



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – APRIL 2026

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

Happy April, I was hoping our weather was going to even out but that hasn't happened so far. We've had temperatures near 80 a few days after we had a few inches of snow! A couple of days before I'm writing this we had almost 5 inches of rain!

Hopefully your bees made it through the winter and you've seen them flying on the warm days we had.

It's time to clean up your hives, get the dead bees off of the landing board, check inside to see if you have rodent damage or wax moth damage so you're ready to install your new bees when they arrive. Repair damaged frames or purchase new ones, make up syrup to feed your bees (make sure you keep it in the fridge so it doesn't go bad) and just wait for the email telling you when the bees will be delivered. Please wait for the email from Sue telling you when the bees will be delivered, I know you're anxious to get started but as talented as Sue is she's only one person who has a regular job, a home based job and family obligations. If we have your correct email address (if you're receiving this we do) you'll be notified about the delivery date shortly after Sue gets the date from our supplier.

We're still looking for people to take over more responsibility at the McHenry County Fair. This is our largest event, we need more volunteers, honey donations, t-shirts ordered among other things. You are part of NIBA and to grow we need more people to step up to help.



At the April meeting we're going to break up the group into experienced beekeepers on one side of the room and newbees or less experienced beekeepers on the other side of the room. We're going to try to get the newbees to meet in the hallway at 630 so we can answer questions or explain something that they're not clear on.

I'm watching a show on Hulu about bees, it's about more than honey bees but it shows that every type of bee is amazing! There are only 2 episodes but I highly recommend watching it.

We have had a picnic in July in past years because we don't have a meeting. Would you be interested in going to a picnic this July? We're looking at possible locations, people liked the Hollows in Cary a couple of years ago. At times we would hold it at a NIBA member's house and we did a hive inspection while we were there. If someone would be open to hosting the picnic (NIBA pays for everything) please let us know.

Tom





Greetings Beekeepers –

Spring is the season when colonies surge with energy—and it's the perfect time to turn that momentum into new colonies. If we don't do it, the bees will! Swarms are amazing, mesmerizing, awesome raw nature... and we could lose half of our bees if we do not become part of the action!



Recently I did a quick SurveyMonkey of the readers of The Beeline asking about managing swarming in the beeyard. Seventy percent of those responding said they proactively attempt to manage swarming, mostly by offering increased space. Ten percent said they would wait and only react if a colony makes swarm cells.

When asked how they would respond to queen cells in a colony, ninety-one percent said they would make a split – an artificial swarm. This gives us a good topic for discussion at the April meeting.

The plans are to break into groups at the April meeting as we have done before. One group will discuss controlling swarming and specifically about making the good, old-fashioned “walk-away split.” It can be simple. But it can also be done skillfully. Let's talk.

Larry



Two Bee Classes Left to Go

Each year McHenry County College offers a lineup of beekeeping classes between February and April. There are now two left for 2026. Wednesday, April 8, at 6:30 *Varroa – Know Your Enemy* will be offered either in person at their Catalyst Campus in Woodstock or online. This will be an evening-long discussion about the varroa mite and its threat to our honey bees. Sign up online here - [Beekeeping: Varroa Mite - Know Your Enemy - McHenry County College](https://mchenry.augusoft.net/index.cfm?method=ClassInfo.ClassInformation&int_class_id=12893).

A two-meeting beeyard class will be offered on Saturday, April 11 and 18. This class will meet in the MCC apiary to install packages of honey bees during the first meeting and return a week later to inspect the colony to evaluate their progress. More information can be found here -

https://mchenry.augusoft.net/index.cfm?method=ClassInfo.ClassInformation&int_class_id=12893.



Chores of the Month – April – and so it begins.....

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

John Leibinger

What's happening in the hive?

Overwintered colonies are well into raising brood for the coming year. On warm days the bees will be out foraging pollen from some early flowering plants and trees. Very early in the month, expect to see assorted colors arriving at the hive entrance depending on the flora in your area. You will likely see a lot of yellows from maples and willows and maybe even some blue from squill/scilla. About mid-month, maybe earlier this year if the two week forecast holds, the dandelions will start blooming and you will see a lot of their tell-tale tangerine-orange pollen being brought in. Though temperatures may be a bit low to do a prolonged deep dive inspection early in the month (there may be a day or two that will allow it), the influx of pollen is a good sign that the colony is raising brood. Brood rearing requires significant protein which is sourced from the incoming pollen. If weather conditions are preventing foraging, use pollen patties and/or pollen substitutes as supplemental feed. The brood will require warmth so the bees will be consuming more carbohydrates (honey, fondant, sugar syrup, etc.) for the energy they will require to produce the heat needed to raise their brood. You may well see bee poop or signs of dysentery at the exit points for bees. My guess is that you won't see as much as you might have seen in prior years since there have been many warm days allowing for cleansing flights. If you do see some, don't panic and jump to the conclusion that your bees have Nosema. This is more likely an accumulation of feces the bees are finally getting to void. It could be dysentery, but dysentery is not Nosema. Nosema can only be determined by inspection of bee guts via microscopy. If it is dysentery, it will likely clear up quickly as the bees get foraging and consuming fresh nectar. If it is Nosema, the only approved product on the market right now is Fumidil-B (Fumagillin) but its efficacy on the most prevalent type of Nosema (*N. Ceranae*) is marginal. There are other mechanical means of treating colonies with Nosema (i.e. shook swarm, Bailey comb exchange), but that's a lesson for a different day.

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

Feed. Sugar syrup at 1:1 ratio (2 lbs sugar/1 qt water) is conventional this time of year as it warms up. A small amount of heat will dissolve the sugar quickly. Allow to cool before feeding to bees.

Pollen, pollen substitute, pollen patties. These supplemental protein sources may help the colony raise brood until natural pollen sources become more abundant. My personal observation on our latest warm days is that there seems to be a fair amount of natural pollen being brought in, but it won't hurt to add a little insurance. It is April and foraging days vary considerably.

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(with frames) above or simply the addition of super(s) may be a better alternative. There are other manipulations that you can also do to mitigate swarming such as the Demaree method or creating splits. There is a plethora of info on these processes available on the internet or even at your local bee club meeting.

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. This time of year, place new foundation frames just outside of the brood nest. This will also help to reduce the swarming urge.

Remove Winter Wrappings as the weather warms. No need to hurry on this though.

For Beekeepers with dead overwintered colonies, it is time to:

Breakdown and clean out the dead-outs. It can be a dirty job as well as a disheartening one. Don't procrastinate or you run the risk of some robbing occurring. Depending on the cause of death of your colony, you may want/need to replace all your frames/combs. Viruses die with your colony for the most part. Mites do also, so you have minimal worry that either of these will carry forward. *If you had a bacterial foulbrood disease that killed your colony, the problem could carry forward.* This would not be typical so don't rush to this conclusion. Seek an experienced beekeeper or apiary inspector for some advice.

Frame Rotation. Consider removing some older and/or 'condition challenged' frames and replace with new foundation as part of an annual comb renewal program (assuming that you will be reusing this hive this season).

For New Beekeepers just getting started this year:

Bees will be arriving soon so make sure all equipment is ready to go.



Finish assembling and painting your equipment. If you have not done this already, ***Get On It!*** Don't procrastinate, the bees will not wait! 😊

Set up your Equipment in your Apiary. Have everything in place. This means your equipment, your tools needed for installation, and feed. Mix your sugar syrup the day before picking up your bees. Try to minimize your last-minute scrambling. The process will go smoother.

Get a Mentor from the Bee Club. Ask for help and guidance. Hands-on assistance would be great, but verbal or written communication is always a great help too.

Ready or not here it comes! No worries. Chill. You have done your homework. You have Read, Studied, and Learned. A little nervous anticipation is all part of the excitement of becoming a beekeeper and right about now it is reaching an apex. Take a breath. A few more seasons under your belt and you will look back on this time with a knowing smile. If you have not received hands on instruction on package installation, review several YouTube videos, or use a lifeline and 'Phone a Friend' (or mentor) on package installation.

Have a checklist for your package or nuc installation. It helps keep you organized and focused.

Have all your tools and supplies ready ahead of time. It bears repeating. Avoid the nervous scramble.

Again, no worries, coaching and virtual help is available.

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)

For All Beekeepers, it is time to:

Review package installation procedures if you are getting new bee packages.

Review nuc installation procedures if you opted for nucs instead of packages.

Prepare your feed.

Review your Beekeeping Goals for 2026 and act accordingly. See earlier month's chores list.

Wash your beekeeping suit or jacket to remove general dirt and specifically to remove lingering essence of alarm pheromone from previous 'suit stings'. Tip: Use an unscented laundry detergent.

General Info:

A couple of ways to install packages:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZknUirqbQk> Randy Oliver

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lt7BWolTbw> Penn State

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9qu-zMhtQ0>

Are you seeing pollen coming in?

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

It is April. Welcome to the 2026 Beekeeping Season!





Looking Ahead to things that happen in May

Swarms

Preparation:

- Catch some: Have equipment on hand to capture a swarm. Bucket & pole setup, extra equipment to re-hive a new colony of bees. Be ready to feed.
- Trap some: Requires acquiring and setting up swarm traps (NOW or very soon) and having extra equipment available to re-hive a new colony of bees. Also requires having feed available.

Splits

Preparation:

- Have equipment ready on hand and ready to go.

First complete inspection for New Beekeeper

Preparation:

- Get a Mentor
- Reread about inspections. Watch a number of U-tube videos. Read, study, attend bee club meetings.
- Phone a friend

Possibly add additional brood boxes as the colony expands

Preparation:

- Have equipment ready on hand and ready to go.

Add Supers

Preparation:

- Have equipment ready on hand and ready to go.

Equipment/supply needs to consider for May:

- Sugar syrup for feed and feeders
- Swarm Traps
- Swarm Lure
- Swarm catching equipment
- Extra Boxes(deeps and mediums) and frames for Swarms, Splits, Expansion, Supers
- Queen Excluders
- Queen Castle and frames

- Nuc boxes for splits and raising queens from queen cells





NORTHERN ILLINOIS BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

2026 APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Affiliated with the Illinois State Beekeepers Association (ISBA)

- Check one: ☐ Renewal Individual Membership - \$20 ☐ Renewal Family Membership - \$30
- Check 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, 2026, 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 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



2026 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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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 adfhoney@gmail.com, if you don't get a timely response, just phone. Pick it up in Cary Illinois.

The queen marking color for 2026 is White

