

# Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association

**NEXT MEETING:**  
TUESDAY October 22nd  
7:00-9:00 Program  
Georgetown Public Library

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Lisa Hoekstra

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## Meeting Dates

Tuesday October 22nd  
Tuesday November 26th  
No meeting in December  
Tuesday January 28th

Meetings are the 4th  
Tuesday of each month.

## October Program

7:00 pm Fall Preparation & Wintering  
Products of the Hive - Dodie Stillman & Barbi Rose



*Picture by Orms Bryan*

# What is a “race” of bees?

An article from Phil Ainslie, President

**Eversweet Apiaries**  
Honeybees are usually selected for their positive traits which are passed down from the queen & the drones she mated with.

There are pros & cons for each breed's traits. This is a fair, very generalized representation of their trait potentials. There are just trait tendencies, but all beekeepers should always be aware of their bees. This material should only be used as a basic reference since many factors such as environment, water levels, viruses, etc., can determine how these breeds will behave. Further research is recommended in choosing the right breed for your personal preference, environment, etc. These breeds are the most common in the United States.

This was collected from WV Dept. of Ag's "Beekeeping in West Virginia"

TRAIT TENDENCY	AFRICAN BUCKFAST	CARNIOLAN	CAUCASIAN	CORDOVAN*	ITALIAN	RUSSIAN
CALM ON COMBS	1	10	8	10	7	5
DEFENSIVE BEHAVIOR	10	1	1	1	2	7
EARLY BROOD BUILD UP	10	8	10	6	5	10
FORAGES EARLY	5	10	10	1	5	10
HONEY STORAGE	1	10	10	8	8	10
NECTAR COLLECTION	10	10	10	10	10	10
NOSEMA RESISTANT	10	5	6	1	5	5
OVERWINTERS WELL	1	10	10	10	5	10
POLLEN COLLECTION	5	5	10	5	5	5
PROPOLIS COLLECTION	5	5	2	10	5	5
SWARM TENDENCY	10	2	5	2	5	7
TRACHEAL MITE RESISTANT	8	10	8	3	5	9
VARROA MITE RESISTANT	10	3	4	3	3	5

1 = Low Tendency for Trait      10 = High Tendency for Trait

\* EVERSWEET NOTE: TRUE CORDOVANS ARE BRED FOR COLOR VARIATION & THIS IS ACHIEVED THROUGH CONTROLLED BREEDING (ARTIFICIAL INBREEDING OR ISOLATED MATING AREAS). GENERALLY, COLOR IS THE ONLY DIFFERENTIAL TRAIT & DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A DIFFERENT BREED.

A race of bees is akin to a breed of dogs. They have names like Italians, Russian, Cordovan or Buckfast. As a beekeeper, you have a considerable number of choices and, over time, you will likely establish your own preferences.

But what exactly is a race of bees and what are the differences?

All honey bees have similar traits and are therefore classified in the same taxonomic genus and species. The differences that occur below that level are what lead to races or breeds of honey bees, just as the differences in K9s define the different breeds.

The characteristics that differ among the various races of honey bees are subtle, but can make a difference in the success or failure of your hive.

The factors at play include:

- Whether they are docile
- Likelihood to swarm
- Tendency to raise brood late in the year, thus requiring more honey reserves for the winter
- Suitability to the local environment
- Resistance to diseases
- Production of honey
- Production of propolis
- Ability to cope with cold weather

It isn't too difficult for someone with a trained eye to identify the different kinds of bees based on their physical appearance.

Let's look at some of the more common races.

## Races of Bees

### Italian

#### Description

Italian worker bees are light in color, while the queen is a bit darker, which makes her easy to locate. Worker bees also have alternating stripes on their abdomen.

#### History

Originally from the Apennine Peninsula in Italy, Italian bees were introduced to America in 1859 and quickly replaced the original black or German bees brought over by the first colonists.

#### Characteristics

Italian bees are the most popular bees to order in North America. They are known for being gentle and good honey producers. They are typically reared in the south and have difficulty in colder climates, as they need to consume extra food to compensate for not forming a tight cluster the way other honey bee types do. Italian bees are strong foragers and do a great job keeping their hive clean.

On the down side, Italian bees tend to swarm and their sense of direction isn't as strong as other bees, so they may drift from one colony to another and frequently rob. This can contribute to the spread of diseases between hives.

New to beekeeping? Consider Italian.

When starting out, you can't go far wrong with Italian bees. Their gentle nature and productivity provide a great way for new beekeepers to become comfortable around bees.

## Russian

### Description

Russian bees are dark brown to black in color and the yellow part of the abdomen is paler.

### History

Russian bees originated in the Primorsky region, which is also home to Varroa and Tracheal mites. As such, they've developed a natural tolerance to these hive pests.

Due to this tolerance, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) brought them to the US in June 1997 to breed mite tolerance into US bee stock. They went on sale to the public in 2000.

### Characteristics

Russian bees are highly resistant to mites and accustomed to cold climates. As such, they overwinter well. Unfortunately, they also tend to swarm, so it's important for the beekeeper to provide extra space in the hive to prevent unwanted swarming.

Russian bees are highly sensitive to the amount of nearby foraging resources available. They will regulate the production of brood in times of dearth, which may be beneficial in climates where the amount of food available is heavily dependent upon the seasons.

Russian bees tend to be slightly more aggressive, although this doesn't always mean stinging. They've been observed engaging in head butting rather than stinging potential threats and guard their hive vigilantly, making them less likely to be robbed.

Russians are a good bet for the new beekeeper. They do have one or two characteristics that should be carefully considered, such as the local foraging situation through the year. They do well in cold climates.

## Cordovan

### Description

Cordovan bees are technically a subset of Italian bees with more yellow coloring. They're also gentler than their Italian cousins and slightly more likely to rob. They are quite striking to observe, with their bright yellow bodies and lack of stripes.

### History

It is not clear what caused the Cordovan bees to veer off from Italian strains and become their own race of bees. In theory, this could happen with any of the different bee types, but thus far in America it's only been observed with Italian bees.

### Characteristics

Other than being somewhat gentler and more prone to robbing, these bees behave just like the Italians from which they evolved. They are rarely available in a package of bees, unlike Italians, so are often considered wilder.

Cordovan bees are a close relative of Italians.

They do well in warm weather. In such environments, they are a fine choice for the new beekeeper, if available (they are not always available as a package and it may be necessary to catch a swarm).

## Caucasian

### Description

Caucasian bees are silver-gray to dark brown in color. They have a longer tongue than many other bee types and are therefore able to take advantage of more nectar sources.

### History

Caucasian bees are originally from the high valleys of the Central Caucas region. This region is between the Black and Caspian seas, making them highly cold tolerant.

### Characteristics

Caucasian bees are known for high propolis production. The propolis they produce is soft and sticky, which can make it hard for beekeepers to inspect the hive. They stop producing brood in the fall and tend to overwinter quite well. In addition, because they are from a cold region they can forage on colder days than other bee races.

Caucasian bees show some resistance to European Foul Brood and are not overly inclined to swarm. Due to their high propolis production, they are not known for being honey comb producers and tend to conserve their honey stores as a result.

Finally, they are susceptible to Nosema and tough to find in packages, though it is possible.

Caucasian bees are another reasonable choice for the new beekeeper

Their tendency to produce great volumes of propolis can create a few challenges. They are not generally considered the greatest producers of honey.

## Carniolan

### Description

Carniolan bees are dark with brown spots or bands on their abdomen. They're slightly smaller than other races of bees, but that doesn't seem to correlate to their ability to forage and bring pollen and nectar stores back to the hive.

### History

Carniolan bees come from the Austrian Alps, Yugoslavia, and Danube Valley regions. They can be found across much of Eastern Europe including Hungary, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

### Characteristics

Carniolan bees are incredibly gentle and easy to work with. Due to their region of origin, they are more likely to forage on cold, wet days than other types of bees and rank among the best for overwintering.

In addition, they create very little propolis and build up their numbers rapidly in the spring. Carniolan bees are also adept at handling dearths and rapidly adjust brood production based on the availability of food. They are a little more likely to swarm than Italians, so it's important to be sure they have plenty of room. When it comes to hive diseases and pests, Carniolan bees tend to be quite capable of fending off parasites and show good resistance to some diseases.

Carniolan bees are an excellent choice for the new beekeeper. They are particularly so for those more interested in helping bees than harvesting honey or in cold climates.

## Buckfast

### Description

Buckfast bees are yellow to brown in color and resemble what many people consider when picturing a honey bee.

### History

Buckfast bees are a hybrid. They were developed in the 20th century by Brother Adam of Buckfast Abbey in southwest England. The stock was imported to the United States, by way of Canada, and is now readily available in the US.

### Characteristics

Buckfast bees are resistant to Tracheal mites and do well in cool climates. They are very gentle, easy to work with and are excellent honey producers. They have a low tendency to swarm and are economical in the use of winter stores.

Cold, wet winters are the norm for Buckfast bees, so they're accustomed to building up the hive size quickly in the spring. Consider Buckfast bees for cold, damp climates.

Buckfast bees are a great choice for backyard hobbyists who'd like to get a little honey out of the deal.

## Africanized

### Description

Africanized honey bees are fuzzy and brownish in color. They look like their Italian counterparts, making it tough to know if a hive has been taken over by Africanized genetics.

### History

Africanized honey bees are actually a hybrid. They were created in Brazil by crossing the African bee with Italian bees in the 1950s to increase honey production.

In 1957, 26 of these experimental swarms escaped quarantine and quickly took over South America. In 1985, they made their way to the US and have since spread through most of the south.

### Characteristics

Africanized honey bees are known for being highly aggressive and, unlike their more docile cousins, will chase a person up to a quarter of a mile if they perceive a threat. There are more than 1,000 documented cases of Africanized bees killing humans and other large animals, such as horses.

They begin foraging younger than other honey bee types and frequently produce more honey. They also reproduce faster than other honey bees, meaning they require more food.

Africanized bees are NOT a good choice for the new beekeeper.

Just don't!

## Summary

With the many different types of bees available, it can be tough to know where to start. Based on the individual characteristics of each type of bee, some races of bees are better suited to new hobbyist beekeepers than others.

What are the best bees for beginners?

In general, Italian, Carniolan, or Buckfast bee stock are the great choices for beginning beekeepers, depending on climate. But there are many choices.



*Picture by Orms Bryan*

# October Newsletter

*from S. S. Brantley, Life Member Texas Beekeepers Association*

November is an important time for beekeepers. One important decision to be made is, "Am I going to the TBA Convention to listen to learned speakers that should be able to help me improve my beekeeping ability?" I encourage you to join me there.

Another decision concerns queen and Nucs. Now is the time to contact your chosen queen producers to see if they are ready to take orders for queens to be delivered in 2020. I have noticed journal advertisements indicating some breeders are already accepting orders. Are you going to want to order Nucs? If so, how many and are the suppliers ready to book your orders for the delivery date you desire? If you are advised that it is still too early to place an order, ask the supplier when they will be ready to start taking orders and mark your calendar. Remember, demand usually exceeds the supply so don't be late in placing your orders.

In the past, I have also advised that you should inventory your equipment needs and place your orders for woodenware and other items. In today's world of Internet shopping, I guess the best advice I can give is to watch the supplier's websites for spur of the moment sales, in-store sales, and equipment items that are being discontinued. The competitive marketing between suppliers sometimes leads to good discounts that can save you money.

In the beeyard, if you are tired of mowing and weed eating around your hives (an activity that usually agitates bees and sometimes gets you stung), consider placing carpet on the ground around your hives. Contact local carpet stores and ask if they will give you some old carpet removed from homes or businesses. This can be placed around the hives to prevent the growth of grass and weeds. If you are concerned about fire ants under the carpet, I have found you can fold back the carpet and spread the

fire ant bait, then put the carpet back in place. The ants will still be attracted to the bait but the bees will not be able to collect the granules and take them into the hive. A side benefit of using carpet around your hives is that you will be able to easily see dead bees on the carpet beneath the landing board, letting you know something is happening inside your hive.

Have you checked your mite level since removing your supers? I know you get tired of being advised to check our mite levels but I believe regular mite checks and appropriate follow-up treatment results in fewer hive losses. Plus, a side effect is that you will be able to determine first hand if the hive has a queen problem or disease problem. Remember, you are required to report any signs of AFB to our state inspection service. You can obtain AFB test kits from most bee supply companies that will assist in making a better determination.

Watch activity at the hive entrance to determine the amount of pollen being stored. Do the two-finger lift on the back of the hive to check for weight of stores. If you have double brood box hives, you may have to use Three Fingered lift, especially if the hive is well stored. Your object is to determine if the hive feels heavy with stores or whether you should provide supplemental feeding.

Small Hive Beetles are not as active now that the weather is cooling. However, be aware that sliming of the hive is still possible. Screen bottom boards with an oil tray underneath can help reduce SHB numbers in a hive. You do not need to close the screened bottom board for winter in our area. If the hive has a good population of bees and sufficient stored honey, they will be fine with open bottom boards through the winter.

*Picture  
by  
Orms Bryan*



# WCABA Honey Judging & Honey Tasting Results

The Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association conducted their annual Honey Judging and Honey Tasting Contest on September 24<sup>th</sup> at the regular monthly meeting.

It was well attended and supported by the beekeeping membership as many entered the 2# jar to be judged and sent on to the State Fair in Dallas, and many more submitted samples of their extracted honey to the tasting contest to see which tasted best.

Twelve jars of local honey were received for evaluation by the panel of three local judges using a standard cumulative 100 points to determine the placement of each jar and the resulting ribbon received. All 12 entries were judged worthy of the blue ribbon, scoring above 90 points, and each is now on display in the Texas Beekeepers Honey Booth at the Fair in Dallas. Congratulations!



*Judging Honey: Chris Doggett, Jennifer Shear & Glenn Patterson*

The honey tasting was more involved and more participatory yet seemed to be enjoyed by all.

The “Tasters Choice” contest had an impressive 28 entries this year ranged in color from light to a few quiet dark samples. The contest being based only on taste, the color was not so much a concern, but whether it tasted good. The membership participated by tasting each sample and voting according to their personal preference; they were the judges.



*Honey Tasting by Members*

The winning sample of wildflower honey was submitted by Dodie Stillman having received thirteen votes and garner the Blue Ribbon. The second place Red Ribbon went to three recipients with a score of 10 votes, Sterling Kinghorn, Jimmie Oakley, and Warren Saunders. The White Ribbon for third place, with 9 votes, went to Elizabeth Exley and



*Taster's Choice Winners: Dodie Stillman (Blue) , Jimmie Oakley & Sterling Kinghorn (Red), and Elizabeth Exley (White) Not Pictured: Warren Saunders (Red)*

Charles Gersbach. a sample submitted by Linda Russell.

Voting was very close on all the samples with several tied for fourth, fifth and sixth place.

These two events each year offer local beekeepers the opportunity to show their honey and let it shine. Plan now to participate and be part of it next year.

Jimmie Oakley



## More Honey Tasting & Judging Pictures



*All 12 Entries Going to State Fair Win a Blue Ribbon*



*Jimmie Oakley reads names of Winners Present: Sharon Stephenson, Phil Ainslie, William Janke, Gene Wallace, Gillian & James Barber, Ann Bierschenk, and Matt Ludlum.  
Not Pictured: Carter Fojtik, Eli Crozier and Butch Miller*

# Honey Queen Coronation

*from Ginny Stubblefield, Honey Queen Chair*

During our September meeting, I introduced our new Honey Queen, Ashley Guzman. She lives in Kempner, Texas. Her parents are Erika and Jorge Guzman. She has a little brother whose name is Alexander.

Ashley is a Junior at Lampasas High School. She has a dual enrollment with Central Texas College. Her interests include former band membership, theater, hunting with her father, swim team and taking care of her honey bees.

Ashley is being mentored for beekeeping by Alaine Heivilin. Alaine said Ashley is an excellent student and loves her bees. Ashley's knowledge of bees will make her an excellent choice as our WCABA Honey Queen. Please introduce yourselves to Ashley during our meetings so she can get to know everyone.

Our new Honey Queen represented the WCABA at the Texas State Fair in the Go Texan Pavilion on the weekend of October 12-13. Ashley and other Honey Queens did demonstrations to Fair attendees of recipes which included honey.





# WCABA Scholarship Recipients to Sell Honey at the Hill Country Fair

Jimmie Oakley WCABA Scholarship Chair

It has been a good year for Scholarship Recipients to make and extract honey as has been reported in the newsletter. Now it is time to convert some of the harvested wealth into future benefit to the Scholarship Program in the form of honey sales to the public to increase our reserve of capital for future recipients. In other words, we are going to hold another Fall sell of honey to raise money for next year's scholarship recipients in the "honey booth" at the **Hill Country Arts and Crafts Fair** to be held on Saturday November 2<sup>nd</sup> (9-5PM) and Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup> (11-4PM) at the **Sun City Texas Social Center at 2 Texas Drive** in Georgetown.

In addition to selling honey the youngsters will be able to talk about bees, beekeeping, and the value and benefits of honey with

visitors to the booth. There will be an observation hive with live bees to enhance the conversation with the general public. The booth will be **located at site #827** in the Memorial Garden Area at the Fair (off the back patio on the grass by the lagoon).

The marketing of the scholarship honey in this way will complete the cycle the kids are learning about in production, processing, packaging and selling of the fruits of their labor. Additional help will be required to cover the time the booth will be open, and a volunteer signup sheet will be



Levi Hoskins shows McKenna Fojtik the observation hive



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2 | 9 A.M. TO 5 P.M.  
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3 | 11 A.M. TO 4 P.M.



Look for the WCABA Honey Booth at the Hill County Fair



The Talentino Family work the Booth



Great year for extracting Honey: the Brett's, Bramwell's and Crozier's

available for those wishing to help out. Also, donations of honey and money will be accepted at the October 22nd meeting.

Show our scholarship youngsters your support by being a part of this worthwhile activity. See Jimmie Oakley, Scholarship Committee Chair, for details or to sign up.

## Report from WCABA Honey Queen, Ashley Guzman

My name is Ashley Guzman and I am the WCABA Honey Queen. I am the daughter of Jorge and Erika Guzman. On October 12-13, I attended the State Fair in Dallas. I had to wake up around 5:00 a.m. so we could get into the Fair Grounds ahead of the Texas-OU Game fans! Once we got to the Go Texan Pavilion, all of the attending Honey Queens began to set up in the kitchen for our demonstrations of cooking with honey. I was incredibly nervous to talk in front of groups of people but I believed in myself. I got out there and told them about the three types of bees in a hive and demonstrated how to make hummus with honey.

The other Queens and I worked in the Honey Booth, talking to interested people walking in to learn more about bees and honey. It was fun relating to others and talking about my beekeeping experiences.

Since our demos didn't start until 4:00 p.m., we had the chance to walk around the Go Texan Pavilion and meet people in other booths. I made a close connection with one booth in particular, "Mild Bill's Gunpowder Foods". We talked about chili competitions. My dad is a HUGE chili fan so I knew he would enjoy hearing about them. We also got to visit a demonstration done by a celebrity chef.

I and the other Honey Queens gave demonstrations of various recipes of cooking with honey. After our demos, we passed out samples to our audience. They enjoyed getting to actually taste what we were cooking.

We got our photos taken in front of Big Tex, a State Fair tradition for Honey Queens. We were on a float in the State Fair Parade – what a treat! We didn't leave the Fair Grounds until about 11:00 p.m. After I got back to my hotel, I still had homework to do ....

I couldn't have done any of this without the help of the other Queens attending the Fair. I am truly grateful that I had the other Queens at my side giving me amazing advice and helpful tips. My thanks go to the American Honey Queen Hannah Sjostrom, Texas Honey Queen Mary Reisinger, Collin County Honey Queen Virginia Allen and Collin County Honey Princess Morgan Kiser.



*WCABA Honey Queen Ashley Guzman works the honey booth with ABF Honey Queen Hanna Sjostrom*



*WCABA Honey Queen Ashley Guzman prepares her recipe at the Texas State Fair*



*From left to right Celebrity Chef J P Mancha from Eat Right Meal Plans, American Honey Queen, Hanna Sjostrom, WCABA Honey Queen, Ashley Guzman, and Texas Honey Queen, Mary Reisinger*



*WCABA Honey Queen, Ashley Guzman, preparing her recipe for cooking demonstration*



*WCABA Honey Queen, Ashley Guzman in the Starlight Parade at the Texas State Fair on a beautiful float*

**New Members**

Chris & Jessica Leahy  
Eric McDaniel  
Florian Hyar

Killeen  
Georgetown  
Dale

**Renewing Members**

Rebecca Jemison  
Frank & Lu Morgan

Georgetown  
Copperas Cove

**Door Prize Donors**

Gary Carlile  
Lisa Hoekstra

**Door Prize Winners**

Hattie Mora  
Warren Sanders  
Jill Baker

Visit Our Website:  
[www.wcaba.org](http://www.wcaba.org)

Email Us At:  
[info@wcaba.org](mailto:info@wcaba.org)

**Texas Beekeepers Association**

**Annual Convention**

**November 7th - 9th, 2019**

**San Antonio Airport Hilton**

**Register at [texasbeekeepers.org](http://texasbeekeepers.org)**