

Montgomery County Beekeepers Association

Minutes for Monthly Meeting

03/17/2025

Apprentices Beekeeper Meeting

Meeting began at 6:12pm

Led by Nadia Clark

Lighting a smoker

Make sure you practice lighting a smoker before your first time on the hive. Pine needles are a good first seer, since they light quickly. However they burn out quickly, so once you put the pine needles, you may use cardboard, horse bedding pellets, or smoker pellets, dried oak/ceder bark. Burlap is also good. These are hard to get to light, but once you light it it burns for a long time. When lighting your smoker, you light the pine needles first. Make sure it's burning well. Then begin layering your choice of material that burns longer. Make sure you don't have your veil on when lighting a smoker, because your veil screen will burn easily. Same with the rest of your suit, so use caution.

Once you finish, you can leave your smoker on concrete and let it burn out. You may also dump the remaining of the contents of the smoker into a bucket of water, then you can store your smoker in a metal or fireproof bucket.

The Bee Supply online is a good place to get help. They have lots of helpful videos and articles, and the employees are also helpful.

If bees are not building on frames, it may help to feed your bees a little bit of sugar syrup (about a quart per week) and rewax the frames.

If you don't have a lot of forage around your bees, you can feed your bees. If you open feed too close to your hive, you may, but it's a hassle since it will attract a lot of other bees, and it can induce robbers. In hive feeding is typically better, since bees can protect the feeder better. The frame feeder is typically the best, but you can put a jar of sugar syrup on the top of your inner cover, put another box, then your lid. In frame feeders come with inserts so your bees can crawl down, but make sure when refilling the feeder you clean out those inserts to avoid having dead bees in your feeders.

The amount of syrup you give your bees varies on how many bee are in your hive, how many resources your bees have, how healthy your hive is, etc. In summer during dearth you can feed, and feed heavily during fall to keep the 40lbs of resources bees overwinter with. Dearth, which is when there are no resources for bees, usually starts sometime in July and lasts until the fall nectar and pollen flow.

When installing your in frame feeder, you put it in the place of the two very outer frames. It doesn't matter which side of the box. When a hive box is 80% full, you add another box. When putting another box on your hive, you may take one of your OUTER brood frames and put it in the new box to make your bees start working faster in the upper box. Make sure it's an outer frame, not a center frame.

Make sure you do this during heavy flow though, since the bees will draw wax easily then. Or feed.

If your hive is honey bound, you can take the frames that are just honey and either extract them, share them with a weaker hive, or freeze them to feed back to the bees later. Make sure the queen is not on the frames though.

The bee supply has a monthly webinar, and they will tell you what to expect for that month for beekeeping. It happens the first Thursday of every month. They also have classes that are good.

When figuring out how to position your hives you want to place them so they won't bother your neighbors. If you're in a neighborhood, you should also keep gentle bees. Winding creek Bee supply sells gentle bees, and The Bee Supply sells Golden Cordovans, which is a very gentle breed of bee.

One tree can produce as much pollen and nectar as 3 acres of flowers, so trees are very good for bees. Tallow trees are a very good source of nectar, and can produce up to 10 acres of flowers equivalent of nectar. It's the main source of nectar in this area. Yaupon holly is also a very good source, along with horsemint (bee balm). Golden rod in fall.

Apprentice meeting adjourned at 6:51pm. 13 people in attendance

Main Meeting

Started at 7:03pm

Vendor announcements

Winding Creek Bee Supply has a Spit & Whittle every Saturday morning, on March 19th Mr. Ed will speak there.

Montgomery County Appraisal District presentation

Presenter: Matt Schiel, RPA, CTA

Office: (936) 756-3354

Direct: (936) 521-8835

Email: mschiel@mcad-tx.org

Address: PO Box 2233
109 Gladstell

Conroe, TX 77305

Also present: Jim Cavazos, Direct: (936) 521-8830, Email: jcavazos@mcad-tx.org

Website: www.mcad-tx.org/ag-timber

The 1-d-1 appraisal says that both individual and corporate owners are eligible under this provision if the land is used for qualified purpose.

For bee ag exemption, you need a minimum of 5 acres and a maximum of 20 acres. This does not include structures. First 5 acres- 6 hives, each additional 2.5 acres add a hive. 20 acres-12 hives. Make sure you check the website for more specific requirements.

For the application, you need pictures of hives with bees in it. You need receipts of purchase of bees, equipment, queen, etc. Contract with a bee company that is supplying the bees (if you have someone else taking care of the bees on your property) and a map of where the hives are located on the property. There is a file on the website for your 1-d-1 application.

2025 Texas legislative session

HB 225 relating to a study by the Texas AM Agrilife Extension Service to determine standards of appraisal

HB 1244 Relating to the Eligibility of land to continue being appraised for ag valorem tax purposes as qualified open space land following a transfer to a person who uses the land in the same way of the former owner.

HB 2930 relating to the eligibility of land for appraisal for ag valorem tax purposes as qualified open space (10 acres or less for uncommon production methods or systems like pastured poultry)

HB 519 relating to honey production and harvesting and packaging of honey and honeycomb.

If you reach the number of hives needed for exemption, then they die and it's time to file, you need to consult with the ag officer so they can work with you.

The deadline for filing for this year is end of April.

SB 1360 relating to the labeling and selling of Tx honey

HB 2998 relating to requiring voter approval for mass pesticide application and municipalities or counties.

Presentation ended at 7:48pm

Presenter: Natalie with Bee Mindful - her presentation on sustainable, natural integrated PMI for more resilient bees at

Presentation start at 7:50pm

There are many ways to treat your bees.

A factor that affects the number of colonies in the US is supply and demand. In WWII there was a high demand of bees for honey and wax to make ammunition.

Not all bees are created equal, so natural treatments won't work on every hive.

IPM is a best management strategy that integrates a combination of tactics to reduce pest and pathogen impact. (Integrated Pest Management)

It helps decrease the resistance of treatments and helps prevent issues. The Biology of the Honey bee by Mark L Winston and honey bee diseases and pests are both good books to learn bee biology.

It's important to know how to identify what a healthy hive looks like, like how to read the combs and the life cycle and symptoms of your pests and pathogens.

American foulbrood is very rare, but you still should know what it looks like since it's a very deadly and contagious disease, and you need to burn the equipment affected by it.

European foulbrood is a stress related disease, and is often related to an imbalance of the nurse bees to brood ratio. When the nectar flow kicks it, it typically takes care of itself. You can feed your bees to help. Chlorine and lemon juice along with other probiotics in sugar syrup is a way to help your bees combat this disease.

Varroa mites are one of the biggest problems in beekeeping, and it's good that you know this pest very well.

Parasitic mite syndrome is a disease you also need to know. The symptoms include sick larvae, deformed wing virus in your bees, etc.

Small hive beetles are a common pest, and they tend to look for protein in your hive. This is also a pest you need to know about.

Wax moths feed on propolis, pollen and wax. It's a secondary pest, along with the small hive beetles.

It's also important to have good queens, since that will determine the half the genetics of your worker bees.

It's also important to have clean combs, and minimize stress in your hive. Propolis (tree resin) has antibacterial properties, so you can also encourage propolis building.

Free plans for top bar hives online (Natalie B, Bee Mindful)

Forage quantity and quality is a big impact on how your bees do in a season.

With a Top bar hive, you have to crush the comb and strain it to harvest honey. You get wax this way, but you do have to destroy the comb from that frame.

Entrance reducers are good to help your bees protect their entrances, along with robbing screens.

In conclusion, it's important to know what a healthy hive looks like, keeps stressors minimal, start with good bees, and how to recognize early signs of issues.

Meeting adjourned at 9:18pm

33 people in attendance

(Submitted by Sofia Clark)