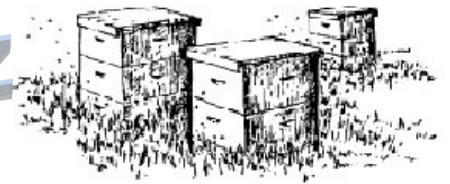




Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



April, 2016

The April 12, 2016 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome (membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year). The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks. We still need some help getting the coffee and lemonade set up for us. We also have a few empty spots on our sign-up sheets for snacks and the opening invocation. Thanks to Dave Grimme who volunteered to bring salty treats and Jennifer Escobedo (something sweet) for our March meeting. After 30 minutes of social time, our meeting will be called to order with an opening invocation by Dave Grimme.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The renovations at the "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center are complete and we will be returning there for our April meeting.

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

Q: I'm still confused. What are the rules for bottling and selling my honey?

An A: There continues to be a fair amount of confusion on this topic. It is best to go online and read what the Texas Department of State Health Services has to say (Google "Selling Honey in Texas").

The new "small honey producer" law that went into effect September 1, 2015 permits beekeepers to produce, package and sell their honey without any food safety requirements, even prohibiting requirements imposed by local health departments. Hives must be located in Texas and owned and managed by the beekeeper. Sales must be direct to the consumer (not for resale or use in products to be sold). Venues are restricted to the beekeeper's home, farmers' markets, roadside stands or at nonprofit fairs, festivals or events. There are specific labeling requirements and the product can only be honey or honey comb (no added ingredients). The "shiny object" in all of this is that

"small" is defined as less than 2,500 pounds of honey!

A "food manufacturer's license" is required if the "small producer" rules are not met. The main issue in meeting the licensing and inspection requirements is that foods cannot be handled or stored in any room used as living or sleeping quarters. "Selling Honey in Texas" discusses the details, including a series of frequently asked questions.

Honey Container Order

Many of our members use containers purchased in bulk from bee supply houses or from Sailor Plastics:

(<http://www.sailorplastics.com/>).

The cost per container is substantially less with the large quantity (200 or more containers and lids in a single large box). Because of their large size, shipping on these individual big boxes is about \$40 each (almost equal to the value of the bottles inside). For the last couple of years we have been ordering honey containers as a group, saving considerably on shipping costs (last year's order was delivered for less than \$5.00 per box). Final cost savings depend on the size of the order.

To again take advantage of these savings, we will be placing a group order with Sailor Plastics. If you want in, you'll need to complete an order form and have it with you at the May meeting. We will have forms available at our April meet-

ing and plan to email copies to everyone in a week or two. You will need to visit Sailor's web site to select from the many choices of containers and lids that are available.

We will collect the forms at our May meeting and we plan to place the order as soon as we have forms and deposits in hand. A \$50.00 per box nonrefundable deposit is required, so make sure you get your order right. The deposit checks should be made out to Fort Bend Beekeepers Association. Be aware that lids must be ordered separately.

The Association's entire order will be shipped to Jeff McMullan's home in Sugar Land and orders must be picked up on the day it is delivered. The balance on your order will be due at pickup. If you change your mind or something, we will offer your order to others for the remaining unpaid balance. It is ok for members to get together to split a box, but one of them must place the order for the full box and lids.

Treasurer's Report

Our March treasury balance was \$1,873.46. Since then we collected \$5.00 in dues from 12 new and renewing members (\$60.00) plus \$75.00 for three more members enrolled in our mentoring program. The resulting treasury balance is \$2,008.46 consisting of \$45.00 in cash and our Wells Fargo posted balance of \$2,575.82 less a \$612.36 outstanding check.

Swap Time Again

Daylight Savings Time went into effect March 13 so we have an extra hour of daylight for our April 12 meeting night. The plan is for another swap night for members to check out the stuff folks brought to the meeting. Members can make a deal and swap treasures out in the parking lot. If you have extra hive components or beekeeper gear, bring it along to our April 12 meeting to swap, sell or give away.

March Meeting Notes

With the Fort Bend County “Bud” O’Shieles Community Center still undergoing renovation, we were again displaced to the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds for our March meeting. This time we met in Building D. It seemed that everyone managed to find the place ok. We had 54 members and guests sign in at the meeting. There were 6 first-timers and 12 new and renewing members that paid their 2016 dues in March. Our roster total now stands at 105!!

After 30 minutes of social time, President Daryl Scott opened our meeting with an invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Daryl next reminded everyone that there are still a few slots open for volunteers for meeting snacks and our opening invocation. He also called for more volunteers to help with the honey bee exhibit at the NRG Center AGventure at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. The rodeo continues through March 22 and more volunteers are always needed. Many of our members have helped out at the rodeo and everyone agreed that it was a fun time that goes by very quickly.

Daryl’s monthly fun facts for March: According to the National Honey Board, there were some 2.64 million hives in the U. S. in 2013. There were 115,000 - 125,000 beekeepers in the U. S., most with 25 or fewer hives. The top five honey producing states (in order) are North Dakota, Montana, South Da-

kota, Florida and California.

The “beekeeper’s calendar” for March includes swarm management techniques like reversing brood boxes, doing splits, etc. During winter it is likely that the bees have moved up in the hive stack as they feed on their stores. Returning the brood nest to the bottom discourages swarming: the bees think they need to finish growing the brood nest first.

Splits can be made using mated queens or queen cells. A queen cell from a hive that is preparing to swarm can be used to make a split, but always leave behind at least one queen cell in case the hive has already swarmed. Another option is the “walkaway split” where the queenless split raises their own queen. This requires eggs or brood less than one day old.

Boone Holloday, Wendy Chopin, Jeff McMullan and Milton Woods gave reports on their mentoring program progress. Jeff McMullan also demonstrated his latest gadget: the Nectar Detector for weighing hives.

Jeff Murray told the group about his plans to form the Texas Honey Trading Co. and asked for input on his idea to form a kind of beekeeper cooperative. Details to follow.

Door prize winners in March included Wendy Chopin who took home a special treat: a bottle of Jerzey Trybek’s hand crafted limoncello (see the related article). The winners were Craig Rench (a magnifying glass donated by Jeff McMullan), Glenda McGaughey (an entrance feeder donated by Gerard Howard) and Alan L’Roy and Gina Walker (beekeeper calendars donated by Jack Richardson). Christina Lopez won a bottle of lemon oil and a list of all its uses (Daryl Scott bought it accidentally while shopping for lemongrass oil). Daryl also donated a plastic water jug that was won by John Petter. It can be used to make a really handy swarm catcher using plans by Jeff McMullan. Jeff has used his swarm jug to capture swarms as high as 35 ft up.

Limoncello

Limoncello is a citrus-based liqueur that is served well chilled. Association member Jerzey Trybek hand crafts his own limoncello sweetened with honey from his hives. He starts with the zest from 8-10 average lemons, or from 8 oranges, or from 5-6 grapefruits. Wash them with a brush and start zesting. He prefers stainless steel vegetable peelers as his zesting tool. Zest as thinly as possible – too much pith will introduce a more bitter taste.

Next he infuses 190 proof grain alcohol. For each liter of alcohol, Jerzey wants about 200 square inches of zest (measured and calculated using π ...high science). He pours alcohol over the zest and seals it in a jar with a tight lid. Within a week or so, the alcohol has dissolved oils and other goodies and the zest becomes dry and brittle. Next, Jerzey strains the yellow/orange infused alcohol. He then dilutes the citrus infusion to about 80 proof (store-bought limoncello is usually 60 proof). His proportions are water, infused alcohol, and honey in 5:4:1 parts by volume. He dissolves 100 ml of honey in 500 ml of warm, filtered and boiled water. After it cools, he adds 400 ml of the alcohol infusion. He lets the cello “mature” for a few days at room temperature before enjoying it well-chilled, straight from the freezer.

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EXTENSION



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