



# THE BEE SPACE



Will County Beekeepers Association  
Est. 2011

THE PUBLICATION OF WILL COUNTY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION • JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2024

## PLEASE JOIN US FOR NEXT MEETING:

**January 17, 2024 at 7 pm**  
Will County Farm Bureau  
100 Manhattan Rd  
Joliet, IL 60433

## FEATURED TOPICS:

- NAHB Expo, ABF conference highlights
- Meet Brittany Buckles, our state bee inspector
- Honey bourbon product review
- 50/50 raffle and door prizes

## THIS MONTH IN YOUR HIVES

### JANUARY / FEBRUARY

- The bees will consume about 24lb (11Kg) of stores in January and February – so check they have enough by hefting your hive
- Check candy boards and replenish them, if needed
- Read books while waiting for spring
- Repair, order, build, and assemble hive equipment to prepare for the upcoming season
- Check honey stores by hefting your hive
- Add a pollen patty in February to encourage brood production
- Order bee packages

## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE HIVE

Additional information regarding hive management for January/February was kindly provided by John Leibinger. [Click to download.](#)

*Chores of the Month – [January/February](#)*



## *Renew your membership and win!*

### START THE YEAR RIGHT WITH AN 8-FRAME COMPLETE HIVE

We're excited about our upcoming beekeeping season and even more excited about raffling off yet another slightly used 8-frame hive set-up at our February meeting (excluding frames). You only need to renew your 2024 membership to receive a ticket. You can buy an additional ticket for \$5 or five tickets for \$20. This giveaway is open to paid current members, so renew today! Good luck!





FEATURE STORY – BY PATRICK SCHAB

## When was the last time you “took a step back?”

*Taking a step back allows you to see things you simply don't see in the rush of everyday life. We all scurry from here to there with work obligations, picking up the kids from school, running to the grocery store, etc. We seldom stop and open our eyes to what's around us and take time to actually appreciate it.*

My wife and I recently celebrated 30 years of marriage with a trip to Portugal. A vacation to Europe puts you in a different mindset. It's time to relax and set aside all the hustle and bustle of everyday life. It gives people the right to stop and absorb their surroundings, whether unique cultural traits such as Fado music in quaint establishments, magnificent palaces in Sintra, or tasting food that has been to the delight of its residents for hundreds of years. A vacation gives you the right not to answer the phone, reply to emails, or hastily plow through dinner to pick up the kids in time after football practice. If it gives you the right to soak it all in, to slow down, and to “take a step back,”

As my wife and I explored the old-world charm of Portugal, starting in Lisbon and then south to the Algarve region, I had my eyes open to see if beekeeping played into the culture. I honestly didn't know, but I thought it would be an excellent article for the BeeSpace. As we toured the cities filled with hilly cobblestone streets, riding the vintage trolley through narrow, twisty streets lit by flickering street lamps in Lisbon, and then driving through the countryside filled with vineyards and broken-down castles that once stood mighty, I didn't see a single beehive or artwork depicting the honey bee. I saw plenty of statues of lions and elephants and various sea critters, but again, not a single bee.

With nothing to work off of, I looked to find some parallels that I could draw upon. So, let's take that imaginary plane across the Atlantic to the historic capital of Lisbon to discover how honeybees have some striking similarities when you “take a step back” to appreciate what's in front of you.

Over the years, as beekeepers, we have seen a lot of honey frames. We quickly glance at them and put them back as we say, “Yep, this looks good,” then we move on to the next frame. In Lisbon and throughout the country, my wife and I made our way on foot or by car, twisting and winding up and down the hills and narrow streets to get to our destinations, whether we were making our way to visit a beautiful cathedral or to catch the sunset at a remote beach. For beekeeping, the end of the path is the honey harvest. For our vacation, it was a beautiful landmark or a tasty seafood dinner. The destinations are amazing, but what about the actual streets we walked and drove on?



Looking down instead of up, you'll discover millions, if not billions, of cobblestones that make the roads of Lisbon. Laid one by one for miles and miles, and with the artistry that creates a market square plaza a masterpiece, it's a shame that the streets aren't acknowledged more. Hundreds of masons worked in the summer heat to create elaborate stone patterns on these functional yet beautiful streets, which have been traveled upon for centuries.

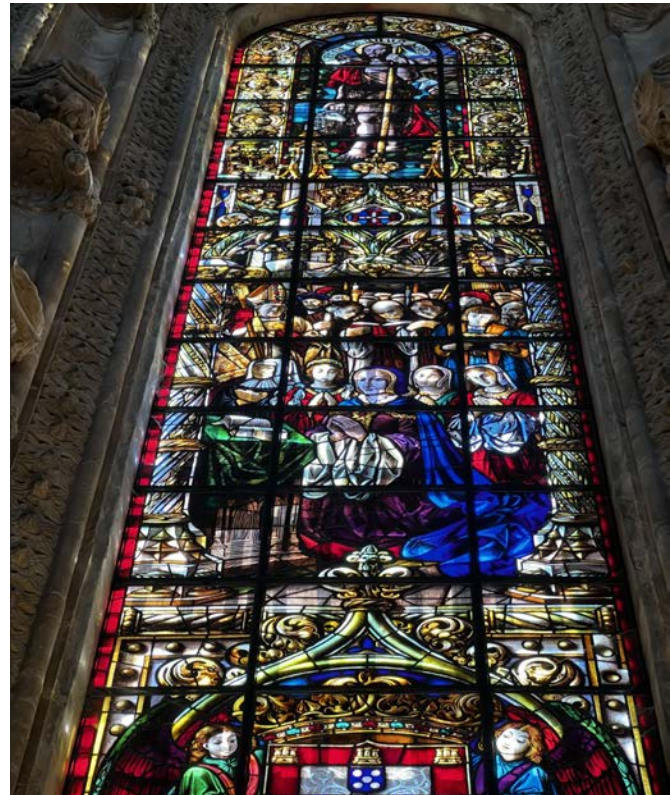
Similar is the honeycomb. A perfect pattern of hexagons, built for stability and practicality in holding and containing the honeybees' precious winter honey stores. A honeycomb frame is absolutely mind-blowing and beautiful, all at the same time, with a perfect geometric pattern that has been used as inspiration in art, design, and engineering. Like the laying of cobblestone streets, imagine the thousands of bees it takes to make each cell, each comb, and each frame with such perfection. Taking a step back, you can see how the effort of making cobblestone streets and honeycomb is similar.



As we walked by the many statues of kings, queens, and famous explorers such as Henry the Navigator and stopped at bakeries that make a deliciously irresistible pastry called Pastel, we made our way to the Jerónimos Monastery in an area of Lisbon called Belem.

This remarkable structure took over 100 years to construct, beginning in 1501. I find it hard to fathom, especially with the haste with which things are built today, that anyone would accept that 100 years is an acceptable timeline to complete a project! Through its construction,

there were several remarkable architects and master builders, both national and foreign, each taking their turn to see that Frenchman Boytac's vision would come to fruition. While touring inside, there's no denying the effort was extraordinary. A lattice framework adorns the vaulted ceilings, held up by octagonal pillars. Stained glass windows tower multiple stories and illuminate the space with brilliant colors.



Lisbon is a proud city filled with architectural gems like this. Unfortunately, a devastating event crumbled more than 1/3 of them. On the morning of January 26, 1531, an earthquake, followed by a tsunami, resulted in 30,000 lives lost and left the city in ruins. Imagine after all the years of effort to build a city, and then the tall order to start over ... and quickly with thousands of homeless families needing shelter. And that's what they did.



The people of Lisbon began to rebuild their city. They adopted the use of tile in a variety of colors and patterns called azulejo on their building facades. This tile was a fail-safe material that still holds up to the elements and has become iconic in Portuguese architecture. Street after street, building after building, these tiles decorate the town's 3- to 8-story buildings, which I bet the typical Portuguese person fails to appreciate.

But as a tourist visiting this for the first time and taking a step back to admire the entire patterned facade and then close up to see that thousands of tiles are used to fill a facade, it's pretty spectacular. Their colors and patterns can be read as a celebration of life beyond the earthquake, with the hope of a prosperous future.

For me, to compare what happened in Lisbon and to its people to a beehive is absurd. However, we can draw a loose parallel to a swarm starting new and the remarkable effort to build a new dwelling with only one resource ... laborers, and in this case, 30,000 homeless bees. We all witnessed the speed at which a colony takes hold. After just a week or two, a comb has been drawn, and eggs are soon laid; all the while, nectar and pollen are beginning to be brought in. Quickly, life returns, day by day, back to normal. There's no 100-year construction timetable like the Jerónimos Monastery, especially with winter approaching in just a few months. While it was the colony's choice to swarm and start anew, unlike the unfortunate victims of Lisbon's earthquake, the effort to build new dwellings and the desire to prosper and reestablish the community are strikingly similar. I never really gave this any thought until I took a step back.



From my student days, I learned that having three points within a story is the golden standard. This article is getting a bit long, so I will keep the following point short, but one we can't live without ... literally. Food. Lisbon's culture embraces seafood. During a cooking class, which I highly recommend, we had the opportunity to explore a fish market. While the smell isn't impressive, the variety of seafood is. From odd-looking eel-like fish to slimy tentacle octopus to a variety of sharply covered crustaceans that we'd eventually eat ... it was

quite the site. The marketers who weighed, prepped, and packaged the fish were there to help with preparation tips for each purchase. More often than not, in our everyday routines, we head to the grocery store, grab what we need, and fall into the same 5–10 entrée rhythm. Taking a step back, you really do get to appreciate the variety of food and the culture that embraces the dishes we enjoy. Dishes that have been around for thousands of years and are still celebrated today, and for good reason ... they are delicious!



This is also the case with honey. While we all have the mindset of harvesting honey, even on the first day of starting a package, have you ever taken time to think about this wonderful substance? Taking that step back, you can appreciate all aspects of it, from its longevity ... it never spoils—to its wonderful flavors, which could be from chocolate to almost barely sweet—to its many uses in recipes or just straight up on toast. It's the only food we harvest from insects, and that's remarkable in itself. And, of course, its ability to keep our bees alive as a powerhouse food source through the winter. Seafood and honey ... yes, there are parallels.

Our vacation was a trip of a lifetime. While honeybees didn't play into the trip, we discovered Portugal is a wonderful place to explore, full of traditions, charm, and romance. Every cobblestone street offered unique and quaint shops to explore. At the same time, every corner had a deli, coffee shop, or bakery that called our name with the smell of delicious temptations. The city's high vista points showcased Lisbon's remarkable architecture, from small residences with tile facades to multi-story, highly embellished cathedrals that point to the heavens with their mighty bell towers that rang on the hour. One could argue that the parallels of honeycomb and cobblestone streets, bee colonies building from scratch and a city rebuilding after an earthquake, and traditional Lisbon seafood and honey have nothing to do with one another, but if you take a step back, they just might.



BY JIM MOLESKI

## Bee Packages vs. Bee Nucs

*As a new beekeeper you may not be aware of the 2 most common ways to start a colony. Like many decisions in life, there is not a right or wrong answer as both options offer up benefits and disadvantages. Let's take a closer look at bee packages and bee nucs to get your apiary started.*

### Option 1: Bee Packages

Bee packages arrive in wire and wooden containers. The most common size is a 3-pound package of bees, along with a young, mated queen. These bees are transported in a small wire/wooden box, with a can of sugar syrup to feed them during their journey.

Package bees are the most economical and readily available source of bees. They are often preferred by beekeepers who want to start early in the spring season. The advantages of packages are they are economical and less prone to spread pests or diseases (since no honeycomb is involved). The challenges are they are slower to build up a working population and they must be accepted by the queen.

### Option 2: Honeybee Nucs

Nucs are small starter bee colonies. They typically consist of 5 frames of bees, including drawn comb, honey, brood, and a mated queen. The advantage of a nuc is they give you a head start because they already have a laying and accepted queen which speeds up their initial growth. The drawn comb provides a foundation for the colony. The challenges of starting with a nuc is they are more expensive than package bees. Also, the drawn comb also brings the opportunity for pests and diseases.

In summary, packages are economical, readily available, and less prone to disease spread. Nucs offer a jump start but come at a higher cost and carry some risk due to the drawn comb. Remember to always purchase your bees from a reputable dealer to ensure a successful start to your season!

***Send us your best bee photos!***

ARE YOU BEE PHOTO-TRIGGER HAPPY?

If so, we'd like to feature your photo in an upcoming meeting or newsletter. Please send us your photo today and earn bragging rights amongst our members! Send your photos to:

[willbees-board@willbees.org](mailto:willbees-board@willbees.org)



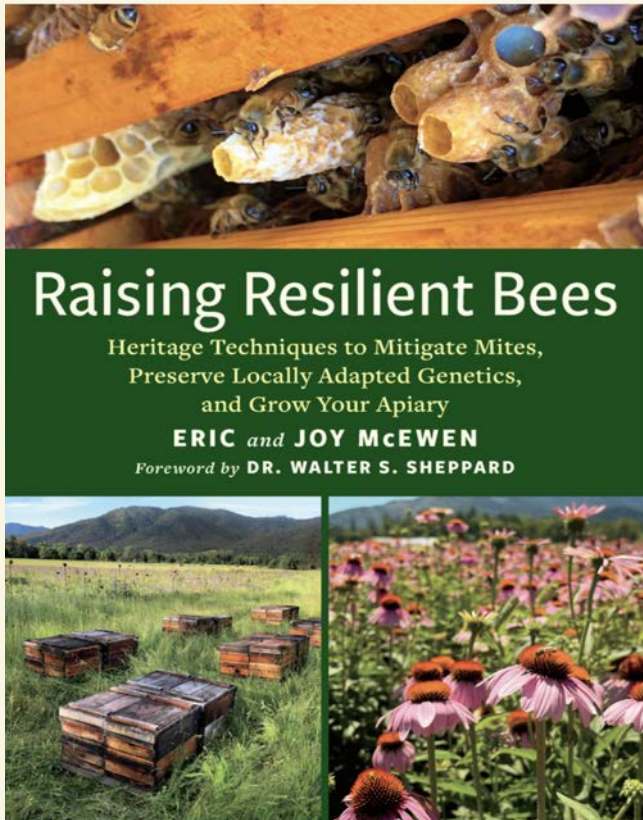
# BOOK NOOK

## Raising Resilient Bees

### *Heritage Techniques to Mitigate Mites, Preserve Locally Adapted Genetics, and Grow your Apiary*

By Eric and Joy McEwen – 2023

Reviewed by our VP Dennis E. Wisnosky



This is a long read – and it is worth the time. Although it is not presented as such, this is really a story about the resilient McEwen family – Father, mother and 3 daughters. It is kind of a love story about the family, the bees and their 20+ years making a honeybee living on 35 acres in the Illinois River Valley, Oregon. They self transplanted from the Midwest.

Eric and Joy come across as excellent students of all that it takes to be successful in “making a living” as bee farmers. Upton Sinclair is credited with saying about hog processors, “They use everything but the squeal.” In that light I suggest beginning this book with the last chapter ‘Making a Living’. Here, I believe even the most experienced honeybee farmers will be saying, “I didn’t know that”, and “that is a great idea”.

At the beginning of their adventure in 2001 the McEwen’s followed beekeeping conventions. They diverged soon and continue to do their own thing to this day. For example, their supers are 8 frames because they believe that this is where Langstroth got it wrong. ‘The natural size of a cluster is 8 frames, not 10’, they say. They use pine for foundationless frames and natural cedar for the supers. No paint anywhere. No upper entrances because the bees will not efficiently, or at all, use the bottom super – hey that matches my experience. I am going to be blocking my upper entrances. They put their supers on the ground – Dave Meyer does also. What about when it snows? Nothing about that. There are many other interesting apiary practices outlined in the book in detail.

What about feeding, medicating and mite treatments. Isn’t that the key to resilient bees? Here is where I was looking for the silver bullet ... I was a bit disappointed, but not surprised. I paraphrase, “give up on mite resistant bees” They tried for years and years and it did not happen. Use local queens only and survival will be optimal but not perfect. Medicate and treat sparingly. They use Oxalic acid drip twice yearly no matter what. They medicate only when they see a disease.

In this 250 page wonderfully written book with beautiful photos of the operation and the family, I only saw 2 items that I can’t fathom. Page 139 says that mites carry all of the viruses of their ancestors. Nope! Page 148, “keep mites at an acceptable level”. What is that anyway?

This book is well worth the cost and the time. Go to <https://digginlivin.com/hives/> I did and I intend to purchase and try at least one of their hives.

*Our Will Bees lending library offers a vast selection of books and videos for you to enjoy. Be sure to check out a book at our next member meeting.*

**Time to expand your bee vocabulary.**

*Bring your answers to our next meeting to earn a tasty treat which will surely impress your fellow beekeepers!*

*Bee milk*

*Wax glands*

*Nectar guide*

*Hive stand*

*Granulation*

*Field bees*



*This month's recipe was provided by Jim Moleski*

## Elderberry Syrup

### Cold & Flu prevention and Remedy

This delicious Elderberry Syrup is made with dried elderberries, raw honey, and herbs to boost the immune system and help protect against colds and flu.

#### **Ingredients:**

- 2/3 Cup elderberries
- 2 Tbsp. fresh or dried ginger root
- 1 Tsp. cinnamon powder
- ½ Tsp. cloves or clove powder
- 3 ½ Cup water
- 1 Cup raw honey

#### **Directions:**

- 1, Pour water into a medium saucepan and add elderberries, ginger, cinnamon and cloves (Do Not Add Honey!)
- 2, Bring to a boil, then cover and reduce to a simmer for about 45 minutes to an hour, until the liquid has reduced by almost half. At that point, remove from heat and let cool enough to be handled. Pour through a strainer into a glass bowl.
- 3, Discard the elderberries and let the liquid cool to lukewarm. When it is no longer hot, add the Raw Honey and stir well.
- 4, When the Raw Honey is mixed well into the elderberry mixture, pour the syrup into a glass jar and store in a refrigerator.

#### **Dosage:**

Children: ½ - 1 TSp. daily; AdUlts: ½ - 1 Tbsp. daily

*Some sources recommend taking the syrup daily through the week, and not on the week-ends to boost immunity.*

If a cold or the flu does strike, take the standard dose every 2-3 hours, instead of once daily, until symptoms disappear.

*Share your favorite honey inspired recipe to be published in the next issue of The Bee Space!*

## Welcome to the board

THIS MONTH'S BEE ADVOCATE  
IS BEAU WRIGHT

Beau may be a familiar face if you've attended our meeting in March of 2023 when he spoke about building his own insulated hives, or you may have seen him at our November meeting when he was elected into a director board position, or if you happen to have kids at Indian Trail Middle School, you may have seen him leading the S.T.E.A.M. team.

Beau has been beekeeping since 2018 and now manages about 26 hives. In 2017, he made a dream reality by buying and moving into an 1854 6.5-acre homestead and learned he was the first person outside the original family to call Maple Hill Farm home.



*We would love to feature you within BeeSpace! Please send us a photo and a couple paragraphs about you and your beekeeping experience.*

# ON-GOING ED

## UPCOMING CONFERENCES

### **ABF Conference – New Orleans, LA**

**January 9 – 10, 2024**

The Tradeshow is yet another place where you can learn about the latest products and services available to beekeepers. They anticipate more than 80 exhibitors, who are all anxious to meet with you to demonstrate the latest in beekeeping innovations.

Visit their [website](#) for more information.

### **North American Honey Bee Expo – Louisville, KY**

**January 4 – 6, 2024**

A great opportunity to share and network with thousands of beekeepers, industry leaders, and some of the biggest YouTube creators in beekeeping. There will be opportunities to learn from some of the best educators in the beekeeping industry & be a part of the largest honey show on the continent!

### **Hive Life Conference and Tradeshow – Sevierville, TN**

**January 4 – 6, 2024**

The primary goal of this program is to equip the next generation of serious beekeepers with advanced knowledge, networking opportunities, and exciting experiences!

Visit their [website](#) for more information.



## **SBGMI (Sustainable Beekeepers Guild of Michigan) – Virtual Conference**

**February 24, 2024**

The 3rd Annual SBGMI Virtual Winter Conference will be a live and interactive conference featuring 9 dynamic and exciting speakers. Registered attendees will receive one year of group membership to the Sustainable Beekeepers Guild of Michigan which includes a complimentary six-month digital subscription to the Natural Bee Husbandry magazine, access to conference recordings, access to our local lending library, American Bee Journal/Bee Culture subscription Discounts, and much more! Visit their [website](#) for more information.

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### **The Chicago Honey Co-Op has two beekeeping class opportunities.**

They teach beekeeping classes from January to March and June/July each year. Winter is the perfect time to prepare for the coming beekeeping season. For 2024, Winter classes are in 2, 2-hour sessions via Zoom and give a beginning beekeeper all the information needed to start up in the Spring.

Classes in June and July are hands on at our apiary for beginning beekeepers. If you have a hive now or just want some more experience before you take the plunge, this class might be good for you.

Visit their [website](#) for more information.

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### **Breakfast with the Bees hosted by James Konrad**

The Fox Valley Beekeepers Association extends an open invitation to all beekeepers to join them via Zoom for a group chat every Saturday at 7:30am Central Time. Guests are encouraged to ask questions and contribute to various topics that relate to the season. Please email James at [james@jamesgardenbees.com](mailto:james@jamesgardenbees.com) for more information.

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### **Varroa mite management tools**

#### ***Randy's Varroa Model on the Web***

This tool helps the beekeeper plan treatment options in order to avoid colony “crash” in the off-season.

<https://chickab>

#### ***Honey Bee Coalition Updated Guide to Mite Treatments***

Visit their [website](#) on all the latest mite treatment options, along with “how to videos.”

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### **Interesting articles and Podcasts**

#### ***Honey bee life spans are half what they were in the 1970s***

Laboratory study might provide new explanation for colony collapses. [Click here.](#)

#### ***Joe Rogan Experience #1908 with Erika Thompson***

Erika Thompson is the owner and founder of Texas Beeworks: an organization promoting public awareness and education about the valuable work bees and beekeepers do. [Click here.](#)

#### ***Pressured by lawsuits, EPA toughens pesticide rules to protect endangered species***

U.S. agency is drawing up new rules for farmers, but some worry the science isn't ready [Click here.](#)

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# ODDS & ENDS

## ***WillBees membership dues!***

Please renew your memberships by January 31 for the 2024 season. Cash and checks are accepted at our member meetings, or visit our [website](#) to renew online. Badges will be printed in February.

## ***Photo contest***

We would like to start building a photo library for our upcoming communications. Please send us your honey bee related photos for a chance to be featured in an upcoming issue of the *Beespace* or at our member meetings.

## ***Share what you know***

We are looking for people to help contribute to your monthly newsletter:

- Feature articles that you'd like to write
- Review of a book or article in a journal you read
- An educational opportunity that you are aware of
- Pictures that you'd like us to share
- Recipe using honey you would like to share

***Don't forget to register your hives for free with the Illinois Department of Agriculture.***

<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/agr/Insects/Bees/Documents/beekeep.pdf>

## ***Swap Meet***

Let's all start going through our existing equipment and think about donating it to new beekeepers. Items may be things you originally may have used and replaced or have more than you need. At a future meeting we will all bring these items and raffle things off.

*Please email [willbees-board@willbees.org](mailto:willbees-board@willbees.org) with anything you'd like to share today.*

## **Update your calendar for our upcoming WillBees meetings:**

Wednesdays at 7pm:

Jan 17, Feb 21, Mar 20, Apr 17, May 15, Jun 19, Aug 21, Sep 18, Oct 16, Nov 20

## **BOARD MEMBERS**

Patrick Schab, President

Dennis Wisnosky, Vice President

Susan Gregory, Treasurer

Fran Miller, Secretary

## **DIRECTORS** (years remaining on term):

Keith Meiser (2)

Beau Wright (3)

Jim Moleski (1)