

# The Middlesex ee

The Middlesex Bee is the official newsletter of the Middlesex Beekeepers Association, Inc., a 501(c)3 non-profit organization; [www.middlesexbeekeepers.org](http://www.middlesexbeekeepers.org)

“Santa is like a queen bee. All the elves are his drones, who exist to feed him royal jelly, which I guess would be milk and cookies. If an elf escapes and eats royal cookies, it will turn into another Santa. That’s what all those mall Santas are. They’re trying to start their own festive colonies.”

Thomm Quackenbush

October 27, 2017 MCBA indoor meeting and bee talk

## Announcements

Welcome everyone, here we are again – inside – before we get started there are just a few announcements:

The MassBee fall meeting is going to be held on Saturday, November 11<sup>th</sup> at Westfield State. You can go to [MassBee.org](http://MassBee.org) for directions and registration information. The speakers will be:

- Meghan Milbrath (Michigan State, she is the coordinator for The Michigan Pollinator Initiative), she’ll be talking about “Varroa Biology and Management” in the morning and “Sustainable northern beekeeping using late Season nuc’s overwintering” in the afternoon.
- Rachael Bonoan (Tufts University PhD Candidate, Pres. Boston Beekeepers Association, MCBA’s December dinner speaker) will speak about “Why do bees like dirty water” in the morning and “Honey bee nutrition” in the afternoon.
- Kim Skyrn (State Bee Inspector) will give an update regarding State Activities.

November-December 2017

7 | 11/24 Annual Auction  
Donate / Buy equipment

10 | Dan Phillips  
Competing in Honey Shows

13 | 12/09 Holiday Dinner  
Turkey, Pot-Luck, Bee Talk

18 | Winterfeed Recipes  
Fondant, Candy Board, Bricks

- 1 10/27 Meeting Minutes
- 2 Meeting & Events Calendar
- 3 BetterBee advertisement
- 4 Join us on Facebook
- 4 Bee Magazine Discount
- 7 Extractor
- 8 Winter Honey Stores
- 9 Christmas Trees For Sale
- 15 Poem
- 16 Wax Portraiture
- 17 Cleaning your tools/smoker
- 19 Club Officers & Volunteers
- 19 Membership / Renewal Form

You can RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP with the form on pg. 19 or ONLINE

## Save The Date

### MCBA Indoor Meetings and Bee Talks

*First Religious Society Hall, 27 School Street, Carlisle, MA*

11/24, 7-9pm, Annual Auction, Bee Talk topic: TBA

12/09 (Saturday), 6:30-9pm, Holiday Dinner & Rachael E. Bonoan,

Tufts Ph.D. Candidate: Honey Bee Nutritional Ecology

01/26, 7-9pm, topic: TBA

02/23, 7-9pm, topic: TBA

03/23, 7-9pm, topic: TBA

04/27, 6:30-9pm, Annual Meeting, Officer Elections, Spaghetti Dinner

### MCBA Spring Workshop

*Carl Flowers' Tree Farm, 1 Kemp Street, Groton, MA*

05/09, 9am-3pm, Beginners and Experienced Beekeepers welcome

### Introductions

Is there anyone here for the first time? For those of you here for the first time, we like to start by having new people introduce themselves: tell us where you're from, where you are in terms of beekeeping, how many hives you have, or if you're just starting off...

- Paul from Lowell, I have 3 hives that I started in July.
- Tom from Boxborough, I have a hive since May (it's my first hive) that's doing okay.
- Jim from Concord, looking to get started this spring (I've built a Warré Hive).
- Tom from Littleton, a raw beginner whose only piece of equipment is a smoker that I don't know how to light.
- Ben from Acton, I have 1 hive that I started this past May that seems to be okay.

### Questions, Comments, Observations

I'm in Chelmsford, and ***I've had a couple visits from a bear*** in the last few weeks – the colony itself is toast (the queen is gone) and what the bear didn't get, robbing did. My question is that the hive [boxes/components] itself is in pretty good shape, ***what do I do with the hive during the winter, so that when spring comes I can put a new package in?*** Do I leave it as-is, with a mouse guard on? Should I prep it in any way? What do I do with it once the residual bees in it are gone? There are still bees in it, or is it empty [except for the robbers]? How many frames of bees would you say are still in it – are there enough to overwinter? No. Well, if there

The State Apiary Program is once again going for a grant to deal with Varroa Mites, at the State level. They are soliciting letters of support – if you are interested in learning more about that please contact Tom Fiore at [president@middlesexbeekeepers.org](mailto:president@middlesexbeekeepers.org)

It's not too early to start thinking about the holidays. Two things in that regard:

We'll be looking for volunteers for our holiday dinner party (Saturday, 12/09/17)

Our spring workshop is held at Carl Flowers' Christmas Tree Farm. He's always been very generous to let us set up there and have our events – ***it would be nice if you were looking for a "Fresh Cut Tree" to take a ride up to Silveus Plantation*** (1 Kemp Street, Groton, MA 01450) and spend some time walking around to find the perfect tree.

were bees in it, Rick said that he would try to condense it down to a single box and see what happens – but since there are no bees in it you should put some screen over the entrance to prevent bees from robbing it further until the spring. Should I completely close it off? No, you want a little bit of airflow in there. I have mesh that I'm using for the mouseguard? No, you want something tighter – like screen-door screen (or Number 8 Hardware Cloth). Just wedge it in, that will prevent anything from getting in there (mice or whatever) but it still allows airflow in there – you don't want to hermetically seal it.

Alix said that **if you leave your hive out in the yard then the bear is most likely going to come back and destroy your equipment**, so you should do something with it now. Yeah, next year I'll be going with an electric fence. John C. asked the member how big his property is, where the apiary is located? About an acre. Do you have a shed, or a garage? Both. Okay, on a nice cold day (30's), take the boxes off the hive stand and dump all of the bees out and clean out your boxes, clean out the frames, get everything nice and neat and store everything in your garage or basement and get it out of there. Don't leave it outside? No, just dump the bees on the ground, store the hive with a mouse guard on it – and store it. In the spring buy a nuc or a package and you already have nice frames to start on (and maybe a little bit of honey) and it will take off like a rocket. Rick said the colder the storage, the better. If you have a shed that's good – you just don't want to store it in a warm area. There's wax moth eggs in every hive, and when it gets warm they'll start hatching out – and as long as you close up the entrances then mice can't get into the hive – but that cold weather will help to kill off wax moth eggs and you can start off with as clean a hive as possible in the spring.

**If you have questions about bear fences, Jen Reed is the expert in our club** (she gives demonstrations at our spring workshop) on how to set up electric fences – the equipment needed and how to charge them... John said that he's luck in Waltham, not to need bear fencing yet, but it's only a matter of time. Tony said that bears are only a couple of miles away from Waltham right now, and if you think you're immune from bears anywhere in Middlesex County, you're dreaming. There have been

## Sponsored Content

**Betterbee®**  
...ready for the Holidays!

**Many Gift Ideas!**

- Honey Sticks and Honey Candy
- Betterbee Made Lip Balm and Hand Cream
- Hand Poured 100% Beeswax Candles
- A Beginner Beekeeping Kit
- An Observation Hive or Bee Lining Box
- Lip Balm Kit- Makes 25 Tubes!
- And if all else fails, a Betterbee Gift Certificate!

**Betterbee Sweet All Natural Honey Candy**  
No corn syrup, no artificial flavors or colors. Orthodox Union Kosher Certified

**Betterbee Beginner Candle Kit**

**Betterbee Beginner's Kit**  
Completely Customizable!

**Honey Straw Variety Packs**  
Find your favorite flavor! KOF-K Kosher Certified

**Betterbee Lip Balm Kit**  
Makes 25 Tubes

**Check out our book selection!**  
Over 40 Titles and Growing

**Beekeepers Serving Beekeepers™**

WWW.BETTERBEE.COM • 1-800-632-3379 • 8 MEADER ROAD • GREENWICH, NY 12834

bears in Newton... Jen said you can go on the Massachusetts Environmental website and see the coverage area, and they're everywhere! A member said that there "isn't a bear in Newton, not anymore." Well, you say that now, but there's a member in Weston having problems with a bear/bears right now and I know where that member keeps his hives, and I know where John C. lives and it's just a couple of miles away. The state's not doing anything. **The state WILL NOT come and shoot the bear**, your hive is gone, so **invest in bear fencing now**. A member said that he had heard that if you come across a bear doing damage to your hive (or farm, or whatever) then you can shoot the bear. (*Editor's Note: Ch. 13I, Section 37: Killing of game by owner or tenant of land*). Tony said that he asked the State's Bear Biologist and Apiary Inspector this very thing directly, and that the state's hunting setbacks apply and that you can not shoot the bear if you are discharging a firearm within 150 feet of a paved road or within 500 feet of an occupied dwelling. Tony

### Like Us on Facebook

Our Facebook Page has updates about meetings (delays/cancellations in Winter), and articles about bees - so the next time you're online, come visit!

said that in the old days, on a farm you had the 3-S's (shoot, shovel, and shut up) but you're in Massachusetts. John S. said that even if you're more than 150 feet from a paved road, and more than 500 feet from an occupied dwelling, in order to shoot the bear legally, first it must be caught in the act of destroying your property. Secondly, only you (the property owner), a member of your immediate family, or someone in your permanent employ (in the case of a farm, for example) can shoot the bear. You can't have someone with a crossbow or a gun come out - you have to do it yourself. Tom said that if you happen to have bees on a friend's property, then you are out of luck because your friend can't shoot the bear because they're not his bees and you can't shoot the bear because it's not your property.

Ernie asked whether the member in Chelmsford knew whether it was a small bear, because they've had a pair of cubs recently in Carlisle? No, it was full-grown - it wasn't a huge bear but it was an adult. John S. said that **he doesn't think that [the size of the bear] matters a lot**, because his neighbor that also got hit set up a trail camera and he could see how big the bear was and that bear was not gigantic - it was maybe 2 ½ feet tall at the shoulder and he was only a young male. But, the bear rolled hives that weighed multiple hundreds of pounds 20-30 feet, and even a small bear is still a bear. Jen agreed, saying that they're very, very strong.

Rick mentioned earlier about condensing hives down into a single box, **I have 2 nucs that**

### Bee Magazine Discount

MCBA members receive a 25% discount off subscriptions to *American Bee Journal*.

For a copy of the ABJ Association Member Subscription form, visit the *Club Business & Important Links* section of the MCBA members-only website: [membership.middlesexbeekeepers.org](http://membership.middlesexbeekeepers.org)

**I put into single boxes, can I overwinter those without putting an additional medium super atop them?** Yeah, it's all relative to the number of frames of bees that you have - if you have enough honey in that one box you can do it, but if it's a nice cluster and you have a medium box with some honey in it then you can put that right on top too to give them the additional space in the springtime and to give them the additional feed. You never know, if there's 4-5 frames of bees then they have a fighting chance; if the colony is down to 2 frames of bees then it's highly unlikely that they'll overwinter. There's not a lot of honey in there, so if I do that then I'll probably need to make a candy board or something on top. Rick said yes, you can get a hive through the winter with no honey by just feeding it fondant. You will need to go out there

and add it every 3-4 weeks (depending upon how quickly they take it)... that said, if the colony is only 2 frames of bees then it's not going to make it – 4-5 frames of bees will have a fighting chance.

Rick, I took your class this year in the spring, and I don't have my notes, but **could you give a brief overview on what to do to be ready for winter?** Rick said that mouse-guards should be on now, and it helps to take the hive apart down to the bottom board to make sure that there are no mice already in your hive (he leaves mouse-guards on his hives year-round when he can). He'll wait until December before he wraps his hives once around with black tar paper (Roofing Felt). You should make sure that your hives are tilted forward a bit because you don't want to collect on the bottom board. During the winter the bees will eat the honey and in the process of uncapping wax and other debris will fall down to the bottom board and if it mixes with any water down there it will form a paste and that's the place that [Small] Hive Beetles will start laying eggs in in the springtime. Your hive(s) should receive as much sun as possible – but with all of these measures they're little things. **What about moisture control?** Some people will put a moisture control or insulation on top of a hive and you can do that if you want... Again, all of these things help a little bit, but they're not going to make the difference in whether your hive overwinters or not.

Rick said that as he discusses in class, **the most important thing is when you start to overwinter your hive is to start doing it in/before August.** To re-queen if necessary, to treat for mites, to make sure that you have a healthy hive. Rick said that the whole key to beekeeping now is that when you have a healthy hive, to keep it healthy. Because once a colony gets sick, then it is really hard to get it healthy [again]. When you have a healthy hive, you keep it that way – and the way to do that is by proper management throughout the summer time. If you don't do anything [over the summer] and then you try to start to do something in September, October, November then it's not going to work.

**What should I do to make sure that my hive has enough food to overwinter?** Rick said that you should be assessing your hive in every inspection – know how many frames of brood that they have, how many

frames of honey and you'll begin to see from August to September they will begin decreasing the number of brood frames (and increasing the number of pollen and honey frames) are in the hive in a perfect world. You can try lifting the hive from the rear – we say a deep frame is about 7 pounds of honey, and some hives might be able to overwinter with only 50-pounds of honey while others will need 100! If you go out there and tip the hive, putting your hand underneath the bottom board and tip it forward or backwards so you can feel the weight to it and if it's very light then you need to start feeding it. On a cold day you'll be able to open up the top of the hive (take the inner cover off) and assess how many frames of bees there are – if there are fewer than 5-frames of bees than you probably have a less-than 50% chance of that hive overwintering. 5, 6, 7 frames of bees then your chances increase. 8, 9, 10 frames? Then those hives should overwinter all the time. When it is cold out, then the bees will cluster and you can count how many frames of bees there are. Rick said that when he talks about “a full frame of bees” he means from the back of the frame to the front of the frame and not just a little tiny cluster in the middle. A good sign is when the bees are down in the bottom box and haven't come up to the top box, the lower the cluster the more food you probably have in that hive. The higher the cluster, if it comes right up to the top of your inner cover the lesser amount of food in the hive. Bees tend to cluster beneath their honey stores – so if they're clustering up top then usually the frames below are empty. Tom said that **if you do feed now, it's past the time when you should have syrup on in your hives** so that any feeding from this point on should be with fondant. Rick said that he agrees with this.

**In the winter, how often should you open up the hive and look down from the top?** Rick said that if he had a couple of hives in his yard, and one hive had 10-frames of bees then he would probably check that hive once a month (up to every 6-weeks), but if he saw that hive start dwindling then he might check it every 3-weeks or so. Again, if it has a LOT of stores and a big cluster then he might not check it. Rick added that most of his yards are inaccessible during the winter so he's doing his assessments now. We've been pretty lucky the last few years, not getting

snow until December, so he's been able to get out there and make assessments.

We've had syrup on our hive that past 2-3 weeks, and when we checked it last there was still syrup and we still want to feed – should we take it off and change over to fondant? Rick said that if he has a couple of hives in his yard, and he's putting syrup on then he said he's going to check on those hives once a week to see if they're taking it or not. Some bees have a high level of food and they won't take it. Other bees might have a high level of Nosema or a high virus load and they won't take it. If bees take the syrup real fast, then I would give them some more. It is always a good sign if they take it fast, but it's not a panic if they don't take it either, because they might not need it. Rick said that he'll always check the weather – the bees will take syrup on sunny days in the 60's and we're still getting those, however as Tom said it is starting to get cold and if you feed too much syrup then that can create too much moisture in the hive because they won't have time to cure it. You're better off by mid-October to November to start to transition to fondant. But if you don't need it, don't feed – people tend to overfeed and continue to feed just because they think that they “have to feed.” **If a hive is heavy, don't feed it, leave it alone!**

I was wondering, **with this month being unusually warm does that mean that there's a risk of them using their storage up because they're moving around a lot?** Rick said that his favorite answer is “Every Hive is Different.”

Some hives might still be raising brood today, and other hives may have stopped a month ago, and that's going to really determine what they eat, or what they do. Every hive is different, and if they are still raising brood now then that's an excellent sign because you have more young bees going into winter, but then again certain races or species, or even queens will stop laying earlier and that's okay. The size of the cluster is everything! Tom cautioned everyone that despite the weather being warmer, there isn't that much out there that's in bloom (there's not a lot of nectar at this point). Rick agreed, and added that the bees are still bringing in pollen and that there's an awful lot of robbing going on – it doesn't have to be a floral source, it could be somebody's weak hive. Tom said that's exactly what happened to him last week: two of his hives ganged up on his third hive and that's all she wrote. They're active (they're moving around), and whether they're raising brood or not the colony is burning energy and unless they're robbing out other hives there's not a lot coming in.

**Robbing is a real problem;** Rick mentioned a members hive that's been having a problem where they've tried closing the entrance, putting robbing screens on and sometimes it is difficult to assess whether it's young bees flying in and out or if it's actual robbing going on and sometimes if you feel you have a strong-enough hive the worst thing that you can do is open it because that allows other bees to get in there, and then they go back to their own

hive(s) and recruiting other bees. It can be a real difficult situation because you think your hive is strong because the numbers are up and all of the sudden the Varroa-carried viruses start kicking in and that makes your hive weak and then they can crash pretty fast. Again, summer management in keeping the mite levels down is very, very important. As is keeping the hive strong... the only other thing that you can do if you're getting robbed out is to move the hive. How do you know whether you're being robbed, or if your bees are robbing others? There's a lot of different activity involved. Now, if there's still brood in the hive (or there was brood being raised until recently) those young bees will come out and orient themselves to the front of the hive. But when there's robbing going on there will be a lot of flight activity going on and you'll see bees wrestling or fighting on the bottom board and you'll see dead bees on the ground and those are signs to look for. If you have several hives and one has a lot of activity and the others don't then that's something you might have to pay attention to – but usually you can see bees physically fighting. You'll also see a lot of flight activity around the hive, and as Tom was explaining there could be two hives robbing a hive out. There could be a hive a couple of streets over coming and robbing your hive out – once one hive finds it then they'll all find it.

**What about the wasps?** Rick said that the wasps are kind of an afterthought and that they're not the ones that will cause the

problem. They're opportunists, the vulture that comes in at the end. Yes, the wasps are around, but usually they come in after something has already happened. Tom said that he arrived at one of his yards the previous Saturday (where he has 3 hives) and the middle hive had such activity that had it been springtime or June, he would have thought that it was about to swarm. There was just this "level of activity" around the hive, I mean "lots and lots of bees" out and about, and mixed in were some Yellow Jackets taking advantage of the chaos... When Tom arrived he said that it was just too late – there was nothing that he could do to stop it at that point – but it looked like a hive that was getting ready to swarm. He simply had to go

## Annual Equipment Auction

Have some extra frames? Don't like your Hive Tool? Think about donating unused or un-needed equipment to the club to raise money at our November Meeting & Annual Auction.

If you can't attend the November meeting, but have equipment to donate, bring your donation(s) to the October Meeting and/or contact one of the club's officers via email.

# Extractor



MCBA maintains a hand-operated Maxant 3100-series 9-Frame Honey Extractor for rent by current members. Rental includes everything you need to extract your honey, including:

- Electric hot knife for uncapping honey frames
- Uncapping Fork
- Uncapping Tank

### Terms:

- This extractor is available on a first-come, first-served basis to members only.
- The extractor is easy to transport in an SUV or Pickup, and is capable of being moved by one person with ease (however 2 people are helpful)
- \$15/day. Extensions may be available depending upon scheduling. Contact the Extractor Coordinator at [extractor@middlesexbeekeepers.org](mailto:extractor@middlesexbeekeepers.org) for information.
- The Extractor must be cleaned WITH COLD WATER before returning to the club.
- Any and all damage and/or maintenance issues MUST be reported to the Extractor coordinator immediately.

To reserve, contact Kathy at: [extractor@middlesexbeekeepers.org](mailto:extractor@middlesexbeekeepers.org) or by phone at: 617.549.7460

back the next morning and pick up the equipment to work on over the course of the winter.

I've read that a single 'strong hive' is way more productive than two moderate, or weak hives and I'm wondering that if you're assuming that almost all of the robbing of one of your hives is coming from the other two hives, is it making them that much stronger – **are you better off with 2-disproportionally strong hives than 3-moderately strong hives?** Rick asked what month are we talking about? Now, with the robbing going on, but looking to next year... Tom said that was the thought process that he had afterwards about the robbing incident: 'Well, I know that there WAS honey in this hive and there's nothing here now, so it must now be over there or over there, and it's never good to lose a hive but maybe those two surviving hives have a little more now than they did. Rick said that a weak hive will never produce honey (we're talking a hive with less than 10-frames of bees), so you have to think about what time of the season it is the better. You can make moves in April, May, June, or even July – but once you get into August then your options are much more limited. You should always try to keep all of your hives strong, and if you have one hive that's really strong then usually they're not going to miss one or two frames of brood to help bolster the hive that's not as strong – but you need to start doing that earlier in the year.

Rick admitted that **this year was very challenging and he can't recall a year that was as challenging** – we had a lot of cool and rainy weather in April and May and it was very difficult for the packages to get going like they usually would – they clustered up and didn't expand as quickly as normal. We missed a lot of the May flowers because there was so much rain, and then with the June flowers the packages just weren't strong enough to get out and take advantage... it seems that we're always chasing it in years like this. There are always exceptions, you may have the one crazy hive that overwintered and produced 200-pounds of honey and then you'll have three hives next to it that do nothing. Again, management of your hives, trying to equalize them as much as you can, try to strengthen them as much as you can. Rick asked members to remember that a queen is not going to save a hive alone, the queen needs bees and if you requeen a hive you should also add bees to it as well.

## Food Stores needed overwinter in Middlesex County

**Full Size Colonies need 70-90 pounds of honey to survive winter**

**I Deep Frame holds 6-8 pounds of Honey**

**I Medium Frame holds 3-5 pounds of Honey**

**So, that's:**

**12-15 Deep Frames of Honey and Pollen**

**15-25 Medium Frames of Honey and Pollen**

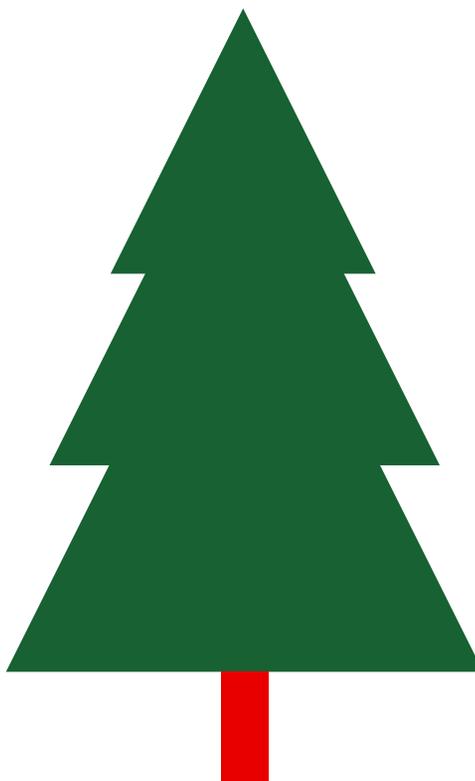
Rick, I had a mix of nucs and packages this year and my nucs got off to a better start – **did you notice in your operation any differences between the packages and nucs?** No, we have packages that fail and we have packages that excel and likewise with nucs – it's all on an individual basis. I can look at a nuc and know whether it's going to take off – when you pull out the frames and it has a perfect brood pattern on four frames and it's the end of April then that hive is going to take off. But if you have a nuc with 2 ½ frames of brood and the pattern could be 'a little bit better,' then those nucs are going to need help. Well, with my nuc and packages the nuc really took off, and the packages lagged behind... Rick replied that they're not starting at the same starting point, a package would need 5-6 weeks to catch up with a good nuc. If you installed a package on April 1st and then a nuc on May 1st then you'll begin to have more of a comparison. The advantage of a package is that usually you can get them a little bit earlier (if you order early you can get in on the early deliveries) and you can start them off on brand new frames so you don't have old frames to deal with. Rick believes that bees do best on brand new frames.

Is it advisable to take a weak hive and then to combine it with a strong hive? What month are we talking about? Right now? Rick said that he

was doing it this week, if we have two hives with 5-frames of bees then yes, we combine them. If we have a hive with two frames of bees then we'll add them to a stronger hive. We recently had one day where we went through 75 hives and there was one with 3-frames of bees and I pulled them out and it was 100% drones so the hive had been queenless, so we just dumped those bees onto the ground. **What's the best way to do the combination these days?** You could go through and pinch the queen from the weak hive, or toss a coin and just combine them, marking the queens to see which one makes it. You could have the weaker hive kill the good queen, they could accept each other – any possibility could happen... if Rick had the time then he would go through then he would pinch the weak hive's queen (unless when he was going through he saw a perfect brood pattern), and he would just add them to the other hive. A strong hive doesn't need help, and in the beekeeping world combining two weak hives yields one weak hive – it doesn't make them stronger, because you could be combining two sick hives. Jen cautioned members that you want to know why the hive is weak, because you don't want to add sick bees to a strong hive. Rick, do you put newspaper between the hives? Sometimes, but it depends upon the time of the year. Tom said that if you have just a few frames of bees, Ken Warchol (Bee Inspector for Worcester County) says to just stick the frames in and they'll figure it out and not to bother with the newspaper method. John C. added

that if you're adding frames of bees to a hive NOT to add them to the middle of the cluster but to put them in the periphery. Don't disturb the good thing you have going on in the strong hive, take frame 9, 10 out and put the new frames in those positions. ●

## Sponsored Content



### Invitation to Silveus Plantation

Our tree-cutting season begins Thanksgiving weekend, Saturday November 25<sup>th</sup> and ends Sunday December 17<sup>th</sup>.

All trees are \$48.00. Our wreaths are \$23.00 made and grown right here on the farm. Prices include the sales tax.

The farm is off of Groton Street in Dunstable at **1 Kemp Street, Groton.**

### The hours are

- 10am to 4pm **Saturdays and Sundays**
- 2pm to 4pm **Weekdays**

*Remember to be safety minded and watch where you put your feet. Stumps, ice and uneven ground can trip you up!*

## Dan Phillips

We're very fortunate to have Dan with us tonight. [Rick] I've known Dan for well over 20-years, we've been members of Essex County Beekeepers Association. We've been to many state and local meetings together, and Dan started working with me and is now one of the partners in my company. He retired from his previous job a year-and-a-half ago, and now he's working a real job... As long as I've known Dan, he's been the premier beekeeper at honey shows, displaying honey, wax, candles, et cetera. In the Massachusetts Beekeepers Association, and at Essex County (which is one of the largest beekeeping shows in the area) and at EAS. He's won more blue ribbons than anyone!

Good evening, and thanks for having me. As you can see, I brought an array of things to use as examples of what we do in competition. **Most of what we do in competition has been with the Topsfield Fair** – it's known as one of the biggest honey shows at a fair in the area and if not, in the country! What we do, when we begin to set up to compete is to plan ahead of time and put some of your good honey aside. The Topsfield fair puts out what they used to call the "Premium Book" but it is now online to conserve paper and to allow people to only look up the sections of the rules guidelines that you need. There are 4-divisions to the Topsfield Honey Show (Dan said he usually only participates in the wax and honey part of the competition). The rules explain very carefully everything that you need to know on what you want to exhibit.

Dan said that what **a lot of people miss out on exhibiting (and lose points on in judging) is that they don't follow the guidelines for exhibiting** – they miss something that is critical to the judges (and what the judges themselves are looking at/for). It is absolutely key to follow the guidelines that the Honey Show gives you. When EAS (Eastern Apicultural Society) puts a honey show on, they will have a set of guidelines available – and so does MassBee when they put on a honey show (MassBee's rules will be online).

Dan said that once you decide on the products that you're going to put in, honey for example, at the Topsfield Fair there are 4-different colors so he uses the [rule] sheets to go by. Preparing the bottles is a knack that you develop individually (everyone has different methods of cleaning the glass bottle after it is filled) because the judges will deduct points for fingerprints (because they will have to break a tie)... So it can come down to the most minute things such as finding a bubble in the glass in judging, and Dan has seen all sorts of combinations of reasons to break a tie between two contestants. The first time you compete you won't have the benefit of a judge's scorecard which is what the judges use to judge with and there's a sheet to go by on every item in the competition. They'll sit down and go through each line while going through the judging and in the case of honey there's:

- the clarity
- freedom from crystals
- freedom from lint
- the Color of the honey: there are the 4-different shades of honey in the competition but there may be between 30-50 different entries for the judges to go through. So a lot of times they'll break it up, the liquid honey part of the competition, we have maybe 2-3 different colors of honey available according to the official color guide [because of the limited forage variety we have here in New England] so the judges will divide the entries into different groups and not adhere to the color grade exactly.

These are all of these different lines of judging criteria and the judges will put down their points. If everything is perfect on that line the judges will give you full points! **When the judging is done they may make some comments on your entry which is very helpful for the next time around (especially if you had some issues)**. In the case of liquid honey, once the judges divide the entries into the separate groups, what they

do is take each entry (which is 3 bottles of the same honey – usually Queenline bottles). The judges will check to make sure that each of the 3 containers is filled to exactly the same level. The judges will open the bottles and ensure that there is nothing in the honey itself at the top (foam, et cetera). The judges are looking for repetitiveness when you package it up to show that you are consistent. MassBee only requires 2 jars, as does EAS.

There's creamed honey, comb honey, and chunk honey, cut comb – all of these at the Topsfield Fair require 3 items per category. Dan said in the case of 'Cut Comb,' with the Ross Rounds the judges want to make sure that it is completely filled in without any open cells. They will look at the color of the wax (the whiter, the better) and look to make sure there are clean cuts and are square, and that all three of the items are exactly the same. You will also need 3 jars for the Chunk Honey category at the Topsfield Fair – the piece of honey must fit in the jar and the liquid honey must be filled to the top. The criteria is similar to liquid honey – is there any foam, are there pieces of wax floating on the top, are the sides of the cut comb nice and straight, are the pieces of honey the same across the three jars – you really do have to make sure that the pieces of comb honey are exactly the same – the judges will even look at how straight is the foundation in the center [equal length of honey cells on each side of the foundation]! Comb honey is hard to keep straight! You have to really look for pieces of

comb that is as flat as possible and to use those for your entries.

Dan then showed a full honey frame that he entered into competition that he won with, and the reason why, was because he was able to find a deep frame of honey that wasn't full of old brood or bulging in places. He said usually to achieve that you would need to have a new hive on new equipment. **Judges will also look at whether the frame itself is clean and that's the hardest part** – you're trying to scrape the edges clean (from wax/propolis) and you end up sticking the edge of your tool right in and piercing the cappings... Dan said that he's done that any number of times and when that happens, well, that entry is gone and you just have to move on.

It's the same thing with the liquid too, Dan said he's often asked by people is how to adjust the liquid so that it's right before you go in – one thing that he does is to take a piece of Saran-Wrap atop the honey and puts the top back on and when he gets to the place where he is going to exhibit, then he'll remove the caps and the Saran-Wrap and then make sure the rims are clean on the top of the jars – because **if you put the tops back on and the judges see a ring of honey or any liquid then they'll take points off!**

Dan said that he's not trying to scare anyone off from competing, but **all of these little details make a difference**. A member asked how many people compete in the Topsfield Honey Show? Sometimes it can be more

than 50 different people; this year there were 35 entries in the liquid honey category. Jen mentioned that in this case, the judges are looking at 35 entries of 3 jars, 105 jars of honey. With the creamed honey in a typical year we'll have 3-4 entries, and there aren't a lot of people selling cut-comb honey so there aren't many entries for that either. The brunt of the competition is the liquid and the wax products at the Topsfield Fair. You will see a fair number of honey frames, because they're fairly easy to do – vendors are making the boxes/containers for them now – but the judges will take points off for frames of honey that don't fit the container (i.e. a shallow frame in a deep container). A member asked who sells the containers because the catalog suppliers don't carry them? Dan said that there's usually a member in the club that makes them – he made his own containers – but usually there's some carpenter in the club that will make up the box Usually what you get for money, from the competition is only for the first three places (First, Second, Third) which is the Blue, Yellow, and Red Ribbons (consecutively) and Topsfield pays a premium for those three places – which is \$15, \$10, and \$5! Dan said that it helps to defray the costs for the big exhibits. Some of the other competitions are actual display of honey products and you have to come up with ideas on how to display it all... Dan reiterated the fact that the key to competing is to follow exactly what the rule guidelines (and judge's scoring cards) say because they say how exactly it is

supposed to be, and what they're looking for – so you can make sure that you fulfill all of the requirements.

Dan said that it's a lot of fun, especially to get kids involved – there are so many categories, especially in the craft end of the competition, and you always need that next group to come up and take over. The Essex club tries to promote Youth Programs as much as possible.

Creamed honey, that's a knack and everyone tries to make it and Dan wins the category sometimes, and well sometimes he doesn't. Dan showed the inside of a creamed honey container where the judges had taken a scoop out for tasting purposes. That's the other thing – the judges will taste all of the honey (the liquids, and the creamed); the judges will do a moisture-content check on all of the entries that come in.

Jen asked whether they identify the jar that you need [for each category], whether it's queenline, round, et cetera? Dan said yes, it's in the guidelines what you need to enter your honey in. Most of the time, you need to enter in the queenline style (also known as Gamma Glass). The jar style used to have larger openings (a classic jar) and there were 2-3 different types but it has now come down to this one style (queenline) because the others are more expensive and/or harder to find... The creamed honey entries need to be in this type of glass (short, squat, and round). The chunk honey entries are in a straight, round glass jar... some of the entries the judges will just outright disqualify (like a Mason Jar) that just doesn't fit into the category.

The other thing that Dan likes to enter in competitions and to work with is beeswax. There are so many different beeswax categories, last year Dan showed us a winner: a pound of beeswax that is decorative. So you can enter something like that, or simply a plain block that is a pound – then there's 2-pound decorative and plain block categories. There are ornaments and different types of molded candles (Dan showed a molded candle that was in the shape of a rolled-candle) as well as hand-dipped candles. Judges like the hand-dipped candles because it is something that you don't see as much these days, not a lot of people do them because they prefer using the molds.

One of the big things with the judges, and they can tend to be kind of funny on the wax, is that there are lots of different shades and colors of beeswax and while Dan said he prefers the bright yellow traditional beeswax color – **judges in the last few years have highly preferred the light-lemon color**. The guidelines just say that the beeswax needs to be an appropriate color, but the judges have a personal preference which makes it tough because you might have great wax to work with (Dan himself uses the wax from cappings) but it seems that the judges get picky now and then.

With the molded candles, a lot of times when a judge sees an imperfection **they will know whether it is an imperfection in the mold or something that you did** that caused a problem with it, and will score it accordingly (not taking any points off for mold imperfections) and might even make a notation on your scoring card.

Do you ever carve the wax? Dan said that he hasn't, but at Topsfield there are so many categories that you can pretty much put anything you want into the competition (there's always an "Other" category in every section). If there's something that you want to try... Dan said he's seen folks make a 'wishing well' out of wax-made blocks, the roof shingles and everything made entirely out of beeswax and entered that into a decorative category. One of the big things too, is that the judges want to make sure that everything is finished; if you look at this candle, for example, there's a hole and everything is not flat, and had I entered it the judges would have taken a lot of points off. What Dan does [**to flatten candles**] is to use a hot-plate with a pan on it, or an electric skillet, to finish all of the bottoms of his candles before putting them onto wax paper to cool for a nice, smooth, finish.

All wax products need to be wrapped in cling-wrap, and you need your competitor's number on them so that there's an identification for it. Topsfield has recently added a 'Competition Candle' category where everyone needs to use the same mold to produce the same candle in the category, and they try to pick something that's difficult to get out of the mold, which is a silicone or a type of rubber that has a slit all the way up

for you to open the mold to remove the candle (Dan commented that he uses elastic bands to help keep the mold closed while pouring). With really complicated candle molds, Dan suggested using a Silicone Release spray because certain waxes tend to stick really well and you'll have a problem getting the candle out of the mold (but most of the time with standard molds the candles will come right out). Dan has found that plastic and metal molds are harder to work with, getting them to release (they will take pieces of wax off and leave scars on the sides of your candles).

**One of the toughest things to do in the beeswax categories is to pour something that's big and flat** – and that's what people try to do – pour a big flat decorative plate and then try to get the wax out of it! But the toughest part is the cooling once you pour, because if a big and flat area cools too quickly then it will crack and that's just no good... The bigger things can be more complicated, and that's part of the judging criteria (the difficulty of the pouring, and the difficulty of the mold) – something like this pine cone candle: if you're able to get it out of the mold without breaking any of it off then you'll get full points. Competitors have their own little tricks, they'll wipe the candles down and put them in bags to prevent fingerprints... You really should see people at Topsfield getting their honey ready because it's really interesting: people are kneeling down and have toothpicks to get little specks out, but what I've found is that if you're doing that you are more likely to

mess up your whole entry – at some point you just have to be done with it, enter it, and cross your fingers.

**Can you explain how you get the foam or bubbles off and out of your creamed honey?** You find the best ones you can, and maybe sacrifice some of the points off for foam, but mixing it on my own I used to try to let it sit overnight so the bubbles would rise up so there would be no air in it (which would give you no foam) but with the creamed honey sometimes it sets up so fast that you can't wait overnight because then you'll have just a big bucket of solid creamed honey the next day! So I've actually taken an old work ID card (a flat piece of plastic) and go around and scrape the whole top of the creamed honey in the jar off of it – and if you let that sit then it will settle out (and it settles out smooth). It's real tedious, and you have to be careful not to leave any divots but you can remove the excess foam – just use it like a little offset spatula.

Chunk honey is a lot more forgiving because the wax pieces float to the top and it is impossible to get every little piece out of there, so you use a toothpick to get the biggest pieces out and to pop any air bubbles that pop up (a result from open cells that might trap air while you're pouring (the air bubbles would come up after the fact). When you're about to enter and you see an air bubble then you can just pop it and be done with it, but that what it comes down to. Dan says he has seen judges go through a category with 6-8 entries and he has

## Holiday Dinner

**12/10 (Saturday), 6:30 pm-9:00 pm**, First Religious Society Hall, 27 School St. Carlisle

Rachael Bonoan (PhD Candidate) will be speak about Honey Bee Nutritional Ecology.

The club will provide the main course of turkey, stuffing and gravy. We ask members to help with the rest:

<u>Last Name:</u>	<u>Please bring:</u>
A-G	Bread
H-N	Salad
O-T	Side dish, or Beverage
U-Z	Dessert

RSVP by 12/4 online on the member's website, or by email to Tom Fiore: [president@middlesexbeekeepers.org](mailto:president@middlesexbeekeepers.org) if you plan to attend.

An optional donation of \$5/person to help defray costs would be appreciated.

*Finally, please remember to bring your own plates, silverware, glasses and/or cups!*

a tie with a score of 97 and they have to somehow split it up and they will go back and put those entries side-by-side and go through them again and find something wrong with the glass, or there's a little honey on the cap, and points would be marked down for that.

**What's your source for glass?** The reason I ask, is because years ago I would go out to Better Bee, drive up in the springtime and it was fine. But now (with a lot of vendors/manufacturers) you can go through a case of glass and not find one good bottle in there (the sides are wavy, there are bubbles, et cetera). Dan agrees, and said lately with Amber (*editor's note, unsure of this manufacturer's name*) there have been defects. He said that he's found bottles where the bottom is caved in – there's all sorts of strange stuff – and with other bottle types the glass is a lot clearer and without imperfections. John S. said that he believes there's only one manufacturer now for all of the standard types of [queenline] glass bottles, and when you look at other bottle types there seems to be a multitude of manufacturers. Dan said that a certain manufacturer may have a mold for their bottles, and they hold on to it... but with the straight sided glass bottles most of them are pretty good – it's just with the queenlines that seem to have the quality-control trouble.

**What size filter do you use for your regular liquid honey (There are 200-, 400-, and 600-micron filters)?** Dan said he uses the standard plastic strainers that fit inside 5-gallon buckets and he uses those, but it makes it tough because unless you heat the honey up it just doesn't go through the finer [mesh] filters, but we go through and filter/strain it a few extra times because the honey category judges will use a Polaroscope (which uses polarized light – often in gemology – and has two polarized filters) and you can see EVERYTHING in the honey – except for this color honey (Dan held up a bottle of dark honey), which I won a prize for because they couldn't see into it to find anything wrong with it (if they can't see it, they can't mark points off...), and they wanted to give a prize to a dark honey because the dark honeys never win. What type of honey is that? Buckwheat, but I've had the Red Bamboo too.

**Can you say something about the fill-line?** How far to fill the jars with honey? That's the other thing they look for, is that you're consistent! The ring around the bottom of the cap area there on the neck of the jar (Dan

points) – the guidelines say that it has to be within that little neck area. What Dan has found, by watching the judges is that all 3 jars have to be exactly the same – that little line is only about 1/8" thick, and if your jars are close to that but at 3 different levels then the judges will mark off points saying that the fill isn't correct. Can you fill the jars by weight? It's all a visual, it's what the judges are looking at. Jen mentioned that theoretically you could use an accurate scale (that measures individual grams) and filling your jars from the middle third of the same bucket of honey then you should be able to get it to the top of that ring pretty accurately... Dan agreed, citing the caveat that each of your three glass jars has to weigh the same, but he's never tried that and just does it by eye.

I've been competing for 27 years, so I've had a lot of experiences with all of these different things. One thing I should show you is that this is the bag I bring with me to competitions, it has all sorts of extra caps, toothpicks, my ID badge (that's flat and flexible so I can get around corners), little spoons, things to clean up things. One thing I do is when wiping off the tops of jars is to make sure that what I'm using doesn't give off any lint, because if you get one piece in there then that is all it takes to get marked down (you need something that's smooth and lint-free). Wiping down the caps is the last thing I do, with a moist towel of some sort. You just have to cross your fingers that you didn't tip the jars in your car while you're bringing them to the competition. The hardest part is getting the liquid into the jars, once that's done then everything else is easier to handle. **I try to encourage everyone I speak to, to enter into the Topsfield Fair [Honey Show].** That show that we put on in the Bee Building is open to the public (no matter what club(s) you may belong to), everyone can enter and help make the competition more challenging.

Alix wanted to reiterate this point, it's the largest Honey Show at any fair in the U.S. and that both Rick Reault and she agree that it's probably the best one too. It is simply amazing, there are thousands of people that go through it, and [the members of] Essex County kills themselves every year to put on a fantastic honey show, and Alix said that she enters everything she can – and **even if you don't think you're going to win, you should enter something to help support them.**

Dan said that his mother does needlework, and she does some beautiful stuff and kept entering year after year, but there was always someone who would edge her out, so she kept entering and three years ago she got 'Best of Show' in that section and she got the big ribbon and all that, and that was the last time she entered, she was 93 when she put that in when she finally won, and she says "I'm all done now, I got the big one and I'm not going through that anymore.

Rick said you hear lots of stories like that, he was after his wife to learn how to make Baklava from her grandmother, because her mother and her aunts never learned how to make it – so finally she did, and back then I wasn't a beekeeper. Back then the only difference between my wife's Baklava and her grandmothers, was the honey. My wife's grandmother didn't use local honey, and everyone says my wife's Baklava now is better, so one year I finally convinced her to enter the Topsfield Fair and everyone went crazy over it because it was the traditional cut, it was the right consistency the right amount of honey, the right layering, everything. My wife won the Blue Ribbon and she said "I'm never doing it again!"

Most people, when they come to enter do it with more than one category. There's an overall championship, where they combine all of your points – and everyone is always chasing Dan for the most points, but not this year! Alix Bartsch got the most points this year, so congratulations to her!

Dan wanted to briefly mention EAS, in 2012 it was in Vermont, and it was a big show which the Vermont folks really pushed, and a lot of people entered – and that is when you can tell how really good you are, because when you get a big show it's not as easy to win First Place. That's why I encourage everyone to enter competitions, because it makes it more fun, and now you know that you can enter something against somebody that compete and make it a real challenge.

Rick mentioned that **next year is the Topsfield Fair's 200th Anniversary**, so they're hoping for something special. George asked if you need any specialized knowledge to volunteer for the Fair, and Dan said no, we'll train you. Rick said "George, with your experience they would put you next to an observation hive so you can answer peoples questions." Kids come right up [to the observation hives] and they whistle, and ask where's the queen, and they ask a million questions – it's a lot of fun. You may be hoarse by the end of the four hours, and it's a great public interface. Alix said that she can't think of any other event that has so many members of the public going through and being fascinated and impressed with everything they see. Rick said that each year is different, because you have different entries so the displays are what makes it different and they're really well done. As Dan mentioned, you can go into the guidebook and see. People have displayed coins with bees, their collections, gift baskets and there's the whole big division of cooking, and baking, and it's

huge. Pies to cakes to relishes, candy to fudge... You can't forget about the Mead!

### Bees and Morning Glories

Morning glories, pale as a mist drying,  
fade from the heat of the day, but already  
hunchback bees in pirate pants and with peg-leg  
hooks have found and are boarding them.  
This could do for the sack of the imaginary  
fleet. The raiders loot the galleons even as they  
one by one vanish and leave still real  
only what has been snatched out of the spell.  
I've never seen bees more purposeful except  
when the hive is threatened. They know  
the good of it must be grabbed and hauled  
before the whole feast wisps off.  
They swarm in light and, fast, dive in,  
then drone out, slow, their pantaloons heavy  
with gold and sunlight. The line of them,  
like thin smoke, wafts over the hedge.  
And back again to find the fleet gone.  
Well, they got this day's good of it. Off  
they cruise to what stays open longer.  
Nothing green gives honey. And by now  
you'd have to look twice to see more than green  
where all those white sails trembled  
when the world was misty and open  
and the prize was there to be taken.

By John Ciardil

Dan congratulated Rick on his win in the Mead category – Rick admitted that it may be his last year entering, because he’s considering on whether he’ll apply for a Meadery license, and if he does then technically he’ll be commercial and you can’t enter an amateur competition...

Although, last year’s win was the best because I also won the Best of Show, and Mead has never won the cooking category so that was fun. So you can win first place in a category (light honey, dark honey, creamed honey, et cetera) but when you take the overall Best of Show that’s really nice, because there’s a special prize – maybe a blue plate along with the ribbon. If you get a perfect score there’s a nice ribbon that says ‘perfect score.’ Dan said you get the big ribbons when you do really good.

Rick said that **the Bee Building at the Topsfield Fair is one of the main attractions**, and we can accurately say this because the Topsfield Fair gives a survey and they ask attendees what their favorite attraction is and the Bee Building either wins it, or is within the top three every year. It runs for 11 days, and what we staff the building with (Rick is a member of Essex County as well) is a minimum of 12-people for each 4-hour shift. There’s 3- 4-hour shifts per day, so 33 shifts of 12 people. As members of Essex County, you can bring in honey for sale, and you are required to work a set number of shifts depending upon the amount of honey you bring in. Some people don’t bring in any honey, they just volunteer to work shifts! There are 4-people rolling candles with the kids, we usually have 4-observation hives, 4-people behind the sellers counter, and a shift supervisor and the building superintendent is usually there too. When you walk into the hall where the observations hives are, and the kids’ rolling table, on the back side is where all of the honey is displayed – and maybe 90% of the attendees ask “Why are there different shades of honey?” The education process begins, and you explain to everyone and there are a lot of good questions and it peaks peoples’ interests and **a lot of beekeepers have started by just walking through that bee building at Topsfield** (Dan said that was how he got started, from going there when he was younger, and he signed up then for the school). Rick mentioned that there are also crafts, they have photographs that are part of the competition (both black & white and colored), paintings, antiques... Quilts, that people

## Wax Work. In Holley Bishop's *Robbing the Bees*

Countless magazines, newspapers, and books offered instruction in the delicate art of imitating life in [bees]wax, catering to the fascination with both botany and illusion at the end of the nineteenth century. Auguste Escoffier, the great chef, restaurateur, and style maker, published a best-selling book called *Flowers in Wax* in 1910, teaching readers to transform beeswax into ferns, flowers, and fruit.

In portraiture, wax artists rivaled the best painters and sculptors of their day. Wax captured color and detail in three dimensions and was in many cases the preferred medium for preserving a likeness. Giorgio Vasari, in *On Technique*, marvels at the abilities of wax modelers in 1550s Florence: “Modern artists have discovered the method of working in wax of all sorts of colors so that taking portraits from life in the half relief, they make the flesh tints, the hair, the clothes, and all other details so lifelike that to those figures there lacks nothing, as it were, but the spirit and the power of speech.” When Queen Elizabeth died in 1603, expert modelers went to work. A resplendent figure, made of lifelike wax (though slightly younger and fresher looking than the queen’s seventy years), was dressed in funeral finery and carried in procession to Westminster Abbey.

One hundred and fifty years later, a young Frenchwoman named Marie Grosholtz took up the art of beeswax portraiture. As a girl, she had been employed by a physician who was a skilled wax sorker (doctors and scientists) often used wax to create anatomical likenesses and indeed entire educational corpses). Grosholtz’s exquisite modelling skills took her to the French court at Versailles, where she fashioned portraits of royalty and a constellation of courtiers. When revolution broke out, she went to the guillotine to take death masks of many of these same faces (now without bodies), including those of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI. Grosholtz married a Frenchman, and as the turmoil in France continued, left for Britain to tour her work, which was by this time an impressive collection of deceased people. The newly married Madame Tussaud became an instant sensation... ●●●

will spend a year, or two, or even three making to one year enter it into the Topsfield Fair. A lot of talented stuff gets entered there... but it comes at a cost, though. Rick said that we start ever meeting here with a bee talk, and it's comfortable for us because we do it all the time – and if you go to one of the Essex County meetings and when they ask “Does anyone have any bee questions?”, there's silence and not one question. It's amazing, because they're not used to it, they're focused on what they're going to do next year. How did we do this year? What did we do wrong, how we're going to fix it, how are we going to make it better? Rick said that it's just crazy, but a good thing. He encouraged anyone that wants go get involved with it, or to work there you can, but anyone can enter the competition and **you truly do get a feeling that you are part of something special when you work there those 11 days.** We have people there that are in their 90's and kids that are 12 years old working, it's amazing the diversity. It's fun to volunteer, and they give you a pass to see the Fair after you work your 4-hours. ●●

## Cleaning your Tools and Smoker

This time of year, my tools are covered with wax and propolis - but no need to worry! All you need is boiling water, a piece of steel wool, a pair of tongs, a disposable aluminum pie plate, some oil, and a plumber's torch.

Boil some water, fill the pie plate and soak your tool(s) for a minute or two. CAUTION, your hive tools will now be HOT, so use the tongs to pluck your tools out of the hot water. The sticky mess on your tools will now easily wipe off with steel wool. I finish up by oiling my tools with a food-grade oil (I use coconut oil).

Depending on usage and fuel source, the inside of your smoker may be coated with a layer of creosote, which can be removed easily by burning it off with a plumber's torch.

BEE-INGO PROPIS



## Winter Feed Recipes

### MCBA Fondant Recipe

2 Cups Water  
½ Tbl. Vinegar  
8 Cups Table Sugar  
1 tsp. Honey-B-Healthy  
(*optional*)

1. Pour sugar, water, and vinegar into pot.
2. Bring to boil, stirring constantly.
3. Cover and boil 5 minutes.
4. Insert Candy thermometer, and continue to boil uncovered until temperature hits 234°
5. Remove from heat and cool to 200° F.
6. Add Honey-B-Healthy (*opt.*)
7. Whip with an electric mixer until mixture begins to turn white with air bubbles dispersed throughout.
8. Quickly pour into molds and allow to cool undisturbed.

### Pressed Candy Board

Make a 2" tall candy board frame from scraps of wood, staple ½" wire mesh to the inside for a candy support and drilled a ½" hole in the front for the bees to escape.

### Bee Candy Recipe

15 Pounds White (Cane) Sugar  
3 Cups Water

1. Put sugar into very large canning pot.
2. Add vinegar to the water
3. Pour the water into the pot, a little at a time, stopping to make sure it is all mixed into the sugar.
4. Mixing takes some muscle, but it doesn't require cooking the sugar.
5. Line the wire mesh with paper.
6. Pile on the wet sugar.
7. Level off the sugar with a wooden ruler, and set to dry.
8. It will set up and harden in 1-2 days.

### Lauri's Sugar Blocks \*

This recipe is not cooked in any way - the ingredients are dried or dehydrated to form the hard block.

10 Pounds White (Cane) Sugar  
1 Cup real Apple Cider Vinegar (*with the Mother*)

1 Tbl. Citric Acid (*Optional*)  
⅛ tsp. Electrolytes# (*Optional*)  
3 Capsules Probiotics (*Optional*)  
1 Tbl. Honey-B-Healthy (*Optional*)

1. If using, stir in Probiotic capsules (*open by hand*), Citric Acid and Electrolytes into the Apple Cider Vinegar.
2. Add Apple Cider Vinegar [mixture] to the Sugar and mix together (*your hands work best*).
4. Roll out and compress in a 1" deep pan (*The disposable aluminum baking trays work really well*). Use a butter knife to pre-cut.
5. These will set up and harden in a few hours in a food dehydrator or a few days sitting out. They're rock hard once dry, so remember to cut to shape when wet if you need smaller blocks!

\* Tony modified Lauri's original recipe by adjusting the ingredient amounts based on 10# of sugar (*for hobbyists that don't need as many blocks as commercial operations*); he also added some additional strains of probiotics (*based upon tresearch*).



# Available online at [ValleyVet.com](http://ValleyVet.com); Agway has something similar.



# Middlesex County Beekeepers Association



### Membership Form

\$15 Annual dues per family, payable to MCBA. Mail this form and payment to: Ed Culkin, 9 Johansen Drive, Marlborough, MA 01752. OR bring it to a meeting.

Please PRINT CLEARLY, and fill out the ENTIRE FORM.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Family Members' Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City / State / Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about us? \_\_\_\_\_

How many hives do you have? \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal  or New Membership

### CLUB OFFICERS

#### President

Tom Fiore

[president@middlesexbeekeepers.org](mailto:president@middlesexbeekeepers.org)

#### Vice-President

Rick Reault

[vpresident@middlesexbeekeepers.org](mailto:vpresident@middlesexbeekeepers.org)

#### Treasurer

Allen Bondeson

[treasurer@middlesexbeekeepers.org](mailto:treasurer@middlesexbeekeepers.org)

#### Clerk / Membership Coordinator

Ed Culkin

[membership@middlesexbeekeepers.org](mailto:membership@middlesexbeekeepers.org)

#### Directors

Jen Reed, TBD

[director@middlesexbeekeepers.org](mailto:director@middlesexbeekeepers.org)

### VOLUNTEERS

#### Extractor Rental

Kathy Martin

[extractor@middlesexbeekeepers.org](mailto:extractor@middlesexbeekeepers.org)

617.549.7460

#### Librarian

Allen Bondeson

[librarian@middlesexbeekeepers.org](mailto:librarian@middlesexbeekeepers.org)

#### Swarm Coordinator

Alexandra Bartsch

[swarms@middlesexbeekeepers.org](mailto:swarms@middlesexbeekeepers.org)

#### Website

John Cheetham

[webmaster@middlesexbeekeepers.org](mailto:webmaster@middlesexbeekeepers.org)

#### Newsletter

Tony Pulsone

[editor@middlesexbeekeepers.org](mailto:editor@middlesexbeekeepers.org)