



SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2026

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

I hope you're all seeing your colonies grow because we've had some nice weather lately and it's going to be nice for the next few days. This is when the newbees face some challenges, when do I add a box, do I had a second brood box or put a honey super on are just a few of the questions they'll have. There isn't a single right answer, remember ask 4 beekeepers a question and you'll get 6 answers. It boils down to what do you want, how do you want to manage your colonies, do you want to run a 2 deep brood box hive or a single deep? Are you a beekeeper that wants honey production or do you want to help your garden and flower beds to get better pollination? Every beekeeper has his or her own reason for getting into this hobby. Maybe you don't know what you want to do yet so you're experimenting to see how much you like it. You can listen to what others are doing but you'll have to figure out what you want from beekeeping and work towards that goal.

Mentor Days

We've settled on the dates for mentor sessions for the next 3 months, some will be held before a meeting at 4PM and others will be on a Saturday at 10AM.

The first one will be June 11th at 4PM before our monthly meeting, Larry usually organizes going to Culvers for dinner before the meeting.

June 27th at 10AM

July 18th 10AM

August 1st 10AM

August 22nd at 10AM



Picnic

The picnic will be on July 11th and will start at 11AM. It will be held at the McHenry County Conservation District Hickory Grove Highlands at 500 Hickory Nut Grove Road in Cary.

The food will be ready around 12:30, we're going to grill up hot dogs, brats and hamburgers and we'll provide potato salad and cole slaw and the condiments. Please bring a dessert to share, we will be holding a contest for desserts containing honey too.

We will be holding a smoker contest again this year.

We are looking for a couple more experienced beekeepers to help manage the hives at MCC, please reach out to a board member if you want to help.

We are looking for a few experienced beekeepers to help on mentor days. You don't have to commit to all of them, let us know which one you can help with and we'll add you to the list.

The McHenry County Fair

Thank you to everyone that signed up for a time at the meeting. I was told I didn't mention that NIBA pays for your daily ticket into the fair. When you sign up for a shift you'll be working with other beekeepers that you may or may not know. Get to know each other on a new level, not just beekeeping but learn where they live etc and make new lifelong friends. You also get a free t-shirt for volunteering that day, where else can you have fun like that for free and get a t-shirt?? No where can you have this much fun with your clothes on!! LOL

Thank you all!

Tom



Greetings Beekeepers –

If one keeps with the Langstroth hive – 8 or 10 frame – the equipment is rather standard. Most pieces fit well. The inner cover has more quirks than other parts.

Historically beekeepers were likely to follow the tradition of the ventilated hive (Though today there is an increasing interest in the “condensing” hive) Ventilation was aided by having a notch cut in the inner cover.

The traditional inner cover had a side that is deeper and a side that is thinner. (Today that may vary.) The question always came up... which side should be down?

The reality is that the bees do fine either way, but beekeepers like to fine tune things. One



In days gone by, the dimensions of Langstroth hive pieces were pretty standard. With many manufacturers starting up, there is more variation today. Theoretically, if one buys all the equipment from the same supplier, it should all fit well and there should be a proper bee space where needed. For

me, I have acquired hive pieces from various sources over the years. The bees don't mind, but sometimes that makes it more difficult for me, the beekeeper.

In the perfect traditional hive, the purpose of the inner cover is to maintain the bee space between the top of the frames and the inner cover. The proper space in the spring is a bee space – arguably about 3/8 of an inch. This would be provided by having the thinner side down. When done “properly” the bees will not build burr comb to attach the frame tops to the inner cover making it easier to open and inspect a hive.

The thicker side has traditionally been used in the fall and winter giving greater space on the top of the frames so the bees can more easily move from side to side on the frames giving them access to winter stores. In the winter bees are less likely to build comb so burr comb is not likely a problem.

Using an inner cover gives the bees the opportunity to propolize the seam between the top body and the inner cover keeping the weather at bay. They do this naturally and if they were to attach the top hive body to the telescoping cover it would be more difficult to open and inspect.

All that said, the importance of having the correct side down is likely minimal.

At one time, the inner cover was made with an insert of solid wood strips with ship lapped seams. That was a nice system... but expensive. Suppliers then went to pressboard inserts. Bad. They absorbed moisture and sagged. We now most often see plywood inserts. They are OK unless they delaminate when they get wet. If you find a supplier using the solid wood, ship lap method, let me know. I will be a customer for them.

Back to that notch in the inner cover... Traditionally (e.g. in the old days) when the beekeeper bought an inner cover there was a notch cut on the end on the deep side. The theory being it provides greater ventilation in the winter... which is not needed in the summer. Today many purchased inner covers



have no notch. Some beekeepers follow the tradition and cut a notch. I like a notch and most of my inner covers have one.

Here is hoping all your splits and installations have gone well. With proper attention, good beekeeping, and a pinch of luck... next spring we will not need to buy bees. It is a worthy goal.

Larry



I will be in the NIBA beeyard from 4:00 to 5:30 on Thursday, June 11... before the regular NIBA meeting. You are invited to join me. LK



Chores of the Month – June 2026

Like the bees we study, we accomplish more together.

John Leibinger

What's happening in the hive...and around us?

The colony population should be expanding rapidly and reaching its peak this month. Compared to last year, we have had a faster start to the growing season. Based on conversations with other beekeepers honey production is going well. Looking at Growing Degree Days (GDD) for my location in Huntley, IL, I am at 493 GDD thru 6/02/2026. Last year, we reached this level on 6/10/2025. So I am ahead by 8 days. The two-week forecast (temp wise) looks to be a bit warmer than last year, so I expect that we will continue to be ahead of last year for several more weeks. We just need appropriate and timely rainfall. That said, there will still be a lot of nectar flowing as the temperatures rise next week. All beekeeping is very localized so your trend may be a little different. **Lessons to Learn:** 1) Growing Degree Days...something to learn about and follow as it relates to the growth of local flora. (See General information below for a cursory explanation of GDD, why you should care, and a link to a GDD calculator). 2) Watch out for getting 'honey bound' as the temperatures rise this month. If you haven't provided sufficient space for the colony to store honey in supers, they will store it in the brood nest and that may lead to having 'bees in the trees' rather than in your hive boxes.

June nectar flows will be picking up significantly as the month progresses (think Sumac and Linden) and nectar and pollen sources are quite diverse and abundant in our area right now, so there will be a wealth of resources for colony growth. Resources/nutrition lead to growing healthy hives. New beekeepers should notice that the bees are no longer taking sugar syrup but rather are collecting nectar from natural sources. Remove the feeders at this transition. Others with overwintered colonies or new colonies with drawn comb should already have a super or two (maybe more) in play.

As a point of emphasis: June is still a strong month for swarming. Large healthy colonies are susceptible to an increased swarming urge. Make sure that there is plenty of space for colony expansion. The queen needs room to lay eggs. The workers need room for nectar and pollen storage. As you inspect frames in the brood nest, be mindful of excessive nectar/sugar syrup storage in the brood nest. Excessive storage in this area can restrict the queen's ability to find space to lay and can lead to swarming or reduced colony growth due to lack of egg laying space. There is a management principle known as '**keeping a clear brood nest**'. **This is of particular interest for those of us who utilize a single brood nest management process. Remove and replace excessive brood nest storage frames with frames of open drawn comb or new foundation. ADD HONEY SUPERS to provide space for the workers to store nectar!**

Keep in mind that the bee population is not the only expanding population. Varroa mites will be on the increase also. Monitor their growth by doing regular mite checks (monthly sugar roll or preferably, the more accurate alcohol wash). Know what you have and keep records. Keep their growth in check by utilizing a miticide, organic acids, drone comb culling, a brood break, sundry other IPM methods, or combinations of any of these. Consult the honeybeehealthcoalition.org website for guidance and remember **the label is the law**. Your specific approach will be influenced by your personal goals and philosophy, but, if you have a mite problem, doing nothing is not an acceptable answer if you want your colony to thrive and survive. If honey production is one of your goals, be cautious about using a miticide that has time requirements before you can add supers. Our honey season has time limits.

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 (be better prepared next year). You should be on a second deep brood box (or third or fourth if using medium brood boxes) now or very soon (brood box addition may vary depending on your management philosophy and specific goals). Let's hope for the best and have extra honey supers and frames built and ready to install this month if you haven't already done so.

Feed your Bees. Feed them until they stop taking the supplemental feed. If they haven't already (and likely they have), they will 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. If you have multiple hives (and you should) observe and compare the behaviors of the different colonies. Talk to other beekeepers. This is 'mission critical' to learning what 'normal' is, and a key to becoming a better beekeeper. Are the bees bringing in pollen? What color? What is the source? (See Pollen Identification Chart link in General Info section below).



Get a Mentor from the Bee Club. Ask for help and guidance. A good mentor with practical experience will be able to ask you the right questions (along with answering some) and provide valuable guidance.

For All Beekeepers, it is time to:

Be very observant of signs of swarming and take appropriate action. This is most relevant to overwintered hives and recently installed nucleus colonies. Swarming is not likely a big problem (but not unheard of) for new beekeepers that started with packages on new foundation or foundationless, but for the rest, keep your eyes peeled for telltale queen cups/cells at the bottom of the frames. Do they have eggs or larvae in them? If they do, the swarm is coming (unless you take action to mitigate the urge) if not, keep watching and provide additional space in the brood nest and add supers as needed. Additional information on swarming can be obtained by reading Megan Milbrath's article on Swarms (see link below under General Info [**Meghan Milbrath on Northern Swarms**](#) for an extremely comprehensive dissertation on swarming).

Add Honey Supers to provide space for bees to move nectar/honey out of brood area and, of course, to start collecting early honey. Keep in mind that nectar takes more space than honey, so as your super gets half full, be sure to add another maybe two if there is a strong flow coming. A strong colony can fill supers quickly. You don't want to get behind the curve this time of year.

Maintain the space around your hive(s). Your bees work hard at thermo-regulation of the hive. Help them out. Trim weeds and grass to allow maximum air flow as the temperatures rise. Maintaining a clear flight path to the hive also increases their foraging efficiency.

Make sure the bees have a water source as we move into the heat of summer. Bees collect water to help cool the hive as part of their thermo-regulation efforts. **(Do not let the water source become the neighbors swimming pool.... that only casts a bad light on the beekeeping community and will only bring you grief).**

Monitor for Varroa Mites monthly. (See General Info section below for references to mite checking procedures)

Treat for Varroa Mites as needed. (See General Info section below link to Honey Bee Health Coalition which has info on mite treatments)

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. 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 counts, 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. 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. (See **Hive Inspection Form** link in General Info section below of one of many checklists that can be found in a quick Google search. Not necessarily the best...just an example.)

The following is a repeat of last month, but it bears repeating. May and June are the months for swarms and this year there seems to be no shortage of swarming behavior.

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 is a swarm trapping/baiting website...Jason is 'the man' when it comes to swarm trapping. He has lots of advice and encouragement on swarm trapping along with free plans for building swarm traps. Check it out.

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

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

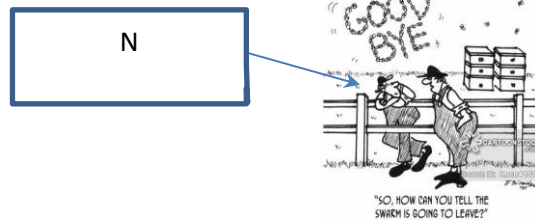
Assemble some gear to **BE PREPARED to catch a swarm hanging in a tree, on a fence, or somewhere else they aren't wanted!** Be ready in case a friend calls and says "Get here quick, my neighbor is freaking out! There are a bunch of bees hanging on my neighbor's swing set and we don't know what to do!"

From personal experience, I can tell you that the difference in truly being ready and thinking you are ready is the difference between catching that swarm and waving goodbye to them. I have watched a swarm exit a hive and



recorded them massing up on a tree branch at about 12 feet up. “This one will be easy”, I mused. I then decided that I wanted to add a few more undrawn foundation frames to the swarm’s new hive so that I would take maximum advantage of the swarm’s proclivity to produce comb. In that extra 10-15 minutes I was prepping frames, ‘my soon to be caught swarm’ had reached consensus on a new home and off they went. They were in the tree for only about half an hour. I had never seen bees leave that quickly.

Be Prepared.... Really Prepared.



Note: Swarm trapping/baiting and swarm ‘catching’ are two different things. Swarm trapping/baiting 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** activity.

Another personal experience: A couple weeks ago, I had a swarm that settled in a tree that was a bit higher than my good sense would let me try to catch (a rarity indeed). They were also spread out on a limb rather than hanging down in a cluster, so they would have been a difficult catch even when I didn’t have the good sense to leave the ladder in the garage. They stayed overnight, so I decided to put an empty hive with used comb in close proximity to them. I added a smear of lemon grass oil at the entrance as further enticement. Well, late that afternoon while I was messing with another colony nearby, I heard the commotion. The swarm was leaving the tree and amassing all over the bait hive. **IT Works!**

Get your blood flowing! Capture or Trap a Swarm!

Fascinating video to watch the action going on in a clustered swarm. You can observe a lot of scouts doing waggle dances. It gets really interesting at around 24:15 minute mark.

[Check out this swarm video](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

[Catching a swarm](#) (Ctrl+Click link)



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)



Pollen identification chart:

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

Inspection sheets:

[Inspection Checksheet \(basic\)](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

[Inspection Checksheet \(detailed\)](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

Sugar Roll Method: [Sugar Roll Mite Inspection - YouTube](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

Alcohol Wash Method: [Alcohol Wash for Mite Control - YouTube](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

Mite Treatment Information [Honey Bee Health Coalition](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

[Meghan Milbrath on Northern Swarms](#) (Ctrl+Click link)

Growing Degree Days (GDD) – Just a primer

GDD are a means used to measure the cumulative warmth in a particular area. It is an estimate but found to be a fairly accurate and useful tool for many (like horticulturalists, farmers, and of course beekeepers) looking to know when plants/crops will reach various stages of development.

The GDD calculation is straight forward. In our area and as it pertains to beekeeping, it is the result of subtracting 50 degrees (referred to as base 50) from the average between the high temperature of the day and the low temperature of the day. If the result is less than zero, there are zero degree days recorded. Each day's accumulation of Growing Degree Days is added to the prior days to provide a cumulative total for the year...and that is what is important to us.

Example: High temp of the day= 70 degrees. Low temp of the day= 50 degrees Average between the two $(70+50=120, 120/2=60)$ is 60 degrees. Remember, this is an estimate, not an hour by hour weighted average temperature. $60 \text{ degrees} - 50 \text{ degrees (the base)} = 10 \text{ degrees}$. This is the number of degree days for that particular day.

So, what is the 50-degree base about? Generally (yes, there are exceptions), plant growth/development/blooming is minimal below 50 degrees in our part of the world and for the plants/trees that we have interest in. Once the average temps exceed 50 degrees growth starts and things start to happen.

Why is this important to me as a beekeeper?

Each plant or tree has a specific time in their development when they bloom. This development is directly influenced by the cumulative warmth the plant experiences. GDD is a means to measure that cumulative warmth. If you know that a particularly important tree blooms at 300 GDD, you can influence your colony management to have a maximum foraging force in place when the date for that 300 GDD nectar flow arrives (assuming honey collection is one of your goals).

How? Well, maybe you delay making elective splits until after that particular tree blooms. Maybe you do a Demaree manipulation rather than a split. Maybe you combine that weak hive you have to a stronger one to make a colony with a huge number of foragers to take advantage of the flow. Being aware of the upcoming flow can allow you to control your feeding to maximize early comb production and stopping your feeding so that your honey crop is produced from natural nectars and not partially from sugar syrup. 'Knowing the future' allows you to get supers on in a timely manner to maximize honey production. It also allows you an opportunity to collect 'crop specific' honey. Do you want specific Black Locust 'water white' honey? How about a crop of delicious Linden honey (a personal favorite)? You can do it and knowing about GDD and your local plants/trees GDD bloom timing can be an enormous help.

How do I know a specific plant's/tree's GDD bloom level?

- Ask other beekeepers that have tracked this information.
- Record the GDD bloom number and date each year for different plants/trees and track it. (Have you heard anyone mention record keeping?)
- Consult local arboretums and botanic garden web sites for bloom GDD.
- Contact regional, state, local ag extension services.

Here is a link to a Growing Degree Days calculator. There are others that you can find on the internet.

[Growing Degree Days Calculator](#) (Ctrl += Click)



Growing Degree Days...Another Tool in Your Toolbox...Use it

An advanced look at what's coming in July

- Honey production
- Honey harvesting (for some)
- Mite monitoring
- Small Hive Beetle (SHB)

Supplies/equipment that may be needed in July

- Harvesting equipment (Extractor, buckets, strainers, uncappers, etc.....is everything clean and in good shape?, Rent?, Have a plan for harvesting your honey ahead of time)
- Honey jars/comb boxes/labeling supplies
- Mite monitoring equipment
- Mite control supplies
 - Beetle Traps, Swiffer pads, other (nematodes, diatomaceous earth)





2026 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President – Tom Allen
tallen122@yahoo.com
 Vice President – Ralph Brindise
rbrindise@att.net
 Secretary – Jackie Tessar
hairdresser9@yahoo.com
 Treasurer – Sue Pinkawa
spinkawa@gmail.com
 Director - John Leibinger
jleibinger@aol.com
 Director - Al Fullerton
adfhoney@gmail.com
 Director – Brandon Teresi
bteresil10@yahoo.com
 Director – Jim Jellissen
jjelli23@gmail.com
 Director - David Engelbrecht
edudavidne@gmail.com

Program Chair – Larry Krengel
 Webmaster – Terri Reeves
 Newsletter Editor – Sue Pinkawa
 Club Extractor Coordinator – Al Fullerton
 Club Raffle Coordinator – Jim Jellissen
 Snack Coordinator – Julianne Anderson

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

