



# Beekeeping News

www.pugetsoundbees.org

## Upcoming Events and Announcements

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### PSBA FEBRUARY MEETING

**February 26, 2002** at the U of W Arboretum's Graham Visitors Center, 2200 Arboretum Drive East, Seattle. (Meetings are regularly scheduled on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month except July and December.)

#### Regular Program:

6:30 –7:00 P.M.

Annual Elections

7:15—9:00 P.M.

Topic: Package Bee Installation

Speakers: Bill Rahr and Frank Fitzpatrick

#### Next Trustee Meeting:

Sat. March 9th, 9:30 am—2:30 pm at

### Upcoming Events

#### FEB. PSBA PROGRAM

Bill Rahr and Frank Fitzpatrick are cooking up a special program about package bees that you won't want to miss.

A short slide show will be followed by lecture and hands on demonstration including: the history of package bees, how to order and receive bees, preparation for and installation of bees in the hive, what to do with a dead queen, useful tips, and recommended reading.

Equipment will be available (less the bees) to supplement the demos. Even old timers (if there are still any around) can join in and give tips for success.

#### BEEKEEPING CLASSES

Course Description: Everything you need to know to begin keeping honey bees. Includes information on protective clothing, tools, key success factors, typical annual schedule, procedures, harvesting,

set up, and medication of hives. A practical exercise at a beeyard (protective clothing will be available) will be scheduled during the class for later in April.

Northshore Community School District: First Class starts at 6:30 pm Feb 25 for 4 wks. Price \$40. John deGroot inst. 425-489-6204.

Seattle Central Community College is sponsoring a one day intensive beekeeping course on April 6 from 8:30-5:00 at Graham Visitor Center. Price \$25. Contact Jeff West at jewest@sccd.ctc.edu or 206-587-5449.

#### PSBA TRUSTEES

The next trustee's meeting will be a ½ day retreat at a location to be announced. All outgoing and incoming officers, trustees, and other interested members are invited. We will try to plan the entire year. The time will be 9:30 am to 2:30 pm on Saturday March 9.

#### Western Apicultural Society 2002 Annual Conference

August 12—15, 2002

Tahoe Biltmore Hotel/Casino. 1-800-245-8667. Use Group Number 0812 when making hotel reservation. Deadline: July 12, 2002.

Contact Eric Mussen (ecmussen@ucdavis.edu 530-752-0472) or Dawn Corl (dawncorl@blarg.net 206-525-2433) for detailed information about the conference itself. This conference is worth getting to. See Supplement to Sept. 2001 PSBA Newsletter for a summary of last year's WAS 2001 Convention.

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

From Dan Hendricks: Tom Sanford is publishing a new online newsletter. Join the new list by simply addressing a blank email message to: Apis\_Newsletter-suscribe@yahoogroups.com.

## Almanac for Puget Sound Beekeepers

*Adapted from Roy Thurber Bee Chats, Tips and Gadgets*

### MONTH of March.

Order queens and package bees for delivery in April or May, if you have not done so already. Register hives per Washington State requirements. Prepare your hive record notebook (see PSBA web site for examples of record keeping tools.) Replenish moth repellent in stored supers.

Weigh or heft the hives and feed with drivet sugar or top feeders if necessary. If the hive weighs <80 lbs, feed them. Hives with adequate stores will be very heavy and difficult to tilt. Remove mouse guards if you have used them.

The hive can be opened on a 55 Degree day with no wind. Quickly check for eggs, being

careful to keep the frame out of the hive for no more than 10 seconds. If you have eggs, then you know you have a laying queen. Clean the floor boards. Initiate AFB preventative management. Reverse the 2 lower hive bodies when cherry blossoms show color, keeping the queen in the bottom box. Swarming can occur as early as April 1st.



Hives with adequate stores will be very heavy and difficult to tilt.

## Questions for the Expert: Catch the Buzz [kim@airoot](mailto:kim@airoot).

### Honey Bee Questions Gladly Answered

Got a question about honey bees? Now you can send your questions by computer to honey bee experts at the Agricultural Research Service's Carl Hayden Bee Research Center in Tucson, Ariz. The center's researchers, who are international authorities on honey bees, will reply via Internet in about 24 hours, according to entomologist Gloria DeGrandi-Hoffman.

This new Internet service, free to the public, is called, "Expert Forum on Honey Bees." It lists a wide range of fre-

quently asked questions, along with answers from scientists. Examples include: "What should I do if I find Africanized honey bees nesting on my property?", "How do I keep honey bees out of my swimming pool?", and "How can I get started keeping bees?" In addition, the Forum also has answers to questions about beekeeping as a hobby or profession, crop pollination, honey bee biology and research conducted at the center.

A special category called "Student Forum on Honey Bees" gives kindergarten through 12th-grade students the

opportunity to use pre-existing questions as a template to help develop new questions on their own.

Users will play a key role in expanding this state-of-the-art, user-friendly, electronic question-and-answer service, according to DeGrandi-Hoffman. Each question answered by center experts will be kept in a database. That way, answers to subsequent similar inquiries will be available to anyone, anytime day or night, seven days a week. What's more, when new information becomes available, the

*(Continued on page 3)*

## President's Message

*John de Groot, PSBA President*

Our club was invited to create an apiary on the Arboretum grounds 50 years ago to ensure the pollination of the Arboretum's botanical collection. The club apiary's secondary purpose is to be an educational resource to the public. The Arboretum has experienced a substantial increase in visitors over the last 10 years or 20 years. The public has become more aware of the honeybee's role in plant pollination, ecosystem health, and agriculture.

The Signature Garden is an annual project of the Arboretum. Local clubs are invited to create a garden around a theme. PSBA is producing a garden of nectar source plants this year and will need volunteers during

the growing season.

Last September, five club members put on a display for the public at the Burke Museum during their "Bug Day". More than 1000 people visited our table and learned about honeybees. There will be another "Bug Day" this September.

Each fall a small number of members aid the Pierce and Snohomish county clubs to staff booths during the Monroe and Puyallup fairs. From a bee booth staffer at the Puyallup faire in 1995, I learned of the existence of our club and of local sources for training and equipment. Many members of the public will hold their interest in honeybees 'in suspense' until they learn where they can

receive training and guidance.

The way for our club to thrive is to become more engaged with the public through the Arboretum, Center for Urban Horticulture, county agricultural faires, and other programs.

I urge each member to volunteer annually to help during at least one event or as a club officer or trustee so that we continue our commitment to educate the public, build good will and add new members to the PSBA roster. Three cheers for the volunteers!



Three  
cheers for  
volunteers

!

### "The Bee Team" Field Notes Audubon. Sept-Oct 2001:16,18

Dr Jerry Bromenshenk has been using pollen analysis in bee hives to monitor the presence of pollutants in the surrounding environment. Bees' legs pick up pollutants along with pollen as they visit flowers in the area. Because bees communicate sources of nectar and pollen to each other through odor

recognition, it is possible to train bees to locate hazardous materials (including explosives, chemical dumps or toxic materials in landfills) by first giving them syrup laced with a small amount of the pollutant and then following them as they continue to search for that smell after the syrup source is removed.

Conventional searches using the most advance technology currently available takes days. It takes an hour to train a hive to a smell and it takes the bees about 15 minutes to find that pollutant within their flight range.

## Questions for the Expert (continued)

*(Continued from page 2)*

laboratory staff will review and update old answers on the Forum.

"Expert Forum on Honey Bees" is part of the Hayden Center's award-winning web site. It can be found at:

<http://gears.tucson.ars.ag.gov>

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TRUSTEES

Bob Clark, Vic Scarpelli, Van Sherod, Kate McWiggins, Steve Lenz, Jennifer Cochrane, Gene Bowley, Frank Fitzpatrick, Tim Celeski, Paula Milligan, 1 open position

## Book Watch

The Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd is a novel that was reviewed in Barnes and Noble Book Magazine. The story takes place in the South in 1964 and is about an orphaned child taken in by 3 Black sisters who earn their living as beekeepers.

## Virtual Beekeeping

1. From Dan Hendricks: Dr. Eric Mussen's bi-monthly Newsletter from UC Davis can be found at <<http://entomology.ucdavis.edu/faculty/mussen/news.cfm>>. This newsletter is a great way to keep up to date on the latest research that affects

everyday beekeeping. A **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED SITE!**

2. From Bees For Development Newsletter: The following 3 websites won top prizes at 2001 Apimondia in South Africa: **GOLD**—[www.bees4kids.org.uk](http://www.bees4kids.org.uk) **SILVER**—[www.ent.uga.edu/bees](http://www.ent.uga.edu/bees) **BRONZE**—[www.irishbeekeeping.ie/](http://www.irishbeekeeping.ie/)

## Tip of the Month

How do you know when to feed the colony? Weigh the hive. To get an approximate weight, put flat bathroom scales on any side of your hive on a hard, flat surface like a

piece of plywood; place a 2x4 (the lever) about two feet long at its mid-point on a 6 inch piece of 2x4 on edge (the fulcrum) in the center of the bathroom scales. Hook the end of the lever under an edge of the hive and push on the other end until the hive just lifts off the ground. If the weight is less than 80 pounds, it's time to feed.



## Puget Sound Beekeepers Association

### PSBA Newsletter Editor

c/o Dawn Corl  
6226 34<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE  
Seattle, WA 98115

### FREE Service for PSBA Members !!

Sarah Cooke will sample your bees for tracheal mites. 206-368-5430

From retired beekeeper—equipment for continuing 3-4 hive bee operation: 23 deep supers and frames, extra frames and new parts, top covers and bottom boards, beesuit, hive tools, new foundation approx. 20 lbs, electric uncapping knife, electric ss extractor [3 large frames], smoke engine, 8 honey buckets and filler bucket, bee-brush, queen excluders, frameware and guides, etc, etc. Will show prices for comparison. Would like to sell as a unit \$1000. Open to view and offers. This is alot of equipment. Lucas de Clercq ( 360) 678-5339.

Order screened bottom boards with pull out inserts. \$15 ea. Call Jerry 206-525-2433

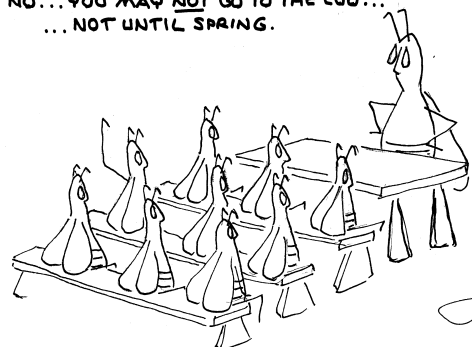
Short ads are run for free for members of PSBA! Commercial ad rates: \$15 for 1/4 page, \$30 for 1/2 page, or \$60 for a full page. Deadline for entry is first of the month.

### WANTED:

6 medium supers, medium frames with drawn comb in good condition, medium zippered beesuit. Call Ilana Guttman 206-320-7972

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NO... YOU MAY NOT GO TO THE LOO...  
... NOT UNTIL SPRING.



## Package Bee Techniques

By *Bill Rahr*



“the following suggestions may help you in having success with your next bee package.”

I have ordered package bees off and on for the past 30 years with good results. Other bee keepers have also purchased and established packages, but occasionally I hear tales of great woe. Mostly it's “The queen died” or “They never built up”. My guess is that it's usually a human problem – a beekeeper error. The bee supply folks are great. They patiently keep replacing your abused bee order, often at no charge. Perhaps some of the following suggestions may help you in having success with your next bee package.

Usually I request the earliest possible spring delivery date to get a good bee build up in time for the blackberry nectar flow. For me that means the first week of April. I also want shipment to start on a Monday or Tuesday. This keeps the bees from spending the following weekend in a cold post office before they get to me. I always order 3 lb. pound packages with marked queens. 2 lb.

packages are not enough bees, especially if your frames contain only foundation.

One year I ordered 4 lb. packages (more money) because I ordered late. It helped only slightly. The best solution for rapid buildup is to put them into a super with drawn comb. Better yet, include a frame or two of honey and pollen (you can steal these from one of your overwintered hives). The queen will start laying right away. A great advantage is that you don't have to feed them if the weather remains foul. You can take, in about three weeks, frames of capped brood from your best overwintered hives and put them in your weaker packaged hives. It evens them out. The maple flow in the middle of April should solve feeding problems.

This is what to do before hiving package bees in bad weather. Put a frameless super on top of the super of frames to be hived. Now remove the syrup can and the

queen cage from the package of bees. Shake all the bees into the super (syrup can hole down) with vigor and strong alternating raps on each end of the package till all the bees are out. Then free the queen from the cage and let her run out onto the frames. She usually dives under immediately and will accept without a problem. At this time I usually sprinkle some of the remainder of the syrup contents directly onto the bees. Go on to the next package to be hived.

Some time later, after most of the bees from the first hive have gone down into the warmer quarters below from the empty super, remove it. Now put the hive cover on with a small stick stuck underneath one corner to allow a narrow opening for flying bees to smell their buddies and get inside. At night remove the sticks. From now on don't even look into the hive for at least a week. If you ‘do sneak a peak’ you'll see the bees clustered on

## Package Bee Techniques

(continued)

about three frames, busy as ever. If you observe returning bees bringing in pollen from filbert or pussy willow, all is well. If not, open the hive and look for the queen. If she's not there, order a new queen immediately.

The above system works in the rain (and sometimes snow) that we get around here in the early spring. It's a great cold weather procedure because packages can be transferred in less than 10 minutes each, thus cutting down on the exposure time of bees to the elements. Last year I averaged about 6-8 minutes per hive installation - and it was raining. Keep the bee packages outside overnight so that the bees cluster. It makes it easier to shake them out. In good weather you don't need the extra 'helping' super, however the bees will need sugar syrup feeding if the weather remains foul. The extra empty super on top is handy to hold quart jar feeders placed directly upon the frames, perforated lid down. Other-

wise you don't need it.

I have a word of caution. When you find a package with only a few dead bees on the bottom and the syrup can three quarters full or more, you know that the queen has only been confined with these bees for a few days. Generally that's not enough residence time for her to become 'their queen'. Set the package aside in a warm place for a few more days of acquaintance. Be sure to sprinkle a small amount of water onto the screen sides of the box to settle them down and satisfy their thirst. Never brush it on or you'll injure their tongues. Many times it's preferable not delay but go ahead and hive the bees. In this case, take the queen cage (leave her inside) and lay it face down across one of the open spaces between frames for a few days. This means that you will have to open up the hive again and release her. Don't forget!

### Some useful tips:

- Prepare and assemble hive equipment in advance.
- Have entrance reducer in place prior to installing bees.
- You do not need a smoker for hiving the bees. They will be gentle.
- Bouncing the bee package on ground will knock bees down off syrup can.
- The use of two hive tools makes removal of the syrup can easier.
- Slide queen cage out, shake off bees, check queen, then set aside.
- Do not put queen cage on ground. You will surely step on her.
- Removing one staple from queen cage screen makes opening easier.
- Setting open queen cage on its side in hive allows queen easy and safe escape.
- Sprinkle only small amount of syrup on bees. Not entire can contents.
- Talk pleasantly to

your bees while you are working. No foul language.

- Close up hive and don't look inside for at least a week.



"This system works in the rain (and sometimes snow) that we get around here in the early spring."