

BROWN COUNTY BEEKEEPERS NEWSLETTER

MAY 2026



Mission: We are dedicated to promoting sustainable, responsible and healthy beekeeping practices in Northeastern Wisconsin for both experienced and first time beekeepers. We strive to create a fun environment where learning opportunities exist for association members and the public.

www.browncountybeekeepers.com



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Things are starting to get busy in the bee yard. Dave Elsen and Carl Fisher hosted the first hive dive at their apiary in the Botanical Garden. This was the first time they opened the hives this year and the bees looked great. They made some nucs from those hives to pull back the strength and prevent swarming. Club members attending received instruction on the making of those nucs and finding the queen. In addition, the members had their questions answered. Thanks Dave and Carl for the Hive Dive.



The same weekend, Dave Elsen and myself received a call from Liam and Lucus Ford, who we are mentoring. They had opened up their hives to find capped queen cells. We walked them through a split with the old queen and the parent hive to raise a new queen. So, first year beekeepers doubled their hive numbers.

With the dandelions blooming and the apple trees just starting to bloom, hives are building up fast. You will need to do inspections weekly to keep ahead of swarming. Adding space maybe the simplest way to minimize the swarming impulse. Adding honey supers, or drawn empty comb in the brood nest, gives the needed space for the queen to lay. If you have queen cells with larvae, adding space isn't going to stop the impending swarming. You will need to do some type of split by removing the old queen and some bees from the parent colony.

Like I said earlier, a lot of bee management is going to happen in May before the first major nectar flow starts.

That's what this month's buzz is about

Chris Groth - President
president@browncountybeekeepers.com





MAY MEETING EDUCATION



Join us on May 20th at the Green Bay Botanical Gardens for an interactive, hands-on evening focused on one of the biggest challenges in beekeeping: Varroa mites.

This month's program will guide members through how to test for and treat Varroa mites as part of an Integrated Mite Management Plan. Instead of just talking about it—we're making it hands-on.

What to Expect:

Multiple interactive stations where you can try different mite testing methods yourself
Guidance on when to treat, based on time of year and hive conditions
Demonstrations of several treatment options and how to use them effectively
A chance to view Varroa mites under a microscope
Practical tips to help you build a season-long mite management strategy

Special Guest: Let It Bee

They'll have a vendor table stocked with Varroa-related products, so you can explore tools and treatments up close. Whether you're new to beekeeping or looking to fine-tune your management plan, this session will give you practical skills you can take straight to your apiary. Bring your questions—and your curiosity.



HOW TO TEST FOR & TREAT VARROA MITES
AS PART OF AN INTEGRATED MITE MANAGEMENT PLAN

MAY 20TH | GREEN BAY BOTANICAL GARDENS

5:30 PM NETWORKING & SOCIAL | **6:30 PM** MEETING BEGINS

TEST IT | **PLAN IT** | **TREAT IT** | **SEE IT**

Hands-On Stations!

- ✓ Try different mite testing methods
- ✓ Learn when to treat based on time of year & what's happening in the hive
- ✓ See several treatment options in action
- ✓ View varroa mites under a microscope
- ✓ Build your season-long mite management plan

Special Guest: **Let It BEE** | Let It Bee will have a table with **VARROA-RELATED PRODUCTS** available for purchase!

LEARN. CONNECT. PROTECT OUR BEES. TOGETHER. ♥



Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84673400856?pwd=DBQH9W36wwYZhtab7hpPVChbrFjAD1.1>

Meeting chat link

<https://us06web.zoom.us/launch/jc/84673400856>

Meeting ID: 846 7340 0856

Passcode: 604023



MAY NEW MEMBER FORUM



GET YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED AND LEARN TESTING FOR MITES



NEW MEMBER FORUM

LEARN • CONNECT • GROW

MAY 20, 2026
5:30 PM - 6:30 PM
BEFORE THE MAIN MEETING

**HANDS-ON LEARNING FOR
NEW & NEWER BEEKEEPERS!**

At 5:30 PM, **RANCE BENNETT** will demonstrate the following methods to test for mites:

- 1. POWDERED SUGAR ROLL**
A simple and effective sampling method.
- 2. ALCOHOL WASH**
Accurate results using a proven technique.
- 3. CO₂ TESTING**
A fast and reliable option for mite monitoring.

MONITORING MITES ISN'T OPTIONAL ANYMORE—IT'S PART OF MODERN BEEKEEPING MANAGEMENT.

MICROSCOPE STATION
We will have a microscope available so you can get an up-close look at a varroa mite!

Ask questions. Learn techniques. Build confidence. We're here to help!
We hope to see you there!

🐝 New Member Forum – May 20, 2026 🐝

Join us before the main meeting from 5:30 PM – 6:30 PM for another hands-on New Member Forum designed to help beekeepers build confidence in the hive.

This month, Rance Bennett will demonstrate three common methods used to test for varroa mites:

- Powdered Sugar Roll
- Alcohol Wash
- CO₂ Testing

We'll also have a microscope available so members can get an up-close look at a varroa mite and better understand what we're fighting inside the hive.

Whether you're brand new to beekeeping or just want to improve your mite monitoring skills, this is a great opportunity to learn hands-on techniques and ask questions in a relaxed setting.

Remember:

Monitoring mites isn't optional anymore – it's part of modern beekeeping management.

We hope to see you there! 🐝



RANCE BENNETT

MEET YOUR INSTRUCTOR





**THE TOM CASHMAN BEEKEEPING
RESEARCH GRANT UPDATE - DICK STURM**

Project Title:

Selective Breeding, Rearing and Assessment of VSH Honeybee Queens for Varroa Resistance in a Northern Climate

Project Summary:

This project will establish a sustainable, club-based queen breeding program focused on raising Varroa Sensitive Hygiene (VSH) honeybee queens adapted to a northern climate. In collaboration with Lloyd Street Bees and beekeeper Trevor Bawden, the Brown County Beekeepers Association will obtain validated northern-climate VSH breeder stock and train participating members in hygienic testing, mite monitoring, and selective breeding practices.

The goal is to develop locally adapted “survivor” honeybee colonies that demonstrate measurable mite resistance and reduced dependence on chemical treatments. By establishing a regional drone population carrying VSH genetics and distributing affordable queens to members of the Brown County Beekeepers Association—both hobbyist and sideliner beekeepers—this project will strengthen colony health, improve overwintering success in a northern climate, and promote long-term sustainability within the local beekeeping community.

The delivery of the Lloyd Street breeder queen is scheduled for mid May, which will officially kickoff the project.

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**“NO MOW MAY” OR “MOW AS YOU MAY”
2CHICKS**



By now everyone has heard of “No Mow May” and it certainly has its share of controversy. Generally speaking, No Mow May should be viewed as a way to raise awareness about what we can do on an individual basis to help pollinators. No Mow May began as a way to ensure early season food and habitat for the honeybees and other pollinators still waking up from their winter slumber. Many pollinators in our area overwinter in plant stems and leaf debris. Leaving this dead material as insulation for developing pupae is crucial for native bees, bumble bees, butterflies, fireflies and beetles. Wait to clean up your space until the temperatures are consistently above 50 degrees.

If your lawn is one of those pristine turfgrass lawns it probably doesn't contain any resources for pollinators, so letting it go until June 3 does little but drive your neighbors nuts. Ensuring your lawn contains low growing plants such as dandelions and clover as well as keeping the height of the mower blade higher (3” or higher) can provide a greater diversity for pollinators.



“NO MOW MAY” OR “MOW AS YOU MAY”

-CONTINUED

Another way individuals can help all pollinators is reduce or eliminate pesticide applications. Steps to take to reduce your reliance on chemicals include: keeping your mower height 3-4 inches shades the soil and reduces weed germination and leaving the grass clippings on the lawn, as this provides needed nitrogen. Finally, accept some diversity in your lawn, a lawn does not have to be 100% grass.

No Mow May doesn't have to be controversial, it can just be an awareness campaign. There are actions each of us can do to help. Robert Swan said it best, “The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it”.

-JEN RENFRO



WHAT SHOULD YOU SEE IN MAY- IN THE HIVE

May is when colonies in Northeast Wisconsin shift from surviving winter to full spring expansion. Brood nests are growing fast, dandelions are blooming, maples and fruit trees are winding down, and bees are bringing in fresh pollen and nectar whenever weather allows.

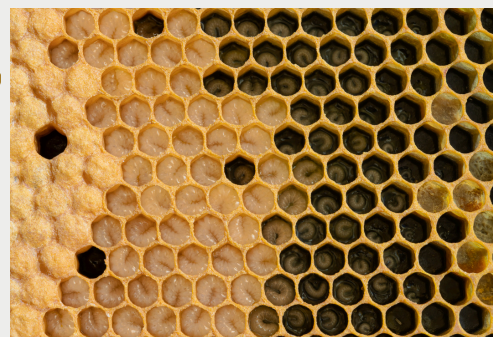
This is one of the most important management months of the year because colonies can go from “small and manageable” to swarm-ready surprisingly fast.

Key May Priorities

- Confirm colonies are queen
- Monitor food stores
- Watch colony strength and congestion
- Begin thinking about swarm prevention and splits
- Start tracking mite levels before summer buildup

What You Should Be Seeing

- Strong colonies should be:
- Expanding brood rapidly
- Beginning comb construction on warm days



A Reminder for New Beekeepers

Not every hive develops at the same speed. Weather, queen quality, winter survival strength, and location all matter. Avoid comparing your hive too closely to someone else's.

The goal in May is simple:

Healthy, growing, and productive colonies heading into summer.

🐝 “Spring management sets the tone for the entire beekeeping season.”



BEEKEEPING ACROSS THE STATE



Register Now for the WHPA Summer Meeting & Field Day!

WHPA Members! You're invited to attend the WHPA Summer Meeting/Field Day

Date: Saturday, June 20, 2026!

Event Details

Location: LB Werks – 8953 Central Sands Road, Bancroft, WI

Time: 8:30 AM – 1:30 PM

What to Expect

The day will feature a variety of engaging and hands-on learning opportunities, including:

- Breakout sessions on topics like queen rearing, beeswax products, Hive IQ, and insights from the Minnesota Bee Lab
- A special encaustic painting workshop (limited seats available + added fee)
- A guest beekeeper speaker panel
- Updates from WHPA and industry partners
- The always-popular Black Jar Honey Tasting Contest (running from 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM, with results announced at the end of the day)
- A fun Loader Rodeo to wrap things up

(Please see the full agenda for complete details.)

Registration

Online registration is available on our website and closes at 10:00 PM on June 15, 2026

Paper registration forms must be postmarked by June 8, 2026

Hotel Lodging

A room block is available at the Ramada by Wyndham in Waupaca for \$134 per night.

Visit our website for the link.

Optional Friday Night Social

Kick things off early and join us for the WHPA Summer Social & Boat Cruise on Friday, June 19 from 6:00–8:00 PM at Clear Water Harbor in Waupaca.

- Cost: \$5 per person (food and drinks available for purchase)
- Enjoy a beautiful waterfront setting, an outdoor bar (rain or shine), and a two-hour ride on a chartered paddleboat

We've also attached a [flyer with additional details about the honey tasting event.](#)

We hope you'll join us for a great day of learning, networking, and summer fun!

For more information and to register, visit <https://wihoney.org/meetings-and-events/whpa-summer-meeting/>

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to any board member.



Stephanie Slater

stephanie.d.slater@gmail.com

2026 BCBA Meeting Education Calendar



Reg = Regular Meetings: 3rd Wednesday of every month at 6:30p

New Beekeeper Forum (5:30-6:30)

A one-hour forum for new beekeepers to connect, share questions and challenges, and learn from one another. An experienced beekeeper will join the discussion to offer guidance and support.

Dates	Topic	Edu Type	Presenter
Jan 21 '26	Wax Processing and Wax Products	Reg MBM	Rance Bennett, This Old Hive New Member Forum
Feb 18 '26	Splits, Understanding the Queen Calendar and buying queens or hive requeening math	Reg MBM	Dick Sturm Kevin Berry New Member Forum
Mar 18 '26	Development of his northern VSH queens and nucs. How to establish and maintain mite resistant genetics Research with Marquette University.	Reg MBM	Trevor Bawden of Lloyd Street Bees and Marquette University New Member Forum
Apr 15 '26	Spring Management Package and Nuc Install	Reg MBM	Round Table New Member Forum
May 20 '26	Mite Management - Testing, Treatments and Honey Bee Health Coalition	Reg MBM	Club Workshop New Member Forum
Jun 17 '26	Non-standard beehives, like Lovens, AZ houses, Top Bars, and native bee houses	Reg MBM	Charlie Koenen New Member Forum
Aug 19 '26	Tool Management Honey Extraction	Reg MBM	New Member Forum
Sep 16 '26		Reg	New Member Forum
Oct 21 '26	Discussion Panel or Networking?	Reg MBM	New Member Forum
Nov 18 '26	Products of the Hive and Honey Judging Contest	Reg MBM	Club Judged Competition & Party New Member Forum

SAVE THE DATE
SUMMER PICNIC
JULY 15TH

Brown County Beekeeping Association

Member Benefits

Club Sponsor – Hansen Honey Farm, Rhinelander, WI

- 5% discount for all BCBA members for ongoing purchase
- For online discount code, contact secretary@browncountybeekeepers.com
- When purchasing in-store only, let them know you are a member of the BCBA.

Club Sponsor – Let It Bee, Inc., Greenville, WI

- 5% discount for all BCBA member purchases, except nucs. In-store only.
- When purchasing in-store only, let them know you are a member of the BCBA.

[Click here for the Club Sponsor Website Page](#)

Club Equipment Rental

Perks of being a member! [Click here for the full rental list.](#)

American Bee Journal Subscriptions

(Contact Club Treasurer for Discount form)

2026 Club Officers

President: Chris Groth
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Vice President-Social Media-Newsletter
Wayne Steigelman
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Treasurer: Chad Ford
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Secretary: Chris DeWolfe
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Leadership Team

Board Member at Large: Dick Sturm

Historian — Edmund Poillion

Mentoring Committee - Shellie Milheiser

Webmaster: Carl Fisher
info@browncountybeekeepers.com

Education Outreach: Bob Michiels

Swarm Czar — Jesse Kallioinen

Club Education CoChairs: Mimi Gerner and Dave Elsen

