



[njbees.org](http://njbees.org)

# December 2015



## NORTHEAST NEW JERSEY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION OF NEW JERSEY

A division of New Jersey Beekeepers Association

President	Frank Mortimer	201-417-7309	3 <sup>rd</sup> V. Pres.	Karl Schoenknecht	201-891-0947
V. President	Rich Schluger	201-693-6949	Secretary	Jaimie Winters	551-486-7479
2 <sup>nd</sup> V. Pres.	John Gaut – <b>Mentor Coordinator</b>	201-961-2330	Treasurer	Bob Jenkins	201-218-6537

Meeting on: **Friday, December 18th at 7:30 PM**, Location: **Ramapo College of NJ, 505 Ramapo Valley Rd., Mahwah, NJ 07430**



*Bee Enthusiasts & Bee Curious always welcome!*



*Weather permitting.*



Please join us on **Friday, December 18th** for our annual holiday party. Time to celebrate the great strides our club has made this past year, mentoring excellence, headline speaker series, great members, good food and drink and finally the art and craft of keeping the bees! Please join us this Friday and make the party even better!

### **Yearly Dues are payable now!**



*Your \$25 yearly dues goes to fund all of our activities, our post meeting refreshments, club supplies and all other necessities required to bring the best possible programs, classes, mentoring and to introduce new beekeepers to the art and craft of the hobby we all love so much. See Bob Jenkins to make your timely dues payment and from all the officers,*

***“Thank you for your continued support.”***



## Message from the President:

Happy Holidays Northeast NJ Beekeepers!

I hope you are enjoying this lovely springtime weather! Seriously, please remember that when it's warm, your bees are active, and when they're active, they use more energy, and that means they consume more of their stored honey. It will be important to check the weight of your hives from now through April, as there is a greater chance of your bees running out of food and starving. We will talk about winter feeding starting in January, but always know that when in doubt, you can pour everyday granulated sugar on the inner cover. Also, never feed syrup at this time of year as the moisture can kill the bees if the weather turns cold, as it usually does in the winter.

One change I need to inform you about is that your dues are going up to \$25 per year. The extra five dollars will be going to the state portion of your dues. However, your branch officers met and we unanimously voted not to increase the branch portion of your dues, which is why dues are only going up by \$5. Please note that out of the \$25, only \$8 goes to our branch, the Northeast NJ Beekeepers.

This is the first increase the state has had in twenty years, and for what the state provides, it is a modest increase. Please remember that some very important bee legislation that positively impacts all of us was passed this summer and that happened because of all the work the state did. Further, the state produces and provides educational brochures, covers the insurance for our meeting place, as well as lobbies our state government to look favorably on beekeeping. We are a solid organization and we need both the state and the branches to continue to be successful at what they do so that all of us can benefit from what each part contributes to the success of every NJ beekeeper.

Your branch, thanks to our club fundraising activities and honorariums from speaking engagements has been able to support our robust guest speaker series, and 2016 will be even more exciting. The Northeast will continue to bring in the speakers who are nationally known for their work or research with bees, as well as local personalities who have something unique to share. Our club is passionate about providing an educational environment for all of our members and it is one of the things that makes our club, YOUR club, so special. This past year, we raised the bar by implementing the best mentor program the beekeeping world has ever seen, and it will only continue to get better. As I look back on 2015, I am very proud of all that we, the members, have accomplished. More people have stepped forward to do their part to make our club a better place and each of us has benefited tremendously. This Friday is our holiday party, a time to celebrate being a beekeeper, our club, and one another. I hope you will join us for some delicious food, lots of bee talk, and a good time with great people. It will be a bee-utiful time!

Happy Holidays,

**Frank Mortimer**

**President, Northeast NJ Beekeepers**



## What I Learned From the Bees This Year

John A. Gaut

Another trip around the sun is nearly over. I'll be setting some beekeeping goals and planning next year soon. First I want to reflect back on some of the things I learned this year. One of the things I like about working with the bees is I learn so much! Working with other beekeepers really expands the learning too.

What are some of the things I learned either from my colonies or working with others?

Raising Queens is a lot of work and you have to stay on a firm schedule. The queens are going to emerge even if the weather is not good or I am away. So I need to schedule my other activities around the queen's schedules! Once the queens have emerged and successfully mated, it is very satisfying to see the new queens starting to lay her new lineage. Hopefully the queens do a good job for other beekeepers too.

It is very stressful for a colony to raise queens. A lot of the colony's resources go into feeding the young queens. I should not expect to get much of a honey crop from the colonies that are raising queens.

The viruses the mites carry are getting much more virulent. 18 viruses have been identified so far! I've been called by some unfortunate beekeepers whose colonies quickly collapsed due to mites and the viruses. In the past, the colonies dwindled slowly with high mite loads. This year I and others have seen colonies that collapsed in a few weeks. These were strong colonies with plenty of honey and pollen. A few weeks later, only a hand full of bees and the queen remained. (Did part of the colony just fly, abscond off without the queen?)

One huge lesson is that the mites need to be monitored continuously. And just because the colony was treated does not mean the mite levels are low! I had one colony that had low mites all summer and was treated with ApiVar. All of a sudden they had high mites! (Did they rob a weak colony loaded with mites?) So I had to do a follow up treatment. They may have not made it through the winter if I did not find the high mite level with an alcohol wash.

Screened bottom boards with an IPM board are very useful for monitoring activities and health of the colony. I can get a good sense of how and what a colony is doing by looking at the debris on the IPM board. If I see wax scales, I know the wax builders are active. I also can get a sense of any small hive beetle problems or wax moth problems. I can also see if there may be a mite problem. The IPM board is just an initial indicator for mite load; an alcohol wash is a much better indicator. The IPM board is like a smoke detector; if I see smoke (e.g. mites, mouse droppings and other pests), I'll investigate further.

Working with new beekeepers, it is important to not only give them guidance but also to be sure they understand the reasons. Beekeeping is very situational; the guidance given in one situation may not be right for the next time. The beekeeper needs to understand why a suggestion is being made (usually related to bee biology and behavior); they can then make better decisions on their own.

Swarming can be minimized by making sure there is plenty of room above the brood nest for nectar storage. A colony starts swarm preparation the previous fall by building honey reserves. The colony will swarm in the spring unless they have plenty of room to store additional nectar. New beekeepers with strong colonies had difficulty preventing swarms since they only had foundation.

Nosema can be an issue. I need to monitor Nosema, just like mites. Looking at the prevalence (number of bees infected) is a better indicator than average spore count.

I feel better having an electric fence around the hives.

At the beginning of the season, I did a little study for mite load assessment; alcohol wash, sugar shake and IPM board. I got consistent results between the alcohol wash and sugar shake. The alcohol wash was much easier and quicker. The sugar shake was messy and sticky. The IPM board is very easy to look at but is just a preliminary indicator, an early warning.

With the warm weather, many beekeepers are worried about the colony going through their stored honey. The weights on my hives have been staying either steady or decreasing only slightly. While the bees have been active in the warm weather, they do not seem to need much energy (honey). The colonies that are decreasing slightly are typically still raising a little brood (requiring both honey and pollen). Still, I check the hive weights frequently to insure there is enough honey for the cold weather in January and February and brood rearing in March and April. After observing hive weights for several years, the colony needs the energy (honey) in the cold weather to maintain a cluster temperature and then needs nutrition (honey and pollen) in the early spring for brood rearing.

Beekeeping truly is partnership with the bees and nature. If I can help the bees survive the parasites, diseases and pests, they may be able to make a little extra honey for me. It is very challenging for each of us hold our parts of the bargain.

# BEEKEEPERS



## **Save The Date!**

Big news for the Northeast New Jersey Beekeepers!

Tom Seeley, biologist, professor and prize winning author of "Honeybee Democracy" and headline speaker will be coming to our meeting to present to the club in exactly one year. It will be a great meeting so mark your calendars now!



## **Northeast NJ Beekeepers Christmas Party- Bee there!**



The Northeast NJ Beekeepers Association will hold its annual Christmas Party Friday, Dec. 18, 7:30 p.m. at Ramapo College. This year there will be noshing on appetizers from Annabella's Salumeria and a mead toast provided by our generous board. We will also have a tricky tray with the following baskets created and donated by our members: Bee Gardening Delight, Mead Tasting, Bee Feeder Galore, A bee silk tie, Everything Chocolate, A gorgeous porcelain bee bowl, Bath and Body Works Pampering, and All Things Honey. We also have received a BIG donation of a Nuc from Grant Stiles, our Nuc Go To Guy, which will be a separate raffle. Tickets for the tricky tray will be 5 for \$10, 10 for \$15. Chances for the Nuc will be \$5 each. Drawings for all prizes will be towards the end of the evening. Members are reminded to bring a desert of their choice to share. Family is also invited. Please email Jaimie Julia Winters with any questions at [jaimw@aol.com](mailto:jaimw@aol.com). And we hope to see you there on the 18th!



## **New Jersey Beekeepers Association Fall 2015 Meeting**

Several beekeepers from the Northeast Branch attended the fall meeting at Liberty Corners. The agenda featured presentations from Mike Gardener (produces packages and queens in Georgia), Grant Stiles (a commercial beekeeper based in New Jersey) and Tim Schuler.

Chris Yates is the chairman of the associations nominating committee. Officers are elected every two years. The next election will be at the winter meeting (February 13, 2016). Chris is asking for members to make nominations for all the officers of the state organization.

Jeff Burd provided an update for the Eastern Apiculture Society Conference 2016 Conference. The EAS conference will be hosted by the NJBA at the Richard Stockton College in Gallaway, NJ between July 25th and 29th. Monday and Tuesday will be short courses and the main education sessions will be on Wednesday through Friday. This a great opportunity for New Jersey beekeepers to learn more about beekeeping and meet other beekeepers from eastern Canada and the eastern US. Please put the dates on your calendar and plan to attend!

Joe Alvarez updated the group on the progress of the Meadow Project. The Meadow Project has planted late season pollinator plants on some utility right-of-ways in October. The Project is also providing education for the general public, landscapers, utilities and municipalities about planting for pollinators. Ramapo College has an early test site next to the student's hive.

Tim Schuler, our State Apiarist provided an update on his activities this season including:

- Developing State Regulations for Beekeeping (eliminating the need for each municipality to have their own)
- Pollen Survey from 6 land use types across NJ (the results should be available for presentation at the winter meeting)
- Beginning and Advanced Beekeeping Courses
- National Honey Bee Survey (inspecting and sampling queen and nuc producers in the state)

Mike Gardner was invited to speak because he provides many of the packages to beekeepers in New Jersey. Mike owns a very large beekeeping operation in Baxley, Georgia. Mike originally began keeping bees in Minnesota for pollination. Gardener Bees produces 235,000 queens a year; 50,000 of those go into his packages. Most of the queens and packages are produced between March 15th and May 15th. Gardener works very hard to maintain mite levels near zero so they can provide quality bees and queens. The business also produces some honey in the remainder of the year.

Grant Stiles talked about the process he follows to produce Nucs (5 frame nucleus hives/colonies). Grant starts with strong colonies that have Varroa under control and are disease free. (The club has sold nucs from Grant Stiles for the past two years and will be taking orders for his nucs in January 2016.)

There were a few common themes presented by both Mike Gardner and Grant Stiles.

- Both work very hard to keep Varroa to near zero. They know Varroa is still there but proactively manage mites to insure the quality of the queens, bees and nucs they are selling.
- The hours are long, especially in the spring and the work can be tedious. They depend on conscientious employees to get all the work done and maintain quality
- They really are trying to produce good queens, packages and nucs at the time promised. Weather is always an unknown factor.

Tim Schuler reviewed the “Considerations When Purchasing Bees.”

- Order early (e.g. January)
- If buying Nucs, verify the number of frames; could be 4 or 5. There should be 3 frames of brood in all stages (eggs, open larvae, and capped brood) and one or two frames of honey and pollen.
- Questions for the supplier should include:
  - Is a deposit needed?
  - Estimated delivery date?
  - If a nuc, does the beekeeper need to supply the nuc box?
  - If a package, how long have the bees been in the package?
  - Were the bees treated for Varroa?
- Care for the new bees include:
  - Provide some ventilation (with little or no air movement).
  - Keep in warm/moderate temperatures (not cool and not hot)
  - The bees may need water – Spray with a little water
  - Install as soon as possible (not in rainy, windy or cold conditions).
  - Feed – Feed – Feed
  - Treat for Varroa – ApiVar is recommended (one strip for 5 frames of bees)

The next state meeting will be on February 14th. The meetings are always informative. Sometimes the locations are a bit of a drive for some of us, so we carpool!





**1,417 Strong!!!**

We quickly blew through the 1000 member milestone and are, as of this writing 1,417 members strong, and growing on our Facebook page! Be sure check it out. See the great pics and stories posted by the Facebook fans we have at our page.

**Remember:** <http://www.nnjbees.org> is your website! Check that site for everything Northeast New Jersey Beekeeping!



**Mary Ann's Gourmet Market**  
 1011 MacArthur Blvd.  
 Mahwah, NJ 07430  
 201-962-8611  
[www.maryannsgourmetmarket.com](http://www.maryannsgourmetmarket.com)

**Next Month**

The Northeast NJ Beekeepers in a joint meeting with our sister branch, Essex Beekeepers, will welcome Master Beekeeper Billy Davis from Leesburg, VA who will speak on sustainable beekeeping.

**All Beekeepers Receive 10% Off!**

❖ Volunteers ❖	
Tom Miller	Refreshments – Cakes, cookies, brownies, tea, etc.
Jennifer Phillips	Refreshments – Cakes, cookies and other treats
Billy Neumann	Club photographer
Hugh Knowlton	Workshop/Event coordinator and presenter
Mike Miller	Club apparel
Emma Stein	Resident artist
Bob Slanzi	Meadmaster