

SMOKER SIGNALS



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A message from Med

I read a meteorologist report that talked about the “Accumulated Winter Season Severity Index” and the fact that the Index for the winter of 2025-2026 is now classified as Extreme. The weather conditions that we’ve seen recently makes this winter one of the most severe in Ohio history based on observations going back to 1950. The most severe winter was that of 1977 to 1978 which of course was the blizzard year.

TOPIC 1

FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING DETAILS ON PAGE 2

TOPIC 2

COBA SCHOOL SCHEDULE ON PAGE 3 AND 4 (FOLLOW LINK)

TOPIC 3

NOT SURE WHAT TO DO WITH THE BEE POLLEN YOU HARVESTED? SEE THE RECIPE ON PAGE 5

Smoker Signals cont.

And we did hit this extreme category, but just briefly, in the winter of 2017 to 2018.

Of course, with these conditions I've really been concerned about the status of my hives. This week the temperature hit 50° and I was able to get into those at my main apiary in Hilliard. I've lost three out of 9. All of the six good hives were quite vigorous and still had some supplemental food supplies on top of the frames. I did take the opportunity to add one or two sugar blocks to each of these six hives. Winter, of course, is not over, so I'll be keeping a close eye on my hives until Spring. I am hoping to be able to get some splits out of my remaining hives.

If you are not aware, "the Kroger Family of Companies is committed to community engagement, positive social impact and charitable giving at the national and local levels". To do this, Kroger has a Community Rewards Program which donates funds to local charitable foundations. Our Central Ohio Beekeepers Charitable Foundation is now enrolled in this program. If you shop at Kroger and have a Kroger Plus card, you can link your account to our charitable foundation. Instructions on how to do this can be found by doing a Google search for "Kroger Community Rewards Program". The link is established by using one of the following 2 choices-

Central OH Beekeepers Charitable Fnd. or NPO# BI811

Then, by swiping your Plus card when you shop, Kroger will donate (at no cost to you) to our organization based on the items you purchase. Hopefully you will take advantage of this program as any funds generated will go towards our scholarship programs.

Finally, a new COBA membership portal is now live. Look for more information in this newsletter. And thanks to Claudia and Bob Bowers, Winnie Williams, Morgan Rudell, Jeremy Woelfle and Mike Hall for their efforts to get this up and running.

Enjoy the anticipated warm up!

General Meeting

The COBA February 18, 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 speaker is Mr. Michael Hogan, Associate Professor at The Ohio State University Extension. His topic is: The Land Grant Mission of The Ohio State University.



Mike Hogan's Biography

Mike Hogan is Extension Educator for Agriculture and Natural Resources and Associate Professor with Ohio State University Extension. Hogan also serves as the statewide Urban Agriculture Team Coordinator for OSU Extension and is also the Ohio Coordinator for the USDA SARE Program (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education).

Hogan's work focuses on urban agriculture and urban food system development and small farm issues such as alternative agriculture, direct marketing, and local food systems. Hogan also provides leadership for the largest Master Gardener Volunteer program in the state in Franklin County.

Hogan served a term as President of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents and has served on the national board of the Joint Council of Extension Professionals. Hogan is active in faculty governance at OSU and served a term as Faculty Council Chair representing more than 7,100 faculty at the institution.

The First Flight

Yesterday, Feb.10 was an indication that the severe cold temperatures are behind us. Temperatures in Marysville reached a high of 51 degrees, sunny and none to a mild breeze. Excellent day to do hive inspection. A day to check on winter survival and food supply.

As many of you know, my apiary is located in the open and quite a distance from the house. I took the backhoe to remove snow from around the hives in order to conduct hive inspection. Besides being my birthday, my wife indicated that I was doing two things I really enjoy. Beekeeping and operating farm equipment. Being a farm boy, I enjoy the outdoors and operating equipment. All hives that survived the harsh winter received supplemental food. Hive ALive fondant and AP23 winter patties.

Next week's weather will be in the fifties. Great time to check your hives. Make sure they have sufficient food. Between now and the first of April is when a lot of beekeeper's experience losses. Bees move to the outside frame for food, a drop in temperature and the bee population isn't adequate to maintain temperature and they freeze.

The next few weeks would be a great time to add AP23 pollen patties to provide food for brood rearing. Also, consider mite treatment before putting honey supers on. I plan on treating some with Apivar and others with Apiguard. About mid-March, I will be putting medium boxes on my double deeps to make medium nucs. Honey supers will most likely go on the first week in April. Last year the honey flow was about two weeks earlier than previous years. (April 11,2025) . Typical honey flow is in the last week of April.

Support your local small business:

Three-pound package bees with an Italian queen.
Available Friday 4/03/2026 and Saturday 4/18/2026.

Medium nucs April-May. Deep nucs May-June.

Packages and nucs pending weather conditions.

California queens in April. Ohio queens in May.

Complete bee supplies by appointment.

Rich Herman 419-512-2105



COBA BEE SCHOOLS FOR 2026 DATES

OPTION 1 - SCOTT'S LAWN/MARYSVILLE BEE SCHOOL ON SAT FEB 28, 8A TO 430P.

OPTION 2 - FOUR 2-HOUR SESSIONS (6:30P-8:30P) ON WEDNESDAY EVENINGS - FEB 25, MARCH 4, MARCH 11, AND MARCH 18 AT WATERMAN FARM HQ AT OSU.

OPTION 3 - LIBERTY MUTUAL INSURANCE SAT. MARCH 14, 2026, 8A - 430P. 518 E. BROAD ST. COLUMBUS OH

SIGN UP HERE. PROGRAMS [HTTPS://SHARE.GOOGLE/W9MH5Q3201VCBJT1W](https://share.google/w9mh5q3201vcbjt1w)

Smoker Signals cont.

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

The bees may still be clustering, but it's almost 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.



“In February there is everything to hope for and nothing to regret.”

-Patience Strong



BEE SCHOOL SPRING 2026 SCHEDULE

<https://share.google/IZtOZKwXDzGyEdUN8>



Smoker Signals cont.

Bee Pollen and Avocado Toast

Ingredients:

- 1 ripe avocado, halved and pitted
- 2 slices of artisan sourdough bread
- 1 tablespoon of extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon of bee pollen
- 1/2 teaspoon of flaky sea salt
- 1/4 teaspoon of freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon of microgreens, for garnish

Instructions:

Preheat your oven to 350°F and place the sourdough slices on a baking sheet. Lightly brush each slice with extra-virgin olive oil.

Toast the bread in the oven for 5 minutes, or until golden and crisp around the edges.

While the bread toasts, scoop the avocado flesh into a small bowl. Mash it gently with a fork, leaving some chunks for texture.

Spread the mashed avocado evenly over the toasted sourdough slices.

Sprinkle the bee pollen, flaky sea salt, and freshly ground black pepper over the avocado.

Garnish with microgreens for a fresh, peppery bite and a pop of color.

<https://simplyfamilyrecipes.com/bee-pollen-recipes/>

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





Habitat



Resources



Might Agricultural Use Lower Your Property Tax?

By Sarah L Sullivan, PhD

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

Agricultural Land is taxed at a lower valuation than Residential Use. If you can get your land to be requalified from Residential to Current Agricultural Use Valuation (CAUV), then the property tax on that CAUV land can incur substantially less property tax.

For example, the rules in Union County, Ohio for land to qualify for CAUV are:

- The parcel must be zoned Residential/Agricultural
- The parcel must be a minimum of 2.5 acres.
- The parcel must have a documented minimum 3-year history of a minimum \$2,500 annual gross sales of agricultural products that were produced from that land each of those 3 years.
- If a residence is on the parcel, then one acre remains Residential Use as the homestead acre.

These rules might be different in your county, so please check with your county auditor.

There are many ways to reach the minimum \$2,500 annual gross sales, such as:

1. Selling Products of the Hive, including honey, pollen, beeswax, queens, nucs, etc.
2. Farmers Markets. Note that many Central Ohio Farmers Markets are saturated with honey vendors. However, there are many other agricultural products in short supply such as: fruits, vegetables, eggs, etc. The Market Manager of your local Farmers Market will know what products will be welcomed at the market that they manage.
3. Agricultural Tourism, such as: u-pick, farm stand, self-serve egg refrigerator on the porch, etc

Furthermore, gross sales of your agricultural products can be counted toward agricultural expenses, such as: CAUV land property tax, repairs and property tax on outbuildings used in production, seeds, bees and bee equipment, brush removal, etc. (1040 Schedule F). Gross sales can also be counted toward business expenses, such as: business use of the home, retail packaging, market booth rent, transportation expense to/from markets, and even your COBA membership (1040 Schedule C).

See also **Ohio Revised Code**:

- Section 323.152 | Reductions in taxable value
- Section 323.153 | Application for reduction in real property taxes
- Section 5713.03 | County auditor to determine taxable value of real property
- Section 5713.31 | County auditor to value land for real property tax purposes

In these inflationary times, perhaps formalizing your agricultural activities might bring some relief to your pocket book.