WILLIAMSON COUNTY AREA BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

WCABA November 2025 NEWSLETTER

www.wcaba.org

2025 Club Officers:

PRESIDENT: Shannon Montez
president@wcaba.org

VICE PRESIDENT: Sean O'Neil
vicepresident@wcaba.org

MEMBERSHIP: Judee Brinley
membership@wcaba.org

PROGRAM: Nan Helmke
program@wcaba.org

NEWSLETTER: Jimmie Oakley
newsletter@wcaba.org

SECRETARY: Phil Ainslie
secretary@wcaba.org

TREASURER: Barbi Rose
treasurer@wcaba.org

HISTORIAN: Matt Ludlum
historian@wcaba.org

PAST PRESIDENT: Phil Ainslie
pastpresident@wcaba.org

LIBRARIAN: Chris Huck
librarian@wcaba.org

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

**NOVEMBER MEETING RESCHEDULED **

1st TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2025 @ 7PM

Georgetown Library - Hewitt Room (2nd Floor)

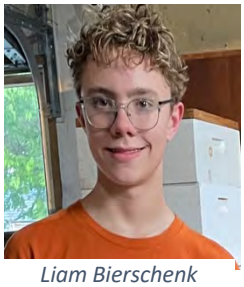
>> ELECTION of OFFICERS <<

PROGRAM: 2025 Scholarship Recipient Reports

Speakers: Anna French & Liam Bierschenk



Anna French



Liam Bierschenk

November will give our scholarship recipients an opportunity to report on the success of the program they have been in since being selected last February. Please come and hear and see the journey (not much different than your own) as they started out in the spring and where they are now. This will be a chance to relive the early days of your beekeeping experience and enjoy their success.

With Introduction by Jimmie Oakley Scholarship Prog. Chair

PROGRAM: Options for Winterizing Your Bees

Speaker: Randy Oakley, Scholarship Pgm.Mentor

Winterizing your hives can go a long way in getting the bees through the cold months and better prepare them for what happens to them in the Spring. Explore winterizing techniques that will help you and help your bees.

We would certainly enjoy your presence at the next meeting on December 2nd (***first*** 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 - Hewlett Rm– 402 W 8th Street Georgetown 78626
Topic: **WCABA Member Meeting**
Time: This is a recurring meeting Meet anytime
Join Zoom Meeting
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82475068933?pwd=aHRiRjc3bS9kYXJGS2g5THVpOEx2UT09
Meeting ID: 839 7875 8570. Passcode: 986569One tap mobile
+13462487799,,83978758570#,,,,*986569# US (Houston)
+12532050468,,83978758570#,,,,*986569# US

Passing of the Torch...

…a note from your President


Shannon Montez - President

As we wrap up the year, it's a good time to reflect on the success of our club. I've always said, our club does not exist without all of you. As the president of WCABA, I have tried to ensure we are providing a valuable service to you as members. Although the position of the president is as the leader of our organization, it is only one position. Our board is comprised of great volunteers who are all of the same mindset. Provide information through knowledgeable speakers at our meetings; provide Nucs and queens at a reasonable price and to support the beekeeping community so that bees continue to thrive.

This year, our board encountered several changes that could have caused chaos in how we run our club. The sale of the Bost farm is probably our biggest challenge. Although we have not decided on a location for our Nuc delivery, it is something we are working to pin down. With that said, any suggestions or volunteers willing to host our club for a day would be greatly appreciated. The other issue caused by the sale of the Bost farm is storage of our extracting equipment. We haven't decided on a location but will probably be renting a storage unit in a Georgetown, unless we have someone who volunteers to host the equipment. We hope to find space that is centrally located and not hard to find.

We also saw a change in our membership coordinator. Chris and Shirley Doggett have been involved in the beekeeping communities for years and Shirley handled membership. I appreciate all that she did over the years. We are blessed with great volunteers and continue to have members who step up to help. Judee and Dusty Brinlee took over membership and implemented a few changes that are already impacting our club. Many of you walked in last month and used your phones to check in. This is probably something that was a long time coming but will be a good change. No more getting out the reading glasses to try to decipher hand written names.

While we may have changes in our board, it's been important to maintain consistency with how we run our club. I've served as the VP and a few years ago, became the president. I think this was a year before Covid hit, and as your president I have helped steer our club through all these changes. We went from meeting in person to meeting by Zoom then back to in person meetings. Throughout it all, we continued to have an active membership. During my presidency, we implemented a program to give back to the beekeeping community. From the net proceeds of our Nuc program, we started donating to organizations such as BIG and Dr. Rangel's program at Texas A&M (Nevin Weaver Honey Bee Excellence Endowment). Although it's understood that we'll have speakers who provide guidance on beekeeping, it's something that we put a lot of thought into, and I think we've continued to provide education and help you learn things even if you're an experienced beekeeper. I hope that I've made a positive impact on our club and have continued to provide the leadership that was needed through all the changes. I'm looking forward to having Sean O'Neil step into the leadership position and as the new past president, will be there to help support him and our club. Thank you all for the opportunity and the support that you've given me. I've enjoyed serving as your leader.

Shannon

Research Pearls

Compiled by Phil Ainslie

Honeybee cluster -- not insulation but a stressful heat sink



Phil Ainslie - Secretary

University of Leeds PhD student Derek Mitchell is calling for further debate on the ethical treatment of insects, saying his research appears to contradict the widely accepted theory that the bees' reaction to cold temperatures is to form layers of insulation -- an idea that has led to them being housed in hives that are extremely poorly insulated compared to their natural habitat.

The study, which is published in the *Journal of the Royal Society Interface,* looks at honeybee "clusters" -- where the insects huddle together, forming dense disks between the combs, to try to keep some of them above 18°C when the outside temperature drops. For almost 120 years, the outer layer of honeybees in the winter cluster -- known as the mantle -- has been said to insulate the cluster core -- the honeybees at the center.

Adopting the same techniques used for measuring heat loss from buildings, Mr Mitchell -- from the School of Mechanical Engineering -- analyzed this theory. However, his findings indicate that far from acting as insulation, the mantle instead acts like a heat sink -- dissipating the heat away from the center. The paper states: "The cluster mantle does not meet any of the four insulation criteria identified and meets all three heat sink criteria."

Mr Mitchell said, "My findings are controversial because it has become a tenet of beekeeping -- that the mantle insulates the honeybees."

He explains that once the outside temperature falls, the heat needed to sustain 18°C+ inside goes up. If the bees cannot produce that much heat, the temperature near the hive wall drops, and the honeybees near it become chilled, and they move closer to bees that can still efficiently produce heat. They get closer together, and their combined thermal conductivity increases, increasing heat loss.

He added: "In anthropomorphic terms, clustering is not a 'wrapping of a thick blanket' to keep warm -- but more like a desperate struggle to crowd closer to the 'fire' or otherwise die."

He said those long-held beliefs have encouraged enforced clustering, by beekeepers' dominant use of what he labels "inadequately insulated hives" and, in North America, refrigeration. This is often seen as a benign or even a necessary process, with beekeeping and academic research considering these conditions of extreme heat loss as natural and normal.

He calls for changes in practice to be urgently considered, researched, and promoted.

Bees actively adjust flower choice based on color and distance: Updating 'flower constancy' beyond Darwin's theory

Since Darwin's time, the phenomenon known as flower constancy -- i.e., where insects consistently visit the same flower type even when many others are also present -- has been understood as a passive behavior to reduce the effort of remembering different flower types. However, researchers at the University of Tsukuba have shown via experimentation with bees that this behavior is an active strategy in which bees balance the time required for memory retrieval and moving between flowers, thereby realizing efficient foraging.

Pollinating insects such as bumble bees often repeatedly visit the same type of flower, even when various flowers bloom nearby. This behavior is known as "flower constancy." Darwin speculated that flower constancy was a passive response to avoid the effort involved in remembering the different flower characteristics. However, this study reveals that this theory is incomplete, since it focuses too heavily on "memory constraints." Instead, researchers found that flower constancy results from an optimal strategy that dynamically adjusts to balance the time required to recall different flower types with the time needed to move between flowers.

In this study, researchers predicted how pollinator behavior changes in response to the levels of spatial mixture of plant species present. When different plant species are highly mixed, focusing on one type of flower increases the time spent moving between them, causing pollinators to skip over other species. In this situation, pollinators should maintain a low level of flower constancy to forage optimally, even if it requires additional effort to recall flower types. Moreover, pollinators should lower their flower constancy when species have similar flower colors or shapes, since switching between species requires minimal effort. By contrast, when plant species are clustered in groups, focusing on a single flower type simultaneously reduces the costs of both memory retrieval and travel between flowers. Consequently, a higher degree of flower constancy is optimal in such environments.

To test these predictions, researchers used two types of artificial flowers and examined how bumble bees' flower constancy changed with the levels of spatial mixture and color difference. As predicted, when the two flower types were more mixed and their flower colors were more similar, bees significantly decreased flower constancy. By contrast, when the same flower types were present in clusters, bees maintained a high level of constancy regardless of flower color difference. These findings challenge the widely accepted theory of pollinator flower constancy that has persisted for 150 years. They provide an important update that improves the comprehensiveness of our understanding of pollinator flower constancy in natural environments.

This study was supported by Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Grant/Award Number: 19K06834.

New Varroa Treatment, Norroa™

Effective

In lab studies, foundress mites exposed to the active ingredient in Norroa™ had no offspring.

Long-Lasting

Maintained fewer than three mites per 100 bees for up to 18 weeks in field trials conducted by experienced commercial beekeepers.

Resistance Management

Novel Mode of Action (MoA) makes it a great tool for resistance management and extending the longevity of active ingredients currently available to beekeepers.

Flexible

It can be applied at any working temperature, as long as it's safe to open the hive.

Boost Winter Survival

Up to 75% winter survival in our field trials, almost twice the winter survival rate compared to the leading chemical treatment.

Bee Health

No negative impact observed on larvae, adult bees, or queens.

How to apply:

- Apply by opening the pouch that is supplied with the Norroa™. Activate the flow by squeezing the pouch… some dripping is ok.
- Keeping the pouch flat, place the pouch on the top of the frames or bottom board.
- After a few days, the pouch will be empty and can be removed.

Price: $22.00/2 pack - $114.00/14 pack

- 2 Packs are in stock and ready to ship! Expected ship date for 12 packs is November 24, 2025
- As of 11/10/25 it has not been approved for use in Texas.
- https://www.mannlakeltd.com/varroa-mite/norroa/?msockid=108ffd85cd3a67061e95eb9dcce266c3

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENT

David Smoots (david@sun-station.com) has about 14 acre property located off FM2001 in **Buda Texas** - we are need of maintain our existing AG status and want to begin actively beekeeping.

David Smoots 704-309-2209

Practical Experiences in the Bee Yard



Stanford Brantley

By mid-NOVEMBER, we can expect the first killing frost of the winter season. Pollen will be hard to find for most rural bees. Some blooms may survive in creek bottoms where dense trees and undergrowth offer protection. If you have your bees in town, they might find pollen from fall-hardy blooming plants in the beds and borders of neighboring yards. The first frost will soon be followed by a hard freeze that will end the blooming of most vegetation for the year.

Now is the time to become really serious about hive weight. Light hives may not have enough stored food to survive the winter. One of the easiest methods to quickly judge hive weight is the two-finger lift. Use you hive tool to make sure the bottom box is not stuck to the base. Then lift the back of the hive with your index and middle finger. If the hive lifts easily, better check inside to see if it needs to be fed sugar syrup for the bees to store. If you are not sure how the hive should feel, practice the two-finger lift on a hive that you know has a good supply of stored honey. This will let you know how a good hive should feel. You will then be able to recognize when a hive feels too light.

If you need to feed hives to increase the winter stores, I suggest you use a 2-to1 or even 3-to-1 sugar-to-water mixture. The thicker the syrup, the less work the bees have to do to evaporate enough water when storing the syrup.

We are fortunate that Texas winters do not have prolonged inclement conditions that prevent bees from flying out of the hive. Between the cold and wet times, bees will fly and forage on a variety of alternative food sources. They will frequent bird feeders to collect dust from the seeds and sugar from any dried fruit that is mixed with the seeds. They are also attracted to meal-based feeds that farmers feed to cows and pigs.

I am trying something different this year. I accumulated lots of wax that I melted in an old crock pot and brushed on plastic foundations. Instead of putting the waxed foundation in frames and storing the frames in a brood box for the winter, I am stacking the sheets of waxed foundation in a box until next spring. I will put them in frames when the winter is over. My thought is they will better retain the wax smell stacked in a sealed box than exposed to air as a frame hanging in a brood box. The risk of wax moth damage should certainly be reduced.

Winter is only a few weeks away and beekeepers want to be prepared. Is this winter going to be mild or severe? How should I prepare? In the "old days", we looked to folklore as part of our winter preparation. The persimmon tree was one of our forecasting tools. We used the embryo of the persimmon seed to predict the type of winter. Inside the seed is tissue in the shape of a knife, fork or spoon. The prediction meaning of the knife, fork or spoon varies in different areas of the county in relation to the severity of winters in that area. More northern areas speak of heavy or light snow while southern areas speak of rain or dry. The prediction I grew up with is this: A knife means the cold will cut you to the bone. A fork means the weather will be just fine and you won't need a coat to stay comfortable. A spoon means the weather will be extremely wet. So have some fun, find a local persimmon tree and collect some persimmons. Open the seed and see what you find inside. Sometimes it takes a pair of pliers to crack the hard outside coating. If the persimmons are ripe enough to eat, you can eat the fruit or make some jelly.

Here is a link to a Farmer's Almanac article with more interesting information about forecasting weather with persimmons. https://www.farmersalmanac.com/persimmon-seed-weather-prediction

Look me up at the Texas Beekeepers Association convention in Waco this November. Tell me what you found in your persimmon seeds. In my experience, I have never found but one type of embryo under a single tree. And all the trees in a given area will show the same image.

Stanford

2026 WCABA Officers

Slate of Officers nominated to serve WCABA for 2026

Nominations Committee: Shannon Montez, Ann Bierschenk, and Jimmie Oakley.

*President – Sean O'Neil
*Vice President – Dusty Brinley *Membership Director – Judee Brinley *Program Director – Dodie Stillman
Editorial Director – Jimmie Oakley
Secretary – Phil Ainslie
Treasurer – Barbi Rose
Historian – Matt Ludlum
*Past President – Shannon Montez
Director at Large -Ken Browning
Director at Large –Ann Bierschenk
**New candidates* *for office*



Nominations will be accepted from the floor at the meeting.

Birthday Celebration and Legacy Recognition



Linda Russell and Allen Brinley help Shannon Montez in club recognition



WCABA celebrated Jimmie Oakley's 80th Birthday and recognized his 50 years as a beekeeper at the October regular meeting. There was cake, balloons, and smiles all around as he was truly surprised. Jimmie appreciates the recognition and is thankful to still be healthy enough to pursue the craft he loves and blessed to be among such a gracious and giving group of people (beekeepers).

THANK YOU WCABA

2026 Nuc & Queen Procurement Announced

Submitted by Gary Bible

The Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association will again offer bees and queens to club members in 2026 through our Bee Procurement Program. The Executive Board voted to provide 5-frame nucs with a queen (not marked), and an additional order of queen bees (marked & clipped) for purchase by current club members.



Five Frame Nucs-Wooden Box

The **5-frame nucs** originate from Merrimack Valley Apiary's Evergreen Honey Company in Louisiana, currently managed by Wes Card. The nucs are advertised to consist of a "laying" queen that has already been accepted by the hive, 3 inner frames containing brood in all stages, 2 outer frames containing honey, pollen and adhering bees, delivered in a sturdy wooden nuc box with full entrance. The queens from Evergreen will be VSH (varroa resistant) produced in their program and should provide a hardy, productive colony that overwinters well.



M&C Queens in Cages

The **queen bees** for individual purchase will come from Bee Weaver Apiaries in Navasota, Texas and are advertised as bred from a hybrid of bees chosen for their mite resistance, high honey production, and healthy population. These queens will be marked (white) for ease of finding and help in swarm control.

Order Forms with current pricing will appear in the December Newsletter and orders will be accepted immediately for the 2026 season.

Our Bee Procurement Program has been a benefit provided to the membership for over 20 years and has become a hallmark service to our club members. The program has drawn many new members to our ranks because of the attractive pricing and the assurance of obtaining bees in an ever tightening and competitive market. For this reason, the club is requesting you limit your order to 6 nucs per total family, and a limit of 4 nucs total for new members (2026) to the club.

Orders will be taken by mail and at the club meetings through February 28th for as long as the supply last. Each order must be on the official/club Order Form, be filled out completely, and be accompanied by the appropriate remittance (check or money order) in order to be accepted. All orders will be acknowledged by a confirmation email and added to the Queen & Nuc Order Matrix by the Procurement Coordinator.

Because of the need to track and match all orders with remittance and delivery of product, there will be no individual transfer of ownership of nucs and/or queens. Cancelled orders will be handled by the coordinator with refunds and resale of the product to members on the Wait List.

Because of the necessary change and uncertainty of the member pickup location, the details on that phase of the delivery process will come when more details are known. Delivery will again be around mid-April. Time will tell, so be flexible in your expectations and the schedule as that time approaches.

Bee & Queen Procurement Coordinator

Membership Report: Judee Brinley

November 2025



Judee Brinley - Membership

New Members

Jan Cleveland	Cedar Park
Kellie Mater	Leander
Mark Rios (family)	Taylor

Renewing Members

Note: October meeting attendance 40 Adults (51 by head count).

***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

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

WILLIAMSON COUNTY AREA BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Dues $20.00 per year - individual or $25.00 - family membership

New Member / Renewing Member

(circle one)

Date:_____

Name:_____ Amount: $ _____

Address:_____

City/State/Zip:_____

Phone: ( )_____e-mail:_____(please print)

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

Instructions: print, fill out, and bring to club meeting , or mail with check to:

Judee Brinley - Membership - 50100 Flintrock Drive Georgetown. TX 78626

WCABA Executive Board Minutes, September 18, 2025

by Phil Ainslie – Secretary

Attending: Phil Ainslie, Shannon Montez, Jimmie Oakley, Nancy Kunschik, Matt Ludlum, Nan Helmke, Matt Ludlum, Seon O'Neil,

- The committee approved the minutes from the July meeting.
- Bost Farm: Jimmie Oakley stated the Bost Farm move-out date will be December 1, 2025.
    - Due to the Bost Farm issue, the WCABA equipment storage will need to be addressed.
- Treasurer's report: Barbi Rose was not able to attend, so the report is tabled until the next board meeting.
- Membership report: Judee Brindley reported 186 members.
- Program report: Nan Helmke report.
    - September meeting will include our annual honey tasting and judging.
    - October: Randy Oakley's presentation on Lessons from the Bee Tree.
    - November: The November meeting will be on November 18 and will include the scholarship report.
- WCABA officer elections: Jimmie Oakley will chair the nominations committee.
- Annual bee procurement: A new coordinator will be needed. Phil Ainslie said he will do it if no one else is interested.
- TBA centerpiece: This year's centerpiece theme is beeswax.
- Scholarship Honey Sales: A new location for the honey sales experience is needed. Dodie or Nan may have a sales source.

WHAT'S HAPPENING at the CONVENTION

DATE: Friday & Saturday, November 21–22, 2025

Location: Waco Convention Center, 100 Washington Ave

Thursday Pre-Convention – November 20

- **Registration opens at 11:30 AM**
- **Master Craftsman Presentations** – open to everyone
- **Vendors on the show floor**
- **Paid Workshops** – Registration for workshops opens soon**:**
  - **Dr. Rangel – Queen Rearing Workshop** Register Here
  - **Honey Show drop-offs** accepted from 1-5 pm Register Here
  - **Master Beekeeper Testing** – take the next step in your beekeeping journey here
  - **Live Jazz & Happy Hour – Hosted by the Courtyard Hotel:** Stop by the hotel courtyard for live jazz music from 6–8 PM and enjoy happy hour pricing at the bar from 5–7 PM. Relax, unwind, and kick off the conference with great music and company!

Friday – November 21

- **Keynote Speaker: Sue Cobey – Challenges of Bee Breeding**
- **Featured Speaker: Megan Mahoney – Bee Breeding: Banking on the Future**
- **Texas Honey Show** – enter your honey and other entries - win Best in Texas!
- **TBA Annual Business Meeting** – vote on new leadership and help shape the future of TBA
- **Networking, demos, and more** – meet beekeepers from across Texas and beyond
- **Shop, learn, and network with vendors bringing the best of the hive to you**
- **Banquet & Auction** – dine, mingle, and discover one-of-a-kind items supporting THBEA

Saturday – November 22

- **Keynote Speaker: Cory Stevens – VSH/SMR Selection in Honey Bees**
- **Featured Speaker: David Burns – The Heart Behind the Hive: Raising Better Bees and Better Beekeepers**
- **Shop, learn, and network with vendors bringing the best of the hive to you**
- **Honey Show Awards & Auction**
- **Door Prizes** – have a chance to take home something special!

WCABA Convention Center Piece and WCABA Convention Auction Item

This year the Center Piece was produced by Director At Large, Ann Bierschenk, and the Auction Item is donated by Ann Bierschenk also. Very talented, and appreciated!



Old Pickup Centerpiece with Products of the Hive - Wax



B-B-Q Accessories Kit w/Seasonings



Save the Date, Save the Money. Join TBA Today! **Tickets: $145/Members $165/Non-Members**
More Info: https://texasbeekeepers.org/annual-convention-2025/