bees.

Inventory your equipment, tools, and supplies.

Set aside some money - for replacement or expansion bees, new/replacement equipment and supplies.

Order your bees if needed. Nuc? (Highly recommended for new beekeepers without drawn comb.) Packages? New Queens?

Review your 2024 season (and your notes....you did take notes....right?) for successes and opportunities.

Think about and set new goals for 2025. What do you want to accomplish this year?

General Info

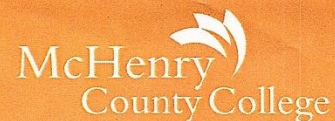
Download the forms to register your bees with the Illinois Department of Agriculture.

<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/agr/Insects/Bees/Documents/beekeep.pdf> (Ctrl+Click link)

***Spring is just ahead.
There is a new beekeeping season on the
way!***



COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT CENTER SPRING 2025



BEEKEEPING

Beekeeping 101

Keeping honeybees is fascinating. Bees will pollinate your garden and provide a sweet crop of honey. In this class, you will learn where to start as a keeper of bees. We'll cover bee biology, modern beekeeping techniques, construction of hives, and how to acquire bees. Keep bees for the fun of it, as a sideline job, or to help your garden and orchard.

Fee: \$75

Larry Krengel

In person

[9695](#) W 2/5-2/26 7-9:30 p.m. Catalyst Campus

Remote

[9696](#) W 2/5-2/26 7-9:30 p.m. Remote

Beekeeping Field Study

This short course will provide practical, hands-on instruction for installing, manipulating, and inspecting colonies of bees. The class will meet in a bee yard, so appropriate clothing and bee equipment will be necessary. Spring is the time to start with bees, and this course will walk you through it step by step. Learn what you need to know to start out right with your bees.

Fee: \$59

Larry Krengel

[9799](#)

Sa 4/5, 4/12 10 a.m.-Noon

MCC

[9800](#)

Sa 4/5, 4/12 1-3 p.m.

MCC

7 Ways To Raise A Queen

The number of small-scale beekeepers is increasing, and the demand for locally raised queen bees is growing. Purchased queens are often raised in areas of Africanized honeybees or come from migratory bee operations where dangerous viruses are exchanged. Gain information and learn seven simple methods of raising healthy honeybee queens. With a few insights and a small amount of equipment, the backyard beekeeper can raise locally adapted queens from bee stock with a great record of winter survival, good temperament, and excellent honey production.

Fee: \$25

Larry Krengel

In person

[9697](#) W 3/5 7-9:30 p.m. Catalyst Campus

Remote

[9698](#) W 3/5 7-9:30 p.m. Remote

Comb Honey

Comb honey is old fashioned honey harvested in the bees own wax case. A hundred years ago honey was removed from the hive and eaten in the comb. Today, extracted honey (honey in the jar) is the norm. This course is an opportunity to return to the old (and some contend the healthiest) way of harvesting honey. Producing honey in the comb is a beekeeping challenge, an old fashioned challenge explored in this class.

Fee: \$25

Larry Krengel

In person

[9699](#) W 3/12 7-9:30 p.m. Catalyst Campus

Remote

[9700](#) W 3/12 7-9:30 p.m. Remote

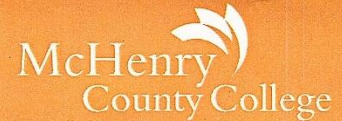


To register for a class, scan the QR code, visit www.mchenry.edu/personaldevelopment, or call (815) 455-8588.

For more information, please contact the Community Enrichment Center at personaldevelopment@mchenry.edu or (815) 455-8758

COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT CENTER

SPRING 2025



Varroa Mite: Know Your Enemy

Enemy #1 in the honeybee world is Varroa Destructor – the varroa mite. Understanding how the biology of the honeybee and that of the varroa mite intersect is important to successful beekeeping in today's world. This mite attaches to honeybees and their larva weakening them and passing on deadly viruses. A successful strategy for control of these mites is critical to the survival of a honeybee colony. This class will discuss the history, the biology and the control of Varroa Destructor.

Fee: \$25

Larry Krengel

In person

[9910](#) W 4/9 7–9:30 p.m. Catalyst Campus

Remote

[10512](#) W 4/9 7–9:30 p.m. Remote

Honey Tasting: A Sensory Analysis of Honey

Honey takes a long journey before it lands in your jar. The final product can be affected by many variables, including the local climate, botanical sources and the honeybees who visit them, and the activity of beekeepers. In this class, we will study varietal honeys using our senses of sight, smell, taste, and touch to fully appreciate the selection of these honeys. We will approach honey tasting as a sensory journey as we review at least five varietal honeys and compare their flavors and profile differences. We will also review and discuss: a Honey Sensory Wheel and how that impacts fragrances within the honey; how to more finely tune our senses to appreciate our local varietals of honey; how honeys acquire certain aromas that often differ from what we would expect; methods of tasting the full balance of flavors of these honeys; how to appreciate the different textures of honey and their impact on our taste buds; and sample 20+ varieties of handcrafted local honeys (creamed, infused, raw, and barrel-aged) and other honey-based products (honey sauces, mustards, and honey hot sauces). Students will receive their own Honey Sensory Booklet for future tastings.

Fee: \$45

Frank Moriarty

[10513](#) T 5/6 6–8 p.m. Catalyst Campus

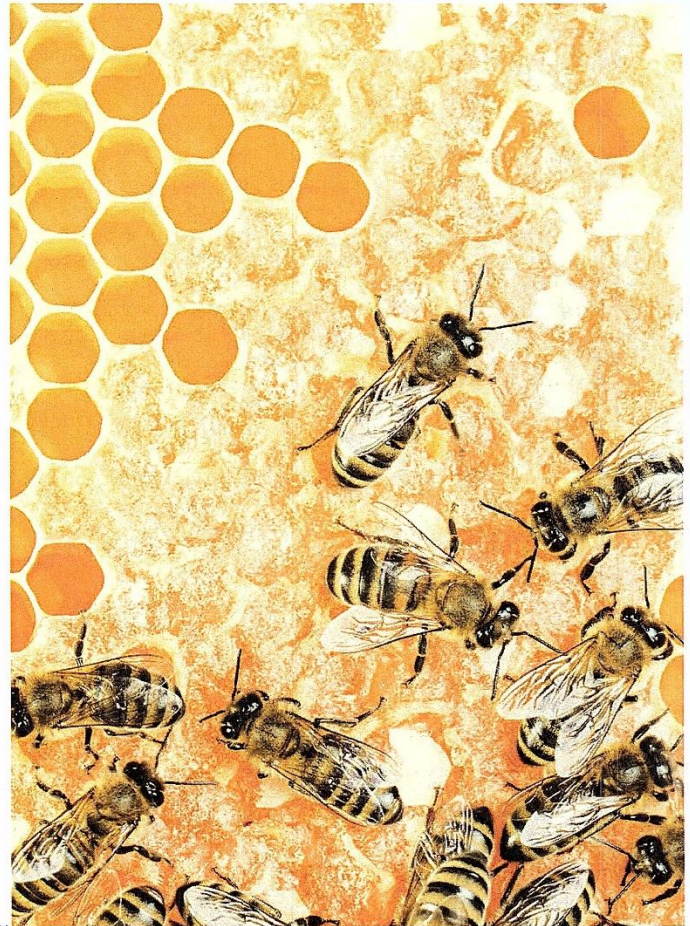
Buzzing Beauty: DIY Beeswax Lip Balm Workshop

Join us for a hands-on workshop where you'll learn to create your own natural lip balms using beeswax. Discover the benefits of beeswax and explore a variety of essential oils and natural ingredients to customize your balms. This workshop will cover the entire process, from melting and mixing to pouring and packaging, ensuring you leave with your own personalized lip balm to take home. Perfect for beginners and anyone interested in natural skincare, this fun and informative session will have you crafting your own lip care products in no time. All materials will be provided.

Fee: \$39

Stephanie Slater

[10404](#) W 4/16 6–8 p.m. Catalyst Campus



To register for a class, scan the QR code, visit www.mchenry.edu/personaldevelopment, or call (815) 455-8588.

For more information, please contact the Community Enrichment Center at personaldevelopment@mchenry.edu or (815) 455-8758



NIBA 2025 PACKAGED BEE ORDER FORM

ORDERS MUST BE RECEIVED BY MARCH 15, 2025

*Name(s):		*Phone:	
*Email:			

***Required Fields**

Please read and initial below – checks will be returned if not initialed.

The undersigned acknowledges that NIBA will transport bee packages from the supplier in Wisconsin to a drop-off point in Illinois. The undersigned agrees that NIBA is not responsible for any damage to the bees or cages during the transport and distribution of the same. The undersigned understands that he/she remains at all times, free to order and pick-up bees from alternate suppliers of their choice.

I agree with the above statement regarding NIBA's Packaged Bee delivery: _____ INITIAL HERE

NIBA is pleased to offer this group bee order as one of the benefits of membership. Therefore, your 2025 NIBA dues must be paid prior to your order being processed, **please use separate checks for bee orders and membership**. Mail your membership forms to the designated address. We will return orders received from non-members. We will order 250 packages of bees and 100 nucleus colonies (NUCs). **Orders will be taken on a first-come first-served basis until all 350 units are sold.**

- Package Price: \$147 each- package contains approximately 3 pounds of bees and a queen.
- 5-Frame NUC Price: \$ 175 each
- Queens \$38 each

Order Information:

My package order preference is given below. I understand the actual delivery timing is determined by many factors including weather and producer availability.

Order Type	Quantity	Queen Preference/Quantity	Price per unit	Total
3 LB Package Pick Up (Targeting early/mid-April)		Italian _____ Carniolan _____ Buckfast _____	\$147.00	\$
Nucleus Colony Pick Up (Targeting Mid/late April)		Italian _____ Carniolan _____ Buckfast _____	\$175.00	\$
Mated Queens		Italian _____ Carniolan _____ Buckfast _____	\$38.00	
			Grand Total Due	\$

Make checks payable to Northern Illinois Beekeepers Association (NIBA)

Queen selection provides club direction only; the club will receive queens as provided by producers. I understand queens are available on a first-come first-served basis and I may not receive the queen of my preference indicated above: _____ **INITIAL HERE**. We will do our best to accommodate all requests, but queen availability is determined by package suppliers. You may mix and match your queens.

The exact date and time for delivery and pickup will be communicated via the email address above. If you do not have email, you will be contacted at the phone number you provided above. **Orders must be picked up on day of delivery, NO EXCEPTIONS. You must designate someone else to pick them up if you are unavailable.**

Complete and mail order form and check (**NO CASH PLEASE!!!**) payable to: **NIBA** c/o Sue Pinkawa, 5010 Bonner Drive, McHenry, IL 60050. Contact Sue at spinkawa@gmail.com or (815-355-4630) - with any questions.

Bee Club Board Member Use Only

Bees Received: _____

Order No _____

Date received _____

Check # _____/Amt _____

2025 APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Affiliated with the Illinois State Beekeepers Association (ISBA)

Check one: ☐ Renewal Individual Membership - \$20 ☐ Renewal Family Membership - \$30Check one: ☐ **NEW** Individual Membership - \$25 ☐ **NEW** Family Membership - \$35

(Includes Single Membership in the Illinois State Beekeepers Association, additional ISBA memberships, \$10 each)

If applying after February 28, 2025, and you are a renewing member, please add \$5.00.

Name(s):
Address:
City: State: Zip:
Phone:
Email address (if family membership, include all emails. Newsletter will be sent to all emails):

☐ **Yes, I would like to order a NIBA name tag(s), add \$16.95 per order (which includes postage).****Name tag(s) should read as follows (please print clearly):**

Please tell us more about yourself:

I have been a NIBA Member since _____ (year)

I plan to have _____ colonies/hives this season

I have been a beekeeper for about _____ years

I am a Master Gardener/Beekeeper _____

Check all that applies:

I sell honey ___ willing to Coach/Mentor ___ Swarm Catcher ___ willing to remove Bees from buildings ___

Personal skills I would be willing to donate to NIBA (i.e. Beekeeping experience, accounting, webmaster, event planning, community education, carpentry, legal, business management, retail knowledge, other)

Complete this form and mail with **check payable to: NORTHERN ILLINOIS BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION (NIBA)**

TO: NIBA Membership, c/o Sue Pinkawa, 5010 Bonner Drive, McHenry, IL 60050

2025 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President – Tom Allen

tallen122@yahoo.com

Vice President – Ralph Brindise

rbrindise@att.net

Secretary – Cristy Binz

cwebb429@gmail.com

Treasurer – Sue Pinkawa

spinkawa@gmail.com

Director - John Leibinger

jleibinger@aol.com

Director - Al Fullerton

adfhone@gmail.com

Director – Brandon Teresi

bteresi10@yahoo.com

Director – Jim Jellissen

jfjelli23@gmail.com

Program Chair – Larry Krengel

Webmaster – Terri Reeves

Newsletter Editor – Sue Pinkawa

Club Extractor Coordinator – Al Fullerton

Club Raffle Coordinator – John Leibinger

Snack Coordinator – Robin Tibbits

Website and Newsletter Submissions

www.nibainfo.org – The Northern Illinois Beekeepers Association website. A wealth of information is available. Contact board members via email, download the membership form, access copies of the newsletter. Terri is asking for your pictures, stories, etc. to have them highlighted on the web page!
reevestherese@att.net

This is YOUR newsletter. Please feel free to contribute. Or let us know if you have any topics you'd like to see covered. spinkawa@gmail.com

Honey Extractor

Did you know that your membership in NIBA includes the opportunity to rent one of the clubs 3 honey extractors?

Two of the extractors are manual, a 4 frame a 3 frame. The third is motorized and is capable of extracting both sides of 9 frames at a time.

Rental fee for either of the manual extractor is \$10.00 for 3 days with a \$10.00 security deposit. The electric (motorized) 9 frame extractor costs \$25.00 to rent for 2 days with a \$75.00 security deposit. Deposits will be returned if equipment is returned on time, clean, and undamaged.

The extractors come with most equipment needed to make the uncapping and extraction experiences go smoothly, except of course, the honey frames and buckets.

To reserve a date contact Al Fullerton by phone or text at 815-382-7139 or email adfhone@gmail.com, if you don't get a timely response, just phone. Pick it up in Cary Illinois.

The queen marking color for 2025 is Blue

