



GREENE BEE NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2026

GREENE COUNTY BEEKEEPERS



Provide emergency fondant or candy board if food stores are low. Only small pollen sub amounts at a time as needed



Quick inspection if temperature >50°; check food supply, for brood, and pests



If replacing queens, time to order new ones



Remove mouse guards once bees have a consistent, steady flight



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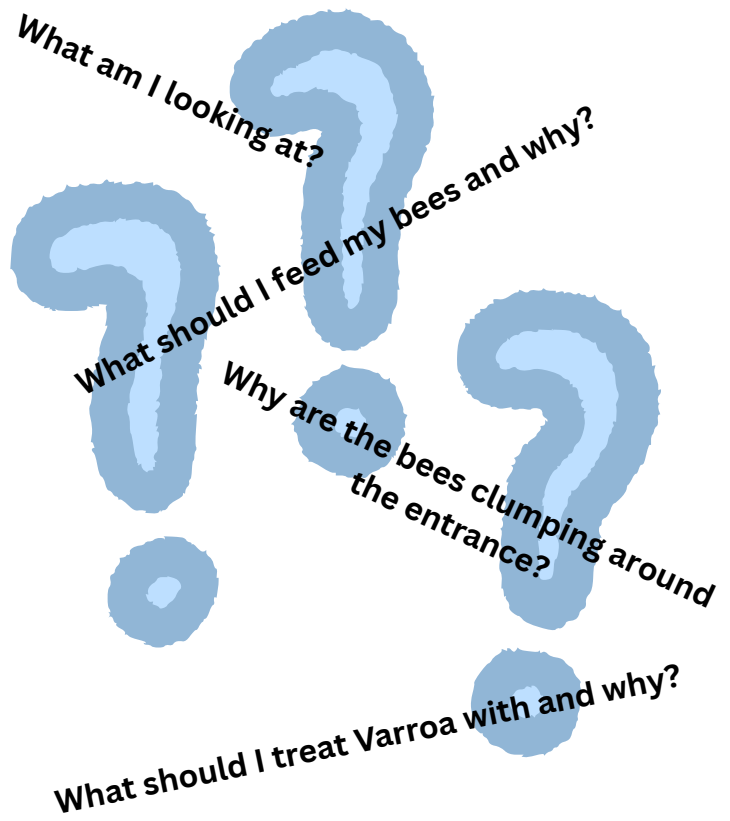
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MARCH 2026 SPEAKER

THE WHAT'S AND WHY'S OF BEEKEEPING

LARRY JOHNSON, OSBA MIAMI VALLEY REPRESENTATIVE

March 17th, 2026; 7:00 PM; In-Person or ZOOM
Xenia Community Center, 1265 W. 2nd. St., Xenia, Ohio



Larry runs Johnson Family Farms in Somerset, Ohio and manages 30 hives. He is active in teaching beekeeping in the Butler and Dayton area. Johnson's been working with bees since he was a kid on his family farm. Growing up, Johnson helped his father's 45 colonies of bees by collecting swarms, extracting honey and wax, and helping with carpentry among his daily tasks.

"Our main focus is just getting everybody's comfort level of having a plan in order to keep the bees alive," Johnson said. "I do everything that I can to try to help build everybody's comfort level up and educate them with what I know."



Bee Aware: Odds and Ends

March 2026

By: Bill Starrett

The type of winter the Miami Valley had this year has caused a larger than normal death of colonies. Honey bees can live through the extreme cold but prolonged cold causes them to starve, often with the hive full of honey. So long as the winter cluster is in contact with honey they can pass it around even in extreme cold. However, if the cluster consumes all the honey in which they are in contact they can starve if the temperatures are so cold the cluster can not relocate within the hive and remain in contact with food resources and that is what has occurred in this type of winter. Dead hives should be protected from mice getting into them as soon as they are discovered and preparations made to get bees back into the empty equipment. I recommend the following inexpensive procedure in mid to late April which is in the middle of the primary nectar flow in Greene County.



A STRONG colony during the primary nectar flow is ideal for raising new queens which colonies instinctively do to produce swarms and which is nature's way of increasing colonies. Most swarms launch in May, but the conditions causing bees to begin swarm preparations begin in April. Removing the queen during the nectar flow forces the colony to raise a new queen when conditions are perfect for queen raising. The longer term benefit is that bees that would result from the eggs laid during the queenless period would NOT be emerged in time to forage during the nectar flow so the harvest capability of the parent colony is not affected.

A second benefit is that a new queen is produced for the parent hive at no cost to the beekeeper... always a plus. A third benefit is that a break in brood rearing is created which allows nurse age bees to become foragers rather than tending developing larvae in the parent colony. The fourth benefit is creating a break in brood rearing so there is a window during which no five day old larva are available in cells for varroa to enter and reproduce which reduces varroa levels. As soon as five day larvae are available when a new queen bee begins laying multiple varroa enter each cell and are sealed in where they die from starvation because there is not enough nourishment in one bee larva to feed several varroa...a natural varroa purging procedure that is cost free.

Here is the HOW TO of the procedure: In mid to late April pull the frame containing the queen and a frame or two of capped brood out and put them in a nuc or another empty hive or dead out. The majority of the bees on these frames must be brood nest bees rather than foragers or they will return to the parent stand and the nuc may perish for lack of population. It may be desirable to shake a couple frames of additional bees into this nuc also to boost the population. This becomes another colony, a nuc to sell, or an emergency queen that may be needed later during the season. Replace the combs in the parent hive making sure there are plenty of eggs or young larvae from which the parent colony can raise a queen. The parent colony will have a new laying queen four weeks later and the nuc will continue to develop with the original queen.

This results in colony increase, a new queen for the parent colony, natural reduction of varroa infestation levels in the parent colony, and little or no sacrifice of honey production.

President's Message

March 2026



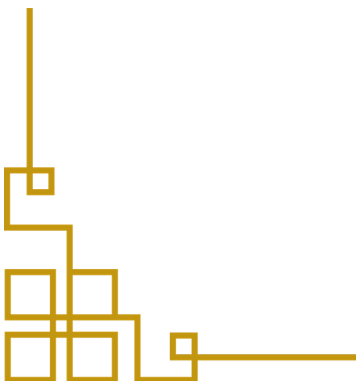
March brings a big change in the weather. And a big variety of weather conditions ... cold, warm, rain, snow, wind, calm. The transition month. Those with bees coming out of winter likely have seen their bees flying around gathering whatever might be out there. They will be hungry as they grow their colonies so consider feeding and providing protein.

Last month we held our Indoor Field Day in collaboration with Ohio State University. Held on Valentine's Day, it was well attended. We had close to 80 people there, twice as many as last year. Most people came from Greene County plus we had a number of beekeepers from 4 other surrounding counties. No heart-shaped cookies but plenty of snacks and a lot of auction items ... beekeeper suits, smokers, tools, a couple of 2-frame extractors and more. We received great comments and feedback! The OSU staff was very impressed with the turnout.

This month we get back to GCBA business with our first official meeting of 2026 on March 17th. Our March speaker will be Larry Johnson. Along with being an experienced beekeeper (since childhood on the farm), he is a beekeeping instructor, mentor and the OSBA Regional Director, Miami Valley Region. He will be telling us about why we do the things we do and what it is we are doing.

During our Field Day event, we gathered a few names of beekeepers who offered to be mentors and more names of those who would like to have a mentor. You can still add your name to either list. We would like mentors to have at least 2 or 3 years of beekeeping experience. Please contact Frances Abrams, frances.abrams@att.net, with your interest or if you have questions.

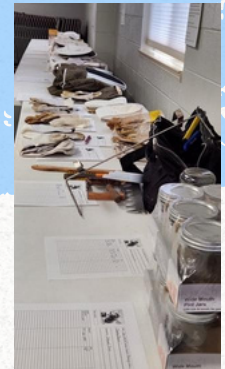
Go forth and bee happy!



Field Day 2026

The GBCA Indoor Field Day with skills workshops on Feb 14th was a resounding success. Approximately 75 individuals showed up to participate, organize and speak. Participants had their choice of workshops on several topics which were all well received. The Silent Auction of over two dozen gently used pieces of beekeeping equipment allowed participants to enhance their equipment needs.

A special thanks goes out to OSU staff member and master Gardener Volunteer, Sara Isbill, who shared about bees and plant phenology and Ohio's Growing Degree Days. We also want to thank the OSU Extension ANR, Marina Miquilini, who helped organize the event. The staff were impressed by our beekeeper's enthusiasm and willingness to help. Special thanks to all our speakers: Bill Miller, Tracy Scott, Paul Piszkiwicz, Cynthia Olsen, Penny Hogan, Dwight Wells and Dave Dolson.



MEMBERS ENGAGE IN EDUCATION

Community Outreach: Bellbrook Middle School STEM Night

Dozens of area families with youngsters in tow stopped by the GCBA display during an annual STEM night. They gathered to speak with members Christy, Paul, Cynthia and Dave about what it is like to work with real bees. Kids were especially interested in touching and seeing the insides of a real hive and wax comb, tasting honey and pollen pellets, and learning about the metamorphosis of bees from eggs to adult. Want to help with youth education? Drop us a line!



TOOLS OF THE TRADE: HONEY BEE FEEDERS



WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU?

BY CYNTHIA OLSEN

A common question from all new beekeepers is, “How should I feed sugar syrup to my bees?

What works best?” There are many feeding methods and many commercial feeders on the market. I think I’ve tried them all. What works best is the simplest and less expensive. We don’t

always have a stored frame of honey to give them back- here’s some options.

Regardless of your chosen method of feeding, the bees will find and get the syrup. In March, as

temperatures rise, they start a rapid buildup of brood and activity. They’ve used up most of their winter stores and are hungry. We use a 1:1 syrup in spring, because it stimulates brooding

and wax production, two essential early activities.

Commercial Feeders



Top Feeders set on top the upper frames within a box. The bees climb up the middle slot and can receive the syrup. A protective screen prevents them from getting into the fluid hold and drowning. This feeder can hold up to 4 gallons of feed on a ten-frame box and is used commonly by larger operations. The cost may be about \$35-40 a unit.

Frame Feeders are slipped into the 1-2 outer frame position of your box and come in various sizes. Holding about 1 gallon of fluid, they are filled from the top. They have either a mesh tube inset or a ladder that the bees can climb down- still they can drown each other. The cost is around \$15-18 per unit.



Small Scale Feeder Options



Universal Feeders are commercially made and sold. I made the mistake of buying one of these and ditched it after a season. There is a valve on the underside that releases the fluid depending on a vacuum within; there are different types of feeding bottoms such as a trough. The bees always found a way up into the container and I ended up with drowned bees. It can hold over a gallon of fluid but are harder to clean. At a price of \$22-32 per unit, it’s not worth the cost.

Entrance Feeders also known as Boardman Feeders are excellent for beginners as they are simple and inexpensive. Coming in either plastic or wood/metal, you can supply your own quart jar and lid, with a dozen small holes punched in it with a penny nail. They slide into the front entrance and should cost you only \$5 per unit. In the spring bees consume the quart of fluid requiring the veiled beekeeper to approach the front on the hive daily to refill. In addition, entrance feeding attracts robber bees and yellow jackets and should be discouraged. Supplying water in this manner is excellent during a drought. Instead of front entrance feeding, several of these feeders can be placed onto the top frames of inner cover, surrounded by an empty box and closed with the outer cover. This is my favorite method.



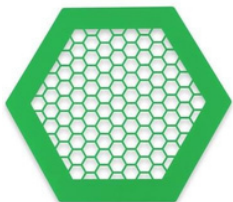
Pail Feeders or Bucket Feeders are extremely simple and can be purchased as a whole unit starting around \$13, the lid alone for your own bucket around \$6 each, or you can DIY your own. The lid is perforated with small holes and inverted over the hole in the inner cover. A vacuum in the fluid filled container prevents the fluid from pouring out. These are simple, easy to clean and store, and economical and can be had in either 1, 2 or 5 gallon sizes.

Plastic Bag Feeders are also easy and economical at around \$0.50 each. Simply fill a freezer zip-lock bag, half to 2/3'rds with your liquid feed. Overfilling will result in leakage. Lay the baggie flat over the frames within a 2-3" feeding shim or an empty box for adequate bee-space and poke a dozen small holes in the top. One-gallon bags are preferable and 2 can fit in a 10-frame Langstroth. The bees consume the syrup this way quickly and will begin to propolize around and chew on the baggie if not removed in a timely manner. The baggies are inexpensive, but not reusable, and if gunked-up, not recyclable. You can prefill these baggies and store in an upright position for emergency feed. Leaving them on their side risks a burst.



Open Container Feeders are still a thing and are typically DIY projects. They can be found on the internet and can be made from plastic buckets, tubs, totes and even large metal drums. The idea is to fill the container with the liquid feed, and float something on top, such as straw, corks, wood chips or Styrofoam pool noodles. The bees will come to it and cling to the floating material to avoid drowning. Several companies are making cute 3-D printed floaters- don't fall for the cuteness.

Open feeding should be called Robbing Feeding. Although lazily simple, this method encourages robbing from your hives and other hives and attracts ants, hornets and wasps along with small hive beetles. The risk of spreading disease is higher. Placed within 100 ft. of the hives encourages fighting. I don't want to encourage other bees and animals to my apiary. Once they get a taste of free sugar syrup, what else do they want?



Down My Garden Path: Maple Trees

By Cynthia Olsen



A few years ago, in the springtime, a neighbor of mine told me that “My bees were getting into his maple tree, but they’re no longer there”. I had to go examine said tree to find that it had been injured and split, and a dark stain ran down one side. Most likely the area honeybees had found it on a warm day and took advantage of its sweet spilling sap. I wonder if that’s how Native Americans learned of the sweet resource of maple syrup. As days get warmer while nights are still cold, sap rises within our maple trees. Woodpeckers, sap suckers and mother nature provide the openings into the bark by design or accident. The sap seeps from these tree wounds down the branches and trunks, attracting the first emerging foragers.

I couldn’t help noticing some of my early flying workers on the warm days we’ve had, were carrying bright yellow pollen. I’m sure that my neighbors were curious as to why I was strolling about the yard with my neck craned upwards. Although the buds are swollen, my red and sugar maples have yet to bloom. As you receive this newsletter, in our area, silver maple should be in full bloom. Red maples (*Acer rubrum*) will start a few days later. All the maples are an early, important source of pollen and nectar for honey bees and other bee species during this brooding period.

Maple pollen is a key protein source, arrives before dandelions, and is of a superior quality in large amounts. It contains essential nutrients such as amino-acids, sulfur, phosphorus, copper and zinc- all necessary in brood rearing.



Maple tree pollen varies from yellow-tan to greenish-gray, though it can appear as a yellow dust that covers surfaces, cars, and pools in early spring. Red maples produce gray-brown to light yellow pollen. This maple blooming will last from now to the end of May, depending on the species.

The only way to taste maple flavored honey from the bees is to steal a taste from the early brood box- but don’t take much.

The Beekeeper's Library: Expert Tips and Resources

Integrated Pest Management – VARROA DESTRUCTOR

Adapted by Cynthia Olsen from multiple sources: Honey bee health Coalition; Northeastern IPM Center; Véro-pharma; journal articles

[IPM TABLE](#)

OSU Extension Phenology and Bee Nutrition Handout From GCBA Field Day 2026

Scan to see what is growing in your area!

[Handout Link](#)

Single Page Inspection Record Sample From GCBA Field Day 2026

Simple vetted field record!

<https://beelab.umn.edu/record-keeping-sheets>

[MENTOR SIGNUP CLICK HERE](#)

[MENTEE SIGNUP CLICK HERE](#)

[SWARM LIST SIGNUP CLICK HERE](#)

PAID 2026 MEMBERS ONLY!



Events, Meetings and More!

March

Mar 10: GCBA Board meeting by ZOOM, 7:00 PM

Mar 16-19: AgriAbility National Training Workshop; sessions on issues with disability in agriculture. Travis City, MI. Registration and fee required.

Mar 17: GCBA Members meeting. Larry Johnson, OSBA Miami Valley Director, is speaking about “The When’s and Why’s of Beekeeping”. In person & ZOOM, 7:00 PM. Xenia Community Center, 1265 W 2nd St., Xenia.

Mar 27-28: Basic Beekeeping Class with Fran & Tom Davidson. OSU Extension Office, Clark County. 3130 East Main St., Springfield. Registration and fee required @ go.osu.edu/beekeeping26

Mar 28: AgriAbility National Training Workshop Option- Benzie County Tour of the St. Ambrose honey processing facility and Meadery. Full Day 8am-4:00PM. Register and fee.

April

BEES ARRIVING ACROSS OHIO-----!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

April 14: GCBA Board meeting by ZOOM, 7:00 PM

April 21: GCBA Members meeting. In person & ZOOM, 7:00 PM. Xenia Community Center, 1265 W 2nd St., Xenia.

May

May 12: GCBA Board meeting by ZOOM, 7:00 PM

May 19: GCBA Members meeting. In person & ZOOM, 7:00 PM. Xenia Community Center, 1265 W 2nd St., Xenia.

[CLICK HERE: BEE PACKAGES still available from Old Drone](#)



Please review our February 2026 Member Meeting Minutes [here](#)

Please review our February 2026 Treasurer’s Report [here](#)