



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
BEEKEEPERS'  
ASSOCIATION  
of Pennsylvania**

**June 2022**

## A Note from the President

*Greg Lehman*

Hey everyone, happy busy bee season! Spring has been pretty wild with swarms so far, I hope you're all keeping up and not losing bees! This time of year is also when a lot of volunteer opportunities start popping up.

In an effort to increase membership involvement, there is now a section on the website for just that (you'll see it under the 'MCBA Members Only Tab' - you must be logged in to view). On the 'Volunteer Opportunities' page I will be listing education opportunities that get brought to my attention (right now there is a Library and a Girl Scout Troop that are both looking for an informal speaker) along with folks' information that are looking to house hives on their property.

I'm always going to ask for some basic information, but beyond that, there isn't much of a "vetting process" so make sure you're asking the right questions and lining up proper expectations. And please let me know if you've spoken with someone so I can take down the request and keep things clean and up to date or if you encounter any issues that I should know about.

One of my main goals of this presidency is to better our community outreach by involving our whole membership. I'm sure there's a lot more being done that I don't even know about – so feel free to share with me what you're doing out there! Brag a little! If anyone has presentations they'd be willing to share electronically please send – I'm hoping to build a database that membership can utilize. For any of this or if you have suggestions / opportunities – email [montcopabees@gmail.com](mailto:montcopabees@gmail.com)

Thank you to all our volunteers out there and special thank you to our Board of Directors for all the extra effort this year to continue growing the club and keeping us headed in the right direction. Onward!



## What's ahead:

Thu 02	<b>82°/63°</b>		PM Thunderstorms
Fri 03	<b>78°/54°</b>		Partly Cloudy
Sat 04	<b>78°/52°</b>		Sunny
Sun 05	<b>77°/55°</b>		Mostly Sunny
Mon 06	<b>81°/59°</b>		Partly Cloudy
Tue 07	<b>77°/61°</b>		AM Showers
Wed 08	<b>82°/64°</b>		Partly Cloudy
Thu 09	<b>79°/62°</b>		Scattered Thunderstorms
Fri 10	<b>80°/60°</b>		Partly Cloudy
Sat 11	<b>79°/62°</b>		Showers

[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)

## What it means:

As May concluded with a second distinct heat wave, you likely noticed an increase in 'bearding' behavior. This is a totally normal temperature regulation technique of the bees and not necessarily a cause for alarm.

However, be on your guard – while we may be through the initial wave of swarms, we are certainly still firmly in swarm season, and the 10-day forecast shows favorable swarm conditions.

Hopefully by now you are experiencing a robust nectar flow. Check those supers and consider adding additional supers as needed! We are quickly approaching honey extraction season and will soon be turning attention to varroa management.

## Queen Cell Program

There are several reasons to requeen a colony – whether it's out of necessity, expanding your apiary, or **simply improving the genetics of your bees!** If you aren't familiar with the MCBA queen cell program, this is the perfect time of year to take advantage and introduce some elite queen genetics into your operation.

MCBA members should be noticing periodic emails offering available queen cells from the cell distribution coordinator Susan Alfano. These cells, selected and grafted from local, high-performance queens (or special queens from elsewhere) are available on a first come first serve basis at \$5 per cell. Before reserving these cells, there are a few things to consider:

- When introducing a queen cell, you should be certain the colony is queenless. A queenright colony will tear down the cell and waste an otherwise high-quality queen.
- If the cell is introduced a short period of time after queen removal (post-split, swarm, or cull), consider the likelihood the bees are raising a sister-queen and the potential need to tear down 'emergency' queen cells. The goal should be to maximize emergence and acceptance of only the introduced cell.
- Upon receipt of a queen cell, time is of the essence. You will receive a "ripe" cell with queen emergence occurring within a few days. Be prepared to install the cell as quickly as you can manage.
- For more information, visit [montcopabees.org/queen-cell-program](https://montcopabees.org/queen-cell-program) and carefully review the information in the emails.

## Education with Montgomery County Beekeepers' Association

### Beginners Class with Mark Antunes

- Class #5 – June 21 – 6PM at the Montgomery County 4H Center
  - <https://montcopabees.org/New-Beekeepers>
  - Registration closed

### Intermediate Class with Dr. Vincent Aloyo

- Class #5 – June 22 – 6PM at the Montgomery County 4H Center
  - <https://montcopabees.org/IntermediateCourse>
  - Registration closed

### Queen Rearing and Cell Grafting Class

- Shout out to Scott Famous, Dr. Aloyo, participants, and volunteers for wrapping up the 2022 Queen Rearing and Cell Grafting class!
- Special thanks to Jeanne Gable – after a rainout of the scheduled hands-on sessions, Jeanne opened her home for a make-up class the following weekend!

# General Meetings

June 23, 2022 (7PM)

## Mini Presentation: Paul Niemczura

- Discussion on varroa mites and a new EPA approved organic miticide expected to be available in 2023

## Main Presentation: Dr. Katie Lee

- Varroa and Risk Factors
  - High varroa mite infestations are closely associated with honey bee colony death. Even when colonies appear to have a similar start in spring, varroa mite populations can be different among colonies as the bee season progresses, even within the same apiary. This presentation will address factors that increase the likelihood a colony will have high mite levels. Understanding what makes some colonies more prone to issues can help inform decisions on mite management and the frequency of mite monitoring.
  - Dr. Lee is the Apiculture Extension Educator, a Bee Squad team member, and a post-doctoral researcher on the Minnesota Agriculture for Pollinators Project led by Dr. Dan Cariveau. Her work focuses on the parasitic mite Varroa destructor, metrics that indicate queen bee and colony health, and the benefits of pollinator plantings on bee health. She developed a parasitic mite sampling protocol that is now a nationwide standard. For the Bee Informed Partnership, she founded two extension teams that provide colony assessment services for commercial beekeepers. She serves on the boards of the Minnesota Hobby Beekeepers Association and the American Beekeeping Federation and co-chair the education and research committees.

## Some Takeaways:

- In January, we kicked off the new year with Dr. Juliana Rangel of Texas A & M University (Honeybee Wax Pesticide Contamination and its Impact on Queen Physiology and Reproductive Health). Dr. Rangel also passed along a terrific resource for additional beekeeping education: the At Home Beekeeping Series through the Alabama Extension beekeeping team. This is a webinar series offered the last Tuesday of every month. For more details: <https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/bees-pollinators/at-home-beekeeping-series/>
- If you missed the March meeting with Michael Palmer (Brood Factories), check out his GoFundMe page for a wonderful cause supporting school children in Oaxaca, Mexico. To learn more and donate: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-the-school-children-of-oaxaca-mexico>
- We closed out a busy May with a talk on queen health and quality by Dr. David Tarpy of NC State University. Keep an eye out for the recorded zoom link if you missed it! This talk featured fascinating content for all levels of beekeeper, but there was some especially pertinent information for current or prospective queen producers. For those interested, you can even have queen lots tested for health and quality through the NC State Honey Bee Queen and Disease Clinic. For more information, visit <https://www.ncsuapiculture.net/queen-and-disease-clinic>

## MCBA Annual Picnic

Our annual picnic has been scheduled for July 30<sup>th</sup> from 12:00-4:00PM! Details are still being finalized but please mark your calendars and plan to join us at the historic Carousel at Pottstown (30 W King St; Pottstown, PA). Once planning is complete, more information and registration will be available on the website. Keep an eye out for additional announcements!

## BeeWorks, LLC

Purchasing beekeeping supplies and equipment has never been easier for us in the MCBA. If you aren't aware by now, a beekeeping distribution center has opened in nearby Bucks County! BeeWorks, LLC, located in Quakertown, can supply most (if not all) of your beekeeping needs!

Take a look at their product catalogue [HERE](#) and be sure to take advantage of this excellent resource. BeeWorks, LLC is open on Wednesdays from 2-6:30PM, or you can schedule an appointment for your convenience. Click [HERE](#) to visit the website.

2320 Trumbauersville Road, Suite 3  
Quakertown, PA 18951

For more information, contact:

Jayne Howe: 215-429-8094

Jon Kutzner: 215-932-1051

BeeWorksLLC01@gmail.com

## Check Reserve Frames!

It seems year after year, certain phenomena occur earlier and earlier. Perhaps it's just in our imagination – but here is a friendly PSA: get eyes on your back up frames (with drawn wax). If you're lucky, you haven't witnessed how destructive wax moth larvae can be to your beautifully drawn frames. While wax moths are typically not an issue early in the season, I observed my first tunneling terror on one of my frames in the last week of May (southern Montgomery County).



## A Noteworthy “Weed”?

As spring gives way to summer, many of those early season blooms are also exiting the spotlight until next year. There is one plant in particular I find very interesting and worth highlighting: ground ivy (or creeping Charlie).

Let's talk about the elephant in the room first: ground ivy is not native, and if you've seen it up close you know that it is rather vigorous. So, this is not a recommendation to cultivate this plant! However, it has been on our continent for a long time and is (unfortunately?) here to stay.

Despite its invasive nature, I find ground ivy to be noteworthy. First, it blooms a bit before dandelions and appears to be a good indicator of steady nectar (and signals a time to think about swarm management). And while this is anecdotal, I observe a significant foraging preference of honeybees relative to dandelion. About that nectar: ground ivy has a fascinating reward system for nectar-seekers called the “lucky hit” strategy. Most ground ivy flowers hold a relatively small volume of nectar. But less than 10% of the flowers contain a “jackpot” supply. If you observe a bee spending more than a second or two... WINNER!

Culturally, you should be seeking other diverse, native plants to promote in your gardens and yards. But until you decide to take on the battle of eliminating your ground ivy (and it will be a battle), enjoy the spectacle of your bees fervently playing the lottery.

[\(UMN Bee Lab; Creeping Charlie: Management and Value to Pollinators\)](#)



# The Beginners' Corner

Derek Pruyne

Hello fellow beginners! I'm Derek – 3<sup>rd</sup> year beekeeper, 1<sup>st</sup> year board member, and editor of this newsletter. Over the last few years, I've learned so much about the wonderful honeybee. But one of the things that always amazes me about this hobby (or career, or lifestyle) is how even the most experienced beekeepers are still on a quest for knowledge. That said, I am *far* from an expert. However, the lessons learned, failures endured, and successes realized are fresh in my mind, so I hope this section will provide some value to new beekeepers out there (especially those in year 1).

To get things started, allow me to share a story from my first year:

I purchased my first nucs (2) the first weekend of June 2020. Obviously, this was a later start than I had hoped as I missed the bulk of our nectar flow. Despite a late start, both colonies grew to easily build and fill out two 10-frame deeps each. Unfortunately, I ran out of season before any of my medium supers were drawn out. Now I told you that story to tell you this story:

Fast forward to spring 2021. Two overwintered colonies (woohoo!). As spring progressed and populations grew, I was adding supers before I knew it. 100% foundation. No drawn comb. This is like giving the bees an unfurnished apartment with no wi-fly (get used to these). In other words, I got caught in a situation where my swarm prevention options were somewhat low, and the apiary became chaotic pretty quickly. Within a few short weeks I went from TWO colonies to FIVE (one captured swarm and two splits). So here comes the advice – specifically for those of you in an establishment year: FEED, FEED, FEED.

You have probably learned by now that in year 1 you are unlikely to produce a surplus honey crop. Of course, there are always circumstances this is possible (nothing is ever so straightforward), but for general discussion – consider year 1 your “establishment year”. I have often seen the question asked by beginners “should I be feeding syrup?”. My answer for year 1: Do. Not. Stop. Feeding. You will notice during periods of strong nectar flow that the bees may not take much syrup. And that's great! The natural nectar and authentic honey are much more nutritious for the bees. But I would argue from a management perspective, producing frames of drawn comb in excess should be one of your most important goals. So much of what we do in our hives *today* impacts what happens tomorrow, next week, or even next year. Not only will these frames be crucial for your approach to next swarm season, but this also directly impacts your 2023 honey crop! So, keep giving your bees a reason to draw comb and keep those feeders full.



Montgomery County Beekeepers' Association of Pennsylvania (MCBAPA) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Our membership consists of individuals who are both commercial and hobby beekeepers. The MCBAPA encourages and promotes active involvement within our community and our organization. Membership is open to an individual who is a beekeeper or has an interest in beekeeping, and who wants to promote honeybee health.

**Our Mission:** *Providing educational outreach to the public, supporting fellow beekeepers and working to promote sound beekeeping practices and honeybee health*