



# SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – MAY 2025

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

I'm writing this on April 30<sup>th</sup> and I'm not sure where this month got away from me! Our weather has been very nice for the most part, getting up into the 70s on some days. Hopefully the bees have gotten a good head start because of this weather trend.

We passed out packages on what might have been the nicest delivery day we've had in a few years, those people I've spoken with got them installed that weekend and things went great. Thank you to all the volunteers who helped that day, unloading the truck and then helping members get the bees into their vehicle for the trip to their new apiary. An especially big thank you to Sue for working with the bee order because it's no easy task, also to Al and for picking up the rental truck and driving up to Heritage Bees to load up the truck and bring them back to the farm!!

Thank you to Ralph, Jimmy, April, Noel and Jackie for volunteering at Gardenfest which was held at MCC on the same day. They spoke with lots of people who had questions about honey bees, sold some honey and as always possibly recruited some new members.

As I was about to bottle one of the buckets of honey from MCC for Gardenfest I found the honey was fermented. The bucket has roughly 40 pounds of the fermented honey so if you plan on making mead and need fermented honey let me know how much you want and we'll figure out how to get some to you.

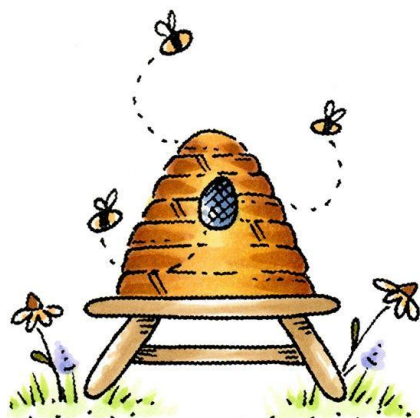
Those of you who ordered a nuc have heard of the problem we had with the order. Unfortunately the number of queen types members ordered would've delayed the order until the end of May (If the order could've been fulfilled by then) so we made the ultimate decision to fill the order with the type of queens Tim will have so people could get their nucs. This has delayed the delivery by one week.

This month's meeting will have 3 breakout Q and A areas. One for the newer beekeeper on what to expect to see in your hive over the next 2 months. The second will discuss swarms and the third will talk about maximizing your honey production.

This meeting we're going to start asking people to donate a bottle of honey for our upcoming festivals and the fair. If you can spare a 1 pound jar or a 12 ounce bear we would appreciate the donation.

We need people to sign up for positions like volunteer coordinator, set up, tear down etc in May. If you are interested or in one of these positions or have questions please contact me.

Tom



## Join in at the Beeyard gathering



We will be visiting the bees in the NIBA beeyard on Thursday, May 8, at 3:30 in the afternoon before the regular membership meeting. There are six colonies that were installed from packages in April. Five of them are doing well. Some have a second deep hive body recently added. We will decide if any others now need their next hive body. One of the colonies needed a replacement queen. We will hopefully find that the new queen has been accepted.

This beeyard is maintained by the Association for mentoring sessions and for the production of honey that is sold to support the Association's activities. All members are invited to bring their bee gear and join in on the hive inspections. There will be time for dinner between the beeyard and the meeting.

## Chores of the Month – May 2025

*Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.*

John Leibinger

### ***What's happening in the hive?***

You should be observing a lot of pollen collection daily. There was a lot of pale yellow maple pollen (or light gray from red maples) coming in during April and finally the telltale tangerine color of dandelions.

Dandelions seem plentiful this year, the fruit trees are starting to come into bloom. Life is good in the beehive! You may also notice that they are consuming sugar syrup at an increasing rate in early May. It will slow down as more and more natural nectar becomes available. Keep them well fed to promote colony growth, but remove if you have the opportunity to collect early honey.

Packages hived in April have been steadily declining in numbers since installation as older bees die off. That will be changing now. The new package colonies will be producing their first new adult bees for 2025 around the time you are reading this and should have a mix of brood in all stages (BIAS). In the next few weeks their populations will increase very rapidly. Within a couple weeks, depending on how early you installed your bees and your mix of new foundation or drawn comb, the colony should be about ready for the addition of a second box (if you are managing via a two deep hive body process, or supers if managing via a single brood box approach), so be prepared. Alternately, if you are utilizing an all medium box management process, you will soon be adding a third box (that box may be an additional brood box or honey super depending on your management philosophy). Nucs hived in mid-late April will have built out new foundation (or be well into the process) they were provided in their brood box and may well be requiring the addition of a second box or honey supers, again, depending on your personal management practice and goals. The nucs being obtained by NIBA are running a bit later than past years, but will be well under way later in the month. The weather will have a significant influence on the rate at which the bees build out their comb, and so far this year all systems are GO. This year's weather has been more favorable than many earlier years. If you started with moderately strong overwintered colonies or with early nucs or have strong single brood box colonies, getting supers on in early May could be the winning ticket for early honey. Watch the weather and your colony development. Try not to miss the early opportunity.

Overwintered colonies, depending on their strength, will be building population fairly quickly (again, weather dependent) and are likely candidates for swarming from now until the end of June. You will notice some drones already walking your comb and will likely see additional drone BIAS. If you see a fair amount, consider this a precursor to potential swarming if you have overwintered colonies (or strong nuc starts for that matter).

### ***For Beekeepers with live overwintered colonies, it is time to:***

**Feed.** Sugar syrup at 1:1 ratio (2 lbs sugar/1 qt water).(If Needed) This is a conventional mix this time of year to stimulate the colony to increase brood rearing. Some will opt to dilute the syrup even a bit more, maybe 1 part sugar to 1.5 or 2 parts water to more closely simulate the sugar concentration in nectar. A small amount of heat will dissolve the sugar quickly. Allow to cool before feeding to bees. Beware that you can over feed. If you notice that the bees are plugging up the queen's brood box laying space, back off the feeding. You want to stimulate brood rearing, not swarming!

Pollen, pollen substitute, pollen patties. Though my personal observation is that there is a lot of natural pollen coming into the hive right now, these early supplemental protein sources are good insurance to help the colony raise brood if the weather creates difficulties for foraging. The weather can raise havoc on the pollen supplies. A typical colony will consume upwards of 60 pounds of pollen over the course of the year, so a little early help is a good thing.

**Check for swarm cells.** A quick check can be made by tilting a complete hive body up and looking at the bottom of the frames for swarm cells (the top box is the most likely box that you will see the swarm cells in unless you have already done a hive body rotation). Be careful not to let the top box slide off when doing this. Get assistance if needed.

Consider this quick check a guide only. A complete inspection may be in line if you are suspecting impending swarming.

**SUPER UP!** If you have a strong colony of foragers, consider removing feed and adding supers to take advantage of early nectar flows. Early honey crops are possible.

**Rotate Hive Bodies.** If your bees have moved into the top box consider rotating the top box to the bottom. The upside to this is that it provides space for the colony to expand upwards and may reduce or delay the swarming urge. The downside is that you may be dividing the brood nest if it spans both boxes. If this situation exists, addition of a third box above or adding supers may be a better alternative. *My personal take/experience on hive body rotation has been that it is not necessary. The bees seem to clean and prepare cells where space is available and the queen has no trouble finding her way there.*

**Frame Rotation.** As temps warm up, consider removing some old frames (w/o brood) and replace with new foundation as part of an annual comb renewal program. Place new foundation frames at the outer positions in the hive. Introducing new foundation may also help delay the onset of swarming if you are removing frames from brood box that are bound up with nectar or pollen.

**Remove Winter Wrappings by mid month.**

**Remove mouse guards.**

### ***For New Beekeepers just getting started this year:***

**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)

**Finish assembling and painting additional equipment,** if you have not already done it. You will need a second deep brood box (or third or fourth if using medium brood boxes) now or very soon. You may need an additional 'cover box' for feed jars or buckets. Let's hope for the best and have honey supers built and ready to install by mid to late May to catch the Black Locust bloom.. Like having a lit smoker, it's better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it. .

**Feed your Bees. Feed your Bees. Feed your Bees.** This cannot be over-emphasized, especially for packages being started on new foundation. Well fed colonies are larger, more productive, and more capable of producing wax for building honeycomb. Feed them until they stop taking the supplemental feed or until you notice that they are starting to backfill the brood nest with stored syrup (more of a chance of this if you were able to acquire drawn comb to start, but far less likely if starting with new foundation or foundationless). You should be able to monitor their syrup consumption every couple of days without going deep into the hive and causing undue disturbance. When performing an inspection, be sure to check that the bees are not getting 'honeybound' in the broodnest. At some point in the month, they will likely switch over to entirely natural nectar sources at which point you can remove the feeders.

**Spend time observing your bees.** This is one of the reasons you took up this hobby. Observe their comings and goings. Are they bringing in pollen? What color? What is the source? Take notes.

[Nice Pollen Color Chart by Season](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

**Get a Mentor from the Bee Club.** Ask for help and guidance. Help may be in person, via phone, e-mail, or text but no matter how the communication takes place, it still will be very helpful, if for no other reason than the confidence and peace of mind a good mentor can provide. **Take advantage of the club provided/sponsored mentoring activities.**

### ***For All Beekeepers, it is time to:***

**Review your Beekeeping Goals for 2025 and act accordingly.** See February month's chores list.

**Make sure that you keep records.** This is a very important element of the learning process...whether you are a first year beekeeper or a forty year beekeeper....you should always be learning something. Consider learning a bit about Growing Degree Days(GDD). This will give you great insight into when your local plants will be blooming. As you see the blooms emerge, or pollen coming in, note the GDD year to date for future reference.

[Explanation of Growing Degree Days](#) (Ctrl + Click link)

[Great Growing Degree Day Chart/Tool](#) (Ctrl + Click link) [Nice Seasonal Pollen Color Chart](#) (Ctrl + Click link)

Record inspection dates, time and temp and weather conditions, quantity of bees, bee behaviors, signs indicating the presence of the queen (eggs, young larvae, actual sighting), number of frames of brood and stores, brood pattern and frame/comb condition, available laying space, observations of signs of swarm preparation, pollen coming in (color, type if possible), drone production, Varroa Mite count, presence of Small



Hive Beetle or other pests, and a number of other issues. Record anything else that is outside of 'normal' once you learn what 'normal' is (for new beekeepers, this is a prime reason for having a mentor and for having multiple hives). Take notes in the bee yard. You will be surprised at how easy it is to get confused over what was observed and which hive it was observed in if you wait to record info after the fact. Here is an example of one of many checklists that can be found in a quick Google search. Not necessarily the best...just an example.

[Hive Inspection Report](#)(Ctrl+Click link)

**Remove entrance reducers. (Or at least increase the opening size)** Probably in the early to mid-May timeframe. As forager numbers increase and forage availability peaks, you want to make sure that the bees have quick and easy access in and out of their hive. This is a very busy and very important time of the year for them to collect and store pollen and nectar. The ready availability of pollen and nectar resources significantly mitigates the issue of robbing this time of year.

**Monitor the hives for swarming signs.** Probably not a big problem for new beekeepers that started on new foundation or foundationless, but for the rest, keep your eyes peeled for telltale queen cups at the bottom of the frames. Do they have eggs or larvae in them? If they do, the swarm is coming....if not keep watching and provide additional space immediately (in the brood box by swapping out honey/pollen bound frames and by adding supers)(simply adding supers is often not enough).

**Get your swarm traps out!** Anybody interested in getting **FREE BEES?** This is the time of year to take advantage of the natural biological rhythms of the hive. Overwintered colonies are highly likely to swarm. Why not be an opportunist and capture a colony that otherwise will find a hole in a tree? It is fun, challenging, and **IMMENSELY EXCITING** when you find bees in your trap. Additionally, these are often colonies that have overwintered....Northern Illinois proven stock capable of handling our winter....wouldn't you want to add some of that quality to your apiary? Here are several websites to get you started...

[Jason Bruns on Swarm Trapping](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

[Swarm Traps and Bait Hives](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

**Assemble some gear to be prepared to catch a swarm hanging in a tree, on a fence, or somewhere else they aren't wanted!** Be ready in case a friend calls and says "Get here quick, my neighbor is freaking out! There is a bunch of bees hanging on their swing set and we don't know what to do!"

**Note:** Swarm trapping and swarm 'catching' are two different things. Swarm trapping involves putting out 'bait hives' for bees to find and inhabit (and then join your apiary). Swarm catching involves capturing a swarm from a tree, bush, fence, or any of a hundred other areas that an initial swarm may land at shortly after exiting the hive and while waiting for the scout bees to find a new home. Usually this is the result of a panic phone call you receive from someone who knows you are a beekeeper. This can be an **INTENSELY EXCITING** and rewarding activity.

**Get your blood flowing! Capture or Trap a Swarm!**



**Welcome to the 2025 Beekeeping Season!**

## News from the NIBA beeyard

Larry Krengel

Seldom have I had problems with the queens that come in packages or nucs in the spring. Although they may not be the best queens, they are functional. This spring I encountered one queen that was not functional – a drone layer.

In theory, the queen breeders who raise thousands of queens at a time will “test” each mated queens before selling it. This is done by placing the queen cell in a mini mating nuc and placing them to a mating yard that has been saturated with available drone mates. After they have mated, the laying pattern of each queen is inspected. It should show a solid area of capped worker brood. The queens who pass the test are then caged and sold.

Over the years I have installed many commercial queens with regular success. The colony in question is the exception. This was one of the packages installed in our association beeyard, a Russian queen who began laying a nice brood pattern... but entirely drone brood. This



colony had no future. The drones serve an important role in the colony, but that does not include housework, nursing or foraging. The colony's bees continue to sense the presence of brood (even though all drone).

They are happy. Should they choose (likely they would not) to replace the queen the existing queen could not lay a fertile egg to make a queen.

Their prognosis would be poor. We have intervened in this case – a rescue mission - and now have replaced that queen. The future looks good.

It is likely, in this situation, that the queen was not successfully mated. Perhaps bad weather. Perhaps poor quality drones. We have no way of knowing. It likely took place a month ago in California or Hawaii. Whatever the case, the queen breeder should have caught the problem by inspecting the brood pattern before selling the queen... but didn't.

Our beeyard will contain eight colonies this year and is ready for a new season of mentoring and honey production. Both Russian and Italian queens will lead our colonies, and we intend to raise local queens. It is time to shake off the sorrows of winter losses and buy into the joys of spring in the beeyard. See you in the beeyard.



# **Beeyard Extras For Spring**

## **Providing Water for the Colony**

- Bird Baths or shallow pails/buckets with Stones or Pebbles for the Bees to perch on
- A Slow dripping hose or outside faucet dripping on a sponge or cloth that will hold moisture
- Chicken waterer with pebbles in feeder rim to prevent drowning
- Short section of soaker hose(requires cutting a couple feet from full sized soaker hose and attaching female hose end and plug on other other end) attached to regular hose turned on very, very, low. Alternately, use a regular soaker hose to water trees or bushes relatively near your hives. Bees will find it.
- Personal Favorite: Boardman Feeder filled with water and attached at entrance (I also make new, shorter entrance reducers to fit, though these are probably not needed in the spring/early summer).*

## **Tips on how to get bees to move into supers while using a Queen Excluder**

- Rotate QE 90 degrees to allow bees to access supers around the edges. Once they have started loading the supers, they will have less reluctance in going thru the QE. At this point, you can return the QE to its normal orientation. The Queen is unlikely to find the access to the supers as she rarely lays to the corners of frames.
- Use an 8 frame excluder (centered) in a 10 frame box. Better done if you use the two brood box management approach. The two outer frames on level two are invariably honey storage so the queen is unlikely to venture there. Workers, however, will use this open space to access the supers and once they have started loading it and know that is honey storage space, you can replace with the 8 frame with a 10 frame QE.
- If you are not a first year beekeeper, use 'wet combs' from last year (obviously would have had to leave them 'wet' from prior year.
- Spray foundation with sugar syrup
- Bait with honey filled or partially filled frame (again, you need this resource on hand)
- Sure fire always works, and my personal go to: Bait with a live brood frame. But wait Mr. Peabody...a deep brood frame won't fit in a medium box. You're right Sherman, so let's get in the 'Way Back Machine' and go back to early May. We will put a medium frame in the deep brood box and let the queen lay some eggs in it and raise some brood and when it comes time to*

add supers we will move this medium frame in a super above the QE and the brood-loyal workers won't hesitate to move through the QE. ....and as an added bonus, when the medium frame is in the deep box, the bees will build drone comb on the bottom bar of the medium frame. That drone comb is a magnet for Varroa , so we can also use the frame as a drone culling opportunity.

### **Tip for catching swarms from your own hives.**

Make a Russian Scion or two..... or more. No, I'm not talking about cobbling together a cheap-ass Russian automobile. I'm talking about a Bee Magnet that will keep you from climbing ladders, falling off ladders, climbing up in a tree, trying to balance an 18 ft pole with a bucket on the end while looking up in the air and poking at a swarm of honeybees who are laughing their stingers off at you, standing in the back of a pickup truck with that 18 ft pole, poking away at the swarm and again suffering the humiliating laughter of those \*&%\$ honeybees or maybe worse.....suffering the humiliation of your neighbors rolling on their lawns laughing at the fool with the pots and pans, clanging away, in an effort to drive the bees down to a lower more manageable height. You call it 'Tanging the Bees' ....they call the guys from the place with padded walls.

So what's the answer? Make and install a Russian Scion in or near your apiary. This is intended to capture your swarms at their 'bivouac' spot (like the swarm in the tree). The Russian Scion is simple and inexpensive to make and easy to install. I would recommend that you google Russian Scion or use this link.

[Russian Scion constrution](#) (Ctrl + Click)

[What is a Russian Scion and how does it work? - YouTube](#) (Ctrl + Click)

The following is my attempt at describing the materials and process to make and use it.

Materials needed:

- 5 Gallon bucket w/lid
- Eye Hook Lag Screw (1/4" dia x 2 ½" -3" length)
- 'S' hook
- 10" piece of 2 x 4 wood
- 3"x3" scrap piece of plywood or anything similar just as a load spreader.
- An ounce or so of old dirty wax, (maybe a drop or two of swarm commander or lemongrass oil(LGO)....optional)
- A length of rope or parachute cord that is twice the height that you will install this in a tree.
- A piece of screening or burlap to wrap and staple around the 2 x 4 to hold the wax/scent and to provide good attachment for swarm.

To build this, you simply predrill a 3/16" hole in the center of the end of the 2x4( by end, I mean the place where the hole runs parallel to length of 10" 2x4). Drill ¼" hole in the center of the



3'x3' scrap and the center of the lid. Screw the eye hook through the 3"x3", the lid and into the 2x4. What you end up with is the lid sandwiched between the 3"x3" board and a 10" length of 2x4 perpendicular and centered on it. Think of it as looking like a large flat top, thin stemmed mushroom with an eye hook on top. The next step will be to wrap and staple the 2x4 with screening or burlap and melt and spread some smelly old wax on it. Maybe add a drop or two of Swarm Commander or LGO. To install it, you have to get your rope up over a branch at 12-18 ft, tie an "S" hook to one end and hoist it up to height. Make sure that there are no branches in the way for raising and lowering the Russian Scion. When the swarm collects on the lid/2x4 it will look like an inverted cone. When you lower it you unhook the "S" hook from the eye hook and lower the swarm into the 5 gallon bucket. Then carry the bucket and dump the bees into your prepared hive. Give it a go and stay safe recovering your swarms!



## Picture From GardenFest



## 2025 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President – Tom Allen

[tallen122@yahoo.com](mailto:tallen122@yahoo.com)

Vice President – Ralph Brindise

[rbrindise@att.net](mailto:rbrindise@att.net)

Secretary – Cristy Binz

[cwebb429@gmail.com](mailto:cwebb429@gmail.com)

Treasurer – Sue Pinkawa

[spinkawa@gmail.com](mailto:spinkawa@gmail.com)

Director - John Leibinger

[jleibinger@aol.com](mailto:jleibinger@aol.com)

Director - Al Fullerton

[adfhone@gmail.com](mailto:adfhone@gmail.com)

Director – Brandon Teresi

[bteresi10@yahoo.com](mailto:bteresi10@yahoo.com)

Director – Jim Jellissen

[jfjelli23@gmail.com](mailto: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 – Julianne Anderson

## Website and Newsletter Submissions

[www.nibainfo.org](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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

