

GBA Monthly Newsletter

Editors: Gina Gallucci and Linda Tillman



Photo of Bee on Blueberry by Steve Esau, MABA member

Message from our President, Jerry Edwards

Spring, a busy and hectic time for beekeepers, opens nature's window which enables us not only to observe our energy driven girls, but also to work in sync with the natural world. This is the most satisfying time of my beekeeping life and I hope your apiary pursuits offer you the same type of solace.

Message is short this month, as I want all of us to have sufficient time to enjoy our bees!

Jerry Edwards, President GA Beekeepers

Saving the world, one bee at a time

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In this issue we present two articles on how to improve your bee club.

## **The Components of a Good Bee Club**

by Bear Kelley, Vice President, GBA

In preparing this topic, I researched other organization's websites, bylaws, and operating manuals and found the following topics that are important to making yours a good bee club:

- Meeting time and location
- Conduct and content of the meeting
- Publicity
- Recruiting drives
- Newsletter or website submissions
- Recognition of achievement

### **Meeting time and location:**

Club officers should attempt to accommodate the majority of the "regular members" at your meetings. Find out what time and location would work best for them. It's difficult to find one perfect meeting time or place. You might be fortunate enough to have your own building, but you still have to find the right time. It can be beneficial periodically to change the meeting time and/or location. Clubs often set up special meetings several times a year. Arrangements are made for a guest speaker who will interest a diverse group. Successful clubs widely advertise this meeting. Often they invite spouses and provide childcare. Experience shows that at such special meetings, you will get not only an excellent turnout of your regular members, but also other beekeepers who do not attend your regularly scheduled meetings. Make sure you have plenty of membership applications on hand.

### **Meeting conduct and content:**

Our members expect and deserve organized, professionally conducted club meetings. The meetings must provide value to the members. They want to learn something, not just hear "how it was," war stories or gossip. Shortly before club meetings, many successful club officers go to the GBA and other beekeeping web sites and review "hot topics" for discussion during the meeting. As a Club President or officer, you must guide the discussions in a productive manner, without stifling the expression of opinions or ideas from the members.

### **Club publicity:**

Many communities have a newspaper or some form of paper or electronic method of advertisement. Contact the individual responsible for such publications to learn what's needed to publicize club meetings and events. Send them material and photos about club activities and individual achievements - toot the clubs' horn. The publicity will gain members and appreciation within the community. Use the GBA website and the *Spilling the Honey* newsletter as a tool for publicity.

Successful clubs contact each new arrival and/or new member to welcome them to the area and the club. Many clubs use a committee or volunteer individuals to make the first contact. Personal contact is particularly important in the case of new beekeepers. Contact the members that have let their membership expire. Professionalism is very important during this contact. Ask them to renew, but don't pressure them to do so.

### **Club recruiting drives:**

Successful clubs hold periodic membership drives, typically once a year, of about 90 days. In some cases, clubs will reduce the membership fee for people joining during the drive and make up the difference from club funds.

### **Newsletter and/or Website submissions:**

Clubs are encouraged to submit material concerning club events, individual and/or club recognition, and beekeepers or "members in action" for publication in the club newsletter or on the club website. You've got to be able to communicate effectively to the masses, and using the newsletter or a website are excellent ways to do that.

### **Recognition of Achievement:**

Many clubs develop "Club-unique" certificates. With the common availability of high-quality laser printers and special paper, it's quite easy to do this. It is always a good idea to recognize members for their contributions to the club or for their contributions to beekeeping.

When I was President of the Heart of Georgia Beekeepers Club, I believe some of the reasons for our club's success, in addition to GBA's good guidance, included good communication, professional development, dedication and the faithful few. I am by no means an expert on the subject, but one thing we did was communicate via email to all club members and beekeepers in our surrounding area. After each meeting I would send out an email, so those who couldn't make the meeting were aware of what went on. I also recognized in

the email those beekeepers who showed up for the first time to our meeting and I thanked them for coming. In this email I also tried to thank those members who had donated time in support of the club. I believe everyone needs a pat on the back, and I like to pat people on the back in a public forum. We then attached this email to our website in order to reach a larger audience. The website was a new addition to our club during my time as the President. During our members we would recognize the new members and those members who had performed volunteer work within the club. It really goes without saying that it is also important to have professional development briefings at meetings.

**Identify your "dirty dozen":**

The last item is about the faithful few - that "dirty dozen" (or half dozen) people who make things happen in the club. These individuals have a deep passion for the beekeepers association. This is not to say all beekeepers don't, but there are always a special few who are willing to undertake any task required to support their club and be productive members of our professional organization. It's the dedication of the faithful few that have helped make our club successful and we try to thank them as often as we can for their support.



## **Treat Your Speakers Well**

by Linda Tillman

**Note:** This article was first published in [Bee Culture](#) in the February 2013 edition.

The mission of most bee clubs is education. While short courses and discussions among club members serve this function well, the speaker who offers the program at a bee club meeting is a very valuable resource that a bee club offers its members. Treating the speaker with care and nurture really makes a difference.

In Georgia, once the Young Harris Beekeeping Institute is over and the list of new Master Beekeepers is posted on the UGA website, bee clubs all over the state start calling. Every bee club wants new energy and ideas so the Master Beekeeper list offers possibilities for new and different speakers. As soon as my name went up on the list, I began getting calls from bee clubs in Georgia and the surrounding states. Now that I've given at least thirty talks in the last two years to bee clubs and other groups, I've become very aware of the importance of nurturing the speaker.

Generally when a speaker comes to talk to your members, much energy has gone into the speaker getting to your club. People like to see what you are talking about so I always put effort into packing "show and tell" equipment to demonstrate my topic. When I talk about harvesting honey without an extractor, I bring the simple objects involved in crush and strain so the club members can see how easy it is. When I talk about making lip balm, I bring the items needed because each ingredient is interesting to know and see. When I talk about using foundationless frames, I bring my quilting rotary cutter, a cutting board, pressed foundation wax, and wax tube fasteners.

Your speaker has driven to your meeting site, usually at the end of a busy day. This represents cost to the speaker in time, energy as well as money. For me that sometimes means a two to three hour drive to the speaking site, gas for the car both ways, and leaving work early (which as a self-employed person means I lose pay for the hours I am not in my office working).

While many speakers (including me) have talks on Power Point that they have given more than once, I always revise the talk before each presentation and often write a completely new one to fit a topic. As those of you who have made PowerPoint presentations know, this is a lot of work: making slides succinct; finding just the right photos to illustrate your points; creating a talk that is the right length.

Recognizing all of the effort and time put in before a speaker gets to your meeting, bee clubs should and often do try to nurture the speaker.

Some clubs take the speaker out to dinner ahead of the meeting. Every club doesn't have the budget to do that, but I would gladly buy my own dinner and get to eat with other beekeepers before the meeting than eat alone, as I have in many a town on a night when I am speaking to a club. Having dinner with members of the group allows the speaker to enjoy some personal connection to those particular people. The pre-meeting dinner usually includes mutual sharing about philosophies about beekeeping and the art of hive management. For me, the added bonus is that I love having a familiar face or two to look at when I am speaking.

Because your speaker is an important source of input for your club, treat your speaker well. Make sure the budget for your club puts a high priority on funds to pay your speakers. Even your own club members who are asked to do the program for a meeting have put a lot of effort into sharing their

information. Recognizing this, the Metro Atlanta Beekeepers pay their own member speakers as well as visiting speakers.

When the talk is over, have someone in your club walk the speaker to their car. It's a way to give the speaker some positive support ("I can tell that our members really enjoyed your talk.") And when all is said and done, write your speaker a thank you email or note to give him/her feedback. It's really special when you can say, "The members are still talking about your example of XXXXX."

Now that I've spoken at bee club meetings all over Georgia as well as in North and South Carolina, I can say that every club takes a different approach. My worst experience occurred at a club two hours away from Atlanta. I arrived on my own, drove through a fast food restaurant's pick-up window, and carried in all my own equipment. The person introducing me said, "Our speaker tonight is....what is your name, Hon?" When I was done, as I gathered up my things to go to my car to drive the two hours back home, a member handed me a tube of lip balm that one of their members had made as their sole gesture to thank me for my time and effort.

Driving home tired and worn out, I felt frustrated with myself for not asking for an honorarium when I agreed to speak there and promised myself that I would not go there again.

My absolute best experience occurred when I was invited to speak to the Macon County Beekeepers Association in Franklin, North Carolina. Tom Hill, the president, and his wife Janet invited me, along with Bob and Suzette Binnie, to his mountain home to enjoy his delectable mead before dinner. This was lovely after my 2 1/2 hour drive. Afterward we went to a nearby Thai restaurant where any member of the bee club was welcome to join us for dinner. About ten of us had dinner together and chatted about bees. When the meal was over, I stood up to pay my check, but the club had treated me to dinner! And at the end of my talk, they gave me a cash honorarium. Later Tom wrote me an enthusiastic "thank you" email.

I felt very valued and knew it was worth the effort to go there.

We have so many ways to learn from each other as beekeepers. The bee club provides a forum for discussion, a resource for beginners, and most importantly, speakers to bring direct knowledge and beekeeping experience to

your members. Treat your speakers well and your club will be a group where good speakers love to present their talks.



**"My heart goes out to the little queen, living out her days in darkness, laying all those eggs, the only one of her kind in the hive with no peer to confide in and, in the fertility exhausted, to be ruthlessly dispatched. The queen business isn't all it's cracked up to be. It is true that she has attendants who look after her needs, but it sounds like a public relations scam to extract the last egg out of her. I wonder if, along the way in her cheerless life, anyone ever takes her aside, pats her on the back and says, 'You're doing a great job!'"**

--William Longgood in The Queen Must Die



*Dear Aunt Bee,*

*My cowhide leather gloves that I use when working my hives have gotten really dirty with propolis, wax, and other debris. Do you have recommendations on the best way to clean, or should I just leave them the way they are?*

*---Dirty Paws*

*Dear Dirty Paws,*

*I'm sure your mama told you to wash your hands - well it's about the same with your gloves. Here's one way to get them clean:  
With the gloves on your hands, wash your gloved hands with mild dishwashing liquid in the sink under warm ->hot water. When your gloves are as clean as you can get them, dry your "hands" or at least your gloved hands.*

*The finishing touch? While still wearing your gloves, take vegetable oil and work it into the leather as if you were rubbing hand lotion into your hands. Do this at least once, maybe twice.*



*Then instead of Dirty Paws, you could sign your name Clean Hands (and you will have soft supple clean gloves for your next hive visit!)*

*Signed,*

*Your Aunt Bee*

*For photos of the process, click [Cleaning beekeeping gloves](#)*

*(Chris Pahl and Linda Tillman, contributing)*



Photo by Linda Tillman 4/27/2013

**Student:**

Vajrrang Kamat examines a frame at a MABA hive inspection. Vajrrang was one of the winners of an essay contest held by MABA. His prize was free attendance at the MABA short course in January 2013. He is continuing to pursue his interest in bees by learning how to do a hive inspection at the Chastain Conservancy inspection site.



"What is sweeter than honey?  
What is more pure or more nourishing?  
It is the milk of the aged, it prolongs their existence, and when  
they descend into the tomb, it still serves to embalm them."  
~~~Alexis Soyer: The Pantropheon 1853

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**A Swarm Story**  
by Tom Watson

I drove up to Pete's house (Pete and I, formerly total strangers, are on a first name basis now!) with no problem. While I drove, I was participating in a conference call with my work. When I got to Pete's house, the gate was open and I was able to locate the swarm fairly quickly. So I parked my SUV close to their locations and left the SUV on, but not running so that I could continue to hear the conference call while I captured the swarm.

I got out my ladder and climbed up to the swarm that was about eight feet off the ground. Having not done this before, I took a five gallon bucket and a bee brush, and proceeded to sweep the bees into the bucket. All in all, they were some of the most mild-mannered girls I have ever dealt with. The bees that were not swept in and still flying had either gone back to the tree or landed in the bucket after five or ten minutes. I knew I had the queen when the bees on the tree started marching to the bucket I was holding next to the tree.

Within 30 minutes I had all but about 50 bees in the bucket. I then covered the opening of the bucket with what used to be a sheer table cover that has lacework small enough to contain bees, but still allow them to breathe. I then put a sawed off bucket inside the 5 gallon bucket to seal the bees in.

As I went back to the truck, I was still getting some stragglers on top of the cover and had another of the table covers to cover them after putting the bees in the back of the SUV.

Then it got interesting.

Once I had everything stowed, I jumped into the SUV and when I turned the key it moaned and groaned and then stopped. It was my battery. I texted Ed Hoehn so that he could share my pain and called my wife so she could bring my car to allow me to jump my battery from hers. Ed was not terribly

sympathetic and it is a 45-minute drive from my house to Pete's, so I took the bees out of the SUV (so that they would not overheat).

So here I am sitting in Pete's driveway, thinking of all the inconvenient times for the battery to die, this was definitely one. After about 20 minutes of watching the remaining bees fly around the bucket and me, all of a sudden the gate starts beeping and then closes. Great - now my wife cannot get inside so now I can't jump my SUV. I sat there thinking that for what should have been about a 30 minute job has now turned from bad to worse. Only the police showing up to arrest me for trespassing could possibly be worse.

OK, so I need to call Pete.

Being the efficient note taker that I am, I left the notes at home with Gina's number (Gina called me, as the person in charge of MABA's swarm calls, to alert me to go get the swarm) as well as Pete's number. No problem. I will text Ed for Gina's number but by this time, Ed was not responding to text. OK, I will call him. No answer so I left a desperate voicemail. No problem. I will call home since my two boys are there with my mother-in-law. No answer. No problem. My 13 year old has a cell phone. No answer. My whole family appears to have a problem answering phones. My wife, when she finally answered the phone, says she is still fifteen minutes away and the police have yet to show up.

Finally my son calls me back and is able to sort through the mess on my desk to find my notes and gives me Gina's number and more importantly, Pete's. So out of the blue, I call Pete who also let the phone ring for a while. I introduce myself over the phone to a skeptical sounding Pete. Finally he believed my comical story and gave me a gate code for my wife to get in so I could start my car.

Thankfully on the way home, the girls were well-behaved and seemed content. To top all of this off, when I got home to hive the swarm, I heard some buzzing and there was a swarm on the gate post to my bee yard - two swarms in one day!

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May Street Cred

To watch a funny video (*watch* is the key word here - the video is in Portuguese) about a donkey in a bee suit, [go here](#). If you'd like to read about

this donkey who has his own bee suit, [here is an article](#) that you might find interesting (and it includes the link to the video).



***New Feature section - articles by beekeepers about beekeeping practices:
Ask 10 Beekeepers a Question and You'll Get at Least 11
Answers***

A Colony's Desire to Draw Comb

by Steve Page

A colony must build honeycomb on foundation to provide space for pollen, honey and to raise brood. This article will discuss various ways to help a colony draw comb on foundation after installing a nuc and when adding supers of foundation. This can be especially difficult for a new beekeeper with limited resources and all new equipment.

A colony will draw comb during a nectar flow. A beekeeper can simulate a nectar flow by feeding syrup made of cane sugar and water at a 1:1 ratio by weight. A new colony will need to be fed until it has enough honey stored to survive winter. An established colony may need feeding if it is low on honey

stores in later winter or in the fall. If you're planning on harvesting honey from an established colony, don't feed syrup during the main nectar flow. At this point the "honey" is no longer honey, but a combination of nectar and cane sugar; therefore it is unethical to bottle this as honey.

Plastic foundation is very tough and durable; however the colony tends not to accept plastic foundation as readily as wax foundation. Wax foundation is delicate and time consuming to install in frames. Plastic foundation arrives with a microscopic coating of beeswax. Adding more wax to plastic foundation will increase the colony's acceptance and the colony will quickly draw out comb on the foundation. Extra beeswax can easily be applied by using a 4-inch foam paint roller.

When a nuc is installed in an eight or ten frame deep super, the colony may be reluctant to draw out comb on the frames of foundation. The colony considers a frame filled with honey to be the outside of the nest. Frames of foundation outside a honey frame tend to be ignored by the colony. The colony will accept and draw out comb on a frame of foundation if it is moved inside a honey frame. As a colony draws out comb and becomes established, the frames of foundation can be moved inside the honey frame on each side of the nest, one at a time.

Honey supers containing frames of foundation should be added one at a time as needed. The colony will draw out the comb starting in the middle. When the middle six frames in a ten frame hive or five frames in an eight frame hive have drawn comb, move the remaining frames of foundation to the middle and the drawn comb to the outside, and add another super of foundation. Repeat as the colony draws out foundation in each super.

A strong colony can make a shallow super of honey in less than a week during the main nectar flow. Check your hives once a week during the main flow.



Interview with a Professional Beekeeper
Georgia Beekeeper: Bobby Colson
owner of B&G Honey Farm

Gina: How many and where are your hives?

Bobby Colson: We have about 100 colonies in four or five locations near Bluffton

Gina: What is your primary purpose for your bees?

Bobby: We do pollination and honey production

Gina: What do you see as the biggest changes over the last several years?

Bobby: The price has gone up and interest has gone way up. People really want to get involved. They are mostly hobbyists. Our bee club (Coastal Empire Association) went from about ten to 120 members!

Gina: Why did you begin keeping bees?

Bobby: My dad had about 50 hives when I was younger. My wife and I went to visit my cousin in Florida for a vacation. He kept bees and while we were there, I helped him. When we got home, we wanted our own bees. Bees are just like eating potato chips - you can't have just one.

Gina: What races of bees do you prefer?

Bobby: We have Italians, Carniolans, and Russians. Each has its own traits. Right now we have a lot of cross between Italians and Carniolans. That is a goo general bee. We are doing this as natural as we can, using strong bees.

Gina: What crops are you pollinating?

Bobby: We do watermelons, cantaloupe mostly, but there is zucchini, squash. we go out about 50 miles.

Gina: We thank you for your time and sharing a little bit about what you do for our newsletter

Bobby: Thank you for asking. I've been a member of GBA for a while.

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## **Bee Club of the Month**

### **Forsyth Beekeepers Club**

Forsyth Beekeepers Club, FBC, which started in 1998 with fewer than 15 members, now boasts an active membership of over 55 individuals. We have a core group of beekeepers who have stuck with it since the beginning, and every year we have an increasing number of new beekeepers that we get pointed in the right direction to enable them to become experienced beekeepers. One of our claims to fame is that several years ago a member of our club became and still is the youngest Welsh Honey Judge in the world.

FBC meets on the fourth Thursday of every month at the Sawnee Mountain Preserve Visitor Center. Members of our club built, donated and maintain an observation hive inside the center and it is quite an attraction. Every month we have a guest speaker, who is an expert on a topic relating to honey bees. With subjects ranging from hobbyist beekeeping, to beekeeping for profit, from

apitherapy to africanized honey bees, from bee biology to rearing hygienic queens, the speakers are always informative, and often entertaining.

FBC has several schools throughout the spring, starting with our short beekeepers course, which as of this year was increased from a one day to a three day school. The first day is a Saturday in February or March and is all in the classroom. Nucs or packages, and wooden ware are ordered for new beekeepers during the class. The second day is on a Saturday, one month later, and is conducted in a member's apiary. It is hands on, and very successful at getting new or timid beekeepers used to handling bees. The third day is the package installation demonstration and is specifically for the new beekeepers who have ordered packages or nucs. The date of this class is dependent on when the nucs are ready. We eagerly stand by with our hives ready, waiting for their delivery. This year we had only a 3 day advance notice before their delivery. Can you imagine over 100 nucs being installed on one day in one apiary, all by new beekeepers?

FBC has been preparing for two years, and has earned the distinction of being authorized to administer the Young Harris Beekeeping Institute exam for the certified beekeeper level. We just administered our first exam, which consisted of a written test, a practical test, and an oral exam. FBC would not be able to be a testing facility if we didn't have several Journeyman beekeepers to run the program. Any beekeeper meeting the minimum criteria will be able to take the test with our club.

The next big thing on our calendar is our annual queen rearing class. One of our very experienced beekeepers who is a long time member of our club has volunteered for several years to conduct this class. It is open to the public, but space is limited and like all of our other programs, it is a hands-on class. In addition to learning how to create queens, each participant may take home up to 4 queens of their own, that they created, for a fraction of what it would cost to purchase them.

Our mission as a beekeepers club is not only to educate all levels of beekeepers, but also people who are simply interested in learning about bees. Through a variety of fairs, festivals, and demonstrations throughout the year, we strive to educate the public about how the honey bee is essential to life as we know it, and how it is being threatened.

Our biggest accomplishment in educating the public occurred in 2012 when the Forsyth County Commissioners were considering altering the county code to

prevent honey bees in all but the most rural settings. After a lot of work and several FBC presentations to the commissioners, the end result is that there are no restrictions on where an individual can keep bees in Forsyth County. That being said, it is also a responsibility of our club to educate new beekeepers on best beekeeping practices to prevent honey bees from becoming a nuisance to our neighbors.

As FBC continues to grow in membership, and activities, so too does our communities' awareness of the benefits of the honey bee to our ecosystem.

Sue Conlyn  
Editor, FBC Buzz  
<http://www.forsythbeekeepersclub.org>



### ***Upcoming bee events:***

Note: Send us your upcoming events so we can list them here

#### **Young Harris Beekeeping Institute:**

May 9, 10, 11 Young Harris College, Young Harris, GA, [Registration details](#)

#### **Honey Bee Queen Production School:**

Tentatively scheduled for June 21, 22, Georgia Bee Supply in Chula, GA Contact information: [www.gabeesupply.com](http://www.gabeesupply.com) or call 229-386-0123



### **The Final Buzz**

The nectar flow is in full swing and we are full of ideas for the newsletter, but we need to hear from you and get your contributions.

In this edition, we are introducing a new section called: ***Ask 10 Beekeepers a Question and You'll Get at Least 11 Answers.*** This is a place where you can write articles about beekeeping practices that are important to you or that you think would be informative for other beekeepers - so please send us



articles. We also need questions for Aunt Bee, your photos, your favorite bee quotes, your funny bee stories.

This is your newsletter so jump in and participate like all good worker bees do!

If you like the newsletter, pass it on to other beekeepers to encourage them to join GBA for only \$15 a year. And, of course, you can read all of the editions that Gina and I have edited at [www.spillingthehoney.blogspot.com](http://www.spillingthehoney.blogspot.com)

Hope everybody is having a good bee season and let us hear from you.

*Linda and Gina*

