



# The PSBA BUZZ

March 2006

Volume 7, Issue 3

EVENTS at the  
Arboretum Center  
Graham Visitor Center  
2200 Arboretum Drive E.,  
Seattle, WA 98112  
(Meetings are the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday  
of each month except July and  
December.)

Mar. 28, '06  
MEETING 6:30–9 pm  
Beginners Instruction  
6:30–7:15 pm  
Main Presentation:  
Miriam Bishop will talk  
on "The Lazy Person's  
Guide to Beekeeping "  
7:30–9 pm

Apr. 25, '06  
Bill Rahr and Bob Clark  
Will present past and  
present gadgets and  
gimmicks for the hive.

## Hive Calendar

### Examine, Feed if Necessary

On the first 55 F+ afternoon, go through hives briefly: clean hive bottom boards and clean out dead hives. Feed hives that will not otherwise make it to summer. Feed all hives in order to medicate with fumagillin (Fumidial B). If medicating in the spring with Apistan or Coumaphous, install at the middle of March to allow enough time after removal for the required 'medication free' period before installing honey supers. Some people recommend not to use Menthol or Formic Acid Gel packs in the spring; temperatures do not become consistently warm long enough in advance of the nectar flow to install and remove per the label recommendations, though this statement is contradicted by many. James Tew recommends treating hives with menthol in the spring after the temperatures gets above 60 degrees and that all treatments are removed at least one month before marketable honey production. The paper towel recipe further on in the newsletter is recommended when temperatures are above 45 degrees. This is due to the fact that the bees will chew on the towel, thus disseminating the menthol throughout the hive without full volatilization.

This is also the month to register your hives with the state. The application form can be downloaded from page 11 of the Washington State Beekeepers Newsletter [http://www.wasba.org/2006\\_03\\_WSBA\\_news.pdf](http://www.wasba.org/2006_03_WSBA_news.pdf)

-Based on Roy Thurber's *Bee Chats, Tips and Gadgets*

## Club Notes,

Hey Folks,

We are thinking of mentors. As we prepare for the spring the club wants to build up its mentor list for our adopt-a-hive program. Mentors are club members who have kept bees for two to three years, who would be available to work with new members who are curious about beekeeping, and would like to pass on the passion of beekeeping. Mentors would show basic skills of beekeeping and some indicators of colony health. The fun part is a chance to meet new people and to share your enthusiasm for honeybees. A "mentee" is someone with either little or no experience in beekeeping and has lots of questions and interest. They should provide basic equipment of clothing: bee suit, boots, gloves, and a hat and veil. Mentees will be willing to meet their mentor at the mentors' apiary and help him or her with their bees. Adopt-a-hive is an important function of our club. For the club, we want to maintain a healthy membership and bring in new people. This is

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a way to help folks over the initial hump when new to beekeeping so they can enjoy this wonderful hobby. If you are interested we will be making announcements during the meetings or contact Richard Sirota, who manages adopt-a-hive. If you have questions or are interested in the program send me an e-mail at [president@psbees.org](mailto:president@psbees.org) and I will forward your message on.

—Tim Comstock, PSBA president

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## Book Review

ROBBING THE BEES: A Biography of Honey, the Sweet Liquid Gold that Seduced the World, by Holley Bishop

Holley Bishop provides a wonderful narrative from the beginning of recorded history to current times of the relationship between bees and humans. Bees, of course, have been making honey for millions of years while humans have been pursuing their honey for thousands of years. Using the notes of 4000-5000 years of recorded history, Bishop describes the human story of consuming honey and with managing honeybees. For example, through most of this history people ate honey with wax, as there was not a viable process to separate these two substances. This became the human palate, along with people of importance who were allowed to eat honey with grubs- a particular delicacy. This scenario was true till a major invention around the turn of the century- the honey extractor.

Another interesting area she covers is a commercial beekeeper, who lives in the little town of Wewahitchka, in the Florida panhandle. The time period she covers is during the tupelo honey flow a precarious race against time that usually results in lots of honey. I found this aspect of the book fascinating. I am constantly amazed at the tenacity of beekeepers who in spite of hundreds of stings and heat and exhaustion they continue to manage bees. Tupelo honey, regarded by some as the premier American honey, which you can buy in specialty stores in a pretty little bottle, comes from an exotic tree that has a serendipitous history.

Bishop mixes historical fact with personal reflection that makes this text enjoyable and easy to read. Not too laden with scientific terms and expert beekeeping practice broadens the target audience to both the enthusiasts and the unlearned. This book does not provide much information on basic beekeeping practice but provides a rich history of beekeeping.

—Tim Comstock, PSBA president

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## Apiary Report

The bees have been moved from the apiary to make way for volunteers to construct interpretive signs, fences and a new shed. We will soon be applying for a grant to assist with the funding of these. More news will be announced as it comes in.

—Newsletter Editor

We're on the Web!

[www.pugetsoundbees.org](http://www.pugetsoundbees.org)

[www.psbees.org](http://www.psbees.org)

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

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# February Meeting

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2006

Beginners Instruction: 6:30-7:15 pm

Van Sherod's beginner lesson precedes the main presentation. Topics for March can cover ordering packages, construction of woodenware, feeding, or spring medications. Van is always open to questions.

Main Presentation: 7:30-9 pm

Miriam Bishop will speak on "The Lazy Person's Guide to Beekeeping," the title of a book she had written a number of years ago in simpler days. Topics will be updated for today's environment.

Miriam will travel from the Methow Valley where she is planning the 2007 Washington State Beekeepers Association at Sun Mountain Lodge. Miriam has a long history of beekeeping. She has been the president of both the Puget Sound Beekeepers Association and Washington State Beekeepers Association. She helped found WSBA's Master Beekeeper Program, and volunteered with Dr. Jerry Bromenshenk of the University of Montana in conjunction with the EPA, monitoring the effects of air pollution on the bees of Vashon Island, the results of which brought down the ASARCO smelter. Today she is the beekeeper for Sunny Pine Farm, an organic lavender farm in Twisp and maintains an observation hive at Sheri's Sweet Shoppe in Winthrop. Undoubtedly, one of the most interesting and enchanting beekeepers in the State.

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## Announcements

The **WSBA convention** will be held Oct 12<sup>th</sup> thru Oct. 14<sup>th</sup>, at the Lakeway Inn in Bellingham, WA. The Mt. Baker Beekeepers Association, is the sponsor club. They are trying to keep the cost as reasonable as possible (less than \$100.00 for both days). The more persons attending the convention the lower the cost. Please e-mail Paul Spinelli, co-president of the MBBA, at [spinelli\\_p@msn.com](mailto:spinelli_p@msn.com) as soon as possible to let them prepare for the possible attendance. Please include "Maybes".

**Package Bee Program.** Thanks to all of the beekeepers participating in the PSBA Package Bee Program. We have reached our maximum number of packages. Packages are scheduled to arrive in Bellevue April 10-14, 2006.

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## Marketplace

Got gear? Sell your stuff here!

**FREE:** Used Full Depth Frames  
Call Donald Mech at (425) 432-3971

Miscellaneous Bee Equipment for Sale.

Tired of mixing sugar water for your bees? **HFCS 55, High Fructose Corn Syrup** in 4 gallon buckets is available for sale when you pick up your package bees. Cary Therriault (425) 885-0159 or [cktherriau@aol.com](mailto:cktherriau@aol.com)

Short ads are run for free for members of PSBA! The fee for non-members is \$25. Commercial ad rates: \$15 for ¼ page, \$50 for ½ page, or \$75 for a full page. Send your ads to [editor@psbees.org](mailto:editor@psbees.org).

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# New Treatments

## Oxalic Acid

A follow up note on last months Oxalic Acid Treatment: Neither the EPA nor Washington Dept. of Agriculture have approved Oxalic Acid for use in honey bee colonies. But Jim Bach pointed out that there is hope... American Beekeeping Federation (ABF) passed a resolution in their convention to request EPA to register oxalic acid. Their resolution goes direct to EPA for their consideration.

## Menthol Treatment for Tracheal Mites

At February's meeting, Sarah Cooke, the disease queen, presented an informational slide show on Tracheal mites. Tracheal mites are probably the worst problem for bees this time of year. The winter bees live a long time and therefore have multiple generations of mites living in their trachea. Treating for tracheal mites at this time of year could save a hive. Sarah brought up a web page which presents treatment for mites with essential oils.

<http://www.wvu.edu/~agexten/varroa.htm>

This recipe is reprinted from this webpage.

### **1): Measure and mix components:**

Place two standard packs of menthol crystals (3.4 ozs. or 100 grams) in an 8 oz. (118.3 cc) measuring cup, then add canola oil to fill. Microwave for 4 mins. at 50% power. Check to see that all crystals dissolved--if not, microwave for an additional minute at 50% power. Must be used while warm otherwise crystals will reform.

### **2): Add to paper towels:**

Remove 30 paper towels from one roll; fold in half and stack. Put stack of paper towels into a large zip-lock bag and add 1 cup of warm menthol-canola.

Zip the bag shut then squeeze the towels in the bag until all towels are evenly saturated. If one end of towels are somewhat dry, turn the bag sideways putting dry end down--in about 10 minutes, all will be evenly saturated.

Thus, one cup of menthol-canola mix will treat 30 paper towels--using 2 towels per colony, this will treat 15 colonies.

Towels can be stored at room temperature indefinitely if the bag is zipped closed.

### **3): Add to colonies:**

Do not add to colonies while a honey flow is on. Place one paper towel over the top bars of each brood chamber. Best time to treat is September. (Tracheal mites are usually not a problem from May to September, so no menthol needs to be used until the time that mites begin to build up in late August or September). Colonies can be treated anytime during the winter when temperatures rise above about 45 F. We recommend this treatment whenever tracheal mites are found; additional treatments can be made in December, January and February. The bees will chew

up the paper towels and discard them at the entrance in 3-4 days (or longer in winter). This mix caused no harm to our bees but definitely reduced or eliminated the tracheal mites.

**Don Jackson's Shop Towel technique:** A very similar technique was published in the February issue of the American Bee Journal by Don Jackson (Jackson, Don. 1997. Tracheal mites, menthol, and shop towels. Amer. Bee J. 137(2): 138-139). He used a 50-50 mix of canola and menthol, heated on a stove, and then cut rolls of shop towels in half and dipped them into the pan to saturate with the mix.

Editor's note: The above recipe recommends using 2-50 gram packets of menthol crystals. I believe they are referring to Mite-A-Thol. These packets can be purchased from Dadant for approximately \$4.30 per 50 gram packet. That equates to \$39/lb. Mite-a-Thol is pelletized menthol designed to be placed directly in the hive. Raw menthol crystals for this recipe can be purchased at a much reduced rate of \$17/lb locally at Zenith Supply, 6300 Roosevelt Way NE. Zenith Supply is also an excellent place for all your beeswax, candle making and soap making supplies. <http://www.zenithsupplies.com/>