



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – NOVEMBER 2025

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

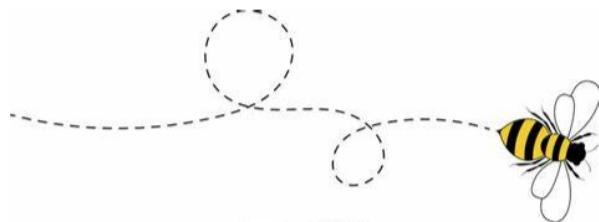
Well we just had Halloween and went through the fall time change and our weather has still been pretty mild. Beekeepers I've spoken with keep seeing their bees flying on warm sunny days so they're putting extra feed on to help them if it's needed.

November is a busy month at the NIBA meeting. We have the honey tasting where everyone can bring a sample of their honey to see how it measures up against other member's honey. This year there will be a new twist, it's a black jar tasting. We will take your honey and pour some into a black jar, we will keep track of the entries so we know who supplied each jar of honey. You won't know which jar is yours so you might pick someone else's jar as the best tasting honey of 2025.

We also hold the election for the 2026 NIBA officers, if you want to run for the position of President, Vice President, Treasurer or Secretary you can nominate yourself or someone else who is at the meeting and wants to run for the position that night. The only requirement is that your dues are paid. The 2026 Directors will be voted on by the new Board members, if you're interested in being a Director please let one of the Officers know.

It's been a privilege and an honor to be your President! If NIBA is led by someone else next year I hope they enjoy it as much as I have and I know the Board and Directors will work hard to make the club better.

Tom



What is Old is New Again

Larry Krengel

OK, I am intrigued by history, the story about how things got to where they are today. Combine that with my passion for keeping bees and my bookshelves are full of old bee

books. When I travel, I frequent the antiquarian bookshops looking for the oldest bee books on the shelves.

The modern keeper of bees assumes that the systems, equipment and advice they find among current keepers has not changed since Langstroth's time. That assumption is



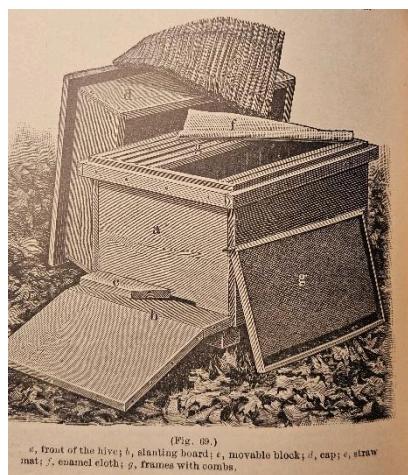
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sometimes interestingly true but not always. Human nature demands that we try to improve on what our ancestors provided for us. But I find the lure of the old readings is finding what has been retained and what has disappeared in the dust of the beeyard.

I was just reading the 1888 revision of *The Hive and the Honey-Bee*, considered the seminal book of beekeeping since Langstroth wrote it first in 1853. The Rev. L. L. Langstroth, born on Christmas Day in 1810, felt too old to complete that year's rewriting and turned it over to a group of beekeepers led by Charles Dadant – lineal progenitor of today's Dadant & Sons. Here are the first lines of that edition –

*By his invention of the most practical movable-frame hive and by his book, *The Hive and the Honey-Bee* – a book as attractive as a novel – Mr. Langstroth has laid the foundation for American Apiculture, whose methods and implements have become popular throughout the world.*

From that 1888 edition of the Hive and the Honey-Bee, we find advice for using a straw mat for wintering hives. This is not attributed directly to Langstroth but appears to have been in popular use as the 19th century came to a close.



The straw mat was used as we use an inner cover and was recommended for winter use. The authors suggest the straw mat provides added insulation on the top of the hive (that sounds like the current advice) and keeps bees dry by absorbing condensation (i.e. today's moisture board). The authors contend the straw mat to be "one of the most useful and necessary implements of the beehive" and is superior to

the wooden cover suggested by some as it keeps the hive warmer in winter and cooler in summer. (Wooden inner covers eventually became the standard perhaps due to ease of

production.) The concept lives on although the method has changed. The accompanying illustration provided by the authors looks like today's Langstroth hive with the exception of the straw mat on top.

Should one be intrigued by this wintering technique, the authors have included the drawing of a method of weaving mats that can be up to an inch thick. Want to be an old fashioned beekeeper? Here is a chance. The authors suggest using "slough grass" found in the Mississippi river shed bottom lands.

The original 1853 edition of the *Hive and the Honey-Bee* is still in print (on demand) and an interesting critique of the original was written by Roger Hoopingarner – *The Hive and Honey Bee Revisited* – where he looks at the original and comments on how beekeeping has changed in the last century and a half...

<https://thehoneyexchange.com/products/the-hive-and-honey-bee-revisited>.

The most recent(2015) edition is available from Dadant & Sons -

<https://www.dadant.com/catalog/m00010-hive-and-the-honeybee-new-edition>. All 1027 pages make for a HEAVY read. In the current title "Honey-Bee" is no longer hyphenated.



A short nontechnical online discussion about our friends, the honey bees.

January 16, 2026 at 9:00 am.

The Sweet Life: A Buzz-Worthy Look into the World of the Honey Bees

Join us for a delightful journey into the fascinating world of honey bees! We'll explore the secret lives of these industrious little creatures, uncovering how they create the delicious honey we all love. From the Queen Bee's royal duties to the amazing teamwork of the worker bees, we'll learn about their incredible communication, their vital role in our ecosystem, and simple ways we can help them thrive. This presentation is full of fun facts and amazing stories about bees.

This course is available only online and McHenry County College registration is found at

https://mchenry.augusoft.net/index.cfm?method=ClassInfo.ClassInformation&int_class_id=13501&int_category_id=0&int_sub_category_id=0&int_catalog_id=0

COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT CENTER

SPRING 2026



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

In person

[12873](#) W 2/4-2/25 6:30-9 p.m. Catalyst Campus
Remote
[12874](#) W 2/4-2/25 6:30-9 p.m. Remote

Larry Kriegel

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 Kriegel

[12906](#) Sa 4/11, 4/18 10 a.m.-Noon MCC
[12907](#) Sa 4/11, 4/18 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 Kriegel

In person
[12889](#) W 3/4 6:30-9 p.m. Catalyst Campus
Remote
[12890](#) W 3/4 6:30-9 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.

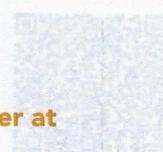
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To register for a class, scan the QR code, visit www.mchenry.edu/personaldevelopment, or call (815) 455-8588.



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

COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT CENTER

SPRING 2026



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.

The Sweet Life: A Buzz-Worthy Look into the World of the Honey Bees

Join us for a delightful journey into the fascinating world of honey bees! We'll explore the secret lives of these industrious little creatures, uncovering how they create the delicious honey we all love. From the Queen Bee's royal duties to the amazing teamwork of the worker bees, we'll learn about their incredible communication, their vital role in our ecosystem, and simple ways we can help them thrive. This presentation is full of fun facts and amazing stories about bees.

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.

Coming soon: [Stephanie Slater](#)

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.

Coming soon.

Frank Moriarty



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

Chores of the Month – November 2025

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

John Leibinger

What's happening in and around the hive?

It looks like an average start to November. The nighttime temps will be running between the 30s to low 40s in the first half of the month and likely 20s and 30s in the last half. Daytime temps will be in the 50s in the first half and maybe a day or two will hit 60. As the month progresses, high temps will likely be in the 40s. Winter is just around the corner, and the bees will be settling in for the season. The bees will be clustering to save some heat. They will be starting to consume their winter stores and will not be taking in sugar syrup at these temperatures.

For All Beekeepers, it is time to:

Finalize your colony activities for 2025**:

****Note: These are much the same as October chores, particularly for those who have fallen a bit behind. There are a few deletions. The deletions are primarily to avoid cracking open the hive bodies and breaking the propolis seals that the bees have created to reduce infiltration of the winter winds. I'll repeat for emphasis.....*This is not the time to be breaking into the hive bodies and disrupting the seals or the winter cluster.***

(Exception: If you are fully wrapping your hives, the air infiltration by cracking the seals will be mitigated by the wraps.

Also, some of the notes below are specific to ventilation hives. See the October notes for condensing hives.

Consider an Oxalic Acid sublimation or dribble treatment to eliminate any remaining varroa mites that may have been in the colony or brought in by a late season robbing episode. A possible advantage of an OA sublimation this time of year is that you will not need to crack open the hive bodies and ruin the hive's propolis seals that were created to keep out the imminent winter winds. A dribble treatment can also be used without cracking the seals if you utilize a single brood box management process. If you use double brood boxes and all the bees are in the lower box, you will need to crack the seal to apply the treatment. If this is the case, strongly consider wrapping the hive to minimize air infiltration.

Tilt the hive forward a little bit to assist moisture drainage.

Rake up leaves and debris from around the hive to lessen the opportunity for mouse and pygmy shrew problems.

Add mouse guards. If you have Pygmy Shrews, the openings will need to be reduced to no more than 5/16". Don't forget....mice can climb, so protect upper entrances also. If you use entrance reducers as your mouse guard, make sure that the egress slot is at the top not the bottom. It seems counter intuitive, but if the slot is at the bottom it is easily plugged up with dead bees thus rendering it useless. When placed 'upside down' it allows the live bees to climb over the dead bodies to exit. A little inconsiderate and heartless of the bees if you are given to anthropomorphism.

Make sure you have an upper entrance/exit if you are following the ventilation hive management process. It helps with ventilation and it is an easy egress point for bees to take cleansing flights in the winter. Make sure it is mouse/shrew proofed. Sometimes the lower entrances get plugged with ice or snow and even with dead bees.

Consider adding an appropriate feeding shim and some solid feed in the form of winter patties, a candy board, sugar bricks or cakes, or dry sugar above the top hive body. You may want to add emergency feed in later winter and having a spacer already in place will make that effort possible. Prepare ahead of time.

Make sure there is adequate ventilation to remove moisture from the hive if you are following the ventilation hive management process. Bees breathe and metabolize the carbohydrates they consume to produce heat. A by-product of that metabolism is moisture, and it must find its way out of the hive to reduce dripping from condensation. **Cold wet bees are dead bees. It is preventable.**

Consider adding a moisture board or quilt box or some other method of capturing the moisture and preventing it from condensing and dripping on the bees.

Consider (very strongly) adding insulation at the top of the hive to further reduce the opportunity for condensation.

Consider wrapping your hive to insulate or at least to eliminate infiltration of cold winter winds. Wraps are often done in black on the theory that there is a little solar heat gain on sunny winter days. It is a double-edged sword, though. If the solar gain is enough to make the bees break cluster, they may have difficulty re-clustering faster than the evening temperatures drop and that can be catastrophic. You judge whether or not you believe the black adds value. Consult the internet for a myriad of approaches to wrapping hives.

**Additional thoughts on insulation: One thing that insulation does is that it slows down the transfer of heat (or cold). This provides a more stable environment inside the hive. Internal hive temps may remain cooler on warmer days and keep the bees clustered. This isn't necessarily a bad thing. Depending on how much temperature fluctuation our area experiences daily, the bees are likely better off remaining in cluster rather than breaking cluster and having difficulty regrouping before they become too cold from quickly dropping temperatures. It is a personal choice. Depending on where you are in the learning/experience curve, this may be a learning opportunity. Insulate some, don't insulate others and monitor the results.

No matter the wrap insulation, be sure to insulate the top.

Consider creating a wind block with snow fencing, straw bales, large lawn bags filled with leaves (word of caution: straw bales and to a lesser extent, bags of leaves may be attractive to mice, so use them with that warning in mind), or basically anything that you can position to break the force of the direct wind against your hive.

Consider strapping down your hive for the winter to prevent winter winds from toppling the hive.

If you have been a conscientious beekeeper throughout the 2025 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 thriving in Spring 2026. Still no guarantee, but you have tilted the odds in their favor.

Start preparing for the 2026 season:

Renew your annual Apiary Registration with Illinois Department of Agriculture.

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

Continue to increase your knowledge of bees and beekeeping:

- Read and study about bees and beekeeping
- Attend beekeeping meetings
- Increase your knowledge of local plants and trees.
- Form a small group of beekeepers to meet for lunch and talk bees.

Inventory your equipment, tools, and supplies.

Review your 2025 season (and your notes) for successes and opportunities.

Set new goals for 2026.

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)



"He likes to bring them indoors for the winter."

2025 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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Webmaster – Terri Reeves

Newsletter Editor – Sue Pinkawa

Club Extractor Coordinator – Al Fullerton

Club Raffle Coordinator – Jim Jellissen

Snack Coordinator – Julianne Anderson

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 2025 is Blue



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