



The PSBA Buzz

Monthly Meetings are held
every 4th Tuesday
(except July, Nov, Dec)

Graham Visitor Center of
Washington Arboretum.
2200 Arboretum Drive E.,
Seattle, WA 98112

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Hive Calendar

Nectar Sources in April: Dandelion & Clover, Scotts Broom (pollen), Huckleberry (ground hugging variant of blackberry), and Geranium.

In May: Feed all hives if a dearth of nectar occurs or wet weather prevents extensive foraging... either with frames of honey or 1:1 cane sugar syrup. On warm days, begin regular checks for new eggs, brood pattern, population level, swarm cells. Beware of crowding in the brood nest to avoid swarming. If colonies are of sufficient strength, add honey supers two weeks in advance of the blackberry nectar flow unless you are absolutely certain they have excess room in the brood nest and would rather concentrate on building up colony strength.

Optional: for over-wintered hives you can consider spring re-queening and/or splitting the hives.

All medications except non-terramycin grease patties should be removed by mid-May if you intend to collect a honey surplus.

May Meeting:

Beginner Lesson: 6:30-7:00pm Summer Management & Honey Production – Sarah Cooke

❖ *Announcements: 7:00-7:15 Get the latest info on what's happening with PSBA*

❖ *General Meeting 7:30–9:00pm PSBA Board Members Brad Jones and Peter Nolte will discuss queen rearing and their efforts to create a queen rearing program in the PSBA Apiary.*

Bee Lunch

By Jeff Steenbergen



The Ceanothus thyrsiflorus 'Oregon Mist' - A Vibrant Blue Delight.

Native to western North America this evergreen shrub stands out for the vibrant blue flowers it makes in late spring. There are about 50 varieties of Ceanothus with colors ranging from blue, white, and pink, but why would you not plant the bees favorite color? Being a native plant these bushes are also amazing drought tolerant once established. Over time they can grow into a small tree to about 15 feet high that provide privacy and color or to fill in that out of the way spot in the garden. Once established these bushes can be a lazy gardeners dream because they do best when not fertilized or watered and put in a sunny location.

President's Message

By Krista Conner

It's been a busy couple of months, with the arrival of bee packages, nucs and the first swarms of the year – thanks to some fabulously warm temperatures this spring.

If you haven't done so already, please inform your friends and neighbors that it is swarm season and how PSBA can help. Tell them about PSBA's swarm list, which is one way PSBA empowers others to protect honey bees.

<http://www.pugetsoundbees.org/psba-swarm-list/> See the article on page 3 for more details on swarms.

On the topic of protecting honey bees, media coverage and controversy over neonicotinoid pesticides has surged, prompted most recently by The European Commission's decision to ban the use of thiamethoxam, clothianidin and imidacloprid on crops which are attractive to bees. While there's not a consensus in the scientific community on the role neonicotinoids play in colony collapse, there is a growing desire and effort to ban their use. Locally, Olympia Beekeeper's Association and Thurston County Commissioner are urging WSDA to limit the sale, use, and distribution of neonicotinoid insecticides for ornamental use in Thurston County and Washington State. You can read more [in this article](#) and on [WASBA's site](#) which contains a link to a petition if you are interested in participating.

The month of May will continue to be a busy one as PSBA prepares to play host to our guest, Randy Oliver and many area beekeepers in attendance at PSBA' Field Day on May 18th. I hope to see you there, it will be a fun and informative day for all.



PSBA President:
Krista Conner

Free webinar: Swarms and Swarm Management with Dr. Jim Tew, Alabama Cooperative Extension System

<http://bit.ly/swarmmgmt>



PSBA's Swarm List is a way we help protect honeybees – please share this link!

PSBA Needs Your Help!

Supplier Info Wanted

Our supplier list on our website needs updating. Do you sell queens, nucs, packages or beekeeping equipment? or know someone who does? Please send information including business name, website, address, email address, phone number and what is sold (nucs, queens, packages, beekeeping supplies) to editor@pugetsoundbees.org

Apiary Repairs

The roof on both the sheds at the Apiary need replacing due to leaks. If you have roofing experience, building experience, and/or materials and equipment for this project please let us know by contacting secretary@pugetsoundbees.org

Extractors

Do you have an extractor that you're not using? Why not donate it to PSBA? PSBA's extractors are getting old and worn from use. If you have an extractor in good working condition that you'd like to donate please contact treasurer@pugetsoundbees.org

A Festival and Parade Just for Bees – and You're Invited!

Please join PSBA at West Seattle's Bee Festival and Parade as the West Seattle Bee and Pollination Garden opens on May 19th. Beekeepers are invited to join the parade by wearing beekeeping suits and ushering the beehives to their new enclosure. PSBA will offer an information booth at the picnic in the afternoon – volunteers needed!

<http://www.westseattlebeegarden.com/events.html>

Upcoming Events:

May 18th: PSBA Field Day with Randy Oliver – a full day of learning from an expert beekeeper and biologist.

Reserve your spot for this learning opportunity today!

<http://www.pugetsoundbees.org/workshops-and-events/>

May 19: West Seattle Bee Festival: PSBA will be in attendance talking honey bees and selling honey. **11am – 3pm.** More info: volunteer@pugetsoundbees.org

Bee Swarms Creating a Buzz

By Jeff Steenbergen, Trustee

With recent losses to bee populations worldwide seeing a few bees around the garden is something to celebrate, but what do you do when a few thousand bees show up? Longer days bring a surge of blooming trees and flowers which create a short window of time for healthy honey bee colonies to split and create new colonies. When a colony splits beekeepers call the part that leaves the hive to a temporary location a swarm. Swarming is the natural process that honey bee hives go through to create new colonies and spread their genetics to new locations. If you can remove yourself for a moment from the frightening concept of 10-15 thousand bees hanging on a branch or off the side of a building a swarm can be an amazing experience to observe.

The swarming process starts when the queen lays eggs in several cells that will be used to raise new queens. These eggs will take 16 days to mature and the mother queen will need to leave several days before the new daughter queens emerge, battle and the strongest takes over. However the mother queen can't leave as soon as she lays these eggs and needs to prepare herself to leave the hive by stopping egg production so she will be light enough to fly to a new home. Flying is something the queen only does after she emerges to mate and possibly again later in life if her hive is successful enough to swarm.

Once the mother queen is ready she will fly out of the hive a short distance and will rest on something branch like usually several feet off the ground. She will be followed by about 2/3 of the bees in the hive that will go with her to build a new home. At this point the separation is final and the process of finding a new home begins for the swarm. While it may just look like a big mass of bees they are actually doing something quite amazing and they are making decisions on possible new home locations to select the best one. The oldest bees scout new locations and present options to the members of the swarm and in a matter of a few hours or sometimes days they will pick a new home. During this time the queen is protected but is not part of the decision making process, in fact she doesn't know where the new home is until she is guided there with the rest of the swarm!

Swarms are vulnerable outside the hive to weather, animals and more importantly people and need to find a new home quickly. In a rural setting this is

usually a hollow tree but in the city with loss of habitat this can take the form of a wall or attic where they become a problem. If you encounter a swarm it is important to call a beekeeper quickly before they leave to a new home. While many services can remove bees from inside a wall it is usually a fatal process for the colony as it is very easy for the queen to become injured during the extraction process. Pollinator numbers are dropping at alarming rates and every swarm presents an excellent opportunity for each of us to help them succeed.

Beekeepers offer FREE pickup and removal of swarms that are easy to reach and usually show up surprising fast for people that also have a day job. Local beekeeper clubs annually publish beekeeper numbers on swarm lists by area and should be your first resource to finding a local beekeeper. If you are unable to find a local bee club or swarm list try calling a non-emergency number like the local fire department and they should be able to point you to the local beekeeper for your area. If you have a swarm list follow the directions listed there which usually are to call beekeepers until you get someone to confirm they can drop everything to rush out to save the swarm. While you wait for the beekeeper the best thing you can do is get your camera ready and make sure people stay 10-15 feet away from the swarm.

When a beekeeper arrives they will remove the swarm by transferring them into a hive box. Bees in a swarm are less likely to sting because they have nothing to defend and are gorged with honey so they have energy to build a new colony. The beekeeper may work bare handed or in a full suit to transfer the football sized swarm of bees into a hive with a shake of a branch or by the handful if they are on a wall. Once the majority of the bees are in the hive the beekeeper will wait for any stray bees to find their way into the hive box before closing the hive up to take to their new home.

If you are in the greater Seattle area please refer to the Puget Sound Beekeepers Association (PSBA) swarm list to find a beekeeper at: <http://www.pugetsoundbees.org/psba-swarm-list>

If you are outside of the Seattle area you can refer to the Washington State Beekeepers Association (WASBA) website to find a local swarm list for your area: <http://wasba.org/local-beekeeping-organizations/swarm-control>

Marketplace

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PSBA Apiary Report, *By Peter Nolte, PSBA Apiary Manager*

A new beekeeping season has officially kicked off in PSBA's apiary. The past winter was hard on the apiary hives, with only three successfully overwintering. Of those three, two were queens descended from Washington State University's breeding program. On April 14, John Woodworth led our annual package installation work party, demonstrating package installations in one of each main hive types: Langstroth, Top Bar, and Warre.

The coming year will bring several exciting developments for the apiary. First, we are beginning an apprentice program for new and intermediate beekeepers where apprentices will take responsibility for one of the club hives and receive mentorship of a more experienced beekeeper throughout the season. Applications for the apprentice program will be available soon.

Our next major development is PSBA's creation of a queen rearing program. Led by Brad Jones, over the course of the next two seasons we hope to be able to begin distributing proven survivor genetics into Seattle and the surrounding areas. The program will begin this year with several rounds of grafting to fill the apiary with local queens with proven genetics, and we'll expand from there.

Finally, we will begin a rigorous mite monitoring program, experimenting with several different methods of monitoring varroa mites. This will allow us to knowledgeably say if and when treatment is necessary, assess mite resistance of colonies, and will also allow PSBA's membership to gain experience with mite monitoring methods through work parties so that they can track mites more effectively in their own apiaries. A greater understanding of mite infestation and control options will lead to better overwintering success throughout the city.

To learn more about what's going on the apiary, track our apiary blog here:
<http://www.pugetsoundbees.org/category/psba-apiary/>

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