

"Promoting the Craft, Science and Future of Beekeeping since 1947"

THE BEELINE

Official Newsletter of the Central Iowa Beekeepers Association



ISSUE: Winter 2024

Editor: Laura Miller

CIBA MEMBER MEETINGS

Saturday, January 20 1 p.m.

Northridge Baptist Church
3700 6th Avenue, Des Moines

Program: Q&A panel discussion, Beekeeping from Urban to Commercial. Get answers to all your beekeeping questions! More details on **page 3**.

CIBA WINTER SEMINAR

Saturday, March 23 All day.

Iowa Arboretum & Gardens
1875 Peach Avenue, Madrid

Program: We'll have a jam-packed day of presentations, fellowship and food. Watch the CIBA website for registration details. More on **page 4**.

Questions? Call Don Moody (515) 770-5754, or ds.moody1@hotmail.com

DEADLINE FOR WINTER NEWSLETTER:

February 10, 2024

Email submissions and comments to:

Laura Miller, Beeline_editor@yahoo.com

We encourage you to receive the newsletter via email; however, we understand if electronic delivery is not for you! You may update your subscription by contacting Linn Wilbur, lwilbur50201@gmail.com

Anyone who thinks
they're too small to
make a difference,
has never met the
honey bee.



FROM THE PRESIDENT, JAMIE BEYER

In this issue of the BEELINE, **Laura Miller** has asked where we get information about beekeeping that has helped us become successful beekeepers (see page 13). When I think of how I learned to keep honey bees and market my honey, I have used several sources of information.

First and foremost, CIBA has been my primary avenue for building my knowledge and skills in beekeeping. Our meetings every other month have always had an expert willing to share knowledge and experience with bees – and you do not even need to be a member to attend these meetings (in other words, NO COST). Our field day this past July was extremely informative and, again, at NO COST -- even the food was free! Our winter seminars in March are always fun, informative and we make great connections. There is a cost to them since we pay for the venue and the great food that is served.

I do not rely on so-called experts who are selling their knowledge. In a lot of situations, they also are selling what they recommend. When there are sooooo many sources of reliable, unbiased information that are very inexpensive, why pay for biased information? My experience has shown me that a lot of people feel that when they pay for something, then it is better. This is NOT TRUE! In the honey bee world where information is being shared in by many nonprofit bee groups, extension units, university and government organizations, why pay?

Then there are YouTube and podcast avenues for information. Some are excellent as long as presenters are proven experts. You need to be careful when someone says "in my experience this works" AND they selling something.

I hope this helps you determine what you can trust and rely on as you gather your own information. Good luck in your beekeeping!

Your President,

Jamie

beyersbog@aol.com

Find us on the web: www.centraliowabeekeepersassoc.org

Find us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/CentrallowaBeekeepersAssociation

Join our CIBA Facebook group: www.facebook.com/groups/353306835159561

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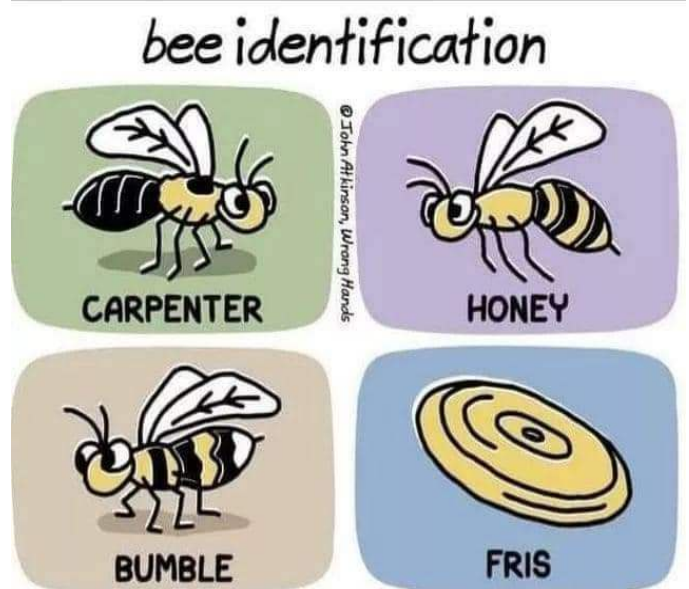
CIBA Club Meetings/Communications

CIBA meets 6 times annually, the third Saturday every other month. During active beekeeping season (May and September), they are late afternoon or early evening; in off-season (November and January) they are early afternoon. The March winter seminar and July field day are full-day events.

The official CIBA newsletter, the **BEELINE**, is published four times a year on the first day of January (Winter); March (Spring); May (Summer) and September (Fall). A special Student Edition is published each January for people enrolled in central Iowa beekeeping classes.

CIBA members also receive the **CIBA Newscast** email from the president on months when the BEELINE is not published (not available for members who choose to receive CIBA info only via USPS).

CIBA Bee Bits, an email newsletter with helpful hints about beekeeping, comes out the 15th of each month (not posted on the CIBA website and available only for CIBA members who receive CIBA info electronically).



CIBA Business Updates

CIBA Member Meeting: *Bring Your Questions, We've Got Answers!*

Date: Saturday, January 20

Time: 1 p.m.

Where: Northridge Baptist Church, 3700 Sixth Avenue, Des Moines

Schedule: We'll have a business meeting and annual election, snacks provided by the CIBA Food Committee, then a Q&A panel discussion, Beekeeping from Urban to Commercial

Here's your assignment: Write down questions that have been bugging you about beekeeping, then bring them to our January meeting. We have fantastic speakers who will serve on a panel to answer YOUR most difficult questions about beekeeping. This is YOUR chance to ask the question you always have pondered.

Panelists include CIBA member and urban beekeeper **Abigail Kelly** from Des Moines; **Mark Smith** from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and **Phil Ebert**, a longtime commercial beekeeper and instructor from Lynnville.



Abigail has been beekeeping since she received an Iowa Honey Producers Association Youth Scholarship in 2018. She was the 2019 CIBA Honey Queen and 2020-2021 Iowa Honey Queen. Abigail keeps her bees between Des Moines, Altoona and Pleasant Hill.



Mark has been with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) Pesticide Bureau the past four years. He is a program planner with a variety of responsibilities including pesticide applicator testing and training and endangered species protection. He has 30 years' experience working in agriculture, turf and specialty crop industries in the Midwest. He grew up on a farm in Shelby County and has a degree in agricultural education from Iowa State University. He can answer questions about IDALS' role in bee and pollinator protection, the Iowa Bee Rule, pesticide misuse investigations and hive registry on BeeCheck.



Phil began Ebert Honey in 1980 with less than 10 colonies in the back yard of his home near Fairfield. His hobby later grew into a family business with all four of his sons working with bees as they grew up. Currently, Phil's two sons Adam and Alex continue to build the business based in Lynnville and Mount Vernon. They produce thousands of gallons of honey sold directly to grocery stores, bakeries, breweries and restaurants throughout central and eastern Iowa. They also sell other honey bee products and services including containers, and ship bees to pollinate local orchards and almonds in California.

Get Ready to Vote in January, No Caucus Needed!

If it's January then it's time to elect CIBA officers and directors. Please make sure you've paid 2024 CIBA dues because only current members are allowed to vote in the annual election which will be January 20.

CIBA is looking for new blood to step into leadership roles. **Jamie Beyer** has agreed to serve one more year as president, Don Moody will be running for Vice President, but the office of secretary/treasurer has been vacant this last year and we need to fill it for 2024 (thanks to **Linn Wilbur**, who has been serving as acting sec/treasurer this past year). In addition, three-year terms expire in 2024 for two directors, **Jim Crandall, Sr.** and **Mark Moberly**.

If you are curious about any leadership position, please contact a member of the Nominating Committee: **Mike Sander**, **Val Just** or **Don Moody** (their contact information is on the back page of this newsletter)..

Mark Your Calendars for Winter Seminar

You will NOT want to miss CIBA's annual Winter Seminar, which is set for Saturday, March 23 at the beautiful Iowa Arboretum & Gardens near Madrid, Iowa. The Program Committee has been working hard to schedule speakers for the day's program.

Here are three of the speakers who've agreed to present:

- **Matt Lance**, owner of Lance Honey Farms from Kearney, Nebraska. He will be talking about "Overwintering in Iowa" and other helpful information for all ages of beekeepers.
- **Steve Tipton**, from northeastern Kansas. He has been a beekeeper for more than 30 years. He will be presenting on a topic that affects all beekeepers: how to solve your honey crystallization problems.
- **John Hill**, owner of HillCo LLC, a beekeeping equipment supplier from Minonk, Illinois. He will present on the new technology of beekeeping equipment and beekeeping.

We'll have more details in our next BEELINE. Until then, watch the CIBA website for more information and online registration. As always, we have limited space so you'll want to be among those who can attend. Make sure you get March 23 on your calendar!

January and February CIBA Board Meetings

The CIBA officers and directors have regularly scheduled CIBA board meetings on the second Monday of each month starting at 7 p.m. The Zoom link opens at 6:30 p.m. These meetings are open to CIBA members and you are encouraged to participate.

January 8:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84091799980?pwd=dW02NXBvQWppVklvdHNkNlZpT25aZz09>

Meeting ID: 840 9179 9980 Passcode: 551814

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kdotNXmQwX>

February 12:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85268902863?pwd=Rk9FdzgxK2llanpMOHp3VlQ2V0dLdz09>

Meeting ID: 852 6890 2863 Passcode: 714384

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kc0xMSZ5T9>

To connect via phone, find a local number at the link under each month's meeting information or use Chicago number (312) 626-6799 and then the meeting ID and passcode for that month's meeting.

Minutes of November 18 CIBA Member Meeting

Submitted by Jim Crandall Sr., Recording Secretary

Welcome: President Jamie Beyer

Treasurers Report: Linn Wilbur reported \$445.16 expenses and membership at 160.

Newsletter: Laura Miller said the next issue of the BEELINE will be in January.

Programs: Don Moody said winter seminar will be March 16.

Auction: Lynn Hammel: CIBA data will be going into Microsoft 365.

Nominating: A committee has been formed to fill officer positions that are open in 2024. We need new leadership because we do not want to become stale. Mark Moberly and Jim Crandell are up for reelection as directors. The election will be at the January 20 member meeting.

Royalty program: 2023 CIBA Queen Bethany Kelly said the program has been great and thanked people for their support.

Youth Scholarship: Jamie Beyer said the 2023 recipient Morgan Spaulding has done a great job and Noelle Dittman has applied for the 2024 scholarship.

Moved to adjourn by Jim Crandell, second by Richard Link.

What Will You Bring to the CIBA Auction?



Look through your bee equipment. What will you need this spring? What haven't you used (and want to get rid of)? The CIBA auction is where you may find everything!

CIBA's annual auction is a **BY** beekeepers and **FOR** beekeepers. It's a great place to get equipment, get rid of equipment you no longer use, and to meet other beekeepers. Members also donate items for the auction, with proceeds going to CIBA programs.

The CIBA auction will be April 20 at the Washington Township School near Minburn. Watch the CIBA website for more details.

Sellers are asked to pre-register online so that lots can be assigned (lot numbers numerically assigned by date of registration). Buyers can pre-register online or register at the door—we strongly encourage buyers to pre-register:

- Easier and quicker to get your bidding number the day of the auction
- It lets us know how many people to expect (parking space as well as making sure we have food for everyone—proceeds from the Royalty Cafe go to support the CIBA queen and ambassador program)

Questions? Contact **Mark Moberly**, CIBA Auction Committee chair, (515) 835-9851, mkmobe@gmail.com. Be ready for a full day of fun and fellowship!!

Meet Your Director: Dick Link

How long have you been a beekeeper? What got you interested in bees?

I got started back in the late 1970s and early 1980s when I got three acres in rural Adel. I was looking around for a good source of honey and couldn't find anything. Either the price was too high or they had run out. I thought well, on this acreage I could get bees and be my own supplier. I really had a rude awakening that first year by getting too many hives. Now I only keep five hives – anything more than that is too much work!

How many hives do you have and where are they located?

I just have five hives now and live in Des Moines. All my hives are on land set aside in the Conservation Reserve Program at my nephew's farm in rural Mingo.

When did you join CIBA and what drew you to this organization?

That was a long time ago! I know that I liked the camaraderie getting together with other beekeepers and always learning new things.

What do you hope to contribute to CIBA as a board member?

I am hoping that I can help contribute to increasing our membership and the fellowship we have with our members as we build our skill set.

What's your biggest challenge in beekeeping?

Back when I started we didn't have mites, all you had to worry about was European foul brood. Mites are a big problem and challenge that has increased over the years.

What do you most enjoy about beekeeping?

It has to be catching swarms. It's hard to explain but it's great to see all these bees and watch them. I remember when I was still working at the post office as a building equipment mechanic. I was the only beekeeper they knew about who worked at the post office. When there was a problem, like when bees would get loose from a broken package, they called me to help get the bees.

The first trap I ever made was set up in a big tree south of the airport in Indianola. By lunch time the trap was full of bees. There was a storm coming and the bees knew enough to get in somewhere, they were coming fast.

What's your advice to new beekeepers?

Start small with one or two hives. Practice finding that queen. And get your feet wet by finding an experienced beekeeper you can help with requeening and other things like that.



Queen's Corner: Thank You!

Submitted by 2023 CIBA Queen *Bethany Kelly*

Hello, everyone! I want to thank everyone for their support as I represented CIBA this past year. I have enjoyed being your honey queen immensely! I have learned so much about presenting and about bees!

I have enjoyed going across central Iowa and talking to people about bees. I had a great time answering the kids' curious questions as well as debating inquisitive comments from teenagers. I loved having conversations with adults about how to help bees. I enjoyed attending both CIBA and Iowa Honey Producers Association meetings and field days. I had the privilege of introducing and meeting many amazing speakers during these meetings.

Overall, my year has been absolutely splendid! I had 20+ programs and events including six days at the Iowa State Fair. I estimate that I reached more than 1,000 people. The majority of my presentations reached kids; I can't wait to see the future beekeepers as a result of what they learned in these programs!

A special thanks goes to **Julie Sander**. Julie gave me a program, drove me to two of my programs, and assisted me during those presentations. **Julie and Mike Sander** have been huge supporters throughout my beekeeping journey and were no different when I became queen.

I also thank **Jamie Beyer**, another huge supporter. Jamie has donated many supplies and handouts that have been super helpful. Thank you to **Keri Kenoyer**, our queen chair, also helped me plan multiple programs. She always was open to questions or anything else I needed.

Lastly, I am thankful for my family, who have been so supportive of me in this role as queen. They accompanied me to programs or helped load the car with supplies. They have been there for me to help in any way throughout this journey.

I appreciate what this year has done for me. I cannot thank you all enough for the opportunity to support bees and CIBA throughout this year!

2024 Susan Kelly Memorial Youth Scholarship Named

The CIBA Scholarship Committee is pleased to announce the recipient of the Susan Kelly Memorial Youth Scholarship for 2024: **Noelle Dittman**. Noelle is from Stanhope and a junior in high school. She has never kept honey bees but knows what she is getting into since she shadowed CIBA President **Jamie Beyer** on several occasions this past summer.

Jamie will mentor Noelle this coming season. She will receive a complete hive with supers in the spring along with all the equipment (smoker, hive tools, etc.) to become a beekeeper. Of course, Noelle also will get a package of bees in April. She also will take a beekeeping class this winter and read up on honey bees.

Noelle is the second recipient of this scholarship, which is supported by a fund set up a year ago to honor Susan Kelly, a beloved CIBA member and wonderful youth mentor. Many people have donated to this fund – many thanks to everyone!

Be thinking of potential scholarship recipients for next year. Details and the application will be on the CIBA web site soon. Serving with Jamie on the Scholarship Committee are **Julie Sander** and **Stephanie Meyers**.



Bethany presenting at the Iowa State Fair.



Passionate About Beekeeping? This May Be for You!

Submitted by Keri Kenoyer, CIBA Royalty Committee Chair

Are you a young adult with a burning passion for beekeeping? Is your mind filled with knowledge about these buzzing creatures and their critical role in our environment? Do you dream of sharing this passion and knowledge with others? If your answer to these questions is a resounding 'yes,' then we have an exciting opportunity for you.

The Central Iowa Beekeepers Association (CIBA) is now accepting applications for the coveted positions of Queen and Ambassador for the year 2024. This is an exceptional opportunity to advocate for the well-being of bees, share your expertise, and connect with a community that shares your passion.



About the Roles

As the Queen or Ambassador of CIBA, you will serve as the face of the association, representing us in various events and forums. This role is not just about wearing a crown or title; it is about embracing responsibility and making a difference in the world of beekeeping. The Queen or Ambassador will be expected to educate people about the importance of bees, the threats they face, and what we can do to protect them. You will have the platform to inspire a new generation of beekeepers, promote sustainable practices, and contribute to the preservation of bee populations.

Who Can Apply?

This opportunity is open to young adults age 16-20 years of age who have a deep understanding and passion for beekeeping. The ideal candidate should be comfortable speaking in public and have a strong desire to advocate for bees and beekeeping.

How to Apply?

If you believe you have what it takes to be CIBA's Queen or Ambassador, don't hesitate to apply. Visit our website -www.centraliowabeekeepersassoc.org/queen-ambassador - to submit your application. Be sure to provide all necessary details and articulate your passion for beekeeping in your application.

The deadline for submissions is February 1. However, we encourage you to apply as soon as possible to avoid last-minute rushes. This could be your chance to influence the future of beekeeping positively, so don't miss out!

Final Thoughts

Becoming the Queen or Ambassador of CIBA is an excellent opportunity to make a significant impact in the world of beekeeping. You will be able to share your expertise, inspire others, and contribute to a cause that is crucial for our environment. So, if you are a young adult passionate about beekeeping, we encourage you to apply. Let's work together to protect our bees!

Time to Pay CIBA Membership Dues

You should have received a letter via snail mail from CIBA President Jamie Beyer with everything you need to renew your CIBA membership. The mailing went out in early December. Membership runs on a calendar year, January 1 to December 31. If you haven't done so already, please renew your membership and pay dues as soon as possible. (If you've already paid, THANK YOU!).

As a reminder, you must be a current member to participate in the election of officers and directors which will take place at our January 20 meeting.

If you cannot find the December mailing, don't worry. You can download a membership form on the CIBA website (www.centraliowabeekeepersassoc.org/membership) – or use the membership form included with the CIBA members email distribution of this newsletter. Feel free to share the website form with potential new members.

How to Track Nectar (and Pollen) Flow

Submitted by Julia McGuire, CIBA member

I can watch my shows on TV without pausing for snack breaks. Because it is inconvenient to stop my show, get up, walk to the kitchen, find the snack I want, then sit down again and re-start my show, I started keeping a stocked mini-fridge near my couch. It helps me out. Now I don't have to travel farther than I need in order to get what I want for a good life. Can you relate?

I also like to tell my friends when I learn about a good deal. Sometimes I can recruit enough of them to make a party out of it. We go en masse to take advantage of the deal as a friend group. Many times, I like to scrapbook these events, too.

Oh wait, if you know me in real life, you know that I really don't watch TV and I really don't snack. You also would know that I live by the phrase, "Just because something is on sale doesn't make it right to buy." **But if I were a honey bee, those scenarios might be true.** And you got me on the last one. I actually keep a scrapbook and record many silly things in it.

We can think about our bees as continuously seeking efficiencies (short routes to the best foods and spreading the word for mob grazing with waggle dances), and we also can think about planning these efficiencies to our advantage as beekeepers and honey producers.

Beekeepers most likely want early and late pollen to ensure an extended brood-rearing season. Honey producers most likely want to be prepared for nectar flows and not miss out on a few extra pounds of honey, or maybe want to get unifloral honey to sell at a premium price. To accomplish these two goals, we need to use our eyes and noses as well as our spidey senses.

Instead of doing something "just because," phenology can inform our actions in a positive manner. Taking advantage of phenology prevents guessing with the "just because" or "swing and miss" strategy.

Phenology: the study of seasonal natural phenomena; tracking nature's calendar such as when cherry trees bloom or orioles return in spring

To do this, we can assess our bee yard by identifying flowers in and near your bees all year long. Because daylight begins to noticeably lengthen mid-month, it is easier for me to be outside in late February to assess by looking at tree and bee activity. Making observations of existing **trigger events** (like bloom times) on a calendar is how I do this.

I know a few beekeepers who track this sort of thing differently and there is no wrong or right way – just choose what works for you. You might like to make notes on your phone, take photographs with time stamps that you organize later on your computer, or maybe you write in a pocket note pad. The goal here is to have a record of events (like my scrapbook analogy).

Some of us need help identifying trees and forbs (flowers) and I learned over the last two years with my SARE grant that everyone has a preferred way to do this – with a mobile app, with a paper field guide, etc. The idea is to take time and correlative activity with the bloom event regardless of how you do it – **just do it.**

The next step is preparing appropriately ahead of and in anticipation of these events as they correspond to bee activity (do this any way that works for you; I use hive inspection sheets). If I know when maples (or elms) will bloom in my bee yard because I wrote down the dates this year, then I can move my hives nearer to them before the next winter for an early food source (the mini-fridge example is good here when the weather is cold).

If I know when black locust (or linden or soybean) blooms down the lane because I took a time-stamped photo last year, then I can work backward and get my woodenware placed in time to capitalize on the expected



Julia McGuire began taking her daughter to CIBA meetings in 2009. She also co-organized the first CIBA winter seminar and was BEELINE editor. She served on the CIBA board from 2014-17.

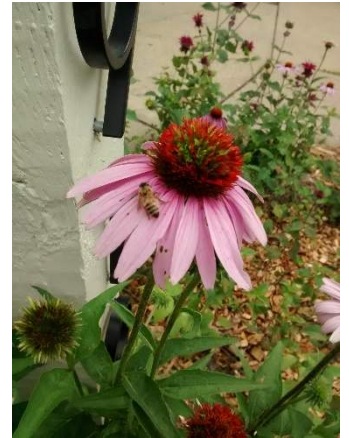
nectar flow. If I can make a correlation between swarm cells and redbud bloom (or whatever triggering phenological event like frog calls, etc., that might happen in your area), I can get ahead of swarming in years to come. Your particular bee yard will give you ideas on how to optimize your operation.

I want to note here that I tend to use phenological events rather than dates. The events will always be in the same order. The time spans and overlaps might vary, and the date of an event might change, but the order will be constant year to year.

My planner and calendar (see sidebar) were crowd-sourced and designed for users to create customized references (scrapbooks) that allow you to take advantage of bees' instincts (my examples of the mini-fridge and talking to friends about a deal then going shopping as a group). My goal as an educator is to help you keep your bees alive through diverse forage or diet and appropriate management.

Perhaps you will not find nectar or pollen flow in the bee yard for a span of time on the calendar (a couple empty pages in your scrapbook). That's a great observation to have! Knowing about forage gaps puts you in a place to anticipate feeding and/or plant new forage habitat and associated expenses (as well as a more informed, resilient bee and/or honey operation) in the future.

EDITOR'S NOTE: In 2021 and 2022 Julia gathered phenology information from Iowa beekeepers to publish in a Phenology Planner for Beekeepers specific to Iowa and surrounding counties. The project was funded by a Farmer-Rancher grant from the USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program. The guide is designed to be hyperlocal to your bee yard. Each month has a two-page spread with a guide on the left with typical bloom times and space on the right for your notes. The Phenology Planner can be purchased by sending an email to julia@juliecache.com.



Top: Button bush; Bottom: Echinacea (purple coneflower)

Top Ten (or More) List for New Beekeepers

EDITOR'S NOTE: At a recent CIBA board meeting, director Val Just suggested CIBA put together a packet of information that would help new beekeepers get started. What information would be the most useful for them? What might we give newbies when they first join CIBA? Director Marlon Moorman composed a Top Ten list, which has since expanded. We thought our readers would like to have this list, and possibly send us more tips and tricks for new beekeepers. Submit your ideas on the CIBA website or send them to Beeline_editor@yahoo.com.

1. **ATTIRE:** Buy a bee suit, don't try to get by with just a hood. Veteran bee keepers may have developed immunity but as a beginner, don't try to develop immunity the first year.
2. **VARROA MITES:** Create a plan for Varroa mite control before you get your bees. Mites are probably the beginner's greatest threat.
3. **PLANNING:** Plan your equipment purchases, not too big and not too small. Buy what you will need for the first year (see number 7).
4. **TIMING FOR WORK:** Schedule your time. In the old days, bees kind of took care of themselves. It's not that easy with mites and other pests.
5. **MOISTURE CONTROL:** Wet hives in the winter kill bees. Think dry before winter starts. Don't feed with sugar water during winter months.

Top Ten List: Lesson

Name _____ Date ____/____/____

Directions: Give ten must-know facts about today's lesson.

Topic→	
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- HIVE SPLITTING:** Use swarming to your advantage, split hives and catch swarms. If you have healthy hives, they will split. Thus, the hives must be split when they get too big.
- MENTOR:** Find a mentor now (better yet, yesterday). A mentor will help you solve problems. While you may overuse a mentor your first summer, it helps establish relationships.
- SCREENED BOTTOMS:** Using screened bottoms help control Varroa mites by letting the bugs fall to the ground and keeps the hive cool in the summer. Solid bottoms keep the bees warmer in the winter. Switching back and forth can improve your hive. (editor note: you can close up the bottom of a screened bottom board for the winter to have the best of both types—use the slots in the bottom and insert an appropriate board or plywood.)
- WINTER PREPERATION:** Wrapping hives in winter improves survivability. The main hive enemy is moisture, cold and inability to get to food stores. While wrapping hives keeps warm and improves heat retention, it may cause problems for humidity that must be managed.
- HIVE BEETLES:** Freeze those unused hives in the winter to kill hive beetles.
- HIVE INSPECTION:** Inspect hives every 10 to 14 days but don't love them to death by over inspecting. Go to seminars, watch videos and talk to a mentor about what to look for in inspections. (editor note: take a beginning beekeeping class—either as a new beek or as a refresher. Page 15 for info on this year's classes).
- SWARM TRAPPING:** Drawn comb will put a swarming queen to work immediately and keep the swarm in your trap.
- SUNLIGHT:** Keep hives in the sun for at least half of the day to control hive beetles.
- WATER:** Bees need a source of water, just not in the hive. A bird bath or some type of water source close by is desirable. Believe it or not, bees love dirty water too.
- FEEDING:** Winter feed includes protein in the form of pollen. Make sure your hive has pollen patties for the winter months especially if it was a late summer split or a fall swarm catch.
- PRODUCTION:** If your hive is consistently low in production, consider a new location. The hive may not have access to the types of plants that produce a good harvest or there is significant competition from a commercial apiary.
- ROBBING:** Use excluders to combat robbing in a new split or small hive. Use screen to cover most of the entrances, allowing only one small entrance until the hive matures. A wet sheet over the hive will deter an attack in progress, while letting the hive come and go as needed. Look for wax caps on the bottom to tell if robbers are actively attacking your hive as opposed to your bees getting active.
- TOP TRICK:** Take wax scrapings off top bars (as long as they are dry and do not have nectar in them) and rub it on the foundation of plastic frames when the bees have removed the wax and are not drawing out comb. With a new wax coating bees are more likely to draw out the comb.

Free Classes for Young Beekeepers

CIBA member Julia McGuire has developed a new program for youth ages 13-16 years who are interested in keeping honey bees. It includes a free, six-week, live-streamed Beekeeping 101 class followed by monthly in-person learning circles for basic beekeeping skills and a youth bee camp in May 2024. A Q&A session on Zoom will be held January 23. For more information, contact Julia McGuire, 515-988-1828, julia@juliecache.com, or go to her website, www.juliecache.com.

Bee-Friendly Gardens: Time to Plan Is Now

Submitted by Val Just, CIBA Director and Webmaster

NOTE WORTHY: This article focuses on native plants and pollinator gardens. Obviously, situating your bees within a 3-mile radius of large-scale bee-loving trees such linden/basswood and black locusts, and in fields of alfalfa and clover will have great honey production and benefit your honey bees

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.” Dr. Seuss

As you start thinking about spring, your honey bees and how best to provide for all pollinators, keep in mind several things as you start planning updates and changes to your landscape and gardens, no matter whether you have a small area in an urban setting, or a large farmstead in a rural setting.

- ✓ Consider plants that provide the most pollen and nectar – native plants.
- ✓ Consider plants that extend the growing season from spring, summer and through fall.
- ✓ Consider your planting area – does it get 6 hours of sun a day, or does the area need plants that can take less sun? It’s important to pay attention to the setting that the plant prefers, and it makes a difference between a mediocre garden and a successful garden.

I love native plants not only because of the value they provide to our pollinators, but also different species of plants can greatly alter the taste of your final honey product. Natives provide more nectar and pollen than hybridized or native cultivar plants that are readily available in local garden centers. When gardeners visit their local garden centers, it’s often impossible to find true native species. For example, gardeners can find echinaceas (coneflowers) in every color, size and shape possible, but will struggle to find a non-cultivated variety of *Echinacea purpurea* or *Echinacea pallida*. Most often, you will need to go to specialized online native plant nurseries to order native plants that support your bees and all pollinators. Or, you can purchase native plants seeds and start your garden from seeds.

What is truly wonderful about native plants is that you can find a variety of plants that cover the full range of the growing season – rendering certain that your bees have nectar and pollen throughout the growing season that take them through the fall as they prepare for over-wintering. You also can find a variety of part-shade loving plants that meet your site needs!

Why Plant Native Flowers?

Our pollinators, butterflies, bees and a host of insects depend on natural nectar from flowers to survive. Due to many factors including loss of natural habitat, disturbance and the misuse of agricultural herbicides and chemicals, our bees and pollinators are facing great dangers that threaten their very existence.

In addition to this, garden centers are loaded with colorful plants that have been genetically altered, cultivated and hybridized. The genetic changes made to these plants have changed far more than the outward appearance. It has altered the nectar-producing ability inside the flowers. They no longer provide the rich nectar found in natural plants. Many have little to no nectar or may be sterile and have no food value at all. In an effort to have compact, long-blooming flowers with multiple color choices, we have reduced our gardens to a visual display that doesn’t provide a necessary food source to the visiting butterflies and bees. They come looking for it and appear to be working at it, but they do so for little reward. Native flowers have the nectar and pollen that will keep our butterflies, bees and all pollinators growing and sustaining.

Make a Difference – Plant Native Seed or Native Plant Plugs!

But you can make a difference. Plant native flower seed or plant plugs – and even better, focus on an Iowa eco-system seed. If you choose to use economical native seed in lieu of buying native plants, patience is the key. You can save money in doing so, but it will take longer to get your garden established. But if you choose to do so, think like nature when planting native seeds:

- The mature plant flowers and blooms in the summer and early fall, then dries and develops a seed head.
- The seeds have sun to dry them, wind to blow them around and winter months of freeze/thaw to seat them down to the soil below and break down the seed coat so they will germinate.

- When the weather warms and seed reaches the right place in the soil, it will germinate and grow a seedling. They are not buried down in the soil, but rather just below the surface – no more than 1/8th inch.
- Native seeds will focus energy into root development first, often growing above ground only a few inches in the first year. They have survived adversity for centuries because they are deep rooted, some up to 12 feet. A few will bloom in the first year of growing; others will begin blooming the second year.
- By the second year, they will be blooming and continue to mature, ready to be enjoyed for many years to support our bees, butterflies and all the important pollinators that depend on the food they provide.

Planting Instructions – Native Seed

- Consider the location and site conditions. An established garden needs very little to get started – but a sod bed needs to be prepared before planting into it, no different than you would have to do for any new planting.
- Keep in mind that if you are starting with sod-covered ground, it must be eliminated prior to planting. If you are planting into an existing garden bed that has a weed barrier mat or mulch, be sure to make an opening in the mat and rake the mulch aside, so the seeds can reach the soil.
- Broadcast seeds into lightly worked soil. Toss the seeds over the surface of the soil, lightly press them down and let the natural conditions of weather, rain snow and freeze/thaw, seat them down to the germination zone they prefer. Consider tossing your seeds onto fresh snow where the seeds will sink into the snow and be pulled down to the soil as it thaws – just like mother nature.
- Most native seeds need cold stratification (winter) to break down the seed coat and stimulate them to germinate. If you don't want to wait for winter to plant, you can look online for some methods to mimic this process in your freezer and refrigerator.
- The seeds will germinate and grow when the soil reaches 70 degrees. Now you can begin to recognize the seedlings and remove any unwanted weeds.
- Native gardening is no different than any other, weeds must be dealt with no matter what kind of gardening you do. You just have to learn what the plant looks like so you can eliminate the weeds around it.
- Patience! You will achieve personal connection that comes from saving a piece of natural history and appreciating the fascinating blooms on flowers that grew when the buffalo roamed free and prairie stretched as far as the eye could see.

My Top 5 Native Plants

There are so many native plants to choose from, but I have had good luck with the following plants, and have observed our honey bees, as well as various other pollinators, gaining great benefit from these plants:



Purple Milkweed
Asclepias purpurascens



Butterfly Milkweed
Asclepias tuberosa
Also supports the Monarch butterfly as a host plant



Tall Ironweed
Vernonia gigantea
Great fall plant - blooms during August & September



Common Milkweed
Asclepias syriaca
Also supports the Monarch butterfly as a host plant



Anise Hyssop
Agastache foeniculum
Biannual plant – don't cut the flowers back before the seed heads form, and drop seed. This is the only way the plant propagates itself each year.



Dark Knight
Caryopteris
Also called Bluebeard

While the plant (at left) is not a native plant, I have found it to be a valuable **FALL** shrub for my honey bees, as well as Monarchs migrating through during September.

Summary

Pollinators, monarch butterflies, managed honey bee colonies and bumble bee species are experiencing declines because of habitat loss due to agriculture and development, the spread of disease, overuse of pesticides and other factors. Declines of pollinator populations put the health of our ecosystems at risk.

You can make a difference, even if you have just one small garden area. Not only use native plants in the conditions they prefer, also provide a water source, establish continuous bloom throughout the growing season from spring to fall using different species of native plants, and eliminate the use of pesticides.

Remember, the actions you take today and during your lifetime have a direct correlation on the health of our environment for future generations to come! As Margaret Mead said so eloquently, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world" As beekeepers, we have the opportunity to make large contributions that enable the success of all of our pollinators, including our honey bees. Make the decision, if you haven't already, to plant native plants this upcoming spring. If you want to use seed, remember, the best time to do so is in the fall or even during the winter, as the seed needs cold stratification to germinate.

Make a difference today!

Native Plant & Seed Resources

I have used the following nurseries and seed producers multiple times, and am fully comfortable recommending them for native plant/seed purchases:

- Prairie Nursery: (www.prairienursery.com)
- Prairie Moon Nursery: (www.prairiemoon.com)
- Allendan Seed: (www.allendanseed.com) This business is in Winterset. I noticed while on the site that Allendan has started offering native plugs for sale. Buy local!

From the Editor: Where Do You Go for Bee Information?

By *BEELINE* Editor Laura Miller

What are you reading about beekeeping? Or watching? Where do you go to get reliable information that can help you be successful in beekeeping? Those are the questions I posed to CIBA directors and members who attended the CIBA meeting in November.

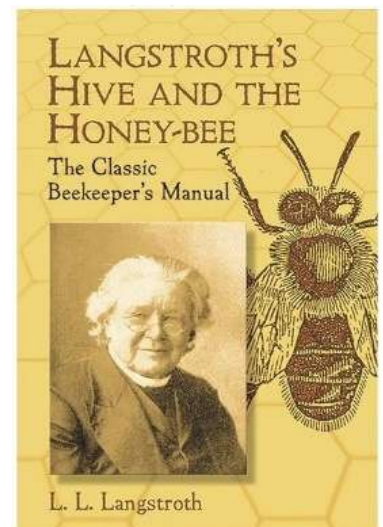
Boy! I got some great answers and places I would not even think about when looking for information. Below are references – in no order of importance – to where these beekeepers like to go for information. I hope these references at least give you someplace to turn the next time you face a challenge in your honey bee adventures. What a great way to spend those cold winter evenings!

The Hive and the Honey Bee

This book was mentioned by several people so it is at the top of the list. Edited by Joe M. Graham (2015 Dadant & Sons), it is often referred to as the "Bible of American beekeeping." It was originally written by Rev. L.L. Langstroth in 1853. Since that time it has had numerous revisions and author changes. You'll find chapters on each topic written by recognized experts for that particular topic. There are also reprints of the original 1853 book available. The current version is available directly from Dadant & Sons for \$55-60 and the reprints of the 1853 book are less than \$20 on Amazon.

ABC & XYZ of Bee Culture

Linn Wilbur suggested another great reference book, now in its 42nd edition (January 2020). It is published by the A.I. Root Company, Medina, Ohio (Root Candles and Bee Culture magazine publisher). The book is described as "an encyclopedia pertaining to scientific and practical culture of bees." Many of the older editions are still around and are of interest for historical practices and/or entertainment in reading how beekeeping used to be done. Cost of the current version is \$75 directly from A.I. Root or more than \$80 elsewhere. It's a good book to look for at sales if interested in the older versions.



Honeybee Democracy

Several people mentioned this book by one of my favorite honey bee scholars, Dr. Thomas Seeley. A pioneering researcher, Dr. Seeley is the Horace White Professor in Biology at Cornell University. This amazingly thorough and informative book tells how a colony does what it does, and why. His many years of research help explain how honeybees as a superorganism make decisions, disagree, and use collective wisdom. Dr. Seeley was a speaker at CIBA's 2022 Winter Seminar.

YouTube Videos

Past President Mike Sander offered his favorite beekeepers who have a YouTube channel where you can watch their videos online. To find them, go to YouTube.com and search for either the name of the channel or the owner (the person who posts the videos). They are:

- Bob Binnie, who owns Blue Ridge Honey in Lakemont, Georgia
- A Canadian Beekeeper's Blog, by Ian Stepler, a Manitoba farmer and beekeeper
- 628 Dirt Rooster, by Randy McCaffrey, a Gulfport, Mississippi beekeeper
- NY Bee Wellness, a nonprofit group in New York that offers workshops to promote bee health
- Jeff Horchoff Bees, who keeps bees and builds caskets for a Benedictine monastery in southeast Louisiana
- David Burns, a certified master beekeeper from Illinois and owner of the company, honeybeesonline.com, which offers bee equipment



Other people suggested searches on YouTube for videos featuring these frequent speakers at beekeeping conferences, or to check their websites for information:

- Dr. Larry Connor, entomologist and owner of Wicwas Press, publisher of numerous beekeeping books and resources (Dr. Connor was a speaker at a previous CIBA Winter Seminar)
- Randy Oliver, trained scientist and owner of a large migratory beekeeping operation in California, who also operates the website www.ScientificBeekeeping.com
- Michael Palmer, commercial beekeeper with numerous online lectures
- Michael Bush, author of The Practical Beekeeper about natural beekeeping (Michael was a speaker at the first day long CIBA Winter Seminar)
- Kamon Reynolds, co-founder of the Hive Life beekeeping conference and owner of Tennessee's Bees LLC in central Tennessee
- Barnyard Bees, a beekeeping retailer that also has videos on various topics
- Fat Bee Man, Don Kuchenmeister who owns Dixie Bee Supply and has been tending bees more than 55 years in Lula, Georgia
- Jason Crisman (JC's Bees), a central Ohio beekeeper/farmer who has two YouTube channels and a blog

Websites

www.centraliowabeekeepersassoc.org: Our CIBA website offers a wealth of information, You'll find all of our past BEELINE newsletters as well as a collection of Q&As written by Margaret Hala and instructional materials from the late John Johnson who was an extension educator and mentor to hundreds of beekeepers.

www.nekba.org: This suggestion comes from our own CIBA webmaster, Val Just. It is operated by the Northeastern Kansas Beekeepers Association.

horizontalhive.com: CIBA president Jamie Beyer says this is his favorite website, which is operated by Dr. Leo Sharashkin, who keeps bees naturally in horizontal hives in the Ozarks of southern Missouri. He contributes to American Bee Journal, Bee Culture, The Beekeepers Quarterly (UK), and many other publications, and speaks internationally on sustainable beekeeping, organic growing, and Earth-friendly living.

www.BeeSource.com: Forums and discussion boards also offer a treasure trove of information – if you can spot misinformation in posts that sometimes appear. Linn Wilbur said BeeSource.com is one of the best forums. You'll find a lot of questions posted by newbies but well-known bee educators and authors (such as Michael Palmer) also participate now and then. The site was started by a group of enthusiasts who shared a passion for beekeeping forums. It has more than 53,700 members and 1.8 million posts.

Podcasts

Beekeeping Today is offered by Betterbee, Inc. (beekeeping supplies) based in Greenwich, New York and is in its sixth season. It offers the latest beekeeping news, information and entertainment. You'll find conversations with researchers, beekeepers and industry leaders on a variety of topics.

A podcast is an audio program consisting of a series of episodes that you can download or stream from the internet. They have grown in popularity and in the number of shows available. To listen, use your favorite podcast streaming app such as Pocket Casts, Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts or Audible.

Parting Thoughts

When things slowed down in our hives this year, I began to read novels about honey bees. I just finished *The Honey Bus* by Meredith May (2019 Park Row Books). From the first time a bee crawled on her arm when she was four years old, Meredith knew that everything she needed to know in life could be learned from keeping bees. When her parents split and she was forced to move to California, grandparents (including an eccentric grandfather who tended hives along the Big Sur) stepped in to raise Meredith and her brother. What follows is a sweet account of a girl navigating a difficult childhood and learning to take care of herself.

I didn't realize this was a true story until the end, when the author included photos from her childhood. She shared many facts about bees as well as what she learned about perseverance and the importance of family. This is a fun read for any beekeeper because Meredith's passion for honey bees is not hidden.

I can hardly wait to check out some of the resources I've been given! Remember that this is by no means a complete list. If you've found a helpful resource -- in print, on the web or on film -- please send me the information and I'd be happy to share in a future newsletter.

We haven't even begun to list all the great information available from academic communities or government organizations, many with great research and outreach programs for beekeepers. There also are wonderful groups that have pages on Facebook (such as Beekeeping Hacks) that you can follow for yet more tidbits for beekeepers). Those may be topics for yet another article -- stay tuned!!

Beginning Beekeeping Classes for 2024

Submitted by Linn Wilbur, Acting CIBA Secretary/Treasurer

The Iowa Honey Producer Association (IHPA) list of beginning beekeeper classes in Iowa is now available at: www.iowahoneyproducers.org—then click the "Classes and Clubs" tab and download the listing. If you know anyone interested in or just starting out in beekeeping, please encourage them to pick a class, enroll and attend. But—these classes are not just for new beeks. These are great refresher courses for those of us, whether one year of experience or old hands. I guarantee you will learn a lot, including things you heard before (but forgot), things you should have heard and even new discoveries and techniques.

It is great to see that Andy Joseph's class is back this year after a hiatus due to COVID. I've attended multiple beginning beekeepers' classes across the state and sat in on others as we advertised CIBA to new beeks. Andy's class is among and often the one I recommend when asked. With Andy's education, work as the IA Apiarist and his experience with his Meadow BlazingStar Honey apiary, he presents an excellent combination of the art and science of beekeeping. His class meets for 6 consecutive Thursday evenings for 2 hours and the class is located in central IA at the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship's laboratory on the Ankeny DMACC campus. Cost is a nominal \$40, includes a beekeeping book and starts Feb. 1st. He does extend free attendance to both IHPA and CIBA Youth Student Scholarship participants—thanks Andy!



Hurray for the Bees!

Bees are right at home in public gardens, even as a subject for all kinds of sculptures. I toured 14 gardens in Wisconsin over the summer and enjoyed seeing these larger-than-life bee features. BEELINE editor

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