



April, 2022

Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping

The April 12, 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. COVID-19 hasn't gone away, so stay informed in case plans must be changed. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome. Membership dues are \$10.00 for the calendar year. If you haven't yet paid for 2022, keep an extra ten dollar bill in your wallet and get your dues for 2022 paid at the meeting. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

Meeting in person or online

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

Tues., Apr. 12, 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.

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. Somehow I figured that it involved little more than getting hives and bees. I'm working on getting my hives assembled and painted, but it looks like there is more to beekeeping tools and protective gear than I thought.

An A: As you have discovered, a few minutes on the internet or with a beekeeping catalogue reveals a dizzying array of options for the new beekeeper. Whatever your plans, it is usually not a good idea

to buy a "beginner" setup for several reasons. Your beekeeper gear may well last longer than your new hobby and quality stuff is easily sold if you later discover problems with beekeeping chores, sting allergies, worried neighbors, etc.

The basic tools for the new beekeeper includes a hive tool (a couple of them is better), a bee brush and a smoker. These will set you back about \$100. You can order online, but local sources are available. You can request a list of local suppliers from info@fortbendbeekeepers.org.

A "paint scraper" hive tool is kinda standard, but tools with a hooked frame lifter are really handy. A couple of hive tools is always recommended because they have a tendency to disappear just when you need them most. Bright colors help find them in the grass, but the most common disappearing act is when they fall down between the frames. (Buzzing bees seem to make it impossible to hear the sound of a hive tool hitting the bottom board.) The pocket sized version is perhaps easier to keep up with when checking your hives. A handy feature of the pocket hive tool is the end shaped like a flag since it can be used to perfectly set the distance to drop in another frame.

A bee brush is used to get bees out of the way, usually off the frames so you can inspect the comb for brood, honey, nectar or pollen. It is important to know that the girls are seldom upset by plastic bristles. On the other hand, natural bristles made of hair can sometimes cause a co-

motion so it is probably better to stick to the plastic ones.

A smoker almost identifies the beekeeper. Bees are woodland creatures, so puffs of cool smoke makes them think the woods are on fire. They engorge on honey and prepare to flee if the flames appear. A belly full of honey makes them lethargic while the smoke covers any alarm scents in the air. Smokers come in a couple of sizes with wooden or plastic bellows. Those with a wire guard to protect from burns are best. Plastic bellows can be damaged by heat and wooden bellows are more traditional. A larger smoker holds more fuel so it burns longer. Avoid buying a cheesy cheap Chinese smoker.

Protective gear is not where to skimp on \$\$, except for gloves. Rubber dishwashing gloves from the grocery store work great so long as they are not too tight to your skin. Get the largest size available for a loose fit to avoid stings through your gloves. When it comes time to wash your bee jacket, you can throw the gloves in the washer too.

Protective clothing can range from a head-to-toe suit (\$150 or so) to a simple helmet and veil (about \$50). The cost of a bee jacket falls in the middle. Besides taking a while to put on, you will find a full suit to be pretty hot during the summer when layered over your clothes. You will appreciate a ventilated jacket with a "fencing" hood in August! And Velcro leg straps to keep stragglers from crawling up your pants leg.

March Meeting Notes

In person attendance at our March 8 meeting was 30. Zoom attendees were not counted, but it was around 7 or so.

Craig Rench, President, opened the meeting and greeted everyone. Three people attending for the first time introduced themselves and were welcomed.

Gene DeBons spoke fondly of Charter Member Ted Kopycinski and of Ted's mentoring. Ted would often say, "Beekeepers are smarter than the average person." Gene often thinks about that comment. Beekeepers are always curious and driven to learn more about bees, their behavior, about wax and how they make it, about honey, about the colony and how it reproduces, about the queen, the queen's pheromones, where the foragers are finding pollen, and what trees and flowers we might plant for honey bee forage.

Danessa Yaschuk, Vice President, reminded everyone of the Central Texas Beekeeper School on March 26th and Craig encouraged anyone who is able, to volunteer at the Houston Rodeo AgVenture Booth.

Next Lynne Jones discussed robbing and robbing screens. Robber bees are simply forager bees, but instead of collecting nectar from flowers, they are stealing honey and nectar from other hives. Once a robbing frenzy starts, unless the resident bees can defend and stop the robbers (or the beekeeper intervenes), the robbing will not end until the honey is completely robbed out. The signs of robbing are: a big increase of activity at the entrance with bees flying in a zig-zag pattern, then darting in; bees fighting at the entrance; dead bees on the ground in front of the hive; bees trying to get into the hive at cracks and seams; and bits of wax debris on the landing board. Some of the techniques used to stop robbing include: reducing the entrance to 1 or 2 bee width or shutting it completely; covering the hive with a wet sheet; turning on the sprinkler

to 'make it rain'; moving the hive; propping a piece of plywood across the front of the hive, and installing a robbing screen. Robbing screens can be purchased from bee supply stores or easily made using #8 hardware cloth (do an online search for "DIY robbing screen"). There are numerous styles, but the principle is the same: the robbers are attracted to the hive entrance, where the smell of honey is the strongest, but they cannot get into the hive because it is blocked with screen; while resident bees simply come and go using the screen's opening, which is further away from the scent of honey. Robbing screens are the cure to robbing, but they are also the prevention to robbing and are advised for use during dearths, but they can be used year-round.

Margaret and Clay Wrzesinski are regular sellers at the Missouri City Farmer's Market. Margaret gave a fantastic presentation of what to expect and how to prepare for selling at a farmer's market. You don't have to have buckets and buckets of honey to start selling. Farmer's markets are always looking for honey sellers and you can sign up for as many or as few dates as you want. You need to have a "business persona" – this is your company name, website, business cards and social media accounts. Use your own photos on your website, not images you find online which might be copy-written. You need to bring cash to make change, but most pay with credit card or other electronic payment. PayPal and Cash app goes straight to your bank account, so you might consider opening an account for this, separate from your regular banking account. You will need to go to the Texas Dept. of State Health Services website to read the requirements if the market requires a Food Handlers certificate. Some markets also require insurance. Get with the Market Manager in advance to confirm the market's requirements. When you prepare for the market day, have a list of everything you plan to take and pack your vehicle the day before since you have to be at the market

an hour before opening. Inventory all the product you are bringing and re-inventory after you get back home. Careful notes will give you a good idea of when you are making your better sales. Consider other items you can sell like candles, honey dippers, honey straws, bee pollen. Prepare for bees checking out your table, especially if you have samples. Be prepared to clean up sticky product. The weather can be challenging: hot, cold, rainy, windy. You will need a good canopy with weights and tables with stretchable table covers (they don't blow in the wind and you can put all your boxes underneath). Displays often blow over. All the items on the table need to be heavy or weighted down.

Before we adjourned, drawings for donated door prizes were conducted by Craig and Lynne Jones, Secretary-Treasurer. Thank you to the donors and congratulations to the winners.

Treasurer's Report

Our March treasury balance was \$3,734.85. Since our last report, we collected \$90 in dues (9 at \$10.00) and \$25 for mentoring program registration. The expenses were \$259.90 for mentoring books and \$12.99 for email service. The resulting balance is \$3,576.96 (\$3,526.96 in our Wells Fargo checking account, plus \$50.00 in cash to make change).

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