WILLIAMSON COUNTY AREA BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

WCABA APRIL 2026 NEWSLETTER

www.wcaba.org

2026 Club Officers:

PRESIDENT: Sean O'Neil
president@wcaba.org

VICE PRESIDENT: Dusty Brinley
vicepresident@wcaba.org

MEMBERSHIP: Judee Brinley
membership@wcaba.org

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NEWSLETTER: Jimmie Oakley
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PAST PRES: Shannon Montez
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SCHOLARSHIP CHAIR: Jimmie Oakley
scholarship@wcaba.org

QUEEN CHAIR:
(vacent)

WEB ADMINISTRATOR: Sean O'Neil
webmaster@wcaba.org

DIRECTOR AT LARGE: Ken Browning

DIRECTOR AT LARGE: Ann Bierschenk

4th TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2026 @ 7PM
Georgetown Library - Friends Room (2nd Floor)

PROGRAM: NEW START TIME FOR Beekeeping 101

Beekeeping 101 [6:30 PM - Friends Room]

Speaker: **Sean O'Neil-Texas Master Beekeeper Program**

Utilizing Dr. Garett Slater's *Texas Master Beekeeper Program* curriculum, Sean will go through the basics of beekeeping found in the 10 modules course during our monthly meetings, so that by the end of the year you've learned everything you need to pass the *Apprentice* certification exam. This month's module is titled **Swarms and Reproduction**, a timely subject.



Sean O''Neil

Beekeeping 201 **Tips and Tricks**

Speaker: Becky Barajas: Gain some insight in beekeeping and learn some of the tricks of the trade from this experienced beekeeper and manager in the bee supply business *(The Bee Supply – Round Rock, Texas 78681)*
Becky will draw on her various involvement in different organizations to help us plan and understand the business side of beekeeping. Bring your questions for the Q&A.



Becky Barajas and Friends

Speaker Bio:

Becky Barajas has been an avid beekeeper for 11 years, from stewarding 2-40+ colonies, sitting on local and national boards, running conferences and clubs, winning dozens of ribbons, collecting honey from around the world (over 200 so far), writing for Bee Culture, volunteering with EAS, ABF, BIP and others. She loves to travel educating all age groups on beekeeping.

We would certainly enjoy your presence at the next meeting on February 24th (***fourth*** Tuesday), but if you can't, then tune in to broadcast virtually via "Zoom". If you are planning to join from an iPhone or iPad, be sure to download this application first: https://apps.apple.com/us/app/zoom-cloud-meetings/id546505307

We look forward to seeing you there Tuesday night @ 7PM!
GT Library - Friends Room– 402 W 8th Street Georgetown 78626
Topic: **WCABA Member Meeting Speaker Presentation**
Time: This is a recurring meeting Meet anytime
Join Zoom Meeting
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82475068933?pwd=aHRiRjc3bS9kYXJGS2g5THVpOEx2UT09
Meeting ID: 824 7506 8933. Passcode: 909659

Thanks for Showing Up!

…a note from your President



Sean O'Neil - President

Bee Delivery Day was, by every reasonable measure, a success, and a big part of that is because we were, frankly, over-staffed. We put out the call for volunteers and got back roughly twice what was needed. We had people standing around looking for something to do; I was just left wishing we had more going on!

Thank you. Sincerely. To everyone who showed up early, stayed late, hauled nucs, answered the same five questions thirty times, and made new members feel like they'd walked into something good.

I hope you've all felt the change, as I have, happening with this club lately. More faces at meetings. More people showing up early and sticking around afterward to talk. There's a sense of community building here, and I want us to keep nurturing that trend.

Which brings me to my next challenge, let's do more stuff together. Meetings and Bee Delivery Day shouldn't be the only days of the year we all see each other in one place. A few ideas I've been kicking around:

- A summer apiary tour where members host and we caravan between a few hives to see how everyone's doing things differently
- A honey extraction day, equipment shared, BYO supers
- A late-summer potluck, ideally featuring at least one dish that is aggressively honey-themed
- A fall mead-making or mead-tasting night
- A winter equipment-building workshop when there's nothing else to do and we're all going stir-crazy
- A field trip to a commercial operation or a bee research program within driving distance

Truly, if there's something you've always wanted the club to do, tell me. If you'd be willing to host something at your place, tell me that too. The club is the people in it, and right now the people in it seem genuinely excited to be here.

Let's keep it going!

Sean

Research Pearls

Contributed by Phil Ainslie



Phil Ainslie - Secretary

Poo for defense:

University of Guelph researchers discovered that honeybees in Vietnam defend against giant hornet raids by applying animal dung around hive entrances, marking the first documented instance of tool use by honeybees. The study, published in PLOS ONE, found that the odoriferous manure acts as a deterrent, reducing the time hornets spend attacking nests by over 50 percent.

The Science of the Wax Cell Shape

Honeybee wax cell: Smart or physics? While many believe honey bees are master architects, evidence suggests they actually build cylindrical cells that naturally transform into hexagons.

Bees use their mandibles and body heat to mold secreted wax into tubes that fit their bodies. As these cylinders are packed tightly together, the bees' body heat (around 45°C/113°F) softens the wax, causing it to flow. Much like soap bubbles, when these circular walls touch, they flatten against one another. Because the cells are uniform and packed in a grid, this physical pressure naturally forces the round walls into a hexagonal pattern.

Evidence for the Theory

- Irregularities: In areas where cells of different sizes meet (like worker and drone cells) and are not perfectly packed, they often form irregular four- or five-sided shapes rather than hexagons.
- Isolated Cells: Queen cells, which are built away from the main comb and do not touch other cells, remain cylindrical.
- Universal Physics: Other social insects, such as wasps, create similar hexagonal structures, suggesting the shape is a result of physical laws rather than a unique bee "intelligence."

From Honeybeesuite.com

Pollen holds a secret that could save honeybees

This article details a discovery by researchers at Washington College and the University of Wisconsin–Madison regarding the symbiotic relationship between plants, bees, and beneficial bacteria.

The key points are:

- The Discovery: Researchers found that pollen contains "endophytes"—symbiotic bacteria (specifically from the phylum actinobacteria) that live inside plant tissues. These bacteria are carried by honeybees from flowers back to their hives.
- Natural Defense: These bacteria, many belonging to the genus Streptomyces, produce antimicrobial compounds. In laboratory tests, these compounds successfully inhibited pathogens that cause bee diseases like "stonebrood," as well as several bacteria that plague agricultural crops.
- The Mechanism: The study suggests that plants and these microbes may have evolved together; the microbes help keep the pollinators healthy, ensuring the plant's reproduction, while the bees provide the microbes with transport to new environments.
- Future Applications: This research opens the door for new "ecofriendly" treatments. Instead of synthetic chemicals, beekeepers and farmers might eventually protect hives and crops by introducing these specific beneficial bacteria.
- Environmental Importance: The findings highlight the importance of biodiversity. A landscape rich in different plant species provides bees with a more diverse "pharmacy" of protective bacteria to help their colonies survive.

Practical Experiences in the Bee Yard



Stanford Brantley

APRIL is usually the month the nectar flow moves into high gear. However, as I pulled up to my honey house on the second day of March this year, I was surprised to find crimson clover blooms shining bright red against the green grass and clover mix. To me, this is a sign that supers should already be on your hives.

Major April floral sources in the Ark-La-Tex include red/crimson clover, vetch, hedges, wildflowers, yuchi clover and sometimes prickly ash and golden raintree. The first bloom will be followed by privet hedge. Our flow usually begins around the mid-March and ends in early June.

This is also the month you should receive queens and packaged bees that you ordered in December or January. There are good YouTube videos showing how to install a package. Make sure you do not pull the cork out of the wrong end of the cage and let the queen loose in her new home with bees that have only been with her for the duration of their shipping time. They may not yet view her as their queen and may kill her. By the time they eat away the candy plug and release her, she will be viewed as their appropriate queen.

If obtaining a Nuc, put all five frames in a ten-frame box in exactly the same order as they come out of the Nuc box. You may need to shave any burr comb off the bottom bar and along the edges of the top bar to get good bee space in the new box. Then add three frames of drawn comb on one side of the Nuc frames and two frames on the other. If you do not have drawn comb, use frames of foundation. Feed 2-to-1 sugar syrup until all the foundation has been drawn. At that time, stop feeding if a nectar flow is still in progress. You could add a queen excluder and a super for them to store any excess nectar.

April is a good month to make a Nuc from an existing hive. Pull two frames of brood and bees and one frame of pollen and honey from a very strong colony and put them in a Nuc box. Add a frame of foundation/drawn comb on each side of the brood frames. Then add a mated queen. Feed 2-to-1 sugar water until the foundation is all drawn out.

When the bees are working strongly in the supers, you need to watch and add a second/third/fourth super before they run out of space to store nectar. If the bees are covering 6-8 frames, it is time to add another super and give them more room.

Many beekeepers will tell you that a new hive will probably not produce enough honey to harvest during its first year. That is not necessarily true. Hives started early in the nectar flow can produce enough honey to fill several frames, if not a complete super. Tasting that first honey from your own hive is a rewarding experience. Even if you find only one frame of capped honey by the end of the flow, I encourage you to pull it and extract it. The experience of your fist honey will be remembered for your lifetime.

Some beekeepers use an upper entrance during the time of high nectar flow. The upper entrance allows the foraging bees to enter the super without having to use the landing board and then move up through the brood area to reach a super. An upper entrance can be created by sliding the top super back just enough to allow a bee to enter. Some beekeepers will cut a small entrance in the edge of a super. Size of the upper entrance seems to vary with the beekeepers. Typically, I read about notches 1 to 2 inches wide and a half inch high. As with many things in beekeeping, there are pros and cons to using upper entrances. Examples of problems include the chance that a queen returning from a mating flight could enter the top entrance and start laying in the super. Another is the creation of an additional entrance for robbers. Be sure to plug the upper entrances after the flow is over to help prevent robbing. An internet search for"upper entrances for a bee hive" will generate a number of articles and videos. These articles are often thought provoking, with a variety of opinions and practices and give you a chance to consider various aspects of the issues. *Stanford*

Another Successful Distribution Day for WCABA

by Jimmie Oakley

The Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association (WCABA) put together another successful bee and queen procurement program for 2026. With a new Procurement Coordinator in the person of the new Vice President, Dusty Brinley, the club offered 5-frame nucs and marked and clipped queens at very attractive prices. Again, the membership took advantage of the offer and ordered to the limit of 300 nucs from Evergreen Honey Company in Jennings, Louisiana, and over a hundred+ queens from Bee Weaver Apiaries in Navasota, Texas.

Also new this year was the new distribution location. With the sale of the Bost Farm and the development of the land into residential housing, not only was the familiar honey house gone, but the country location that the club had depended on to bring in the hundreds of nuc of live honey bees. With several locations to be considered, the Sugar Ranch, homesite of the Dusty and Judee Brinley, was finally chosen. Situated off of the Interstate, along a major thoroughfare, with plenty of room, and no close neighbors, it proved to be a great asset to the operation.

Using the proven order and tracking process in place for the past several years, Judee Brinley, the new Membership Director, took on the task of receiving and processing the mail order request for nucs and queens, and kept the spreadsheet with all the details.

There was a worthwhile effort to get more members to volunteer to help out on distribution (night &) day. Many of our members signed up for the first time to help out at this major club event.

The drive team, led by John Hibbard (and his truck/trailer rig), and Bill Kruger, Chuck Saxon, and Logan Peters left the Sugar Ranch on Friday morning about 10AM for the 5 1/2 hour drive to Jennings, LA and the return round trip, same day. Long haul, but not without benefits. There was comradely, great B-B-Q at Truth's (did we mention FREE beer), and there's always Buc-ees.



Drive Team: Bill Krueger, Chuck Saxon, Logan Peters, John Hibbard



Drive Team at Truth's B-B-Q in Brenham



A good reason to make this trip, YUM!



They know people (beavers) in high places

Yes, they did arrive back, all in one piece, with the nucs by four o'clock on Saturday morning. Because of a lack of communication of a change in nuc container size, the drive team could only haul 168 of the new Pro-Nuc plastic boxes on John's trailer. After some discussion with Wes Card, owner of Evergreen Honey Company, he agreed to send the remaining 144 nucs with his drivers on his truck to complete the order delivery. It arrived about 5:30 AM.



Additional load of nucs from Evergreen Honey arrived on a separate goose neck trailer (144)

Dodie Stillman and Jimmie Oakley made the 2-hour drive over to Navasota midday on Friday to pick up the 120 marked and clipped queens that were ordered by the club. They were visually checked for condition and the white dot marking, all appeared okay.



Dodie checking marked queens at Bee Weaver Apiaries in Navasota

At the Sugar Ranch on Friday evening there was a pre-distribution walkthrough with some of the volunteers to assure everything (lights, tables, canopies, etc) was in place for the arrival of the load of nucs.



Early morning check in canopy under the lights

Before daylight on Saturday the blurry eyed volunteers began to show up to do their part in smoking, screening, unloading, and eventually reloading the nucs into member vehicles. Dusty had the pickup area situated so the members could once again "drive through" to get their nuc/queen order. Judee Brinley had all list (spreadsheets) printed and at the right table to get the members checked in and checked off as having received the product they ordered and paid for.

Member pickup was scheduled from 7-12noon, but because of the unexpected arrival of the nucs in plastic boxes, there was no need to screen the individual nuc entrance. The nucs were ready to pickup on arrival, and the first pickup was actually at 6:30; early bird gets the nuc.



First nuc pickup was before daylight

There was a pretty steady stream of cars and trucks making the turn into the circular drive, checking in, then pulling forward to have the loaders fill their order according to the chit sheet, and then being checked off as having received their nucs. If they needed to pickup queens, they proceeded to the front porch of the new house where queen distribution was taking place. In queen pickup you got to look over the lot and choose your pick of the litter. Everyone had opportunity to pick out their best queen.

As members continued to show up the nuc yard dwindled down and by noon the pile was about gone. By the end or day there were only a dozen nucs left, the 4% overage, so all were accounted for.



Queen Pickup was staged on the front porch

So much of the success of the event could be attributed to the many hands of the volunteers for the day. Judee Brinley recruited many that had never work distribution before, giving them an opportunity to look inside the workings of this major club program. It also gave the individual an increased sense of ownership in the club making them more invested in the successful outcome. A huge <u>THANK YOU</u> to all the volunteers, and to the Brinley Clan and the Sugar Ranch for an exceptional location to hold our unique event.

Jimmie



Entrance to Sugar Ranch at Burson Lane



The Brinley Clan: Judee, Dusty, Jack, Jaelyn, Ryan, Sadie, and Adam (not pictured)

More Pics from WCABA Bee & Queen Pickup Day

Saturday Morning April 18th @ 5:40AM



Unloading Ground Crew: many hands make quick work



Counting & Checking: 312 Total Nucs on the ground



Drive through pickup>>follow the sign...



***First Stop**: Name & Phone# & get your chit*



Pull forward for nuc loading



Tied down, checked off, and you're on your way!!



Many nucs left to load out, just waiting on the next customer!

We can not say it enough, thanks to all the willing volunteers that turned out to help make this so successful. Identifying who's who is like being at a Santa Claus Convention or shooting a Michelin tire commercial-??? But here is my attempt to identify you and recognize your efforts from the volunteer list…***roll credits!!***

Unloading nucs: John Hubbard, Logan Peters, Chuck Saxon, Bill Kruger, Phil Ainslie, Shawn Hoss,Garry Bible, Scott Bible, Gillian Mattinson…maybe, most likely others.

Pickup Check-in: Judee Brinley, Linda Watts, Matt Makarczyk, and Dodie Stillman, maybe others.

Nuc Loading: Phil Ainslie, Gary Bible, Warren Sanders, Steven Burke, Scott Bible, Cody Stillman, Keith Brainard, Matt Makarczyk, Matt Ludlum, Ryan Brinley, Dusty Brinley… maybe, most likely others.

Nuc Confirmation: Ken Browning, Susan Browne.

Queen Distribution: Linda Watts, Sherilyn Vineyard, Sadie Richardson, and Sean O'Neil, and Barbie Rose.

Parking/Traffic: Ryan Brinley, Alan Brinley

And to anyone else I overlooked, or who took the time to pitch in; THANK YOU!! *JO*

Scholarship Recipients Make Spring Split

Jimmie Oakley – Scholarship Chair

The 2025 Scholarship Recipients achieved one of the major goals of the scholarship program by making a spring split from their original nuc colony they got last spring. They have met the challenge of building up a five frame (nuc) colony into a strong three story hive, extracted honey for the colony in the first year, successfully wintered over the colony, and now have achieved sustainability by increasing their number of hives through splitting.



Queens have arrived, time to finalize the hive split

Earlier in the month, after the spring mite check, the kids used the vertical hive technique to set a nuc configured box on top of the stand separated by a queen excluder. While setting up the nucleus hive on top, all the bees were shaken out of the boxes and required to crawl back through a queen excluder, thereby restricting the queen to the bottom two boxes. The top box, being queen free, it was ready for a new queen. With the arrival of the queens for the club this past weekend, the final phase of the procedure was ready to be put into motion.

Anna French and Liam Bierschenk utilized a fresh Bee Weaver queen to finalize the vertical split and now await the results of the requeening process. To split the hive the top box was raised up, the queen excluder was removed, a reversible solid bottom board was inserted, effectively splitting the bees in the hive in half. The stand was now ready to insert a caged queen in the top nucleus hive. The hive will be rechecked in 7-10 days or two weeks to assure the queen is out and laying.



After inserting solid bottom board Anna & Jimmie opens up nuc hive

Once the requeening process is complete the scholarship recipients will be allowed to move their hives to their own apiaries to finish out the season.

Jimmie



Liam Checks nuc for queen cells



Anna inserts caged queen between frames



Caged queen inserted, Anna closes the nuc and waits to check back (10-14 days)



Mr. Oakley & Liam pause for photo after completing vertical split & requeening nuc ***Congratulations, job well done!***

Membership Report: Judee Brinley

April 2026

New Members

James Albritton	Austin
Dwight Hammers-Rebecca Storey	Leander
Trisha, Jeff, & Laurel Kick	Georgetown
Adrienna & David LeHuquet	Georgetown
Paul & Nancy Lippa	Round Rock
Greg & JoAnn Testeman	Salado
Sheri Vineyard	Georgetown
Kitty Voorhis	Georgetown
Niberly & Miriam Walton	Salado



Judee Brinley - Membership

Renewing Members

Danica Bingham	Georgetown
Lorriane Brady	Georgetown
Aaron Bramwell	Cedar Park
Louisa Chandler	Georgetown
Helen Dorrance-Scott Bowman	Leander
Allyssa Elliott	Georgetown
Dan Ernst	Liberty Hill
John & Helen Hibbard	Liberty Hill
Bill & Lydia Krueger	Wimberly
Buddy & Cherie Miller	Marble Falls
Randy & Amy Oakley	Elm Mott
Jim Ray	Georgetown
Barbi Rose	Corinth
Wayne Zieschang	Bartlett

Total Memberships (Individual and family): 166

***New members**- please remember that Texas Beekeepers Association still gives one-year free membership to those people that are new to beekeeping. Let me know if you are interested in this.

Judee

Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association
Treasurer's Report - As of April 25, 2026

Profit and Loss

ACCOUNTS	Year to Date
Income	
Program Income - Bee Procurement (2026)	$55,860.00
Program Income - Membership Dues	$2,955.00
Total Income	$58,815.00
Cost of Goods Sold	
Bee Procurement Program Nucs & Queens	$51,300.00
Total Cost of Goods Sold	$51,300.00
Gross Profit	$7,515.00
Operating Expenses	
Bank Charges	$50.00
Dues	$50.00
Insurance	$1,873.00
Meeting Supplies and Refreshments	$360.19
Permits	$206.26
Speaker Fees	$300.00
Travel Expenses	$48.98
Total Operating Expenses	$2,888.43
Net Profit	$4,626.57

Balance Sheet

ACCOUNTS	As of April 25, 2026
Assets	
Total Cash and Bank	$61,000.13
Total Assets	$61,000.13
Liabilities	
Bee Purchase Commitment (2026)	$51,300.00
Less Payment Installments	($51,300.00)
Total Liabilities	$0.00
Assets & Liabilities	$61,000.13
Equity	
Retained Earnings - Prior Years	$56,373.56
Retained Earnings - Current Year	$4,626.57
Total Equity	$61,000.13

Bee Procurement Program - 2026

Income	
Program Income - Bee Procurement	$57,460.00
Cost of Goods Sold	
Bees	$51,300.00
Gross Profit	$6,160.00
Expenses	
Wire Charge	$50.00
Permit	$206.26
Travel Expenses	$48.98
Total Expenses	$305.24
Net Profit	$5,854.76

Notes (as of January 24, 2026):

BeeWeaver Commitment 120 Queens — $4,800.00
- Payment Installment = $4,800

Evergreen Purchase 300 Nucs — $46,500.00
- Evergreen Commitment = $54,000
- Less Volume and in-person pick-up discount = $7,500
- Net Amount = $46,500
- Payment Installments = $46,500

Accessible Beekeeping Training

Submitted by Sean O'Neil



Join us for an in-depth, SARE PDP–funded Accessible Beekeeping training designed for Extension agents, agricultural educators, vocational rehabilitation professionals, and service providers supporting diverse farming communities.

This training combines classroom instruction, hands-on hive demonstrations, and guided use of our interactive Living Manual—a practical, continuously updated resource built to support real-world teaching and field application. Participants will gain tools they can immediately apply in outreach, programming, and technical assistance.

Registration is required at no cost, and free lunch is provided.

Training topics include:

- Principles of accessible and adaptive beekeeping
- Common physical, sensory, cognitive, and environmental barriers in apiculture
- Practical hive adaptations and ergonomic techniques
- Using technology and tools to supplement inspections and learning
- Safety considerations and risk reduction strategies
- How to integrate accessible practices into Extension and outreach programs
- Guided walkthrough of the Living Manual for continued learning and reference

This session emphasizes practical implementation, not theory—equipping ag professionals with inclusive strategies they can confidently share with producers, educators, and community partners.

Questions: Justin Sims- jsims@accessiblebeekeeping.org

AgrAbility: Cmkovar@ag.tamu.edu

Event Date and Time

Thursday, May 21, 2026 - 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Location

- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service - South Campus
- 1470 William D. Fitch Parkway - Room #175
- College Station, Texas 77845

Event Questions

For questions regarding event details, please contact the event organizer cmkovar@ag.tamu.edu.

Technical Questions

If you would like assistance navigating this site or have questions about the registration process, please contact our customer service group by email agriliferegister@ag.tamu.edu or call 979-803-1372 Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. CST. Calls or emails logged after hours will be answered the next business day.

WILLIAMSON COUNTRY AREA BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

MEMBERSHIP / CONTACT UPDATE FORM

Date: _____

[ ] **New** Membership or [ ] **Renewing** Membership

[ ] Individual $20.00 per year or [ ] Family $25.00 - individuals living same household

[ ] Update Contract Information - [ ] Request Badges

To pay your membership, bring this form and payment to the meeting or mail to:

Judee Brinley – Membership

50100 Flintrock Drive – Georgetown TX 78626

Checks must be made payable to WCABA

Update Contact Information

Name:_____Family names:_____

Phone: ( )_____ _____

Address:_____

City/State/Zip:_____

E-mail:_____

(please print e-mail address neatly)

To save postage cost may we send yout Newsletter via e-mail? [ ] Yes [ ] No

New Member only: Would you like a FREE 1-year Membership in Texas Beekeepers Association?

[ ] Yes [ ] No

Request Badges:

List names for family membership badges needed _____

_____

Addition Instructions:

(revised 2-2026)