



Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

The March 8, 2022 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm both online and in person at Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Of course COVID-19 hasn't gone away, so stay informed in case plans change. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome. Membership dues are now \$10.00 for the calendar year. If you haven't yet paid for 2022, keep a ten dollar bill in your wallet and get your dues for 2022 paid at our March meeting. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

Meeting in person or online

Our March meeting will again be both in person at the O'Shieles Community Center and online:

Tues., Mar. 8, 7:00 - 9:00 pm

To attend online:

login: [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85622635183?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85622635183?pwd=UFR1NFN6MWU1emh1YmJDNG1EK1UrUT09)

pwd=UFR1NFN6MWU1emh1YmJDNG1EK1UrUT09

Meeting ID: 856 2263 5183

Passcode: 275853

To connect by telephone (audio only), call 346 248-7799, Meeting ID: 856 2263 5183 , Passcode: 275853.

An email with clickable instructions will go out ahead of the meeting. As usual, we plan to start the meeting at 7:30 after 30 minutes of "social time".

Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

Q: I'm getting ready to become a beekeeper in a few weeks. I bought an unassembled hive and could use a few tips in getting it all put together?

An A: It is best to go at this with the plan for a hive that will last forever. You could just nail stuff together and call it good, but your hive is going to have to take all that Texas weather can throw at it. Bare wood will soon look pretty rough and begin to rot.

It is best if all exposed wooden surfaces get a top quality paint job, starting with a bit of wood filler in any visible cracks. Don't paint inside the boxes, but you should paint all sides of the bottom board. A trim roller (and a 1" brush to get in the handholds) makes short work of your painting, especially for the top and bottom edges. You can hang the boxes from 2x6's, setting the box on a small wooden block so you can paint all sides at once:



Start with a good (meaning expensive) exterior primer and follow up with at least two coats (three is even better) of quality house paint. You can often find a bargain in miscolored paint. Lighter colors are better, but the color is really not that important. Hives are most often painted white (like most houses) to help reflect hot summer sun (hives do best in full sun: bees don't care and pests like hive beetles and wax moths hate it).

Before assembling the box, it is good (but not critical) to start by priming inside the "fingers" that will fit together. When dry, assemble the boxes with a generous quantity of top quality carpenter's glue suitable for exterior use. Some folks prefer to use deck screws in

place of the galvanized nails provided with the box. After assembling the boxes, clean up the excess glue with a wet cloth, inside and out. At this point it is a good idea to use a carpenter's square or tee square to make sure that the box sides are at right angles. If you ended up with a parallelogram, it is easy enough to get it straight before the glue sets by holding the box on a side edge on the driveway and pushing down to get it to 90 degrees.

Bees are incredibly sensitive to smell, so you should give the paint several days to fully dry. You can assemble your frames during this time.

Langstroth frames consist of a top piece, a bottom piece, and two sides. The sides determine the frame's overall height for deep, medium or shallow boxes and are designed to provide "bee space" between the frames. The bottom piece can be slotted or divided into two strips to accept the foundation. The top piece can be slotted or have a removable wedge to secure the foundation in place.

Foundation can be of plastic or milled beeswax (with or without reinforcing wire). Bees seem to prefer the milled beeswax while beekeepers like plastic for its ease of use. It is a good idea to give plastic foundation a generous beeswax coating no matter what the vendor says. For milled wax foundation, crimped reinforcing wire is a must except for very thin foundation used for comb honey. If the frame is to be used for honey, cross

wire reinforcement will prevent the comb from coming apart in the extractor.

HLSR

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is off and running for its three week run: February 28 - March 20. The AGVENTURE exhibits in the NRG Center are open daily from 9:00 am until 9:00 pm to welcome school groups and rodeo visitors to the livestock show. It features a wide variety of exhibits, from watching baby chicks hatching to a petting zoo and pony rides. One of the most popular AGVENTURE attractions is the honey bee exhibit.

Volunteers from our four local beekeeping groups (Fort Bend, Brazoria, Harris and Houston) enjoy telling rodeo visitors all about honey bees and beekeeping. The observation hive is almost always surrounded by a crowd. The HLSR honeybees are almost symbolic for us as an ambitious start for a new year with our bees.

Members are encouraged to volunteer and lend a hand. The schedule is under the "calendar" on the Harris County Beekeepers Association web site (<https://harriscountybeekeepers.org>).

February Meeting Notes

In person attendance at our February 8 meeting was 34. Zoom attendees were not counted, but it was around 10 or so. After a slight delay with technology setup, Craig Rench, President, opened the meeting and greeted everyone. Several people attending for the first time introduced themselves and were welcomed.

Margaret Wrzesinski spoke briefly about the Mentoring Program and the planned FBBA Library.

Jim Orr and Harrison Rogers of the Harris County Beekeepers Association's spoke about the volunteer opportunity at the AGVENTURE bee booth at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. They explained the exhibit and expectations for

beekeeper volunteers. Most importantly you don't have to know everything!

Gene DeBons, Coordinator of our **Help! I Have Bees** program explained to everyone that the program is an important free service we offer to the community. By collecting a swarm, the beekeeper is probably preventing a colony of bees from moving into the walls of someone's house, or their storage building, or into their barbeque pit. When someone spots a swarm, they often go to the internet seeking help. They can report the swarm using the online form on our website. The form is then emailed to Gene. Last year, he received about 260 emails. The form asks for the basic information on the location of the swarm and for a description of its size and how high above the ground it is. Gene uses the list of members who have volunteered to capture swarms to find a nearby member that is available to collect the swarm.

Swarms don't hang around long, and anyone on the Swarm Call List needs to be prepared with their suit and equipment to capture the swarm. You also need to answer your phone when he calls. If you don't answer or return Gene's call within a few minutes, he has to move on to the next person on the list.

Our Swarm Call List starts over every year. If you want to be on this year's list, send an email to info@FortBendBeekeepers.org to request the Swarm Call List form.

The main presentation was given by Jeff McMullan, our Newsletter Editor and author of the Ask a Dozen Beekeepers... column. If you have a question, ask Jeff. He'll research an answer and might even use it for the next month's newsletter. Jeff's presentation was on honey bee swarm behavior and how to go about catching and keeping them.

With everything in beekeeping, Be Safe. Wear your protective gear. Most swarms aren't defensive, but that doesn't mean the bees never

sting. Make sure you work safely if using a ladder. Free bees aren't free if you hurt yourself.

Honey bees swarm for one of two basic reasons. Reproductive swarms leave an established colony to form a new one. Absconding swarms are leaving a nest site that has become unsuitable. Absconding swarms are pretty common in our area in late summer because they have chosen a nest site that just gets too hot.

The door prize drawings were conducted by Craig and Lynne Jones, Secretary-Treasurer. Thank you to all who donated and congratulations to all the lucky winners.

The meeting was then adjourned. Thanks to everyone who helped with straightening up the chairs, throwing away trash, and getting everything out to vehicles; we were able to exit the building a few minutes ahead of our 9:00 pm deadline.

Treasurer's Report

Our February treasury balance was \$3,542.84. Since our last report, we collected \$180 in dues (18 at \$10.00) and \$25 for mentoring program registration. The only expense was \$12.99 for email service. The resulting balance is \$3,734.85 (\$3,684.85 in the checking account, plus \$50.00 in cash to make change).

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

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