



# The Shore Swarm



The Newsletter of the Beekeepers Guild of the Eastern Shore

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

## Greetings, Beekeepers,

This will be a brief little newsletter. The bees will soon be clustering inside their snug hives and we will too.

But this December has so far kept us lurching from sunny days in the 60s and 70s to frosty mornings of sub-freezing temperatures. The days will soon begin to lengthen and as the cold strengthens, our clustering honey bees will be facing the long months of little forage and greatest need.

The unusually warm December days are actually putting our bees at risk of starvation. The bees are spending lots of energy flying and we might see them carrying pollen into the hive. But their activities represent a net energy loss to the hive as they are not finding enough nectar to replace the honey that fuels their activity.

The experienced beekeepers among us believe that supplemental feeding at this time of year will help ensure that our bees get through the winter. Read further in this newsletter to see tips and recipes for winter feeding from our own members, compiled by Mary Walker.

Also, you'll find in this newsletter some details about proposed changes to our bylaws to help our guild remain strong.

Joy to all at the turn of the year!

## Upcoming Events

**Saturday, January 9<sup>th</sup>**

**Regular Meeting, Melfa Chamber Of Commerce, 10 am**

**Jenny Templeton: Planting for Pollinators.**

**Friday – Saturday, February 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>**

**Practical Backyard Beekeeping Conference, at Old Dominion Agricultural Complex in Chatham, Virginia. See Carol for more details.**

**Tuesday, February 9<sup>th</sup>**

**Regular Meeting, Barrier Island Ctr. 6:30 pm**

**Minding Your Beeswax: Business Opportunities and Issues in Beekeeping, with George Bryant of the Small Business Development Center.**

**Saturday, March 5<sup>th</sup>**

**Regular Meeting, Melfa Chamber of**

Commerce, 10 am.

Andy Westrich

Friday, March 18<sup>th</sup>

We present "The Fun Side of Beekeeping" at the Barrier Island Center, for the Friday Morning Coffee Program.

## Feeding Winter Bees

Mary Walker

Many beekeepers are concerned that our unusual weather conditions may require extra feeding this year. The bees are flying and finding very little to bring home (amazingly, still finding pollen!) Supplemental feeding for winter usually means making some sort of semi-solid sugar candy, patty or fondant rather than a liquid mixture.

Most beekeepers put the sugar solids directly on top of the hive's uppermost frames. To make vertical space for the sugar, an empty shallow super can be used to support the inner cover. That does mean extra space in the hive for cold air, and I have used wadded paper towels to fill some of the empty space. This paper also serves to absorb some of the ever-present moisture that rises in the hive. There are probably other methods, and we would all be glad to hear about those.

Here are several recipes from our members:

From Donna Fauber:

Here is a recipe I received from Angela for feeding solid sugar.

### Easiest Recipe

1/3 cup Apple Cider Vinegar (ACV)\*  
4 pounds sugar.

Mix and spread on parchment lined pan. Use glass or rolling pin to smooth. Cook 170 with door cracked for 30 min. Cut off heat, and leave in oven.

\*May use water instead of vinegar. I've done both, no problem. (The bees seem to really like the ACV but some say it can cause diarrhea. I haven't seen this in my hives.)

### Licho's Queen Candy Recipe

One large bag of powdered sugar  
8 ounces (half bottle) of corn syrup.

Mix and roll. No cooking, you'll need upper body strength, unless you use a mixer! Sounds like a sticky mess but it isn't and it's easy to form. I didn't have parchment paper so I used paper towels. I suspect newspaper would also work. I made this and put it on some hives, I haven't checked to see how it's "weathering" in a humid beehive.

Mary Walker thinks this **easy recipe** came from **Andy Westrich**:

5 lbs. granulated sugar  
7/8 Cup water (I think I will use half vinegar from now on- I know the girls like it)  
1 tsp. Honey-B- Healthy (optional).

Mix in a large bowl and spread on a parchment lined 9 x13 baking pan. Score into four parts. Place in a slightly warm oven that has been turned off and leave overnight.

## Telling the Bees

### Don Forbes

The Beekeepers Guild lost a very dear charter member recently, when Don Forbes of Onancock died on December 1<sup>st</sup>. Don was a retired Naval officer, defense contractor, and businessman before moving to the Eastern Shore and becoming a realtor. He is survived by 2 sons and 4 grandchildren – and a very well known Goldendoodle, Missy. Don embraced his adventure of beekeeping wholeheartedly and hosted our first and second annual picnics. He was a very generous and gracious host, and was involved in our first beekeeping class as well as in our early experiences with group orders of equipment.

### Will Smith

Will Smith of Exmore died December 15<sup>th</sup> at his home. Will was fairly new to beekeeping, having taken the BGES Beginning Beekeeping class just this past year. In spite of a chronic illness, Will was hopeful and fully involved in work and life. He was a former deputy sheriff, police officer and state trooper, and very instrumental in the annual Troy D. Ashe pistol tournament. Will is survived by his wife Liz and 2 sons.

**We will miss both of these men very much!**

***Winter Grease Patty from Beekeeping for Dummies (supposedly protects bees from tracheal mites- patties can be used year round.)***

*1 ½ pounds solid vegetable shortening (such as Crisco)*

*4 pounds sugar*

*½ pound your own honey (would powdered sugar do?)*

*1/2 pound pulverized mineral salt (orange-black kind sold at farm supply store).*

*Mix all until smooth. Form into about 12 hamburger-sized patties. Use one at a time on top bars of hive, flattening to fit under inner cover. Store extra patties in a bag in the freezer.*



Here are some of Ann Snyder's sugar patties, made from the easiest recipe, probably from WT Wilkins via Mary Walker

Bowl of sugar

A few spoonfuls of water

Add water to sugar little by little, mixing continually, until mixture has the texture of slightly moist sand. Shape by hand into flattened shapes on a wax paper lined pan. Allow to dry until firm near a heat source like a radiator. Place atop frames in your hive.

## BGES Goes International

Bettina Dembek returned from Germany recently, and she reports that our friend Herbert Habich is proudly sporting his new BGES shirt. The following is a note that Herbert sends us:



*Dear Friends,*

*What a surprise! Thank you very much for the shirt (I'm so sorry, but our "Bee Club" doesn't have anything like that.)*

*It's a great honor for me to get a shirt from your "Beekeeper Guild." I will wear it with pride.*

*On March I tell our beekeepers about the meeting with you. They are very excited to hear from you. I'll show them the same lecture and give them informations of our discussion. There I'll wear the shirt (to make them a little jealous!!!) and they will get a taste of Angela's honey.*

*Now I wish all your beekeepers*

*Merry Christmas  
And a very healthy New Year 2016  
Lots of honey and gentle bees.*

*Thanks a lot again for the shirt. It's great!*

Bettina also sent a copy of an article about Beekeeping in the USA, written by Herbert about US! With pictures! A copy of this article, which appears in the December copy of "Bienenpflege: Die Zeitschrift fur Imker." (Sorry for lack of umlaut, Bettina!) will be available for your viewing pleasure at our next meeting in January!

## Speaking of Attractive Shirts....

If you'd like to own one of our club shirts which Herbert sports so stylishly, we have 2 sources for them:

BGES screen printed shirts. Order by emailing [BGESVA@GMAIL.COM](mailto:BGESVA@GMAIL.COM) Short sleeve \$12.00 Long Sleeve \$15.00 Polo \$18.00

Embroidered shirts are available at Marker 29 in Onancock, you can call them directly at 757-787-1000.

## Membership in the Beekeepers Guild

BGES membership runs July 1st through June 30th. Join now and your dues will be HALF PRICE.

You do not need to be a member to attend any of our monthly meetings!

We do encourage membership as it helps us bring programs to the community and club members.

Among our members there are probably many reasons to belong to a Beekeeping Guild, beyond the good start and support such a group can give to beginners:

It's important to have an identifiable source of information and bee help for our Eastern Shore non-beekeeping neighbors.

It's important to have a local group with knowledge, willing to be advocates and community educators on behalf of honey bees.

It's important for us to continue to foster growth and mutual support among our own members through meetings and continuing education.

## A BGES Member Goes to the State Meeting

Donna Fauber's notes from the Virginia State Beekeepers fall conference that was held in Weyers Cave, VA

The meeting speakers were Dr. Ernesto Guzman, Professor and Director of the Honey Bee Research Centre in the School of Environmental Sciences at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, and Dr. David Tarpy, with the Department of Entomology, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, N.C.

Dr. David Tarpy - **Better Queens, Better Colonies and the Queen and Disease Clinic at NCU**. His research interests focus on the biology and behavior of honey bee queens—using techniques including field manipulations, behavioral observation, instrumental insemination, and molecular genetics—in order to better improve the overall health of queens and their colonies.

Dr. Tarpy said that in all batches of queens, some are good and some perform poorly. His lab, at NC State University, tests queens and they have tested batches from commercial queen suppliers, artificially inseminated suppliers and small queen producers. He has found that commercial queens and small queen producers have the same rate of good queens vs. low quality queens. He indicated that inseminated queens were really only useful for those in the field of research and those that wanted specific genetics, he was hesitant to say this but he indicated that artificially inseminated queens weren't of the same quality as open mated queens. In all instances, he said that when he tests queens, sometimes they test ok for viability and then perform poorly. Basically, they are trying to find out why queen performance has been declining over the years. They are also studying drones. He said a bigger queen is definitely better; you want a well mated queen. If you have a runty queen that is "good", graft from her but don't keep her around.

He mentioned that the physical quality of queens depends on the age of the larva. When older larvae is used (grafting or by forcing workers to make a queen) you will produce a "worker" type queen. The younger the larva, the better the queen, he said if you can see them, they are too old! You want to use a day zero larva.

Dr. Ernesto Guzman - Basis of Selective Breeding for the Honey Bee and Microbes, Natural Oils and Nutraceuticals to Sustainably Control Parasites in Honey Bee Colonies

Dr. Guzman was very interesting, some statements were quite scientific while other statements were easily understood. I tried my best to write down everything he said, he also had an accent so I know I missed a lot. He sent me a copy of his book but in this case, the movie was better than the book. Dr. Guzman spoke on selective breeding. He said every beekeeper has to pick traits that are most important to them. Pick no more than three but two is best. It's nearly impossible to breed a bee that has all of the wonderful traits a beekeeper wants. He mentioned not confusing genetic traits with environmental qualities. For example, if you chose honey production as a trait, that could be 80% environmental and 20% genetic. He said breed for genetics, you'll get a higher success than if you breed for environment. He shared with us tips and tricks for note taking, picking bees that are honey makers, hygienic, defensive/gentle, etc.

Because research is saying that mites are the main culprit for winter mortality (85%) and with a count of six mites per 100 workers, the survival rate is 50%. He gave us the how and when to test mite drops so that a beekeeper could accurately choose that trait. He spoke about drones and mating control, it was also noted that queens do pass disease on to eggs. With that said, he spoke about how our current control is both toxic and expensive, how drone comb was labor intensive and for current organics, conditions had to be optimal and results varied. His hope

is to one day be able to say that we do have organic honey! He did not recommend any specific treatments, actually he didn't talk about treatments at all but spoke more about the importance of honey bee genetics as a control. He then touched on organics and said this is where the next phase of research is headed, but not in his lab.

I'm happy to share or explain the rest of my notes and the book that Dr. Guzman mailed to me. I didn't want to make this too long! I'm anxious for spring to arrive so that I can use some of the techniques for increases in my own apiary.

**The VSBA 2016 Spring Conference will be hosted by the Nansemond Beekeepers Association on June 17 & 18, 2016 at Smithfield Center, Smithfield, VA. They said one of their guest speakers would be Dr. Lawrence Connors. The VSBA conference is held twice a year, they have several vendors' present, noteworthy speakers and you get to network with other clubs and beekeepers from around the state. I've been to two of them and always take away something new!**

*Many thanks, Donna!*

There was a special meeting early in December, to which all members were invited to discuss the structures and processes of our guild. This meeting was very well attended, and the discussion was productive. There are some good ideas afloat for our future.

Our guild's bylaws were closely examined and some changes are being proposed. These will be discussed more fully at our January meeting, but chiefly have to do with tightening up some of our procedures and encouraging participation and shared leadership among more members.

Here are some areas under consideration:

-  Term limits of 2 years for officers
-  Increased participation in state and regional activities
-  Add education/program committees, also refreshment committee
-  Follow regular agenda for business portion of meetings
-  Add audit committee to assist treasurer
-  At meetings, allow time to acknowledge visitors

Members will be hearing more about these proposed changes at our future meetings. Thanks to Angela Barnes, Donna Fauber and everyone who is working thoughtfully to ensure that BGES remains active, useful, and relevant in the future!

This newsletter was intended to be brief, but as you can see, there has been a lot of work quietly being accomplished by our beekeepers on the shore.

Don't miss the January meeting. Our own Jenny Templeton, whose official title is "soil conservationist," will be sharing interesting and useful information about how we can plant for bees in whatever spaces we might have. Lack of forage and habitat is often cited as a major reason for the decline of all pollinators, especially honey bees.

And don't forget to provide a little ventilation in your hives, even in the winter! Moisture condensing in the top of a hive can kill more bees than the cold will.

