



# St. Clair Beekeepers Association

## *Bee Buzz*

Monthly Newsletter of the St. Clair Beekeepers

January 2016

### **Don't Miss:**

BeeSpeakSTL presents Dr. Tom Seeley, author of *Honeybee Democracy*, Saturday, February 27, 2016, Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis. Click [here](#) for info.

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Next SCBA Meeting will be held:

Friday, January 29, 2016, 7:30 p.m.

St. Clair County Farm Bureau  
1478 IL Rte. 15, Belleville

Speakers: Wayne Wilhelm, Lab Supervisor, St. Louis County Department of Public Health, who will discuss *Honey Analysis for Pollen Content* and the *Challenge of Determining Pollen Types*,

- and -

Jane Sueme, longtime beekeeper and owner of Isabee's, who will explain the *Purpose of Pollen in the Honeybee Hive*.

Mr. Wilhelm began his career at St. Louis County as a chemist in 1989. He is certified by the National Allergy Bureau to collect and identify pollen and mold in ambient air and has experience in analyzing numerous other materials, including air particulate filters, asbestos, lead in blood and drinking water. He has presented his findings to the St. Louis University Medical School Department of Allergy and has been featured on KSDK Channel 5.

Ms. Sueme began keeping bees in 2004 and in 2009 opened, Isabee's, the only beekeepers' supply store in St. Louis. In addition to maintaining numerous bee colonies, she provides education and consulting services. Ms. Sueme is a founder of the St. Louis Beekeepers Association and BeeSpeakSTL, and a former board member of the Eastern Missouri Beekeepers Association and communications coordinator for the Heartland Apiculture Society. She has been featured in *St. Louis Magazine*, *St. Louis At Home*, *Sauce* and on KMOV TV4 Go Green.

**From  
President  
Bill Mattatall**

Hello My Friends, Hello –

Once again a new year is upon us, and once again old man winter has Quietly slipped up behind us and said hello with a burst of cold air, rain, wind, and snow.

Again I am sure we are all worried about the health and safety of our bees. The high wind broke off a large bough of one of the Mulberry trees that hover above my bee yard. It fell devastating the fence, coming to rest just inches above several of my hives. All seems to be well but until I can clear the fallen tree I am unable to get to those hives.

I hope all had a Merry Christmas and that this New Year will be prosperous and fruitful for all.

2015 was definitely not my best year for honey production. Due to the wet spring my honey production went from 600+ pounds to a mere 57 and a half. I have found that there were others that fell into the same situation. I need everyone to reach out to their fellow beekeepers and invite to this month's meeting which will be Friday the 29th at the Belleville Farm Bureau on Route 15 across the street from Eckert's Market.

Susan, Charity and crew have been working diligently on this year's program agenda. Lonnie Langley from Overcup Honey called all excited about a program he wants to present at the February Meeting..

I have had several calls from individuals wanting more information on beekeeping. This year we will again have a beekeeping one-o-one class. It is scheduled for early March. We are also working on having an intermediate class sometime later in the year, I am thinking possibly at one of the summer meetings.

In closing I would like to wish everyone a happy and prosperous New Year. I would also like to thank all those who worked so hard last year putting our program together. A special thanks to Kevin Wilke, Vicki and John Peil, Ken and Katrina Kloepper, Ken Schaffer, Susan Bailey, Charity Davis-Woodard, Barbara Beal, and so many more, including my lovely and faithful wife Barbara.

Hope to see you all this coming weekend.  
Salud a sus bees.

*Billy*

## Overwintering bees in Southern Illinois

My method of overwintering bees in southern Illinois is perhaps a little different than most of you are accustomed to. I raise a lot of nucs for overwintering and have found most winters we have sufficient breaks in the weather to allow for occasional cleansing flights. This is important. Successful overwintering is largely dependent on healthy bees going into winter in the first place. Make sure in August that your mite counts are low, ideally less than 3 mites/100 bees. Also, make sure small hive beetles haven't gotten a foothold in your hive. They will overwinter inside the cluster right along with the bees.

I try to get my nucs into single hive bodies (see photo below on left ) and



feed syrup in October if stores are low. For this I use 1 gallon Ziploc bags directly over the frames inside a 3" high "Kloepper" feeder rim with a 3/8" x 3/4" opening in front to allow for an upper entrance. I try to feed something close to 2:1 sugar to water but don't get too concerned if it isn't that thick. I have never heard any complaints from the bees! Use hot water in order to get as much sugar into solution as possible. I feed this until daytime highs drop into the lower 50's at which point the bees will no longer take the syrup.

Once the bees stop feeding on the syrup, I remove any liquid syrup feed bags and start placing two or three sugar bricks directly over the cluster. (See my recipe [here](#).) In addition, I place a roughly 8 1/2" x 9" x 1 3/4" Styrofoam block inside a clean 1 gallon Ziplock bag (it is easier to make that block from several strips of Styrofoam rather than one large block). This block is placed over the center six frames with two sugar bricks directly behind it, as shown in photo above. I make sure the frames on either side of the center six frames are primarily filled with honey on both sides. No empty combs or foundation should be in frame positions #2 and #9.

*(Continued on page four)*

**Winter Hive  
Protection -  
Ken  
Kloepper,  
Waterloo**

**Winter Hive  
Protection -  
Ken  
Kloepper,  
Waterloo  
(cont.)**

Of course, I make sure to install entrance reducers in late October to keep the mice out, and I also install a homemade piece of FRP (fiberglass reinforced plastic - 4 x 8 sheets available at Home Depot) board over my screened bottom boards to help keep the winter winds out.

By picking a warm day (preferably at least in the 40's) during the last two weeks of December, I will go through each hive and add additional sugar bricks as necessary so I know they have food directly over the cluster going into January's typically extreme cold weather. Another check in early February is usually all that is needed to make sure they have sufficient stores to carry them into spring. However, as with any type of overwintering of your colonies, the most likely time for the bees to starve is late winter or early spring, as brood rearing is getting under way and springtime nectar may not yet be available. So check as necessary!

**Windbreaks and Insulation Boards**

Several of my hives are on top of a hill that gets a ferocious north wind so I always try to give them a windbreak. In the past I've used straw bales, which work great, but they're heavy and hard to stack. Plus, when they get saturated



with rain (like this winter), they can fall over if you don't have them staked. Since that happened to me this year I bought a roll of "silt fence" (\$29/100 ft. from Rural King) and installed it to the north and west of my hives. It's the black fabric behind the hive in this picture. It's cheap and seems to be working well, although since the ground is so wet I've had to go out and hammer the stakes back into place a couple of times.

I also encase the hives with pieces of half inch foil-backed rigid foam insulation taped together to keep them in place. On top I put a one inch piece of the same type of insulation. The insulation is available at Home Depot for about \$11 for a 4x8 sheet, which will wrap two full size hives. This year I taped the insulation together with Scotch Blue Exterior tape, but in a pinch I've used duct tape and it worked fine. I make sure to leave the bottom and top entrances uncovered for ventilation.

One good thing about the rigid foam insulation is that, if you're careful unwrapping the hives in the spring, you can salvage the insulation and use it next year. It's not sophisticated and not too pretty, but it's cheap and seems to work.

**Winter Hive  
Protection -  
Barbara  
Beal, Glen  
Carbon**



## One Piece Plastic Hive Wrap



These coverings, sometimes sold under the brand name Bee Cozy, are one piece of extra thick wrap designed for two deeps. Since I have one deep and one medium I folded under the extra material before enclosing the hives. They were secured with Tyvek tape, and I cut holes for the entrance and upper vent hole. The cost of each wrap around is \$18 and they can be ordered from most beekeeper supply houses. Whether or not they are effective and reusable is going to be a March conclusion. They were not quite as quick and easy to install as I

had thought they would be, but having a partner would be a big help. (Editor's note - Vickie also uses straw bales as a windbreak, but, as you can see, she staked hers well so they didn't fall over when saturated with rain.)

## Quilt Boxes

Last year I used a technique for preventing the winter build-up of moisture inside the hive called a **Quilt Box**. As described on the blog Honey Bee Suite ([honeybeesuite.com](http://honeybeesuite.com)) it is a spacer box (mountain camp rim) that holds an absorbant material and, when placed on top of the top hive body, allows moisture to pass through the material and on out through a vent to the outside air. It seemed to me to be a good way to provide both some insulation and extra moisture control to the overwintering hive. I decided to use the shallow supers we already had rather than build new boxes, but ideally you would have dedicated quilt boxes to use year after year. You will need:

1. a rim spacer at least 2" tall, preferably 3" for our climate
2. #8 hardware screen mesh cut to the outside dimensions of the spacer (width and length) This size mesh is smaller than bee space and is used in screened bottom boards. It is strong and stiff, but not always easy to find. Window screen will work but would need to be braced so as not to sag down on the bees. I think a larger screen such as # 4 would also work if you line it with a cloth such as canvas to prevent the bees from getting up inside the box and the chips from falling through.
3. staple gun
4. thin muslin cloth or other breathable fabric, cut large enough to extend up the sides of the spacer a little
5. cedar or pine chips, such as that used for animal bedding

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**Winter Hive  
Protection -  
Vickie York,  
Glen Carbon**

**Winter Hive  
Protection -  
Charity  
Davis-  
Woodard,  
Edwardsville**

**Winter Hive  
Protection -  
Charity  
Davis-  
Woodard,  
Edwardsville,  
(cont.)**



After stretching and securing the hardware cloth with staples to the bottom side of the rim, we nailed wood strips to add further strength and to provide an even surface to come in contact with the hive body it would sit on. Turning the box over, I placed the cotton muslin cloth down inside, making sure it was flat across the screen and extending up the sides. This contains the chips and keeps dust from falling onto the bees. Add about 3" of wood chips.

Since I didn't want to drill ventilation holes into our honey supers I relied on the ventilation notch in the inner cover or added small wood spacers.

Occasionally I would check the chips by ruffling them up a bit, but nothing ever felt more than slightly damp. All the hives came out of winter in good shape.

For more information check out the [Honey Bee Suite](#) blog or email me at [cdavis.woodard@gmail.com](mailto:cdavis.woodard@gmail.com).



**Basic Cooked Hard Candy**

15 lb sugar

6 c water

1/4 tsp cream or tartar (optional)

Mix thoroughly and heat to 240°(use candy thermometer). Maintain at this temperature for 15 minutes. Do not stir as this makes the candy grainy. Cool to 150-180°and then whip or stir vigorously until mixture turns thick and white. Immediately pour into pans. Let cool and harden.

Additional recipes: <http://stclairbees.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Feeding-Your-Bees.pdf>

<http://stclairbees.com/resources-for-beekeepers/> (Recipes-Kloepper Method)

[http://www.midwesternbeekeepers.org/uploads/3/4/2/8/3428924/recipes\\_for\\_winter\\_emergency\\_only\\_feeding.pdf](http://www.midwesternbeekeepers.org/uploads/3/4/2/8/3428924/recipes_for_winter_emergency_only_feeding.pdf)

**Recipes for  
Winter  
Feeding**