



# The PSBA Newsletter

May 2004

2004, Issue 5

## EVENTS at the Arboretum Visitors Center

2200 Arboretum Drive  
East, Seattle

### May 15

FIELD DAY  
10 am to 3 pm  
Bring Your Beesuit !  
Speaker: Jim Bach

### May 25

MEETING 6:30 -9:00 pm  
Beginners Instruction  
6:30 – 7:15 pm  
Main Presentation:  
Requeening  
7:30 – 9 pm

### June 22

MEETING 6:30 -9:00 pm  
Beginners Instruction  
6:30 – 7:15 pm  
Main Presentation:  
Queen Rearing  
7:30 – 9 pm

### July 17

ANNUAL PICNIC  
at the Arboretum  
11 am - 3:00 pm  
Panel and Open  
Discussion: Bee  
Dances

### Aug. 24

MEETING 6:30 -9:00 pm  
Beginners Instruction

## Hive Calendar

Year-to-year variation in temperature or rainfall, hills that block or funnel prevailing winds, northern or southern exposures, nearby lakes or rivers, and other geographic features near your apiary will speed or delay the blossoming time by as much as three weeks. Use the hive calendar as a guide.

### May

May blooms include Dandelion, Clover, Scotts Broom (pollen only), Huckleberry (ground hugging variant of blackberry), and Geranium.

Feed all hives if a dearth of nectar occurs. There is sometimes a gap between the nectar flows. At this time brood-rearing and the colony's need for honey and pollen is at the maximum. Mere rainy weather may cause a brief dearth of nectar. Strong hives respond by robbing their neighbors. Some robbed hives starve in only 2 or 3 days. Monitor closely. If necessary, put entrance reducers and feeders on all hives through the actual start of Blackberry bloom for your local area. All medications except non-terramycin grease patties must be removed by mid-May if you intend to collect a honey surplus. Check regularly for swarm cells. Beware of crowding in the brood nest. Super in advance and no later than May 15. Optional spring requeening.

### June

June blooms include Blackberry, Dandelion, and Clover.

Our major nectar flow, blackberry, usually starts in early June. So far, this looks like an early year so be ready. Check for swarm cells each 7 – 10 days. Blackberry lasts 2-4 weeks. Remove and extract capped supers.

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

*2004, issue 5*

## Apiary Report

### Work Party on May 8<sup>th</sup>, led by Cary Therriault

Attending the work party were; Cara Mathison, Maria Jewell and Rob Hawkins (a "new" beekeeper with 5 hives). John Keehan and his mentees Megan and Justin also were on hand to work their "adopted" hives number 1 and 2.

Each hive was inspected for brood pattern, number of bees, presence of eggs, queen, and swarm cells. The brood chamber(s) were lengthened horizontally by moving empty brood frames from the ends of the brood box to a more central position. The brood chamber(s) were increased vertically by adding an extra western size super to those with a deep size brood box or, in the case where the brood chamber was a western super, then two western supers were added. Queen

6:30 – 7:15 pm  
Main Presentation:  
Diseases  
7:30 – 9 pm

**Sept. 11**  
Fall Trustee Meeting  
9:30 AM to 1:30 PM  
At Tim Celeski's office

**Sept. 18**  
**Seattle Tilth  
Festival**  
Educational Booth and  
Honey Sale

**Sept. 25**  
**Bug Day at the  
Burke Museum**  
Educational Booth and  
Honey Sale

**Sept. 28**  
MEETING 6:30 -9:00 pm  
Beginners Instruction  
6:30 – 7:15 pm  
Main Presentation:  
Nectar Source Plants  
7:30 – 9 pm

**Oct. 3**  
**King County Fall  
Harvest Festival**  
Educational Booth and  
Honey Sale

**Oct. 26**  
MEETING 6:30 -9:00 pm  
Beginners Instruction  
6:30 – 7:15 pm  
Presentation: Mead  
Making  
7:30 – 9 pm

**Nov. 16**  
MEETING 6:30 -9:00 pm  
Election of Officers,  
Potluck Dinner,  
Tall Tales, and Awards

excluders were added above each brood chamber. To create space for the anticipated blackberry flow, one additional western super was added to each hive above the excluder. Since all of the brood frames (and for that matter most of the added honey supers) were already drawn foundation, the feeders and jars were removed and stored in the shed.

Hive #9 Good brood pattern, five frames of brood/eggs. Added a western brood box. Reversed brood boxes such that the empty one is on top. Added excluder and western honey super. No further action required for two weeks.

Hive #8 Good brood pattern in deep size brood box. Remove one frame of fresh eggs and gave to hive #4 (see below). Added second brood box, queen excluder and western honey super. No further action required for two weeks.

Hive #7 Reversed brood boxes, added queen excluder and western honey super. Good brood pattern. No further action required for two weeks.

Hive #6 Good brood pattern in deep brood box. Reversed brood boxes such that a western brood box is on the bottom. Added queen excluder and western super on the top. No further action required for two weeks.

Hive #5 Reversed brood boxes. Deep brood box on bottom with a western brood box above. Added excluder and western honey super on top. No further action required for two weeks.

Hive #4 **NO QUEEN** could be found. Very few bees present. Several queen cells compromised by frame removal and inspection and, therefore, may no longer be viable. Fresh eggs on a frame from hive #8 added to the brood area to encourage the generation of another queen. Added queen excluder and honey super. This hive is already weeks behind the others. Even if they will be able to raise another queen, they will not be able to make up for the lost time. With this in mind, I recommend that a queen be purchased ASAP and installed. Brood from other hives should be added to this hive to mitigate the loss of the queen and makeup for lost time. As another option, this hive could be merged with another viable hive.

Hives #1 and #2 Outstanding amount of bees and capped brood in both. Thoroughly inspected by John K, Meagan and Justin. Excluders and honey supers added. These are the shining stars of the apiary - expect big weight from these two.

Excluding hive #4 the apiary is in good shape. The package bee hives should be productive this year. Space is no longer an issue. Hives #1 and #2 will require the "good" type of attention as they should be in need of additional supering before any of the others. Meagan and Justin have "adopted" these two. Good choice!

The amount of available supers is low (now that we used a considerable portion of the available western size boxes for brood boxes). Many of those that remain are compromised by wax moths or have frames without foundation. There may be enough for the next round of supering, although effort and time will be required to go through what is available in the shed and gather the usable frames into the good supers. Should the nectar flow be average or better, additional prepared supers will be required.

The use of unmarked western supers as brood chambers will become an issue in the future if medication is used on these hives.

### **Work-Party Schedule**

(The third Tuesday instead of the fourth. Bees don't like to compete with turkeys.)

## December

**We do not meet in December.**

Reindeer and honeybees don't play together.

We're on the Web!

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

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

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John Keenan  
Cara Mathison  
Mary McIsaac  
Rob Stevens  
Cary Therriault  
Wes Ulman

Period	Work-party Leader
May 16 – 31	John de Groot (206-601-9023 / <a href="mailto:john_degroot@juno.com">john_degroot@juno.com</a> )
June 1 – 15	Cara Mathison
June 16 – 30	Rob Stevens
July 1 - 15	Tim Comstock
July 16 – 31	Mary McIsaac & Tim Comstock
August 1 – 15	Mary McIsaac & Tim Comstock
August 16 – 31	Mary McIsaac & Tim Comstock
September 1 – 15	Paul Knutzen
September 16 - 30	Paul Knutzen
October 1 – 15	Scott Enright
October 16 - 31	Scott Enright

Thanks to Cary Therriault for the apiary report.

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## Club Notes

### Working at Beekeeping. Part One.

For those of you that are just beginning you might find yourself wondering if it'll ever be easy. Truth be told, there's a lot to learn in order to become a successful beekeeper. Just ask some of the most experienced among us such as Van Sherod, Dawn Corl, John deGroot, Bill Rahr and others. They'll surely tell you that there still learning each time they visit their colonies.

Since I've been doing this for a little while, I thought I'd pass on a little of how each year I've spent beekeeping has changed my skills. For those of you that are experienced you might find this a little dull, but for those of you just starting out some of this may sound familiar. Since this will take some time to cover, I'll break this into two parts and finish up next month.

Because of my difficult-for-beekeeping location, I spent the better part of my first year getting my property ready for beekeeping and attending PSBA meetings. I would listen carefully at the beginner's session at each meeting. I also made it point to go to Field Day at which I got to see the inside of a hive for the first time. How exciting and a bit frightening it was. Though I was in a beesuit, it was one bee good, 50,000 bees not so good. After another couple of visits to the club's apiary with other beekeepers, I relaxed a bit, and finally came to trust my suit and gloves to keep me safe.

The early part of the next spring was spent acquiring all the necessary equipment and putting all 600lbs of it together. I know the weight because I had it trucked up from Eugene to save on shipping. I thought I'd get enough supers, frames and foundation to last me a while so it took a while to assemble it. I learned in the meetings the previous year to start early. I'm glad I did.

Later that spring my first packages arrived by mail. This is where I had my first problems. At that time we hadn't put together a group purchase, so naturally I mail ordered. But, I ordered from Georgia. Georgia is a very long ways away from Seattle and one of the two packages arrived with about 90% of the workers dead. They'd eaten up all their syrup and were likely overheated on their long journey.

Installing the packages went fairly well, but the weak one was not going to make it. Frank Fitzpatrick and the apiary manager of the group helped me out by providing some frames of bees and some drawn comb to help the weak hive get started.

A little later I discovered I made mistake number two. This was the first year that Russian Queens were available and throughout the spring and early summer I discovered that this was not the best way to start out. They had a bit of an attitude making visiting them always a "fun" experience. Also, the colonies just didn't develop very well. By this time I also discovered the dreaded early summer drought that people in the club were warning me about. I almost starved my colonies without realizing it and had to feed them again in the summer. (Make sure your hives have plenty of groceries before the blackberry bloom) I made lots of phone calls to other mentors throughout the year. If it wasn't for that I wouldn't have known what the problems I was having were.

I had trouble with my rather not very friendly Russian queens throughout the early summer and finally replaced them with good old Italians in hopes building up the colonies and making it through the winter. I made it through the winter, btw.

Lessons Learned: Ordering Russians was a bad idea. I should have listened to other members' advice and nice and easy Italians. Second, ordering packages from a long way away got me off to a bad start. Third: learn from others to know what you're looking at. Books just didn't do it.

Welcome to bee farming. End of part one. Happy Beekeeping. See you at the next meeting and at Field Day on May 15<sup>th</sup>.

*Tim Celeski, President PSBA*

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## Field Day, 2004

**Field Day will be May 15, 2004 from 10 AM to 3 PM**

We are fortunate to have Jim Bach as our chief speaker and teacher and to conduct the hands-on hive examination. You will not find a better learning experience. Last year Jim wowed us with his keynote presentation "State of the Art Integrated Pest Management". What will we learn from the Master this year? Come and find out. Each year, Jim conducts a hands-on Hive Inspection workshop. Be sure to bring your bee suit. A few loaner suits will be available for those who don't have one. Jim plans to cover: ideal state of the hive and colony from last fall; colony size and supering prior to field day date; starting a hive from packages, nuc or parent colony; disease medication programs, monitoring HBTM and Varroa levels, mite resistance measurement; queen and stock evaluation; colony behaviors; and effective colony and hive management for a crop. Field activities will revolve around "seeing what you're looking at" - a practical introduction to bee behavior and the colony environment. If there are queen(s) available and the colonies are strong enough to make a split, or if a colony needs to be requeened, Jim will demonstrate the most effective ways to perform those procedures. This day will be the best half day instruction in beekeeping that you will find. Don't miss it.

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## May Meeting: Phermones

**The Beginners Instruction**

Van will start things off with his usual excellent instruction on seasonal procedures.

**Main Presentation:**

Bill Rahr will discuss Pheromones in the Hive.

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## Microchips deter theft of Hives

**From BEE-L, the internet discussion site:**

Theft of beekeeping equipment has been deterred using AVID microchips, along with a sign saying: "NOTICE: BEE HIVES ON THIS PROPERTY ARE PERMANENTLY IDENTIFIED WITH AVID MICROCHIPS. Call AVID at (800)336-AVID"

The Moses Lake area was plagued by repeated thefts from beekeeper's equipment yards. A beekeeper mounted a dummy camera on a tall pole and placed a sign: "THIS YARD UNDER 24 HOUR CAMERA SURVEILLANCE". The camera never was operative but the thefts dropped to zero. Such a sign (+ live or dummy camera) could discourage both bee thefts and bee loss through shaking of colonies. The AVID microchips cost \$2.70/chip for lots of 25. The cost was less compared to prices charged for insertion into pets because the chips didn't need to be sterilized.

Thanks to Joe Traynor for his post on [BEE-L@listserv.albany.edu](mailto:BEE-L@listserv.albany.edu)

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## How to Grow Brainy Wasps

**Just in case you wish to:**

Sean O'Donnell from Seattle University has been studying colonies of wasps in Costa Rica. He has found that as the wasps graduate from simple housekeeping tasks performed inside the nest to more complex tasks outside the nest their brains grow bigger. Mr. O'Donnell said the region of the brain that grows is known to be responsible for cognitive functions. More research needs to be done to find if the wasp's brain grows larger because of the increased demands on it (how to find and gather food in a complex and changing environment) or if wasp brains simply grow with age.

It seems likely that honeybee brains would grow in a similar way. With honeybees you could solve the chicken or egg question by incubating several frames of brood, letting them hatch out with a new queen and seeing if the bees that take up the tasks of foraging have bigger brains than those that clean cells. Does anyone know if this research has been done with honeybees?

Thanks to Tim Celeski for forwarding this BEE-L posting.

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## How much does a bee weigh?

**Wedmore, a bee researcher, has published the following for worker bees:**

Weight in	Number per	Description
Milligrams	Pound	
110	4,100	on emergence
158	2,900	on 8th day
100	4,500	at 3 weeks old
80	5,700	as an old forager

95	4,800	Average age of field bee (empty)
133*	3,400	Average age of field bee (fully loaded)
60	7,600	weight of old starved bee

\* This figure was probably taken during a good harvest. The general average would be much below this.

Package bees vary from about 2,600 to 4,500 per pound, averaging 3,500. A figure of 3,500 to 4,000 is about right for a swarm, varying with the strain and the number of hours the swarm has been out. 4,000 is a nice round number per US pound.

*Taken from BEE-L, the internet discussion site, and condensed*

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## Bee Q & A

### Question

My bees are clustering in a bee-beard on the front of the hive. Is this a problem?

### Answer

This behavior happens from time to time and no-one knows exactly what it means, but it doesn't seem to be associated with any problems. Your girls are probably hanging out, enjoying the weather. I suggest you carry a lawn chair and a frosty mug of your favorite beverage out to your apiary and imitate them.

*Newsletter Editor*

*2004, issue 5*

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## Reminder

### Meeting Etiquette

Conversations in the meeting room make it difficult for others to hear. Please go to the lobby to talk, or conduct your discussion silently by using the waggle dance.

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## Foraging

### Local Queens for Sale

LOCAL QUEENS will be available at this month's meeting. Available May 25th, from good stock, marked, \$12 ea. Discounts on orders of five or more, please call for availability. Also, 3 7/8" thin surplus foundation for comb honey or Ross Rounds; 5lb box \$20. Call Brandon Clayton, 425-486-3206, or email [wsu\\_brandon@hotmail.com](mailto:wsu_brandon@hotmail.com)

*Short ads are run for free for members of PSBA! . Commercial ad rates: \$15 for \_ page, \$30 for \_ page, or \$60 for a full page.*

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## Round Dances

### Volunteers wanted for work party on Sat. May 22

John deGroot will lead a work party on Saturday afternoon May 22. Each beginner will work with an experienced member. To participate call John at (425) 788-2259 evening or (206) 464-3609 day or via email at [john\\_degroot@juno.com](mailto:john_degroot@juno.com).

