

THE BEE SPACE



WILL COUNTY
BEEKEEPERS
ASSOCIATION

THE PUBLICATION OF WILL COUNTY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION • SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2025

PLEASE JOIN US FOR NEXT MEETING:

September 17, 2025 at 7 pm

Will County Farm Bureau

100 Manhattan Rd

Joliet, IL 60433

FEATURED TOPICS:

- Making sugar bricks hands-on demo
- Queen clip review
- Beecabulary

THIS MONTH IN YOUR HIVES

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER

- Put on supers for goldenrod and aster flow in September
- Provide final mite treatments
- Remove honey supers and harvest fall honey going into October
- Prep for winter by making sugar candy
- Feed bees 2:1 sugar to build stores for winter once supers have been removed
- Consolidate weak hives

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE HIVE

Additional information regarding hives management for September/October was kindly provided by John Leibinger. Click to download.

[Chores of the Month – September](#)

[Chores of the Month – October](#)



Extractor Rental

WHEN IT'S TIME TO HARVEST, WE GOT YOU COVERED.

As a WillBees member, you have access to a 4-frame rental extractor. Please visit our [website](#) for more information.

We are also looking for a member to serve as an "extractor rental host" for our club. As a host, you would coordinate pick-up and drop-off of our club extractor with members who need it. For more information, please reach out to [Fran](#).





BY JOE ARDOLINO

Selling Honey at a Farmers Market in Illinois: A Guide for Local Beekeepers

Selling honey at farmer's markets in Illinois offers beekeepers an excellent opportunity to share their products with the community while generating income.

However, success requires attention to product presentation, customer engagement, and regulatory compliance. This paper outlines best practices and legal considerations for effectively selling honey in Illinois markets.

PRODUCT AND BRANDING

1. Emphasizing Quality and Origin

Illinois consumers at farmer's markets value transparency and local sourcing. Labeling honey accurately—whether it's raw, unfiltered, organic, or wildflower—is essential. Clearly indicating the geographic origin (e.g., "Will County Wildflower Honey") reinforces its local appeal and builds consumer trust.

2. Attractive Packaging

Packaging plays a crucial role in attracting buyers. Clear glass or plastic jars showcase the honey's natural color and clarity. Rustic packaging elements such as kraft labels, wooden dippers, or handwritten tags create a handcrafted, farm-fresh aesthetic that resonates with market-goers.

SALES AND BOOTH SETUP

3. Professional Booth Appearance

A visually appealing booth signals quality and professionalism. Use rustic tablecloths, clear signage, and well-organized displays. Showcasing honeycomb, beeswax candles, or beekeeping tools can attract attention and spark conversation.

4. Pricing Strategy

Pricing should be competitive yet reflect the value of your product. Research local market rates. Your honey is not the mass produced store honey you and your bees worked hard for it don't underprice your work. This can increase volume sales and customer satisfaction.



MARKETING AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

5. Tell Your Story People love connecting with producers.

A simple sign or photo display showing your bees, hives, and harvest process can foster a sense of authenticity and encourage purchases.

6. Engage With Customers

Be personable and knowledgeable. Explain the health benefits of raw honey, suggest recipes, and offer tips on honey's uses beyond sweetening tea—such as in skincare or cough remedies.

7. Social Media and Loyalty Programs

To encourage repeat business, sign up to social media platforms like Facebook, X, or TikTok this will help build a steady customer base.

PRACTICAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

8. Licensing and Regulation

In Illinois, honey producers must follow several regulations:

- *Apiary Registration:* Beekeepers must register their hives annually with the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) under the Illinois Bees and Apiaries Act [510 ILCS 20].
- *Food Labeling:* Honey must be labeled in accordance with federal and state laws. If sold in its pure, unadulterated form (including comb honey), it is exempt from inspection under the Illinois Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act [410 ILCS 620/27]. However, federal labeling standards still apply. One thing that all honey sales have in common is proper labeling. For more information on labeling check out our web site Will County Beekeepers Association (willbees.org) under the heading EDUCATION for a link to proper labeling.
- *Cottage Food Laws:* Producers selling under 500 gallons per year may qualify for exemptions under Illinois' cottage food laws, provided the honey is not altered with sweeteners. Infused or flavored honeys are considered processed and must comply with additional inspection or cottage food rules.
- *Sampling and Health Department Rules:* Vendors at farmer's markets in Illinois must follow the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) guidelines for food sampling, which includes obtaining a Farmers Market Food Product Sample Handler Certificate for distributing food samples. This certificate allows vendors to provide samples without needing a separate permit, as long as they comply with specific regulations
- *Business Insurance:* As in any business it is best practice to protect yourself. Many reputable company's offer insurance at a reasonable rate to people that sell honey. Check with your insurance company for a quote.

CONCLUSION

Selling honey at Illinois farmers markets can be a rewarding experience for local beekeepers who understand the importance of quality, branding, and compliance. By combining clear labeling, attractive presentation, engaging storytelling, and adherence to state regulations, producers can successfully market their honey to a growing audience of health-conscious, community-minded consumers. Remember one farmers market in one town may have a different set of rules than the one in the very next town. Always check with the local event and town before setting up and selling your product.



This month’s recipe was found on [Honey.com](https://www.honey.com).

Bright One Mocktail

Ingredients

- 1 cup - ice cubes, divided
- 1/2 oz. - lemon juice
- 1 T - clover honey, or 1 1/2 T clover honey simple syrup (see tips below)
- 1 oz. - yuzu juice
- 1/2 oz. - spirit-free gin
- 1 cup - ginger beer

Directions

Chill glass with 1/2 cup ice; remove once adequately chilled and discard

Combine lemon juice, clover honey, yuzu juice, and spirit-free gin in cocktail shaker

Shake with 1/2 cup remaining ice until chilling and dilution are achieved

Fine strain into a chilled stemmed glass

Top with ginger beer and garnish with mint leaves

Tip

Honey simple syrup is a great way to incorporate honey into drinks with ease.

To serve for a group of 8, use portions listed below, follow instructions for shaking, portion into glasses and invite guests to top with 1 cup ginger beer.

- 4 oz. lemon juice
- 8 T clover honey or 12 T clover honey syrup
- 8 oz. yuzu juice
- 4 oz. spirit-free gin

Recipe courtesy of mixologist Julia Momose, made for the National Honey Board

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

BEECABULARY

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!

Washboarding
Zombie Bees
Benzaldehyde

Flash heater
Honey sump
Mead



THE SOLAR WAX MELTER



BY FRAN MILLER

By this time of year you've most likely extracted your honey and may have a pile or 2 of wax cappings.

There are plenty of things you can do with wax, scraps included. After melting your beeswax, put it to use with one of these ideas:

- Use it as a lubricant to keep hinges from squeaking — it lasts longer than oil!
- Craft your own beeswax candles by pouring your melted wax into candle molds — there are hundreds of shapes and styles to choose from.
- Whip up some homemade natural skincare products, including soap, lotion, and lip balm, to enjoy for yourself or sell at your product table.
- Condition wooden cutting boards, bowls, and utensils with a mineral oil and beeswax mixture — simply apply it to the board with a clean cloth, rub it in, and buff away any excess.
- Apply a thick coat of melted beeswax to your plastic foundations to encourage the bees to build out comb.

Not going to use your wax? Sell it, trade it, or see if someone from your beekeeping association can use it.



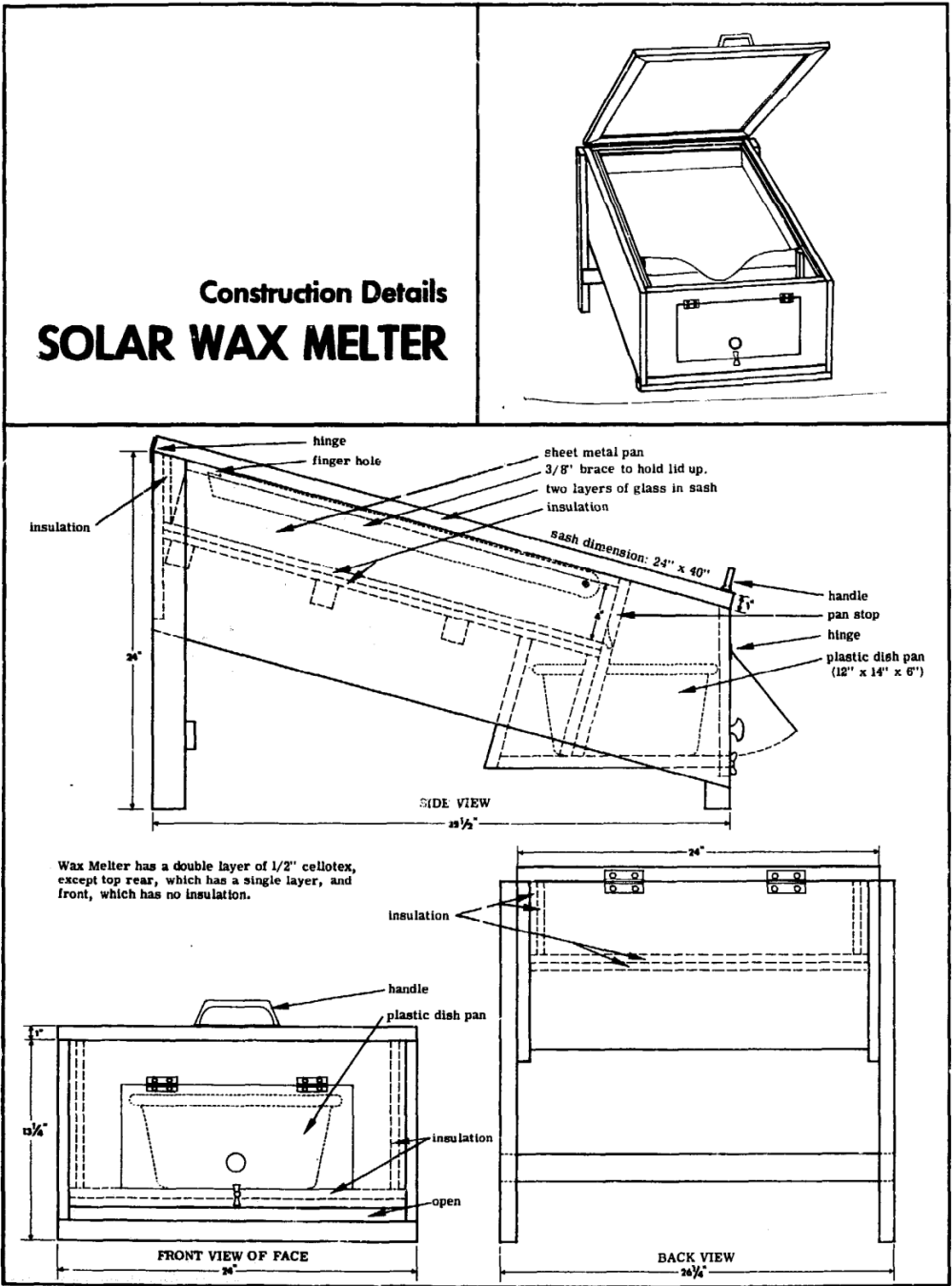
USING THE SUN

If you have a large amount of wax cappings you may want to consider using a solar wax melter.

A solar wax melter is a box with a filter and collection tray, covered with a glass lid. When the sun shines through the glass, it heats the interior of the box until the beeswax reaches its melting point at 145 degrees.

Solar wax melters can be purchased for \$180 to \$400 per unit or you can make one yourself, cost effectively, with materials you may have laying around.

Will Bee Director, Keith Meiser has provided us with [build plans to make your own solar wax melter!](#) Keith has personally built this unit and says it works great!



HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR USING A SOLAR WAX MELTER:

A solar melter is an easy tool for processing wax, but these quick tips and tricks will improve the process and produce even better results.

- The melting process itself separates the debris from the wax so cleaning isn't a requirement, but a quick rinse is beneficial: Simply rinse the cappings a couple of times in cool water before adding to the melter.
- A wax melter will work best when used on a level surface in a sunny location.
- Beeswax melts better when the temperature is above 75 degrees, but you may see progress on cooler days when the sun is bright.
- Solar melting is not a quick process, but if you check every few hours, you'll soon see progress.
- Large or extra dirty batches of wax may take multiple days to fully melt.
- Keep the screen, catch basin, and metal pan clean for best results.

Have you made your own solar wax melter? Do you have build plans you'd like to share? Let us know, we'd love to hear from you!

Teens and Honey

THIS MONTH'S BEE ADVOCATE
IS THE BRIDGE TEEN CENTER

The Bridge Teen Center is an innovative grassroots nonprofit community center that was designed around the interests and needs of teens in the suburbs. They opened in Orland Park in 2010, and have served over 14,000 different teens and families from 128 Chicago Southland and Northwest Indiana communities.



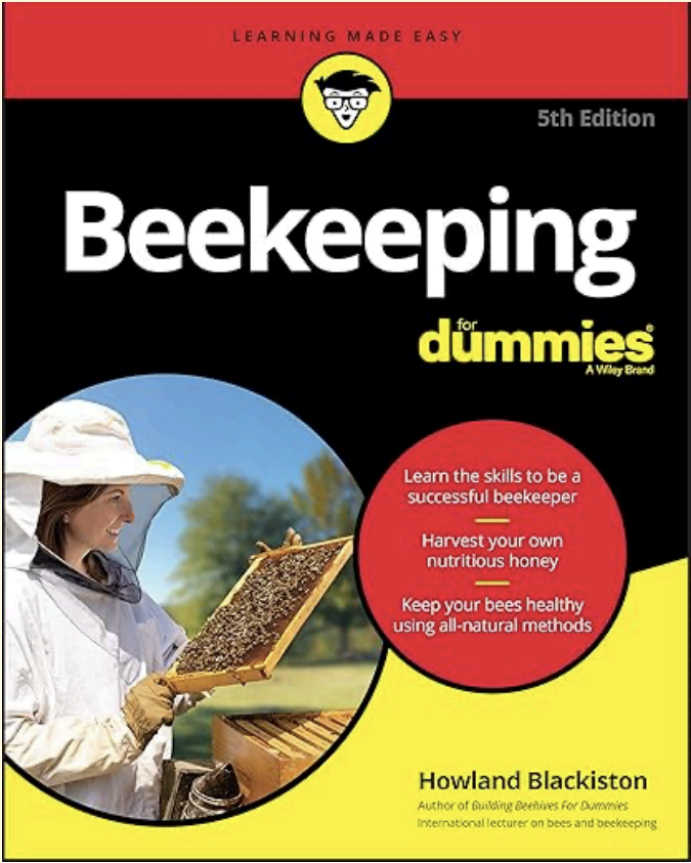
Their mission is to provide free programs during after-school and unsupervised hours where students can develop mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually in a safe environment. The vision of The Bridge Teen Center is to provide teens with a place to find hope, purpose, and direction.



The serve students in 7th-12th grade, and also provide ongoing programs and resources to help parents navigate through the teenage years. Because student safety is our primary concern, The Bridge is managed by experienced professionals who are supported by well-trained and pre-screened adult volunteers.

The Teen Bridge Center invited WillBees to come in to give a hands-on presentation. Beau graciously took-up the offer and led a demonstration on harvesting actual frames of honey which the kids really got a kick out of. Nice job Beau!

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



BOOK NOOK

Beekeeping For Dummies

By Howland Blackiston
Reviewed by Patrick Schab

Years ago when I decided to become a beekeeper, I was a dummy. I didn't know a lick about the hobby. I didn't know anything about a beehive and its components; I didn't know how to get bees, or how to install them. I didn't know how to tell the difference between a male, female, or a queen... shoot, I didn't know they were called workers and drones. Harvesting—when do you do that, and how?

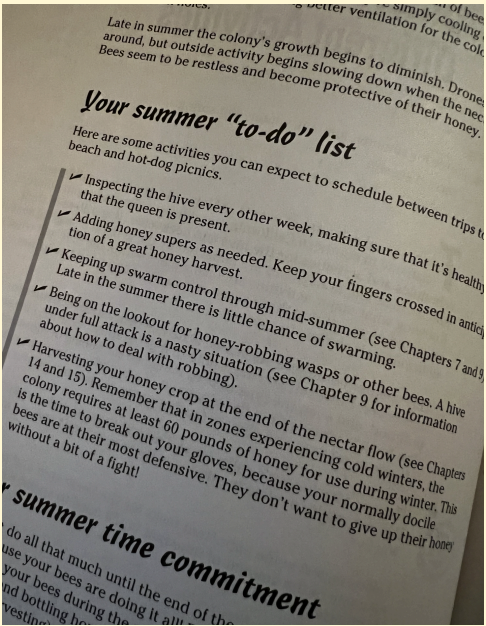
According to my dictionary, the fifth definition of a dummy is "an idiot, bonehead, fathead, numbskull, blockhead, dunderhead,

chucklehead," and the list goes on. Yikes, seems a bit harsh.

We are all dummies when we get into anything new, so if I wanted to have an even remote chance of making this bee gig come true, I had to start by educating myself. So, I bought my first book on beekeeping called, "Beekeeping for Dummies."

The cover says: "Learn to build and maintain your own beehives, handle all phases of honeybee production, use the latest tools and equipment, plus more." That was everything I needed to learn, and by golly, I feel it delivered on every level, especially for a dummy like me.

The book broke down the Langstroth hive, and provided a link to plans so I could build one. It spoke about optional equipment like queen excluders, how to assemble frames, and so on.



When it came to explaining the bee life cycle, it detailed all the phases from the queen laying eggs to the brood emerging.

It also did a nice job explaining how the beekeeper's job changes seasonally—from when to add supers to when it was time to remove them—all in easy-to-understand language.

Mites? Yes, that was covered as well. The center section features full-color reference photos for first-time beekeepers to peek into a hive, without actually opening it up.

This 358-page book did the trick for me, and even years later, it's still a good reference. Perhaps there's a page on keeping my smoker lit... Oh, there it is: page 114, "Lighting Your Smoker."

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.



BY KEITH MEISER

We were at the Fair!

Once again, we participated in an exhibit at the Will County Fair in Peotone in the Farm Bureau tent.

This year the weather was much more pleasant (last year reached 101 F) and we had many interested visitors with many questions. Almost everyone wanted to see the queen in the observation hive and this year's queen was elusive.

I want to thank our great volunteers who did such great work educating our visitors and answering all of their questions.

Thanks to: Felicia Akman, Joe Ardolino, Julia Copeland, Dominic Egizio, Jon and Susana Flodstrom, Russ Hook, Georgia Karras, Rick Lorenz, Dennis Maue, Anthony and Samantha Merkel, Fran Miller, Patrick Schab, Glenn and Sonja Skoff, Craig Theimer, Brian Vanderjack, Kevin Warns, Dennis Wisnoski, Beau Wright, and Mark and Grace Youell.

Special thanks to Fran Miller, who helped with the coordination, procured much of the educational materials, all of the individual official Willbees volunteers t-shirts, as well as the fair entrance passes, and also served 3 days at the exhibit, including the stressful closing night.

Also, Joe Ardolino, who not only participated but helped set up the exhibit the day before the opening and also the hectic teardown the last night and Felicia Akman who signed up, coordinated, and scheduled all of the volunteers.

I also want to give a special thanks to our youngest volunteer Samantha Merkel who stepped in and repeatedly found the queen for the assembled crowds when the rest of us "seasoned" beekeepers couldn't find her and expertly answered all the questions about beekeeping. She also stopped by on a couple other occasions (not scheduled) while at the fair, helping answer questions and explaining the details of the bees' lives. (She also won a Blue Ribbon for her 4H entry unrelated to beekeeping!)

UPCOMING ELECTION

Bored? Then Join Our Board

Here's your chance to make a difference and become involved in WillBees which has grown to over 100 members!

This November we'll be holding our elections with terms that range from 1 to 3 years.

Our club firmly believes that fresh perspectives make for fun, educational and engaging meetings. If you've enjoyed our meetings, field days, the BeeSpace newsletter and have some fresh perspectives on how to make our club even better, please come on board and contribute!

OPEN POSITIONS:

President (1 year) • Vice President (1 year)

Treasurer (1 year) • Secretary (1 year)

Director (3 years)



ON-GOING ED

SWOBA Upcoming Speaker Series – Summer & Fall 2025

All sessions begin at 7:30 PM ET on Sundays. We're excited to host the following guest speakers! Please see registration links below and feel free to share.

Mr. Jerry Hayes – M.S.

Date: Sunday, September 28

Topic: TBD

[Register](#)

Mr. Hayes has generously shared a discount code for Bee Culture Magazine:

Code: 25SWOBA (Valid through the end of 2025) Visit: www.beeculture.com

Mr. Dewey Caron – Ph.D.

Date: Sunday, October 26

Topic: TBD

[Register](#)

Interested in Dr. Caron's book? Email him directly at dmcaron@udel.edu or visit the contact page on the SWOBA website.

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 for more information.

WillBees Field Days: Fall

Sunday, September 14, 2025 2 – 5pm

Dennis's Apiary

26153 W Renwick Rd. (SE corner of Renwick and County Line Rd)

Our third and final Field Day event will help set-up Dennis's apiary for winter. We will be looking at several hives to determine if they are strong enough for the winter and decide if we need to feed them to help with their honey stores, or to combine smaller hives that may be struggling.

Note: All attendees are required to sign a waiver and wear protective gear. More details to come.

Interesting Reads and Watches:

Record US Honey Bee Losses and What Mite Be Behind Them – [Click here](#)

Scientists Found Sticky Goo Inside a 2,500-Year-Old Jar. Seventy Years Later, They Finally Know What It Is – [Click here](#)

ODDS & ENDS



The Golden Spoon Award

Did you harvest some really tasty honey? Then enter the Prestigious Golden Spoon Award honey competition which will be held during our member appreciation meeting in November. See our past winners on our brand new award plaque as you enter our member meetings.

Meyer Bees

The Meyer Bees beekeeping supply showroom in Minooka is open 5 days a week 10am - 4pm closed Wednesday and Sunday. For details please contact WillBees member Dave Meyer:

dave@meyerbees.com, or 815-521-9116 or visit their website at meyerbees.com

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>

Varroa mite management tools

Randy's Varroa Model on the Web

This tools helps the beekeeper plan treatment options in order to avoid colony “crash” in the off-season. <https://chickab>

Honey Bee Health Coalition Mite Management Tool

<https://honeybeehealthcoalition.org/varroatool/>

Share what you know

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

- Review of a book or article in a journal you read
- An educational opportunity that you are aware of
- Recipe using honey you would like to share

Please email willbees-board@willbees.org with anything you’d like to share today.

Update your calendar for our upcoming WillBees meetings:

Wednesdays at 7pm:
Sep 17, Oct 15, Nov 19

BOARD MEMBERS

Patrick Schab, President
Joe Ardolino, Vice President
Craig Theimer, Treasurer
Fran Miller, Secretary

DIRECTORS (years remaining on term):

Keith Meiser (0)
Beau Wright (1)
Felicia Akman (2)