

Minutes of the meeting April 10th 2014

Richard Reid opened the meeting at 6:30 pm and began by introducing the officers to new members:

- Mark Chorba, past president, manages the new bee packages
- Jerry Borger, past president, responsible for beginner classes
- Sam and Jack Price (absent) Secretary and treasurer respectively
- Sue Hossack, corresponding secretary
- Jim Hill, vice president
- Tonia Moxley, program director
- Mark Priest and Kent Murrmann, manage food at meetings

The presentation "Gardening for the Bees" was given by Holly Scroggins, director of the Hahn Horticultural Garden at Virginia Tech. Holly began by pointing out that the VT Horticultural Club Spring Plant Sale, was being held Thursday through Saturday, April 24-26 from 8:00am to 6:00pm every day. In addition to being a horticulture professor, Holly and her husband own a blueberry farm in Giles County and keep bees to assist with the pollination. Unfortunately bears got into her hives last November while the family was away in Florida. They destroyed all but one hive. Although they had an electric fence around some of the hives, it was not solar powered and the battery had run down. She recommended the website <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/bear/> for advice on bears.

Her garden strategy is to have diverse plants, with a wide range of bloom times, particularly early spring and late fall. Mid-late summer also can be tough on bees. Minimize the use of pesticides. Also have a diverse habitat (not all grass and mulch) Talk to neighbors to see what they are growing. She emphasized that *Sevin Dust* bug killer is the worst for bees, do not use it! It is outlawed in many countries including the UK and Europe.

She recommended avoiding flowers with double blooms which are bred for show, they have little to no pollen, lacking stamens and stigma. There is a misconception that only native plants are good for the pollinators, but she recommended you don't limit yourself. She asked the question, what is a native? Native to the county? The State? Region such as Mid Atlantic? – but that still encompasses coastal, piedmont, and mountain areas. Some plants are better adapted to particular soil in your yard. She recommended <http://plants.usda.gov> a website which shows which plants are native to which states, but pointed out that the plant may not be native to all counties within that state. For example, *Echinacea Tennesseeensis* (which bees love). This is native in only 3 counties in Tennessee. She reminded us that bees and earthworms are not native to the USA, bees were imported in 1622, now there are 4000 species of bees native to North America.

She explained the word 'Cultivars' as cultivating a variety by crossing plants. For example the plant *Brassica oleracea*, has been cultivated into cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, kale, and brussel sprouts.

The term 'Nativar' is now being used: ("cute or evocative names sell plants"). For example Joe Pye Weed is very large, but has been crossed to produce Little Joe which will fit in a small garden. She gave out a handout and talked about examples of plants that help bees:

- Henbit, out now, is a small white flower, considered a weed.
- Fruit tree blossoms (not double blooms).
- Hellebores such as Lenten Rose, bloodroot are out in February

She concentrated on summer plants and reminded us to dead-head perennials to get increased bloom time.

- Mint family: catnip, cat mint, sage
- Lavendar
- Russian sage
- Mountain mint (flowers august, September, part shade tolerant) Good in afternoon sun. ("Enchanters Garden" and the Blacksburg Farmers Market does carry mountain mint)

She pointed out that not many shade perennials are good for bees.

Mid- late summer yellow daisy "thingies" are great pollinators.

For example:

- Helianthus – part shade
- Cup plant – asteracea – leave join at bottom at stem to form cup which collect rain water
- Sunflower – actually a collection of small individual flowers.
- Black-eyed Susan
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When looking in catalog, look out for "pollenless" these are flowers that are grown for the cut-flower trade and have no pollen so are not good for the bees.

Examples of Late summer-fall flowers

- Caryopteris clandenensis – blue mist shrub
- Goldenrod – 'fireworks'
- Vernonia – 'iron butterfly'
- Fall anemone – lots of stamens
- Asters – e.g aromatic aster, is a late bloomer
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Resources

<http://Plants.usda.gov>

<https://www.pollinator.org>

<http://www.xerces.org/>

She also recommended "Bee Basics: An introduction to our native bees". This can be found at <https://www.pollinator.org/PDFs/BeeBasicsBook.pdf>

During question time Clem Von Claparede asked if there were any plants deer don't like? Holly answered that No, only boxwoods! and maybe daffodils and some asters. She pointed out that deer tend to avoid pungent foliage so they stay away from Aromatic Asters. Mike Crawley asked if huckleberries and wild blueberries were good for bees, Holly thought so, She said brambles are also good.

Following the presentation refreshments were served.

Richard Reid thanked Arnold and Phyllis Rampey for putting up Dwight Porter, last month's speaker. Mark Chorba reported that 150 packages have been sold, including 45 to two other Roanoke bee groups. They are running out fast, so if you want one, go to the website or email Mark.

The minutes of last month's meeting were approved.

The treasurer's report was discussed – there is \$19061 in the bank, much of this is payment for bee packages. The treasurer's report was approved.

Sue Hossack reported that there are a number of DVD's CDs, and books available to members. Each one has an index card. To take out a book or DVD on loan, she asked that the card be filled out with name and date, and the card placed in the 'on loan' box so she can keep track of who has what. Jerry Borger pointed out that the association has 2 children's bee suits, so if anyone wanted to borrow one when the packages came in, to let Sue Hossack know.

Richard asked if anyone has any queens for sale. Tim Service reported that he should have some by mid May. Richard may also have some later. Richard pointed out that members wanting a copy of the membership roster should email Sam Price. Richard also recommended trying out Jerry's Double Screen method of queen rearing. Sue Hossack and Tonia Moxley will put the handout on the website so members have access to it.

Richard announced the first Field Day will be at Clem Von Claparede's bee yard off Alum Ridge in Floyd. 12:30pm – 2:30 pm. There is a limit of 15 people, so a sign up sheet was put out. Sue was tasked with putting the info on TheHive. Clem will give directions. Richard stated that the field trips will be held the Saturday after every month's meeting.

Discussion over Picnic. Tonia recommended Nellie's Cave as we had used it last year. This was approved. The date of July 19th was suggested as the best date. Tonia will call and book Nellies Cave if that day is free and will look into getting music, and the 'potato cooking guy'.

The Raffle was held

Some questions were asked about what we should be doing with the bees right now: what is the yellow pollen they are bringing in? Holly reported that it is from the weeping willow. The red pollen is mostly from the Purple Dead Nettle. Now that warm weather is coming, there will be amore consistent pollen and nectar flow – red bud is often associated with nectar flow so make sure there is enough room in hives. Reverse deeps if the bottom box is empty. Put on supers if population is expanding. Richard said he puts empty space above brood. No swarm cells yet by will happen quickly. Put on a 3rd deep if both boxes are full. Dr Fell puts on 3-4 supers at once to ‘challenge’ the bees but this may also encourage small hive beetle.

Jerry Borger had a question about an over-wintered nuc, which did not expand as quickly as expected. He combined this with a hive where the queen was failing. This hive now has several frames of brood, but also has one frame full of eggs – many to one cell, which looks like laying worker, although the queen is present. There were a variety of suggestions (two queens present? New queen often lays multiple eggs are first?) but no one has seen something like this before.

Richard reported that a good time to start breeding queens is to wait for swarm season, and the nectar flow.

Mark Chorba reported that Warm Hearth Community in Blacksburg has invited the NRVBA to their “Eco-Expo Day” on May 10th from 10:00am- 4:00pm to set up a honeybee display to sell your honey and other related products, talk about bees and answer questions about beekeeping. Volunteers are requested to sign up to attend this annual event.

He reminded everyone that this is another great opportunity to help out the local area and get to know the people at Warm Hearth. Network with them and others to gain access to swarms that come their way or access to new Bee yard possibilities. You never know who you will meet or the connections that could be made by attending these type of events.