### Fall 2022 Edition Ron Miksha, ABLB editor

"The busy bee has no time for sorrow." - William Blake

Welcome to the autumn issue of **ABee Landing Board!**We hope that August ended well for you and you have more than a bucket of honey in the pantry. If you had a bumper crop, go ahead and take a victory lap. If the crop was disappointing, be assured that you are living in "next year's country" – every year is a fresh start – and a beekeeper's "next year" starts in the fall.

During the next few months, getting honey bees into good shape for winter is our main challenge. By September first, most beekeepers have finished their harvest and have begun supplemental sugar feeding and mite treatments. Before November, most of us will have insulated the hives for winter.

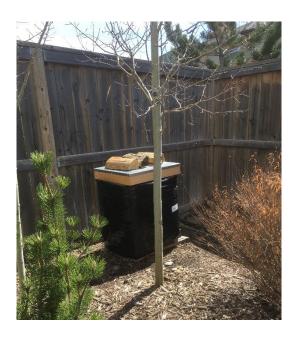
In this issue, Glenda takes a look at late summer and fall flowers. Sometimes clover gives nectar right up until the first killing frost. Then a bit of pollen and nectar may come from goldenrod and aster. Glenda shows us beans, dill, and sunflowers – three plants that satisfy gardeners, chefs, and bees of all sorts.

Malcolm has an informative piece on what he is still learning – after 29 years of beekeeping! He mentions fall mite strategies, hive splits, and wintering.

Liz continues to do so much for our newsletter: writing, copy-editing, and organizing. She also prepared the results from the big photo contest for display here. Mark reports on hosting *Saturday at the Hive*, with a focus on wintering preparation.

Want to help this newsletter? We would enjoy your favourite tall tales and tips and tricks. Please send your stories and pictures by email to ABee Landing Board.

#### Just before the Fall



As the nights grow longer, you may find that your bees will grow more restless. Defensive bees are no fun, so do all you can to eliminate stings and robbing while following these end-of-season suggestions.

- ★ Honey supers need to be removed;
- ★ Last extracting should be finished;
- ★ Check for mites and nosema medicate if needed;
- **★** Feed 2:1 sugar:water to top-off hives' winter stores;
- **★** Add Fumagillin to syrup, if necessary;
- ★ Continue feeding until bees stop taking it;
- **★** Feeding usually starts right after honey is removed;
- **★** Feeding usually ends in October;
- **★** Eliminate colonies that would die over winter;
- \* Remove Apivar strips if you used them;
- \* Add entrance reducers;
- **★** Confirm hives slope slightly forward to drain water;
- ★ Wrap the hives with insulation;
- ★ Store equipment where it can't be robbed; and,
- ★ Have a hot cup of tea with your own honey in it.

#### **Country Blossoms – Glenda Livingston**

Glenda Livingston has taught various parts of the beginner beekeeping course for the Calgary and District Beekeepers. Glenda and her husband operate a market garden (and many honey bee hives) on the dry-country prairies east of Calgary.

#### Three plants that have it all

In this edition of 'Dry Country Blossoms', I'll suggest three terrific plants to grow that work well in our Alberta climate.

There is little reason why late summer and early autumn should be totally devoid of blooms in your garden. For beekeepers, insect enthusiasts, and keen cooks, it is worth checking out these three plants: Scarlett Runner Beans, Dill and Sunflowers.

Here are some qualities to love about them:

- 1. They blossom in August into September which is often a time of dearth.
- 2. They all are super-easy to grow and need minimal care.
- 3. All offer a huge draw to a variety of pollinators late in the season.
- 4. They provide special culinary ingredients to enthusiastic cooks.

Scarlett Runner Beans are dramatic. Their giant-sized (one inch long), vibrantly-coloured seeds are gorgeous. The mature plants can climb ten feet up a trellis and then branch out to form a canopy of green with brilliant scarlet blossoms. Bumble bees are particularly drawn to the flowers. If trained to grow on a structure, they form a living canopy that kids can enjoy and learn from by observing the insects that visit.

Once pollinated, their flowers will produce long flat green beans that are delicious when picked young and cooked like green beans. Waiting until the pods are full and dried will give you the gift of more Scarlett Runner bean seeds that you can store and plant for next season.



Scarlett Runner Beans (credit Livingston)

Every year, we plant Scarlett Runner beans around a metal structure that transforms into a shady shelter by August.

**Dill** is something that you need only seed once for it tends to self-seed very early in the following spring. By August, the flowering heads of the tall dill are full of insect pollinators visiting the attractive heads.



Honey bee on dill (credit Livingston)

There is nothing quite like the deliciousness of fresh green dill leaves on new potatoes! Conveniently, dill shows up when the potatoes and cucumbers are ready. Dill gives home-made garlic dill pickles their magic and a dill leaf adds flavour to many dishes. It is easy to preserve by freezing for using in the dead of winter.

The sunflower, another super plant that lasts late into the season, is a magnet for honeybees and bumble bees. We have been amazed to see honey bees alongside bumble bees, all frantically gathering pollen on one huge flower.



Black oilseed sunflowers (credit Livingston)

Our black oilseed or Peredovik sunflowers are grown densely in fields. If it's a good yield, we will get enough bird seed to feed the winter sparrows and songbirds.

Sunflowers grown in commercial-sized plots and fields can yield large amounts of mild, bright-yellow sunflower honey. And, of course, the seeds can be eaten raw, roasted, or added to all sorts of salads and baked goodies.

So, in January as you peruse the garden catalogues, consider Scarlett Runner Beans, Dill, and Sunflowers – three plants that seem to have it all!

#### **Goldenrod and Aster**

As the Alberta honey season draws to a close, we do what we can to provision our colonies for the cold months ahead. Mother Nature helps a little. In addition to the garden plants described in Glenda's article, left, there are two important native plants that can give a little nectar and pollen. Some of us have seen pollen coming into the hive as late as November, but no one should depend on late summer or early autumn wildflowers to fatten skinny colonies. There aren't enough of these plants and conditions aren't always right for them to supply much to the bees.



Prairie Goldenrod (Solidago missouriensis) loves acidic soil and won't yield much nectar in Alberta's limey dirt. In parts of Ontario and Quebec, it can fill a couple supers every fall. But not here. If you are lucky enough to find a bit of this

darkish strong-flavoured honey in the brood chamber in October, notice its sharp smell and enjoy the rare treat.



Prairie Aster (Symphyotrichum falcatum) likes our alkali soil and will give up nectar more frequently than goldenrod. Its purple and pinkish-purple daisy-like flowers will attract late season pollinators but there just isn't enough of this flower around to rely on for topping off

a hive going into winter.

Although these flowers aren't especially good for our honey bees, they are native to Alberta and help our wild pollinators.

#### Alberta Bee Clubs

Here are links to some of Alberta's clubs:

- Calgary District Beekeeping Association
- Edmonton District Beekeeping Association
- Grande Prairie Beekeepers Club
- Red Deer & Area Beekeepers Association

#### **Edmonton District Beekeeping**

#### **EDBA MEMBERSHIPS:**

Monthly meetings for Edmonton-area beekeepers. If you are interested in becoming a member or renewing your membership, please contact the EDBA treasurer at: <a href="mailto:EDBAtreasurer@gmail.com">EDBAtreasurer@gmail.com</a>. The cost is \$25/yr. Cash, Cheque, or e-Transfer accepted.

Malcolm Connell and Craig Toth are offering their bee courses, now in their 8<sup>th</sup> year, in the Edmonton area. Contact them here to see their learning opportunities.

The tentative schedule for the Edmonton and District Beekeepers monthly meetings in 2022 are as follows:

- **★** Thursday, September 15th
- **★** Thursday, October 20th
- ★ Thursday, December 1st or 2nd in conjunction with the <u>Alberta Beekeeping Commission AGM</u>, Conference & Trade Show.

#### **Calgary and District Beekeeping**

The Calgary and District Beekeeping Association invites everyone to attend their first unmasked, in person meeting in years! Come and see what our teeth look like! September 7 at 7.

Your bee club had a lot going on this summer. Mentoring, Saturday at the Hives, Stampeding . . .

#### **Calgary Stampede 2022**

Over 1.2 million people attended the Calgary Stampede in 2022! Calgary and District Beekeepers (CDBA) was there again to greet many of them. The CDBA exhibit was managed by 48 volunteers some of whom were making their first public appearance since the pandemic and most of whom volunteered numerous times between the set up of the booth on July 5 through to its take down on July 18. This year, our volunteers even managed to capture a swarm on the midway using the exhibit equipment all while keeping the exhibit open to visitors. Once again, we were told that the CDBA exhibit was one of the most visited at Stampede. Many thanks to the great volunteers who made the Stampede event a success!



The Setup!



Eric Metcalfe and Lilli Meloche explain activities in the observation hive.



# ABee Landing Board



Newsletter 4 – September 2022 **Calgary and District Beekeepers Association** 



Crystal Read, Pierre the Canadian Honey Council (CHC) bear, Boyd Williams and Lilli Meloche welcome visitors.



Robert Watson, Liz Goldie, Kathryn Winkler, Jim Rogers, Bruce Aitken and two of Calgary's finest at Sneak-a-Peek, the night before it all begins.



Laura Ell, Pierre, Debra Scott and Vanessa Shalamer still welcoming visitors on the last day.

Photos by Liz and David Goldie



You may have seen newspaper reports about the Calgary Bee Club's Stampede volunteers' extracurricular swarm-catching excitement during the Stampede. We have long-time expert beekeeper Jim Rogers to thank for wrangling the stray livestock. His time set a new Stampede record for this special event!

#### Calgary Herald reporter Stephanie Babych quoted Jim:

"If you do a quick knock, you can dislodge the queen into a bucket and then you pour that into the honey box. As long as you get the queen, they all follow."

The bees were in a tree on the Midway, so there was a lot of attention from folks wandering the grounds.

Jim added that "anyone can help pollinators including those that aren't honeybees — by researching and creating small habitats in their yards. But those looking to keep honeybees should follow the city guidelines and take a course to prevent harming their hive."





The time has finally come! The CDBA will be meeting in person on September 7th at 7 pm at the <u>Forest Lawn</u> Legion located at 755 40 St SE.

This meeting will focus on preparing your hives for fall and winter. Our guest panelists will be Dr. Medhat Nasr, Ron Miksha, and Neil Bertram. Be sure to bring all your beekeeping questions and have them answered by these experts – they have over 125 years of combined beekeeping experience.

Enjoy great conversation with your bee buddies over cookies, coffee, tea, veggies and sandwiches.

There are three other 2022 presentations to take place following the September Q&A Session. These are also scheduled to be in person and at the Forest Lawn Legion. Please note the following presentations and date changes. The hall was not able to accommodate our regularly scheduled dates.

Oct. 19 – *Preparing for Winter* (Etienne Tardif – North of 60 Beekeeping)

Nov. 2 – *Nosema and Lotmaria Passim* (Courtney McInnis – Ag and Agri-Food Canada)

Dec. 7 – A year in the life of a Beekeeper (Reece Chandler – Scandia Honey Company)

Calgary and District Beekeepers Association

### Q & A Session with Experts

September 7 at 7 pm IN PERSON

#### Panelists:

**Dr. Medhat Nasr –** SBDC-Technology Adaptation Program Lead and former Alberta Provincial Apiculturist

Ron Miksha – University of Calgary researcher, <u>badbeekeepingblog.com</u> blogger and former CDBA president and

**Neil Bertram** – commercial beekeeper, beekeeping instructor and former CDBA treasurer

For speaker and membership details, please go to calgarybeekeepers.com



#### Have you checked the **CDBA** website lately?

It's here that you'll find the club's events, previous newsletters, the bee club library with dozens of beekeeping resources, help at getting started in beekeeping, provincial bee registration information, membership details for the Calgary and District Beekeepers Association (just \$25 buys you so much!), and a chance to buy or sell local honey. There's a lot more on your club's website. Take a few minutes to browse – you'll be surprised!



#### **CDBA Photography Contest Winners**

CDBA is pleased to announce the winners of the Calgary and District Beekeepers Association photo contest - 2022! First place photographs are presented below and all of the winning photos can be viewed at 2022 Photo Contest Winners! — Calgary and District Beekeepers Association (calgarybeekeepers.com) Prizes will be awarded at the in-person meeting on September 7 at the Forest Lawn legion.

Thank you to everyone who submitted photos this year and a special thanks to our 3 judges, Stephen Bennett, Ken Crebbin and Joanne Liu who graciously offered their expertise to judge this competition.

First place in **Category 1** (Hives during the year) "**The Final Look**" by Katie Merchant



"My husband, Will, loves to stand back and take a final look at what we did during our inspections. Sometimes he stands there for 20 minutes watching the bees and seeing how our hives have changed. I try to take a picture of him doing this every time so we can see how the hives change over the season." Katie Merchant

**Overall Winner** and First place in **Category 2** (Inside the hive) "**Holding Hands**" by Katie Merchant



"One of my most favourite things to do when checking my bees is to sit and watch all the marvellous things they do. To me, each hive has a different personality and show it in different ways. I know that they're working together hard, but in my heart, this is a group of women who love each other and hold hands as they work to stay connected. I could watch them for hours ... and sometimes do." Katie Merchant



First place in **Category 3** (Beekeepers) "**Learning to Love**" by Katie Merchant



"My sons were always afraid of bees and most things that could "bite", but once we became beekeepers, they decided they would be our pets. Now we sing to them, call them our baby girls and always love to sit and watch them in all their glory." Katie Merchant

First place in **Category 4** (Honey bees outside the hive) "**Pollen Pants**" by Linda Symmes



"The photo ... made me think of those bright yellow pants MC Hammer wore in the early 90's. This little worker is notably top of the charts." Linda Symmes First place in **Category 5** (Honey bees in action ) "**Busy Bees and Peonies**" by Tracey Filewich



"The photo was taken at my father's acreage in the Chestermere area. The two of us have taken up beekeeping as a hobby that we can do together. We are constantly learning and being amazed at the ins and outs of beekeeping!" Tracey Filewich

First place in Category 6 (Cell phone only) " A friend with weed." by William Pratt



"My bees work the foothills northwest of Calgary, where the flora is often a few weeks behind the city. This works well as I usually get several days to notice events like the first wave of dandelion blooms and race out to the country to throw on supers. I have always wanted to make mead with the dandelion blooms and dandelion honey, but haven't managed yet. Next year." William Pratt

### Rolling Through the 2022 Beekeeper Year – Malcolm Connell

This is my 29<sup>th</sup> year of beekeeping. Each year has its challenges – and surprises lurk.

I would sum up the year as 'a collision of goals with realities.'

We began the spring with news that half the hives in Canada had perished. My losses were average, but I was impressed by the higher survival rate of hives in polystyrene boxes. The process of doing splits in May was hampered by cool conditions. I decided to wait until June. By early June one yard's population had expanded enough to make nucs and sell them. The other yards continued to lag. Hence I gave them even more time before attempting to split hives. I decided not to sell the later splits but nurse them on.

One positive feeling I had in the spring was that **enough** of my hives had survived again without my needing to buy nucs, packages, or queens. Putting more emphasis of preparing nucs to sell has made me pay more attention to (and become more skillful at) judging a hive's growth and potential.

In my conversations with other beekeepers a few issues stand out. A few have said the bees did not do well next to large fields of canola. They were not visiting the canola much. Others, while recommending their oxalic treatments, mentioned they had very high losses. I continue to believe oxalic acid treatments have irregular results.

The high winter loss was blamed on a perfect storm: a longer cold spell in winter and a long warm spell in October to early November, ideal conditions for varroa mite breeding. This had been proceeded by the hot spell in July/August of 2021 which allegedly stimulated varroa mite populations.

In 2022 so far we have been spared the climate of 2021. July temperatures were average, significant rainfall

came to most of the Edmonton region in June and July at just the right time. The long August dry spell has lessened yields but has not been a disaster like 2021.

The issues for me now are:

#### 1 Winter Survival

Besides aiming to have more bee population per hive in September, each year I'm switching more winter boxes over to polystyrene from Beaver Plastics. I have noticed more brood being reared in polystyrene hives during May and September than in wood hives. I still add extra insulation if I still have it from wrapping up wood hives in the past.

#### 2 Erratic Climate Conditions.

If the worst type of spring occurs: cool, dry and windy, it's important to check if the hive populations are expanding at all. Feeding additional white sugar syrup in drought conditions may be necessary in May and June.

#### **3 Varroa Control Strategies**

In the last two years I changed my varroa control strategy to treating in Fall with Apivar strips for at least 42 days from the last week of August to mid October. People say it's more expensive, using 4 strips a hive instead of one in spring, yes, but you are only spending \$12 per hive instead of \$3 on an average hive worth about \$350 now. On the other hand if you save by using fewer strips in spring, what more effective treatment can you use in Fall when varroa populations peak?

Formic is less effective if Fall temperatures fall outside the range 10-25 °C. August temperatures have often been higher this year.

Oxalic acid treatments in October are probably too late as the damage has been done. Thymol is another choice that I've heard people consider, but I haven't tried it. In spring I prefer to treat a strong hive with formic if its population is covering all frames and if temperatures

are within the accepted range. If it's a weaker split, I don't treat it as the varroa population is low.

#### 4 Lessons learned from hive splitting

This spring I had too many one-frame-of-brood splits. Because of the cool weather, **several became 'drone layers,'** as the queens had disappeared or cells didn't hatch. The solution to guard against cool weather is to have at least 2 frames of brood and put the nucs with queen cells in a different and more sheltered yard.

One yard continues to have fewer queens mating each year, possibly because of the abundant bird life snacking on young queen bees. Another yard, with fewer birds, usually has more hives surviving winter. It has better rates of queen survival and more success with creating functioning nucs, but has less forage in late July-August. The search for a perfect yard continues.

Splitting hives with at least 8 frames of brood before August 15 continues to be a successful strategy. This year, instead of creating more splits using queens grafted in July and mated in small nucs, I used the splitting process to equalize the strength of existing hives – boosting hives with less brood so all hives would have enough winter bees.

Checking queen brood rearing rates in August is important for judging if hives need to receive a population boost to survive winter or a replacement queen. Also **it's important to keep written records** with dates to see if hives survived with more brood reinforcements – and to what extent hives which gave up 4 frames of brood survived.

Submitted by Malcolm Connell





#### **Regulatory Updates**

All Alberta Beekeepers — As the bee season ends for another year, here is a gentle reminder to beekeepers who are leaving their hobby. According to the Bee Act, beekeepers are required to be registered with the provincial government. The Bee Act defines a beekeeper as "a person who owns and possesses bees or beekeeping equipment or both." This means that even if you only own used equipment, you are still required to register every year. Colonies changing hands must have been registered. Here's the required Beekeeper Registration Form. If you need help, a guide is provided at Beekeeping Registration.

Please contact the Alberta Bee Health Assurance Team at 780-644-8746 or <a href="mailto:bee@gov.ab.ca">bee@gov.ab.ca</a> if you have any questions.

<u>Calgary Beekeepers</u> – Effective January 2022, beekeepers in the City of Calgary are required to register their bee colony locations with the City.

To register, go to <a href="https://www.calgary.ca/pets/licences/urban-beekeeping.html">https://www.calgary.ca/pets/licences/urban-beekeeping.html</a>

Beekeepers who had bees prior to 2022 have until the end of the year to register with the City. The City has indicated it will take a month to process the permit. Beekeepers who started beekeeping in 2022, prior to the registration form becoming available, are required to register immediately.

Before applying for a beekeeping licence, **new**beekeepers must complete an approved beekeeping
training course. Then you will need to apply for a
licence for each property you keep bees on in Calgary.
When applying, you will need to provide proof that you
have permission from the property owner (or proof that
you own the property) and you'll need to provide a
drawing showing where the bees will be situated on the
property. See all the details on the <a href="city's urban">city's urban</a>
beekeeping website.



Our series, "It's honey, Honey" focuses on backyard urban beekeeping as performed by a very experienced Haysboro (SW) Calgary beekeeper. Mark is quite active in our bee club, contributing with Saturday at the Hive, organizing the winter banquet, and volunteering in a wide variety of roles, including auditing CDBA's financials. The retired firefighter is an award-winning honey producer and accomplished bee master.

#### It's honey, Honey

By Mark Soehner Fall 2022

On the second Saturday of Stampede, 11 members met at my Haysboro apiary to see what my operation looks like. Located at Elbow Drive and 96 Avenue SW I have a 140 foot by 55 foot lot with seven hives. One hive is a nuc and six are overwintered hives with 2021 queens.

This was the fourth time that Ron Miksha and I co-hosted *Saturday at the Hive*, where we looked at the small urban apiary of a hobby beekeeper in his 6<sup>th</sup> season.

I discussed the possible issues of why I lost four of ten hives last winter. I had kept the dead bees so that we could examine them. There was agreement that mice had done significant damage in two hives, moisture in another and an unknown problem killed the fourth. The strong evidence of urine, mouse droppings, eaten comb and eaten bee bodies was present. Next winter, the hives' entrances will be significantly reduced to keep mice and voles out.

We looked at the R7 polystyrene bee box by Beaver Plastics, and the top and bottom board. We examined the oxalic crystal heater/vapourizer and the effects of burning on the polystyrene bottom board. We also looked at harvest equipment - the spinner in operation in the kitchen on the 2022 frames, progressive finer filters, labels and jars holding the final product.

We then suited up and examined three hives to see the evidence of a busy queen and the bees building new

comb and storing tasty honey. Ron commented on what we were seeing on the frames.

The afternoon wrapped up with drinks, hot dogs, chicken wings, spring rolls – snacking, drinking and talking in the shade on an 80 °F (27 °C) July afternoon.

Thank you to co-host Ron Miksha for the commentary, Randy Ku for the wings and rolls, Deb Scott for the photos, and the attentive members who attended.



Mark Soehner, left, showing the destruction caused by mice and voles that entered a hive during winter.



"Finger-lickinggood" honey right from the hives.



Beautiful new wax replacing comb damaged by mice during the previous winter.



## Alberta's Tracey Smith awarded bee research grant of \$60,000

Over the past few years, the PAm-Costco research grant has put \$260,000 into the hands of honey bee researchers in Canada. Costco is a major funder of honey bee research, recognizing it as an investment to ensure an ethical and sustainable food supply. PAm, Project Apis m., supports efforts to improve honey bee health through research.

This year's awardees are Ana María Quiroga Arcila (Laval, Quebec) and Tracey Smith (Edmonton, Alberta). Tracey Smith is pursuing her PhD at the University of Alberta. She is advised by Dr. Olav Rueppell. The focus of her research is relative humidity within bee colonies and its impact on Varroa and viral transmission. Her project is titled, "The effect of hive relative humidity on Varroa destructor reproduction and viral infections."

Tracey Smith owned and operated Beanstalk Honey from 2010 to 2021. She is interested in how temperature and humidity may affect varroa and virus dynamics in colonies. Tracey lives on her farm east of Edmonton where she keeps goats, sheep, and chickens.

Many thanks go to Costco and a huge congratulations to these PhD candidate honey-bee researchers!



Thank you to Deb Scott for this great shot of three native bees working apples in the Calgary area. Please send *your* photos to share in this newsletter!

**Beekeeping Hint:** Fall is cleanup time in the apiary. After our hot August, it's hard to imagine that we can have a blizzard with snow covering the hives in a couple of months. And it's hard to imagine that colonies are going to die over winter. But many do.

In Alberta, starvation, poor queens, disease/mite problems, and winter stress (skunks, mice, loose winter wraps) cause most losses. These issues are preventable.

Avoid inevitable losses by wintering heavy hives that are properly protected from winds and beasts. Almost nothing is as sad as cleaning up ten thousand soggy mouldy dead bee bodies in March.

To clean them up in the fall, combine weak hives with strong ones early: place the weaker above the stronger separated by newspaper. A couple weeks later, combs may be consolidated into a more compact brood nest.

The <u>Canadian Association of Professional Apiculturists</u>, recently published a survey of winter losses, as reported by beekeepers. Here are the most common winter-loss reasons given:

B.C.	Weather	Starvation	Poor queens
Alberta	Ineffective Varroa control	Winter weather	Nosema
Saskatchewan	Winter weather	Ineffective Varroa control	Nosema
Manitoba	Weak fall colonies	Poor queens	Starvation
Ontario	Poor queens	Starvation	Weak fall colonies
Quebec	Poor queens	Weak fall colonies	Weather
New Brunswick	Don't know	Starvation	Weak fall colonies
Nova Scotia	Poor queens	Weak fall colonies	Starvation
P.E.I.	Poor queens	Weak fall colonies	Starvation
N.L	NA	NA	NA
Province	1st	2nd	3rd

#### **Products of the Hive: Propolis**

As we approach winter, fresh sticky propolis will surely be on our minds – and hands. Propolis, resin, is collected from tree buds by honey bees, packed into corbiculae (pollen baskets), then tugged off at the hive.

Propolis is from Greek (meaning 'before the city') is also known as 'bee glue'. And it's sticky. Honey bees seal holes and cracks, repair wax combs, and strengthen thin edges of combs with it. Wild, or feral, honey bees living in tree cavities cover the inside of their chamber with a layer of propolis. Seeley and Morse (1976) called this a "propolis envelope" and recognized that it is part of the bees' chemical defense against bacteria. In important 2017 research, Alberta's Renata Borba with Marla Spivak show that the propolis envelope supports honey bee health against AFB. It's also used to entomb small intruders. It's possible to find a dead grasshopper that the bees didn't dismantle and haul out – instead, they coat and seal the decaying varmint in sticky antiseptic propolis.



A propolis envelope under a hive lid.

Since the days of the ancient Egyptians, propolis has been used for various medicinal remedies. Today, it's reported to have <u>anti-covid properties</u>, curative powers on skin disorders, and healing effects for a variety of other ailments. Because it is so sticky, propolis a bit hard to enjoy – and will certainly stain teeth. But some

enterprising folks solved the enjoyment issue by using propolis as an ingredient in nice-tasting confections.



You can experiment with your own propolis by following instructions here for making oil, water, or alcohol tinctures and extracts. Be aware that some people can be allergic to propolis. If you aren't allergic, then experiment. Don't let the bees have all the antiseptic fun!

#### A Bee Walked into a Hive. . .

Dennis

Milbrandt has a great sense of humour and a gift for wordplay. Bees, honey, and combs are naturally punny. What could go wrong?

Three drones are in the bar enjoying their mead. In walk two conspiracy theorists and they sit next to them at the bar.

One bee says, "You can't tell me that was a coincidence." - DennisM

Stop me if you've heard these before:

A person walks into a library.

"Got any books on bees?"

"No," says the librarian. "All our books are on shelves."

A beekeeper lost three fingers on his right hand, so he asked his doctor if he would still be able to keep bees. The doctor said: "Maybe, but I wouldn't count on it."

Enjoying this newsletter? Want to share it?
Before we can send the newsletter to anyone, we need their approval. Anyone can subscribe for free by sending a note to ABee Landing Board: email ABee Landing Board.

#### THE BACK PAGE EDITORIAL

Ron Miksha

#### Winter wraps

When I read in this newsletter that both Malcolm Connell and Mark Soehner had good things to say about polystyrene hives, I thought that I'd add to their ideas.

I built my first beehives fifty years ago. I used trees that grew on our farm down east. We had a small sawmill, mostly for turning our trees into planks and rafters for our commercial greenhouses. My father showed me how to rip native tulip poplars and then mill them down on our planer. I made rabbet cuts for the corner joints and used a thick-kerf dado blade for the frame rests. I cut enough for 300 double-storey hives.

I thought I'd always use wooden hives, but the following year, I learned about mixing polyurethane from raw ingredients. You stir the poisonous stuff together and quickly pour the mix into a mould. I built a mould that had the shape of an inside-out hive body. I dumped the material in, making a poly hive — 48 years ago! It wasn't perfect and it shattered when I dropped it later that year. It was also a lot more expensive than home-grown wood. So, I forgot about plastic hives for decades.

One downside of woodenware for beehives these days is that lumber prices are up a lot since the days of free wood growing in the back forty. The other big issue is that one-inch softwood gives a low insulation value (R = 1.4). That isn't enough to preserve the heat generated by a colony. So, beekeepers tend to cluster colonies and wrap various forms of insulation around them.

For years, I wrapped my hundreds of hives in pink fiberglass insulation and drew black Komex building paper around the boxes. I hated this task. The wind howls strongly on the open prairies, so I spent a lot of time chasing insulation across pastures. If I wasn't careful, I'd split the building paper on a nail or hive corner and then need to rewrap. Tying the units made

a nice-looking Christmas package, but that's the only good thing going for it.



Someone in Calgary (I've forgotten, it might have been Liz Goldie) showed me the newest poly hives. I liked what I saw, so I converted. Of course, I'm down to just two backyard hives now, so it wasn't a big investment. I'm also disabled. My days of standing against the wind, tugging on insulation and wrapping paper, are long past.

In addition to simplified winter wrapping, the yearround insulation keeps the nest warmer in spring and cooler on the hottest summer afternoons. I've found that the bees look much better in April than they ever have as the bees expand their nests without chilling.



Poly hives aren't perfect. They can be awkward to handle and hard to move, but I've had no cracking issues and my winter wrapping is always done. You can see, in the photo here, that

the typical R-7 polystyrene hive doesn't need wrapped and the colony's cluster heat is confined to the hive and isn't lost melting snow on the roof.

Many thanks to all our <u>ABeeLandingBoard</u> volunteers. All readers are invited to contribute. We'd love to hear from you!