

# The Bee Line

Beekeepers Guild of Southeast Virginia

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Article submissions are always welcome! Email the editor, Jennifer Bell, at: [jenniferburdock@gmail.com](mailto:jenniferburdock@gmail.com)

# Holiday Party

Happy New Year! Hopefully everyone had a safe and warm Holiday season. It was great to see so many members at our Guild's Holiday party. Everyone went home with a surprise gift, after a fun round of "Cut-throat Pollyanna" and a full stomach after a wonderful dinner. A special congratulations to John Hathaway for being chosen as this year's "BGSV Beekeeper of the Year"! Thanks for all that you do John!



Pictured above: Guild member Don Ross in his newly acquired Christmas sweater.

# Beekeeping Short Course



Thanks to all who helped make our 2024 short course a success! We had a total of 22 new students register for the course and 16 guild volunteers!



# Greenbrier Primary STEAM Day



A special thanks to Guild members John Hathaway and Donnie Norrell, who volunteered at Greenbrier Primary's STEAM Day on January 24th. John and Donnie presented to 8 first grade classes during this event. Thank you both for representing our Guild and inspiring future beekeepers!



# Telling the Bees

Founding guild member, Judy Ferguson, 77, passed away peacefully on January 14th, 2024 at Virginia Beach General Hospital. She is survived by her son, Scott Pollard. Judy was born January 10th, 1947 to Charles and Martha Clayton in Norfolk, Virginia. She was a graduate of Princess Anne High School, Old Dominion College, and Virginia Tech. Judy had a career in medical records before she retired early to do what she loved, living and working on Gee-Haw farm with her husband J. Robert (Bob) Ferguson, also a founding guild member, who predeceased her.

Judy's passion was her animals – her many dogs, cats, mules, chickens and bees plus whatever strays were fortunate enough to find their way to her home. Judy enjoyed gardening, beekeeping and stitchery; she volunteered for countless organizations, including our guild where she served as our first property manager. She volunteered for the herculean task of refreshment coordinator for our first Beginning Beekeeping Class where we had over 100 students and only 28 guild members!



Judy's contacts in the agriculture community were invaluable when we began lobbying for a reasonable beekeeping ordinance in Chesapeake. She invited us to a meeting of the Chesapeake Agricultural Advisory Commission where she served as Secretary. The Ag. Board's members, mostly farmers, were well aware of how important honey bees are to the environment and they became our champions to City Council.

Perhaps Judy's greatest talent was her storytelling; she had an amazing gift for finding humor in any situation and delighted in sharing her mirth with others. It was not unusual to place a quick phone call to Judy and be laughing together an hour later.

A graveside service was held for Judy on January 27th, 2024 at Chesapeake Memorial Gardens. In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to the Chesapeake Humane Society in Judy's honor.



# Calling All 2024 Nuc Sellers!

With our introductory course wrapping up, we have a lot interest from new-bees looking to buy nucs! Making a split is a great tool for swarm prevention, and if you don't have the room to expand it into another hive, please consider selling those bees to a fellow member! Our guild is one of the few clubs in Virginia that produce local nucs for members, rather than importing bees from outside the area. As a seller you are able to set the terms of the sale including the price and how you want to handle equipment (trading frames, including the price of equipment in your sale, loaning equipment, etc.) We take pride in this program and would like to keep it going! There are a few guidelines that the guild requires our sellers to adhere to:

1. Nucs provided by suppliers, enrolled in the guild nuc program, must be state-inspected and be accompanied with a health certificate as proof of state inspection.
2. Nucs shall have fully drawn frames, a queen who is the mother of the brood in the nuc, brood in all stages of development, including capped brood in a solid pattern and stored honey and pollen.

If you have questions on how to put together a nuc, reach out to a mentor or our other experienced beekeepers.

If you are interested in selling nucs this spring - to be ready by May/June timeframe - please reach out to the nuc coordinator, Bailey Bunn, with the following information:

1. Name
2. Email address
3. Phone number
4. Brood chamber size (medium or deep)
5. Approximately how many nucs you anticipate to sell. It is okay if this number changes.

Bailey Bunn – Nuc Coordinator  
bunnbailey13@gmail.com  
303-815-2821





# The Tidewater Beekeeper's Calendar



**February:** The colony will be clustering, but increased brood rearing typically happens in February. The queen will begin to lay a few more eggs each day. Drones may start to appear in the hive. The biggest trigger is the longer days and more importantly the maple bloom that usually happens in early to mid-February. This bloom is probably the largest single trigger to kick the colony into brood production.

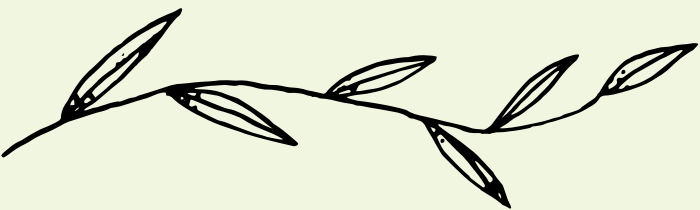
Check the status of your hive. It's okay to remove the top cover and inner cover to inspect. You'll be able to tell where the bees are clustered. You can move frames around so the frames with honey are near the cluster. But NEVER, repeat NEVER physically disturb the cluster. Continue to monitor the hive for sufficient food supplies and if light, provide either dry sugar (if cold weather is predicted) or sugar water for warmer conditions. A colony that is rearing brood will consume lots of resources per week, and if the weather turns bad, a colony with small food reserves can quickly starve to death. However, once you start feeding, you will very likely need to continue feeding until they are bringing in their own food supplies. You may feed to stimulate brood production, but again, once you start, you must keep feeding until the colony is bringing in adequate resource to sustain itself.

Finish preparing your equipment for spring!

**March:** With the days becoming longer, the queen steadily increases her rate of egg laying. More brood means more food will be consumed. The bees will continue to consume honey stores. They will also bring in a fair amount of pollen in during this month.

On a nice sunny day at the beginning of the month, when there is no wind and the bees are flying, have a quick look inside your hive. Any temperature above 60 degrees should be fine for a short period of time. If the temperatures are cooperating there should not be any problem removing the frames for a quick inspection, but be careful not to chill the brood. Inspect for disease and see that the queen is laying.

Colony populations are high in preparation of the coming poplar flow, but food stores can run dangerously low until the flow starts. It may be necessary to continue feeding the hive. For those using double brood boxes, you may consider reversing boxes. This may help your colonies expand and not swarm. Do not reverse if brood spans between your boxes. Towards the end of March is when you should consider placing honey supers on your strong colonies. If you are using bare foundation add only one super at a time. If you have drawn comb, you may add more than one super. You may not collect honey in March, but this gives the colony a sense of overhead room and helps with swarm prevention. Also mid to late March you need to make sure that the colony has plenty of space to expand the broodnest. Failure to provide adequate space will most certainly result in swarming. Also near the end of March is when you should do the first comprehensive inspection of the season.



# Revolutionary Beer Fest 2024

Calling all history buffs, homebrewers and beekeepers! We've been invited to the Great Bridge Battlefield and Waterways History Foundation's 7th Annual Revolutionary Beer Fest. The event will be held at Khedive Shrine Center on Saturday, April 20th from 1-5 Pm. We are looking for two volunteers to assemble and staff an educational beekeeping display to showcase the importance of beeswax, honey and mead in the 18th century. Volunteers receive a free ticket to sample craft beers and ciders from 15 different breweries. The festival will include food available for purchase, live music, cornhole, artisan vendors, a raffle and more. If you'd like to volunteer, please contact Pam Fisher at: [BeesKneesApiaries@gmail.com](mailto:BeesKneesApiaries@gmail.com) or 757-620-0945.





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## Future Meeting Dates & Swarm Bucket Workshop

**February 12th** - Presentation on “Swarms” followed by a **swarm bucket workshop**. The workshop is free for all Guild members and will be held immediately after the guild meeting for those who would like to stay. If you want to make a swarm bucket, you will need to **bring your own 5 gallon bucket with a lid**. Additional materials will be provided on site.

**March 11th** - Presentation Topic: Making Splits

Guild meetings will continue to be offered both virtually via Zoom and in-person at Towne Bank 137 Mt. Pleasant Rd., Chesapeake, VA 23322 at 7:00 pm.

