

# Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association

**NEXT MEETING:**  
TUESDAY August 20th  
7:00-9:00 Program  
Georgetown Public Library

## **2019 Club Officers:**

**PRESIDENT: Phil Ainslie**  
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Lisa Hoekstra

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**QUEEN CHAIR:**  
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## Meeting Night Changes

Tuesday August 20th  
Tuesday September 24th  
Tuesday October 22nd

Meetings are the 4th  
Tuesday of each month  
except August when room  
availability caused a change.

## August Program

7:00 pm Ice Cream Social  
Question Time with Panel of Expert Beekeepers

In order to help better understand how WCABA members harvested honey and what we can do to better prepare for next year, we have a short questionnaire we'd like for you to fill out. If you didn't harvest anything this year or are a new beekeeper, still feel free to submit it as we'd still like to know!

Google forms link:

<https://forms.gle/JvLrZph88a4qYUpV6>

# Stuff I Wish I had Been Told When I Was a NewBee Beekeeper.

*from Phil Ainslie, President*

## Equipment and clothing:

1. Cotton suits cling when you get sweaty and bees can then sting through the wet cotton. Solution: vented suit. I was working on an Africanized hive on a high 90's day and sweating profusely. Bees all around and all over me. Ended up with 25 stings on my arms from the grumpy ladies stinging through my suit.
2. I suggest two-piece suits. Most of the time you will only need the top. One-piece suits are more difficult to get in and out of and generally you will only need the one piece suit when you are working with hot bees, bees near the ground or working with a large number of bee hives.
3. Fencing veil: The disadvantage is that your cheek can rest on the mesh when you turn your head, resulting in opportunities for a sting. Again, I was working Africanized bees. I leaned over to pull some frames. The suit pulled across my back and pulled the fencing veil closer to my face. Each time I turned my head, my face rested against the screen. You guessed it, the damnable girls stung me through the veil. Now I use a rimed hat veil. Downside to hat veils is the wind. This can be fixed with a chin strap. The other downside is when working in tight quarters the hat type veil keeps getting knocked around. If possible, try on your bee suit. Purchasing your wearable gear at a seminar offers this opportunity. Be sure to lean over, flex your arms, turn, and twist with the suit on. Binding can cause the veil to rest on your face.
4. Gloves: Yes, they can sting through the leather gloves. It does not happen often but it can occur.

## Stings:

1. Bees can sting through socks. I was extracting some bees that were in the lower portion of porch steps. I was in a full suit and thought I was protected. Well, the bees came out in force, yes indeed, they were Africanized and quite grumpy. The porch step was near the ground and directly in front of my ankles. One bee said, "betcha I can sting through his socks", others said "me too" and the race for my ankles was on. Ugg!
2. Stings itch! All I remembered from the stings I received as a child was the pain. But the pain is not all that bad. The itching at the stings is another matter indeed. Eventually I found that an application of some of my honey to the stings reduced the itching and inflammation significantly. I don't know if this works for anybody else but it works for me. My wife even commented on the noticeable reduction in redness, and swelling.

3. Double check all your suit zippers. Watching bees fly around INSIDE your veil is disconcerting and a little intimidating.

## Lifting:

1. Eight frame supers are the way to go if you prefer deeps and lifting is an issue. This will reduce the load by as much as 14-16 lbs.
2. Medium or shallow supers can be used also in place of deeps. Three mediums are about equivalent to two deeps.
3. You may want to place your hives on a stand that enables you to lift without stooping. Downside to this is that it is possible to have supers that are a bit high as the hive expands into more supers. Generally, in Texas we don't get the high stacks you see on the internet. So far it has never been a problem for me. I keep all my hives 12 to 15 inches off the ground.

## Location, location, location

1. If you have a stream on your property, know how high it will rise during flooding. I lost 4 hives due to flooding. Now they are all on high ground.
2. Other things to consider about location:
  - a. Afternoon shade.
  - b. Nearby water source
  - c. Keep your horses away from the hives when inspecting or extracting.
  - d. Fence in your bee yard if you have cattle or grazing animals.
  - e. Place something under your hives to keep the grass at bay. Old plywood, old carpeting or whatever you come up with. This also reduces the chance of getting chiggers in tall grass around your hive. I was mentoring a man that had his bees in tall grass and I managed to get chiggers as a result. Good grief those itched.
3. Of course, the more flowering plants the better.
  - a. Cotton flower nectar can be attractive to bees, although it is low in sugar content. Cotton also has nectar on the underside of the leaves. Cotton honey tends to crystalize quickly and for this reason it is a good source for creamed honey.
  - b. Wheat is of no value to bees.
  - c. Corn has pollen but no nectar.
  - d. Sunflowers are a motherload of pollen and nectar.

## Grumpy bees, why?

1. Queenlessness. This aggressive behavior usually stops when you replace the queen.
2. Shortage of nectar-producing flowers (nectar dearth). The bees get aggressive and start robbing. The robber and the robbed both get aggressive.
  - a. Fighting bees release alarm pheromone and this makes other honey bees aggressive. More fighting=more pheromone=more fighting= escalation. You and your pets become fair game.
  - b. Dead bees and honey attract wasps and yellow jackets
3. Rainy weather when accompanied with heat and high humidity.
4. Your queen was superseded by a queen with aggressive or Africanized genes. A colony that supersedes the queen sometimes can result in more aggressive bees. That's because you have no guarantee of the new genetics. The new queen mated with drones from goodness knows where. Her offspring may not be as nice as the carefully engineered genetics provided by your bee supplier. When this happens, order a marked and mated queen from your supplier to replace the queen that is now in your hive.
5. As your colony grows in size and the season progresses, the bees become more protective of their stores.
6. Do you launder your bee clothes and veil? Previous stings on gloves and clothing can leave behind an alarm pheromone that can stimulate defensive behavior when you revisit the hive. Be sure to keep your garments clean. You can also smoke the area of the sting to disguise any alarm pheromone that may linger on clothing or on your skin.

Fellow WCABA members, if you have "stuff you wish you were told", please let me know by going to [wcaba.org](http://wcaba.org) and click on contact us. It is my wish to compile the list, place it on the website for new beekeepers to peruse.



**William Janke is selling 14 hives - he has developed a severe allergic reaction to bee stings.**

**If Interested please email William at [wjanke50@gmail.com](mailto:wjanke50@gmail.com) or telephone (512) 656-3871**

# Hobby Sweetens Couple's Lives

by Ann Bierschenk - Georgetown

Extracting honey is an activity that my family always looks forward to each year.

This being an exceptionally cool and wet spring that brought forth an abundance of wildflowers that Lady Bird would be proud of, I found my hives loaded with lots of capped combs containing sweet light honey.



My mentor, Jimmie Oakley, said, “You’ve got a lot of honey!” and, he offered me the use of the 12 frame extractor at the Bost Farm Honey House.

As providence would have it, the weekend he offered was also the weekend of my 40<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary. What a great time to pull the frames and extract since I would have lots of muscles and hands at the house visiting that weekend.

I have to admit, the night before we extracted was somewhat sleepless for me as I had visions of accidental spills by grandkids in the Honey House. That morning I got an early start to the Bost Farm with two of my sons, leaving my husband to stay with my elderly mother and instructions for the moms to bring the kids over about an hour later. And, what a fun time it was for my sons. My sons took brief instructions from Jimmie and got straight to work breaking open the caps, loading the extractor, straining the honey and bottling up the sweet sticky delight. There was nothing for me to do but wipe honey drips off the floor.



Sons David & Stephen uncapping frames with help from granddaughter Claire



William County Sun article circa 2010 (see insert)

Stuck on the cabinet doors above the countertop, I could not help but notice a yellowed laminated news clipping with a photo of a smiling Mr. and Mrs. Bost entitled **Hobby sweetens couple's lives**. How happy they looked and how much joy beekeeping must have brought to their lives. I could only imagine what it must have been like for them back then.

About midmorning as random bees bounced off the window screens and fans kept a breeze circulating through the room, a stampede of grandkids came running through the screened doors with fingers ready for sample honey tasting. Jimmie gave each child their own plastic bear and the opportunity to fill it at the bottling station.



*Anabelle and Abigail tasting the honey*



*Bridget has found a good source in the basket*



*Jacob takes a taste too.*

Photos were being snapped with phones as the grandkids wanted to get into some of the action of extracting. The moms were busy with wet rags trying to minimize sticky fingerprints and honey drips. Jimmie even had a wet mop ready just in case.



*Anabelle is the first to fill her bottle*



*Bridget gets a bottle, while Emily waits*



*Emily fills her bear with David assisting all the kids*

Oh, how good the honey tasted after that final filter, straight from spicket and into the last bucket before being poured into the bottling tank! Yum! The kids just couldn't get enough honey.

Perhaps a future honey queen is among us today, or maybe a future beekeeper, but there were definitely a lot of honey lovers. And, lots of honey for all to take home with sweet memories of a honey harvest with each sweet taste!

Yes and thank you, Mr. and Mrs. Bost, honey does sweeten our lives in many ways.

## Honey House Pics



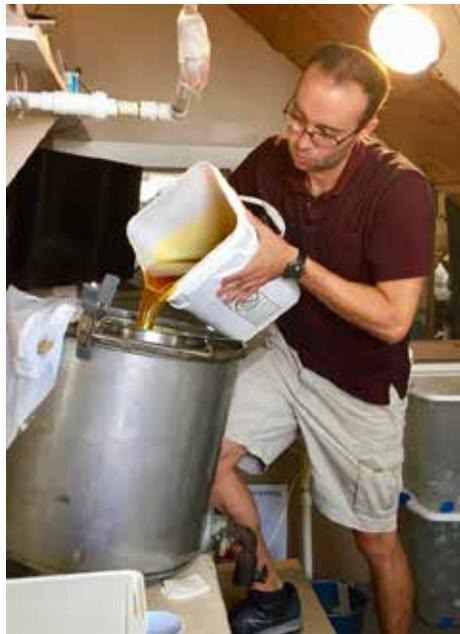
*Claire has a step up as she uncaps the frames*



*Honey Bear...All Mine!  
Bierschenk Grandchildren:  
Jacob, Bridget, Anabelle, Claire, Abigail, James, Emily*



*Claire watches as Stephen pours extracted honey through final strainer in the process*



*David moves honey to bottling tank before the final containers are filled*



*Granddaughter Claire observes cautiously while grandson Andrew fills containers as granddaughter Abigail watches closely*

## More Honey House Pics



*Making Sweet Memories*

*back row: Wendy, Kevin, Stephen, Cici, David, Kristen, Ann, front row: Andrew, Claire, Bridget, Anabelle, Abigail, Jacob, James, & Emily*



**Ann Bierschenk**

A WCABA member, she extracts and bottle her honey in Williamson County, and hopes to be in her own Honey House by next year.

### Hobby sweetens couple's lives

It all started decades ago with a love for honey, which Robert and Mary Bost used to buy by the gallon to put on bread, cereal, biscuits and anything else that needed a little sweetening. Today the Georgetown couple have 300 hives each with about 70,000 bees. Each hive produces about 50 lbs. of honey each summer. For the past 20 years, the bees have produced enough honey to sell in local grocery and convenience stores.

Robert and Mary retired from the Leander ISD in 1980. Mary served as an elementary teacher there and Robert as a principal for 37 years. Both Robert and Mary are active members of the Williamson County Retired Teachers Association. They say that working together as educators and as beekeepers has been the glue that has cemented their marriage. "We are best friends," Robert Bost says.



*Robert and Mary Bost say that working together almost all their lives has strengthened their marriage.*

*(pictures and captions by Jimmie Oakley)*

# Scholarship Recipients Treating for Mites

by Jimmie Oakley – Scholarship Chair



July was not a hot month in the Scholarship bee yard, never making it to 100 degrees, but August is a different story, hot, hot, hot!

Fortunately, the prescribed Apiguard (thymol gel) treatment was started on July 25<sup>th</sup> while the temperatures were well within the effective range (60 -105 degrees).

The Sustainable Apiary Plan calls for a mite treatment after the spring-summer honey as been pulled and extracted, which was reported with great success in the last newsletter.



Bailey Brett prepared for an Apiguard treatment

The treatment is from a bulk quantity of the gel where the acceptable amount of 25g per week is administered for at least 4 weeks to span the complete development life cycle of the honey bee while the Varroa Destructor mite would be emerging. This satisfies the 100g maximum amount allowable.

During each inspection of the hive the scholarship recipient records the resources in the colony to determine any deficiencies. As a result, pollen supplement was added to the feeding regiment along with the 2 – one gallon feeders of 1x1 sugar syrup. The syrup and the pollen serve to continue a steady progress forward during the Texas drought we normally experience before the fall honey flow starts.

Fall queens have been ordered and will arrive the first part of September in time to set up the proposed “piggy back” nuc that will go on top of the existing hive to winter over till spring.

The scholarship hives still maintain a good bee population and honey reserves and should be ready for this major step in the program curriculum. There will be further mite treatments with Formic Pro before winter to hold down the mite count to assure a healthy colony in the spring.

Randy Oakley continues to serve as instructor for the group and they are following the plan as laid out.

Thanks to all who participate and support our program. JO



Apiguard, bulk pack. Approximately 25 grams per week



Reece Brett is assisted by Tami Brett in feeding his hive

**Williamson County Area Beekeeping Association**  
**Meeting Summary - July 23rd, 2019 meeting.**

The meeting was opened by Phil Ainslie, President, at 7 pm.

**President's Announcements**

1. Next month's meeting will include an ice cream social event, and a question and answer panel. A signup sheet was provided for members to sign up to provide toppings.
2. Bee Buzz will be at Rudy's BBQ, at the IH35 location, in Round Rock from 2 pm -4pm. This is an informal, come and go, meeting to talk about any aspect of bees that you please. The meetings will be on the Sunday following the monthly WCABA meeting. Look for the table with the super on it !
3. The WCABA is still in need of mentors to support our members. Consider being a mentor. You can get more information from the WCABA website under "Mentor/Mentee program". You may know more than you think, and you can help a fellow member. Give it a go !!
4. If you have any suggestions regarding the website, please don't hesitate to contact a board member. We would love to have your input. Let us know what you want to see more of, less of, or a change in the layout.
5. Please complete the survey, provided by Matt Ludlum, regarding the honey harvest this year. The survey is only 6 questions, and it will help gathering data on the honey production in our area. The survey to be completed by members present at the meeting.
6. Floor was opened up for announcements:-  
A gentleman is selling 2 cases of mite treatment, and he will take no more than a \$1.  
Michael McPherran has a collection of books for sale.

**Beekeeping 101 - 102. Keeping Honey bees Successfully in Central Texas**, presented by Randy Oakley.

I very informative presentation on vertical splits, the Oakley hive management approach, and numerous questions answered.

**Members Present:- 72**

**Door Prizes. - 7 lucky winners**

The meeting was closed by Phil Ainslie, President.

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday August 20th** at the Georgetown Library. This is the 3rd Tuesday, and Not on our regular 4th Tuesday!!

Gillian Mattinson.  
Secretary, W.C.A.B.A.

# Honey Tasting & Judging at September Meeting

It's not too early to be thinking about the Honey Judging and Tasters Choice Contest that is always held at the WCABA regular meeting in September when we celebrate National Honey Month.

In regard to that I would like to cover for our new members and remind our veterans of what we do and why and maybe offer some tips as you prepare for the September event.

As far back as I have been a member of WCABA we have had a "honey tasting" as a fun thing to do as the summer harvest season drew to a close. I retired from commercial beekeeping after 10 years in North Dakota and experienced my first tasting while a new member of WCABA myself. Believe me, it was an eyeopener. Having produced and sold semi loads of northern honey to packers in the twin cities, it never really occurred to me just how different honeys can taste.

Texas is blessed with some really fine flavored honey and many of them come from our area, so bring your baby food size jar of your honey to be placed with all the others as we once again do the "TASTING", just for the fun of it. There will be a first (blue), second (red) and third place (white) ribbon presented and the bragging rights for the next year that go with it if you are a winner.

The judging is all subjective based on the individual palate, because everybody tastes, and everybody judges. As all of the small samples of honey are lined up on the table, all who participate in the tasting get three votes to mark by the ones they think deserve their vote, and the one getting the most marks is declared the "Tasters Choice" for 2019. That's easy enough, right? The hard part is that you only get three votes.

On the Honey Judging side, there are actually judges (3) that are tasked to judge the honey going to the State Fair of Texas held in Dallas in October. Any club member can submit a \*2lb. glass queenline jar of their honey to be judged against the standard and then to be donated and sent to the Fair where it will be on display in the Texas Beekeepers Association Honey Booth while the Fair is in progress. The honey will then be donated to the Happy Hills Farm in Granbury, Texas in support of their work with children.

The judging is based on a 100-point system where credit is given for container appearance and fill level, the freedom for foreign material, and the flavor and brightness of the honey. Each entry will be presented with a ribbon based on how the honey stacks up against the standard.

I have provided some additional tips on preparation of your honey for this part of the competition in hopes that you'll have an enjoyable experience and learn something about the presentation of your honey.

I hope this may become one of your favorite parts of the beekeeping year. JO

*\* If you need a 2lb. glass jar for your entry or a baby food jar for your sample, contact Jimmie Oakley at the Bost Farm [512-507-3009]*



*Many samples to taste*



*2018 Winners: Ginny Stubblefield, May Bost, & Kay Oakley*



*Judging: Frank Hunt, Chris Doggett, & Shannon Montez*

# Preparing Honey for Show

By Jimmie Oakley 2018 TBA Honey Show Committee

\*Note: Bees make the honey and you are not winning on the honey, but your presentation of the honey. Judges look at how you present the honey and taste is a secondary (sometime deciding) factor.

Make sure you present your honey in the container called for by the contest.

Use the right container: Queenline Jar – 1#, 2# - and a good lid!!

Cleanliness is next to...\*\*

Make sure your containers are clean. Wash in dishwasher by themselves.

Never touch the jar with your hands after that; use lint free cloth (flower sack towels) or photo gloves.

Pick the Jar Well (blemish free). Look carefully for bubbles or flaws in the glass, even the bottom.

Put Good Honey in your Jars. Honey Quality Check - Choose only fully capped frames (moisture) and taste it for flavor (no bitter weed, leafy spurge, goldenrod).

Filling your Jars: Slowly, holding with a towel, tipped at an angle to prevent bubbles.

Fill Level of Jar: Up to the top screw thread (the first time). Reduce lever before entering into the contest. This allows for removing bubbles and/or debris later.

Cover Jar with Plastic Wrap: Judges look under the lid and no honey should be there, remove the plastic wrap before giving to judges.

Bottle Honey Early as Opposed to Late: Give your honey time to settle up and provide opportunity to skim or remove bubbles and/or debris. Remove top layer with a silver spoon to above the inside fill line. You should not see empty space below the lid.

\*Honey is judged on three categories, Light, Amber, & Dark, the Appearance of the Bottle (cleanliness of the bottle inside and out, no honey under the lid), the Uniform Fill (up to fill line), Free of Foreign Matter (granulated crystals, bubbles, foam, wax, lint), Flavor, and Brightness (clear, sparking, transparent).

Hints: You can heat honey slowly and allow bubbles to rise by leaving the jar in a closed, parked car all day (in Texas = 100+ degrees).

To remove specks, wax, or lint try long wooden squares to move the foreign matter to the top and dip off with silver spoon.

Polish jars with silk cloth.

Use individually cut moist square of lint free cloth (white men's handkerchief) to wipe underside of lid before presentation.

Store honey in room temperature above 57 degrees to avoid granulation.

\*\* I realize this might be overkill for most honey presentations, but good rules to remember anyway. JO

**New Members**

Will & Jenn Gonzalez  
Brandon & Jessica Thoennes  
Melanie Ocana

Cedar Park  
Georgetown  
Leander

**Renewing Members**

Diane Stromberg

Taylor

**Door Prize Donors**

Steve Gavenda  
Lester Wetherall  
Chris Doggett

**Door Prize Winners**

Don Parsons  
Steve Gavenda  
Hattie Mora  
Brenda Castile  
Brandy Eves  
Don Schwertner

Visit Our Website:  
[www.wcaba.org](http://www.wcaba.org)

Email Us At:  
[info@wcaba.org](mailto:info@wcaba.org)

**Texas Beekeepers Association**

**Annual Convention**

**November 7th - 9th, 2019**

**San Antonio Airport Hilton**