

SMOKER SIGNALS



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A message from Med

I recently came across an article published in ScienceDaily (March 27, 2026) regarding honeybee nutrition. The article outlined some of the nutritional stressors on honeybees including lack of variety of wildflowers and pollen. This can be due to agricultural changes, climate change, and overall loss of habitat for our bees to forage on. As a result, beekeepers offer their colonies pollen substitutes which are often not nutritionally complete. The article states that “these provide calories but lack the sterols bees need leaving colonies nutritionally deficient”.

TOPIC 1

UPDATE ON THE
APIARY AT SCOTTS
LAWN. SEE PAGE 3

TOPIC 2

SWEET, SPRING IS
HERE!
CELEBRATE WITH
A RECIPE ON
PAGES 5-6

TOPIC 3

WANT FREE
PLANTS? SEE THE
UP COMING COBA
EVENT BELOW
AND ON PAGE 10

Smoker Signals cont.

A team of scientists led by those from the University of Oxford did research to find the critical sterols from natural pollen that honeybees need for good development and survival. By analyzing tissue from nurse bees and pupae, the scientists were able to identify six sterols vital to the bees. With this information in hand, the scientists were then able to genetically engineer a yeast, *Yarrowia lipolytica*, to produce an exact mix of the sterols. The yeast was subsequently grown in large batches, dried to a powder, and then used as a supplement for honeybees in a very controlled environment. This ensured that bees had no access to other pollen sources or substitutes.

The results were extremely encouraging. The researchers found that the “colonies receiving the enriched diet produced 15 times more larva that reach the pupal stage” versus the control on standard diets. These colonies also continued raising brood throughout the whole testing time frame.

“The new supplement could strengthen bee health without increasing competition for limited wildflowers. It may even evolve into a complete nutritional feed.” More field trials will need to be done, but if successful, the article states that the supplement could reach the market in the next couple of years. So, more to come.

If you’ve not had a chance to do so, I strongly recommend that you view the two-part National Geographic documentary, entitled Secrets of the Bees. This is a remarkably well-done work, detailing honeybee societies as well as other pollinators and conservation efforts. Very factual with impressive and beautiful cinematography. You will probably wind up watching this two or three times. It’s that good!!

As you probably know, we are starting to get more and more requests for outreach events. Several are scheduled in the next few weeks. Look for an email from Claudia regarding volunteers to help with these. Always a great experience

My honey supers are on. I hope you are all enjoying and taking advantage of the significant dandelion bloom that's going on in herbicide free areas. I've also noted large areas of dead nettle in bloom, and the red buds are reaching peak. It won't be too much longer till the fruit trees start blooming. And I think all of us are looking forward to the Linden, Black Locust, Tulip, and Catalpa bloom. Always hoping that I will need to add more honey supers!

General Meeting

The COBA April 15, 2026, meeting will be at Franklin Park Conservatory, in the Veridian Room. Social hour and potluck are at 6:30, and the meeting starts at 7 p.m. The featured speakers are the 2025 COBA Youth Scholars, who will be giving their final presentation

**MAY 2, 2026,
PANCAKE
BREAKFAST AND
PLANT SWAP.**



**WELCOME NEW
BEEKEEPERS AND
ALL CLUB
MEMBERS!
PLEASE MAKE
PLANS TO ATTEND
OUR ANNUAL
PANCAKE
BREAKFAST AND
PLANT SWAP ON
SATURDAY, MAY
2, 2026, STARTING
AT 9AM.**

**THERE WILL BE
PANCAKES,
SAUSAGE,
COFFEE, JUICE
AND WE WILL BE
HAVING OUR
PLANT SWAP ALL
FREE TO CLUB
MEMBERS AND
THEIR FAMILIES.**

**LOOKING FOR
SOME BEE
FRIENDLY
PLANTS FOR
YOUR NEW BEE
YARD? LOOKING
FOR ADVICE ON
WHAT TO PLANT
TO ATTRACT
POLLINATORS TO
YOUR GARDEN?**

Smoker Signals cont.

Opening week at Scotts Miracle-Gro Apiary!

It's the first week of April and spring has arrived at the Scotts Miracle-Gro (SMG) Apiary located on Scottslawn Road in Marysville! On Thursday April 2 the team de-winterized the hives and moved the hives to their new, sunnier, location in the SMG bee yard. After moving the four-surviving hives, (unfortunately one hive did not survive the winter) our mentor volunteers led the teams in hive inspections and placed feeders on each hive. We fed each hive with the Pro-Sweet liquid feed and then demonstrated how to securely strap down each hive to their stands. On Saturday April 4 we reconvened installing four new packages of bees.



The team helped set up four new hives and then Rich Herman demonstrated how to properly install the packages and the queen cage in each of the new hives. Although the day was warm, we did have to contend with 20-30mph winds, but the team was very successful in making sure the new bees were deposited gently into their new homes. After placing feeders and

strapping them down we then had a Q&A session.

If you are interested in participating in the COBA SMG Apiary we meet on Thursdays at 6:30pm. Address is 14380 Scottslawn Rd, Marysville OH. Park across the street at the Scott Associates Credit Union, it's a red barn, as the small gravel lot in the apiary is for COBA volunteers who are unloading and loading equipment and handicapped placard holders only.



THIS IS THE EVENT YOU MUST ATTEND. DID YOU THIN SOME OF YOUR PERENNIALS AND DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH THEM? BRING THEM TO TRADE.

BREAKFAST WILL BE SERVED AT THE METHODIST CHURCH, 501 EAST BROAD STREET, COLUMBUS 43215 STARTING AT 9 AM. THIS CHURCH IS ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF EAST BROAD ACROSS FROM THE COLUMBUS MUSEUM OF ART. THIS IS A GREAT WAY TO START YOUR WEEKEND WITH FELLOW BEEKEEPERS AND MAKE NEW FRIENDS.

WE ALWAYS NEED VOLUNTEERS TO SET UP TABLES AND FLIP PANCAKES. PLEASE SEND ME A MESSAGE AT MARYDRU2000@YAHOO.COM IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP OR HAVE ANY QUESTIONS. DRU PRITCHARD

Smoker Signals cont.

Create a Buzz: It's Time to Teach What You Know

The bees are foraging, and it's time for Outreach Season. Schools, libraries, and clubs are scheduling honeybee presentations. If you are interested in volunteering to help, contact Claudia at claudiakhoureybowers@gmail.com.



“Spring is nature’s way of saying,
‘Let’s party!’”

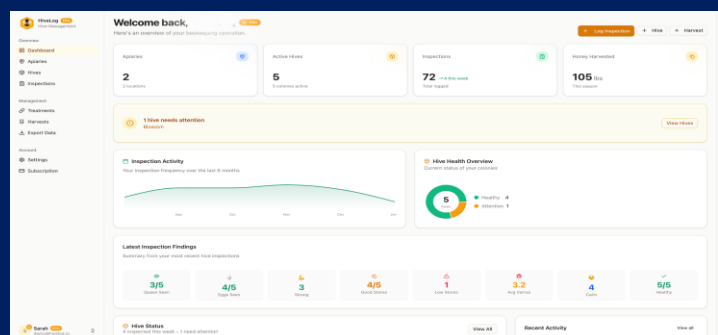
Robin Williams



HIVE LOG

HiveLog is a free hive management app for hobbyist beekeepers.

<https://hivelog.io/>



Chamomile Cupcakes with Honey Buttercream Frosting

Author: [The Chunky Chef](#)

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 17 minutes

Total Time: 37 minutes

Servings: 12

Ingredients

Chamomile cupcakes

- 1/2 cup water
- 2 chamomile tea bags
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter
softened to room temperature
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- pinch of salt



Honey buttercream

- 1 cup unsalted butter *softened to room temperature*
- 1/4 cup of honey
- 3 1/2 cups powdered sugar *whisked to remove any lumps*
- pinch of salt
- chamomile flowers *for garnish (optional)*

Prepare

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line muffin tins with cupcake liners or spray with nonstick cooking spray. Set aside.

Brew tea

Smoker Signals cont.

1. Bring water to a simmer (on the stovetop or in the microwave), then add the chamomile tea bags and let steep for 10 minutes. After 10 minutes has passed, discard the tea bags and let the tea sit to cool while you move ahead with the recipe.

Combine dry ingredients

1. In a smaller mixing bowl, add the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Whisk to combine, then set aside.

Cream butter and sugar

1. To the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or large mixing bowl and use a hand mixer), add butter and sugar. Beat on MED speed until light in color and fluffy.

Make batter

1. Add the eggs one at a time, beating after each addition, scraping down the sides as needed. Add vanilla, beating until combined.
2. Add about half of the flour mixture, beating on LOW until just combined. Add half the brewed chamomile tea and beat to combine. Repeat with remaining flour mixture and tea, mixing until just combined and no flour streaks remain.

Bake

1. Scoop the batter into the cupcake liners (using a cookie scoop is super helpful), filling them about 2/3 of the way full.
2. *Bake in separate batches for best results, with the muffin pan in the center of the middle rack.*
3. Bake for 16-18 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out with just a few moist crumbs.

Cool

1. Remove from the oven and let sit for a minute, then transfer cupcakes to a wire cooling rack to cool completely.

Make buttercream

1. Add butter and honey to a large mixing bowl (or the bowl of a stand mixer) and beat with a mixer until creamy.
2. Add powdered sugar and salt, a little at a time, mixing at a lower speed to prevent the sugar from flying out of the mixer.
3. Increase the mixer speed to medium and beat for another 2 minutes or until the frosting is smooth and fluffy.

Frost cupcakes

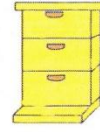
1. Transfer frosting to piping bag fitted with a large open star tip (or your desired tip), and once the cupcakes are completely cooled, pipe swirls of frosting onto cupcakes.
2. Garnish with chamomile flowers if desired and serve.



Habitat



Resources



New Apiary Registration Process & ODA Bee Resources

By Sarah L Sullivan, PhD

(Reviewed by Bradley Deering, ODA State Apiarist)

Please submit suggestions for future articles to sarah@fruitstrengthfarm.com

Apiary registration is REQUIRED by State Law. <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/909.02>

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) manages the Apiary Inspection Program in Ohio. The previous state budget bill, HB 96, made several changes to the Apiary Program, effective during the 2026 renewal process. The changes are:

- Apiary registration is now free.
- Beekeepers can now register their apiaries online.
- Operations that offer Queens, packages, nucs or colonies for sale will be required to pay \$50 for a Queen Certificate (technically it is called a Certificate of Inspection)

New beekeepers can register their apiary via the [Registration](#) page on the ODA website (see link below). Beekeepers for whom ODA has an email address, will receive an annual registration renewal email reminder.

agri.ohio.gov/divisions/plant-health/apiary-program/updates

In addition to online apiary registration, the website of Ohio's Apiary Program has been substantially updated. It addresses many concerns of new and experienced beekeepers.

- The [Home](#) page, includes: QR code to register your apiaries by smartphone and link to online registration page. Recent law changes, Beginning beekeepers' video, Pesticides for use against varroa mites, and link to the Honey Bee Health Coalition (HBHC) Guide to Effective Varroa Sampling & Control (pdf). Contact information for the Apiary Program.
- The [Registration](#) page, includes: Overview, links to both the online New & Renew Registration as well as link to PDF Application for New & Renew Registration, Registration Process, Apiary Inspections, Pesticide Notification, and No Consent for Inspection
- The [Inspection](#) page presents the 2025 Inspection results for each county. Map of County-appointed inspectors and list of County-appointed inspectors.
- The [Commercial Operations](#) page, includes: Information on Queen Rearing Apiaries, Permit Necessary to Transfer, Ship or Move Honey Bees into Ohio, and Selling Honey
- The [Pests](#) page, includes: photos and information about American Foulbrood (AFB), European Foulbrood (EFB), Small Hive Beetle, and Varroa Mite.
- The [Best Practices](#) page, includes: Recommended Practices for Hive Location, Bee Health & Colony Strength, and Seasonal Management Recommendations Spring/Summer/Fall/Winter. Links to Honey Bee Labs and links to Apiary Law.

April 2026 Activities

at the

ScottsLawn COBA Apiary

Date	Activities	Learning Activity
Thu, 02 Apr	<ol style="list-style-type: none">De-Winterise & clean-up the apiaryMove over-wintered colonies to new positions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Yellow jacket trapsBest practices for inspecting a hive
Sat, 04 Apr	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Install packages of beesWe will be spraying the packages with OA	<i>N/A</i>
Thu, 09 Apr	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Inspect the over-wintered colonies	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Feeding coloniesSwarm Traps
Thu, 16 Apr	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Inspect the over-wintered colonies	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Adding supers for collecting honey
Sun, 19 Apr	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Install a 2nd package of bees	<i>N/A</i>
Thu, 23 Apr	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Inspect all colonies	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Planting for Pollinators (given by Dutch Mill Greenhouse)
Sat, 25 Apr	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Frame building workshop (location TBA)	<i>N/A</i>
Thu, 30 Apr	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Inspect all colonies	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Splitting coloniesFeeding splits

Other Notes:

- At some point in May, we hope to be installing a swarm. Learning activities for that date will be rescheduled.
 - 22 Apr: Earth Day
-

Smoker Signals cont.



Starting in 2026, the COBA activities at the ScottsLawn apiary will be completed using electronic apiary records.

We have selected HiveTracks to record our records and other activities at the ScottsLawn participate, you will need to install the your smartphone, but **you do not need a HiveTracks Pro this application for the ScottsLawn apiary.**



colony inspection Apiary. To HiveTracks app on **subscription to use**

The instructions for you to use HiveTracks with your

1. Install the HiveTracks app on your smartphone (there is
2. Connect to the ScottsLawn Apiary using either [this link](#), QR code shown to the right using your smart-phone's

smartphone are:

no cost), and then

or you can scan the camera.

The web link will

take you to the pro.hivetracks.com website where you will need to enter your name and eMail to create an account. You do not need to subscribe to a pro subscription to use HiveTracks at our apiary.

As with other COBA systems, there will be no marketing data (spam) coming from us.

Using HiveTracks at the ScottsLawn Apiary

If you are the person recording activities for your team at the apiary, these are the instructions for you to use:

1. Click on **ScottsLawn Apiary**.
2. Click on the hive for which you are going to record activities.
3. There you will see the assigned tasks for the day. Click on one, and when you then click **Complete to-do**, it will prompt you for any additional information needed.

The most common task we will be performing is **Perform Inspection**. Click on that and then **Begin Inspection** to bring up the inspection record form.

There may be more than one task assigned for a day: be sure to check the list.

We're looking forward to seeing everyone!

Pancake Breakfast and Plant Swap

Date: **Saturday May 2, 2026 at 8:30 – 11:30 am**

Location: Broad Street United Methodist Church, 501 East Broad Street, Columbus 43215
The church is directly across from the Columbus Art Museum

Parking: Park in the lots on the east side of Washington Ave – the State Auto Insurance lots

Enter: The primary entrance for this event is on the west side of Washington Ave in a blacktopped area between the church and an apartment building. If you need to use the handicapped ramp and elevator, it will be available to get to the social hall for breakfast

Pancake Breakfast - served 9-11am

All Welcome. NO Bees here. Bring the whole family. Enjoy a hearty breakfast.

Serving: Pancakes(gluten-free available) , eggs, bacon, sausage, coffee/tea/juice/cocoa

Volunteer: To help with the pancake breakfast, please contact Dru Pritchard at 614-537-0308 or marydru2000@yahoo.com

Plant Swap - 8:30-11:30am

Bring: Got extra plants to share? Bring them to the COBA annual plant swap and let them find a new home. For each plant, please include an attached label with the name of the plant. Empty pots up to 5-gallon size are also welcomed.

Take: Swap plants that you brought for new plant varieties that you would like to try.

Hosts: Barb Bloetscher and Sarah Sullivan will be under the white canopy on the blacktop by the event entrance. We are here:

- to receive your donated plants,
- to help you select new plants to take home,
- to answer your Honey Bee Habitat questions, and
- to receive your suggestions for the Habitat Resources column in COBA's monthly newsletter, Smoker Signals. Note: This is a team effort with Sarah drafting and revising the articles and Barb providing constructive feedback and suggestions until we are both satisfied with the results.



Articles published since last year's plant swap:

May 2025: "Pollinator Habitat Guides"

Jun 2025: "Identifying Current Floral Sources"

Aug 2025: "What is a Dearth?"

Sep 2025: "Dealing with Overly Defensive Bees"

Oct 2025: "Protecting Bees from Winter Starvation"

Nov 2025: "FreeCycling Bee Stuff via COBA"

Jan 2026: "Workhorse/Pollinator Plant selection via ERA Tool"

Feb 2026: "Might Agricultural Use Lower Your Property Tax?"

Mar 2026 "Pear Tree Nectar ... YUCK!"

Apr 2026: "New Apiary Registration Process & ODA Bee Resources"

submitted by Sarah L Sullivan, PhD

Checking Out for the Good: A Way Shopping Can Help Support COBA

The following screenshots are step by step instructions on how to link your Kroger shopping card to COBA. Each time you shop Kroger will donate pennies towards COBA. Every small amount counts!

<https://www.kroger.com/i/community/community-rewards>

2. Link your Card to an organization.

Selecting the organization that you wish to support is as simple as updating the Kroger Community Rewards selection on your digital account.

1. Sign in to your digital account.
2. Search for your organization [here](#).
3. Enter the name or NPO number of the organization you wish to support.
4. Select the appropriate organization from the list and click "Save".

Your selected organization will also display in the Kroger Community Rewards section of your account. If you need to review or revisit your organization, you can always do so under your Account details.

3. Your organization earns.

Any transactions moving forward using the Shopper's Card number associated with your digital account will be applied to the program, at no added cost to you. Kroger donates annually to participating organizations based on your percentage of spending

Smoker Signals cont.

Greener Growth: COBA Cuts Paper

COBA recently switched the membership roster to a new platform called Join It. You should have received email (or two) with a request to log in and update your membership profile. If you have, thank you. If you haven't, please do so. You will receive a follow-up email to download your digital membership card. Please place this card in your apple or google wallet. You may need to download the wallet app onto your phone or portable device. If you have any issues, please call or email me. Thanks.

Bob Bowers (330) 353-2316 cell bbowers53@att.net

