



SEACOAST BEEKEEPERS

APRIL 2010 NEWSLETTER

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NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY APRIL 15TH 7-9PM

JEREMIAH SMITH GRANGE, LEE NH

President's notes:

Happy Spring! The bees have certainly been treated to wonderful weather after all our March rain, and the pollen seems to be streaming in. I wish I could say the same for the bees in Georgia. Not to be a pessimist, but I wouldn't expect great things from those early queens, as the mating must have been pretty sporadic in February.

We visited our daughter in Austria/Germany in March and I was able to visit a Beekeeper's coop market in Munich and also to visit with a beekeeper at the open market in Salzburg. It was so moving to see a large farmer's market-- mid March, in an Alpine climate no less--with so many wonderful products already...five or six kinds of early greens, overwintered root vegetables, early flowering plants, etc. There were no less than five beekeepers all making a good living at one market in Salzburg--a city the size of Manchester! Astonishing what can be done when a country supports its small farmers. The one beekeeper with whom I chatted had "Forest honey" made from the honeydew of aphids, Rapeseed Honey, and also a honey made

from spring Alpine blooms. He produced a dark brown salve which was 25% Propolis!! It came dear, but was a good seller--the Austrians seem to understand the value of this amazing compound. He struggles with Varroa just like we do, and uses a combination of thymol in summer and oxalic acid in the fall. It is always interesting to compare notes with other beekeepers.

At April's meeting, as in March, we will hold a special raffle (tickets five dollars each) for a three pound package, generously donated by Ben and Bev Chadwick. This will be available for pick up in Alton several days later in April. Also I will be collecting any donations for our annual "Products of the Hive" basket that we donate to the Channel 11 auction. They are struggling this year more than ever and have shown wonderful educational programs about the bees. So let's all help to support this great NH institution.

Lastly, I have had a number of requests from local farmers for pollination. If you are interested and still have available hives, let me know ASAP and I will put you in touch.

Stay well....April is one of our busiest months!!

Amy Robinson

A (very) Short History of Package Bees, or Things You Might Not Have Known If You Didn't Read The Newsletter!

(Editor's Note: This is from the 1929 edition of A.I. Root's the ABC and XYZ of Beekeeping.)

"It was A.I. Root who first conceived the possibility of shipping bees without combs. We find in the original edition of ABC of Bee Culture, published in 1879, and also in Gleanings in Bee Culture in 1878, 1879, and 1881, an account of his experiments in shipping bees in wire-screen cages without combs, very similar to those now made." This experiment was done in order to reduce shipping charges. A package of 2 or 3 pounds of bees was about the same size as a wintered-over colony. A positive side-effect, for both bees and

beekeepers, was a major reduction in the transmittal of foul brood. No bees on combs, meant no foul-brood moved from one area to another.

But shipping bees wasn't easy. Root had to figure out how to make candy that bees could eat, and survive on, during the shipping. He also learned how to use metal containers for syrup or water. After many experiments by beekeepers all over the country, it was proved that syrup was the 'right' food to ship with bees. Those experiments were conducted from 1914 through 1916.

"Heavy winter losses in the more northern states began to bring to the front the possibilities of making good the loss through package shipments." (Ed. Note: Not much seems to have changed in 100 years!)

"About 1918 and 1920 it was discovered that two or three pounds of young bees would equal the performance of a fair, wintered-over colony in the production of honey the following season."

"In the olden days, before the package bee business was known, heavy winter losses meant that the equipment of combs, hives, and all were idle during the season. It took a whole year to build the bees up to their former strength, and then there was the chance of severe winter losses again. It will be seen that the package business is really insurance against heavy losses. If one has lost 50 per cent of his colonies and the other 50 per cent are medium and weak colonies, the whole bee-yard, at an expense of from three to six dollars a colony (1929 prices!) can be put into active working condition again."

And lastly, here's what A.I. Root says about installing package bees:

"...put the bees in a shady cool place... and toward night, along about five or six o'clock, put a cage in front of each of the prepared hives containing combs or frames of foundation. Covers should all be removed and a part of the frames taken out from one side. The cage should be jounced upon the ground, the syrup can lifted out, and the queen-cage with its occupant removed. The cage of bees should be placed in the space vacated by the frames. The cage containing the queen should be put between a couple of the combs. The queen will attract the bees out of the cage to the combs where she is located. The cage may then be removed, when the other frames can be put back."

For everyone getting new bees, congratulations, have fun with them and remember to feed them constantly until July 4th!

Here's an important piece of news:

Mary Lonergan is looking for a beekeeper to take over her account supplying a local health food store.

They need at least 250 pounds of honey over the year, mainly 1lb jars and some 12 oz bears.

Call Mary for details, evenings and weekends (603) 926-1114

Need Supplies, or help, for you or your bees?

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49 Lane Drive, Alton, N.H. 03809 (603) 875-3544

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