



The Monthly Newsletter of the Mecklenburg County Beekeepers Association April 2018

President's Buzz

Something New

One of the reasons I enjoy keeping bees is because there is always a new experience, or something new to learn. A couple of weeks ago, we noticed a hive that was making queen cells. They appeared to be supercedure rather than swarm cells, but given the time of year, we decided to remove the queen. Today, I got a chance to look at the girls. The first frame I checked had bees balled around four queen cells, which seemed odd.

As I put the frame back in the hive, I couldn't help but notice a strange sound that seemed to come from nearby. The sound seemed to get closer as I pulled the next frame. It was then that I spotted her: a small queen. I'm guessing that she was recently emerged, and had not yet mated. I saw something odd about her behavior. As she wandered around the frame, seemingly aimlessly, she would periodically stick her head in an empty cell, and it was then that I heard it: A sound like a high pitched kazoo, a combination of buzz and whistle. I realized I was seeing and hearing a new queen making the "piping" sound that I'd read about in beekeeping books.

I'm not sure if she was searching for a rival queen, or was trying to locate the queens still in their cells. And why were the bees clustered around the queen cells? Were they trying to protect them, or were they aiding the new queen? If only I could have stayed to watch the unfolding drama . . .

More new stuff

The last couple of years, we have struggled to produce honey because most of our hives have swarmed. Each year, half or better of our honey has been produced by a single hive that did not swarm. So when Mel Disselkoe started the OTS Queen Rearing seminar we hosted last year with the statement, "I don't allow my hives to swarm", I was all ears. By the time of the seminar, it was too late for us to apply his method, because our hives were pretty much done swarming. However, we were determined to give it a try this year. The method involves watching your hives closely in the late winter/early spring, and determining the optimum time to remove the queen, along with some brood and bees, before the swarming impulse begins.

In addition to removing the queen, you notch cells that contain eggs or very young larvae (<1 day old). The absence of queen pheromones encourages the bees to convert the damaged cells to queen cells. The number of frames notched is determined by your goal: Do you want to create a number of nucs for sale, or do you want to make a strong hive for honey production?

So far, we've had mixed success. The good news: No swarms cast by our hives. The bad news: Not all of the hives are

April's Meeting

April 19
7 PM

Mouzon United Methodist
Church
3100 Selwyn Avenue
Charlotte, NC

Speaker: Lewis Cauble
Mite Control



creating queen cells where I've notched.

In trying to determine why we weren't producing the desired results, I determined that I have been notching the frames incorrectly. With another three hives approaching the time when they will need to have their queens removed, I hope that correcting my notching technique will produce the desired results. I'll share more about our experiment in managing our hives with the OTS method in future articles.

Ed

In the Beeyard

David Segrest, NC Master Beekeeper

The news from the apiaries is varied. Some people have lost everything, Some hives are doing great. We are in the make or break stage for our year's production whether it be bees or honey. If a colony to be used for honey production is reasonably strong, it needs to have supers. Weak colonies need to be beefed up. There needs to be an apiary plan in place.

Every hive should have a purpose. Some hives will be for production. Some will be for support. They should be close to one another. As the season progresses resources can be pulled from the support colony and placed in the production colony. It is important to keep the production colony at full strength. Our area is blessed (cursed) with a long season of warm weather. Unfortunately we do not have a long honey season. Nectar and pollen are available for the bees in late February. If honey is desired the bees need to be ready to take advantage of the nectar flow as soon as possible. The nectar will dry up toward



the end of June. The bees will have built up a lot of honey by then. Other bees will want to steal it so it needs to be gotten off of the hive as soon as possible. The bees will need to be fed from then on because the flow will be followed by a dearth.

When honey is pulled it needs to be processed as soon as possible to avoid damage by wax moths and small hive beetles that will hatch from eggs in the cracks of the frames. If the honey cannot be extracted within 3 days it must be frozen. If you are making any kind of comb honey, including chunk honey, the comb must be frozen unless you want to emulate Mescaline and have the larvae in the bottle. A lot of resources are required for raising queens by grafting. If resources are limited splits can still be made as "walk away" or notched frames. Make a goal of having local bee stock in every apiary.

Easter Sunday Swarm from the Woodhouse Apiary

What's Blooming in April: English Laurel

Matt Burgoon



Common Name: English laurel, skip laurel, cherry laurel

Botanical Name: *Prunus laurocerasus* L.

Plant Type: Evergreen shrub or tree

Typical Bloom Period: March-April

Nectar Usefulness: lower

Pollen Usefulness: low

“Good fences make good neighbors” sings the proverb, and while Robert Frost may beg difference, an urban or suburban beekeeper would certainly agree. In Charlotte, it is as easy to grow a fence as to build one, and one of the favorite screen and hedge plants is *Prunus laurocerasus*, the Schipka Cherry Laurel, sometimes called the skip laurel or English laurel. A shade-tolerant, drought-tolerant evergreen, various cultivars can be pruned to a low hedge and some can grow as high as forty feet. A stroll through some neighborhoods in April finds one nearly surrounded by cherry laurel in various stages of bloom.

Prunus laurocerasus is native to the regions surrounding the Black Sea. It grows large, thick, shiny leaves alternating on stems to form a dense thicket when pruned. An abundance of white flowers grow in clusters on a vertical stalk (raceme). Individual flowers have five petals and an abundance of stamens; the flowers are perfect and self-fertile — they do not require a pollinator to fruit. The fruits are clusters of drupes — fleshy outside and a hard shell covering a seed inside, a stonefruit — which start green and ripen through red to nearly black. Birds distribute the seeds to propagate the plant; it also spreads by growing roots from stems where they touch the ground.

A native cousin, *Prunus caroliniana*, looks nearly the same; it forms a less dense hedge and left alone will grow into a small tree. It blooms earlier in the year than the cultivated varieties.

Current industrial research on *Prunus laurocerasus* is mostly focused upon the layers of waxy outer coating on the leaves and upon the antioxidant food value of the fruits. Some cultivars of *Prunus laurocerasus* are developed to serve a market demand for their cherries in southeastern Europe. Do not eat very bitter fruits as part of your own exploration, however. Leaves, twigs and bark of the cherry laurel smell of almond when crushed; this indicates the presence of hydrogen cyanide, a poison. Know your cultivar and be very cautious with this plant.

Our bees respond to cherry laurel with mixed reviews. In more urban locations, the sheer abundance of the plant makes it valuable as a forage source. In Peter Lindtner’s book, *Garden Plants for Honey Bees* (Wicwas 2014), he rates *Prunus laurocerasus* low as a pollen source, and lower as a nectar source. So when something better is available (like other *Prunus* species), the bees are likely working there instead. Lindtner observes pollen pellets of cherry laurel to be light yellow to green.

Most of the information in the article was gathered from the following sources:

On nectar and pollen values:

Garden Plants for Honey Bees

by Peter Lindtner;

Publisher: Kalamazoo : Wicwas Press, 2014.

On cultivation as a food source:

<http://dergipark.gov.tr/download/article-file/211569>

Plant details are most clear on a noxious weed alert site:

<https://www.kingcounty.gov/services/environment/animals-and-plants/noxious-weeds/weed-identification/english-laurel.aspx>



Spring NCSBA Conference Review

Attending a North Carolina State Beekeepers Association (NCSBA) meeting can be a great way to meet other beekeepers, examine equipment first hand, and listen to national and international speakers on a variety of beekeeping topics. Over a dozen MCBA members attended the Spring 2018 NCSBA meeting in New Bern. A couple have volunteered to share their experiences from the meeting.

I was entertained by the speaker from University of Guelph (Ontario, Canada) who talked briefly about over-wintering all his colonies in single deeps. This is not what we have been taught! The University also has over 30 videos on YouTube on how they do things there; search YouTube for University of Guelph Honeybees.

-Libby Mack

This bee conference I enjoyed eating the wonderful fresh seafood while chatting with “Bee friends” . This conference I got to eavesdrop on conversations from the gurus of beekeeping in Mecklenburg County over meals and I enjoyed a casual conversation with one of the state inspectors. It was fun to learn more of her background.

Light bulb moments for me: if you have a hive where you aren't certain of queen status (possible no queen vs. virgin queen) add a frame of brood, including eggs. If you are in the hive every 3 weeks minimum you won't end up with a laying worker.

Drones aren't ready to mate for about a month after they emerge! You can squeeze them to check maturity- I'm not doing that, just saying! Should be some Drones ready when the Red Buds are blooming in Spring. I also enjoyed talking to Christy Hemenway about her Top Bar hive system. If enough interest, might bring her in as a speaker!

-Karen Brzycki

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Email us with questions at
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Picture and Article Submissions
are always needed and are
greatly appreciated.

Email submissions to:
Rachel.E.G.Woodhouse@gmail.com



Mecklenburg County Beekeepers Association

2018 Dues Form (January 1 thru December 31)

Note: State registration is now handled separately through the state website
Please see link below

(Please print clearly)

Today's Date _____

MCBA Annual Dues: \$5

I am: New

Renewing

N/A

*First Name: _____ *Last name: _____

*Address: _____

*City: _____ *State: _____ *Zip code: _____

Phone: _____ *Email: _____

County of residence: _____

How long have you kept bees? _____ (yrs) Number of hives _____

How would you like to be involved with the Club? _____

*This information (name, mailing address, email address) will be provided to all members of the Mecklenburg Beekeepers (and to members ONLY - no one else will receive this information from us). If you DO NOT want this information shared, please opt out by initialing here. _____

Please make check payable to MCBA and mail completed form to:

Dietlinde Zipkin
MCBA Secretary
201 Foxlair Ct.
Matthews , NC 28105

For state membership registration or renewal , you'll find a link on the NCSBA home page:

<https://www.ncbeekeepers.org/>

Benefits of state membership include :

Subscription to the quarterly Bee Buzz newsletter

Notices of bee-related education opportunities

Member discounts to the state conferences and other education opportunities

Discounts on magazines such as the American Bee Journal

Copy of the Yellow Book statewide membership directory

Annual beekeeping calendar

