



# BEE LINES

Journal of the Ulster County Beekeepers Association

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The Ulster County Beekeepers Association welcomes and encourages all having an interest in honeybees. We meet on most second Mondays of each month from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Rosendale Community Center, 1055 Route 32, Rosendale, N.Y. Non-members are encouraged to make a donation to the Speaker's Fund.



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Ulster County Beekeepers Association

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*Blue pollen mystery solved! See page 10.  
Photo by Deb Davidovits.*

### On the cover:

Vernal witch hazel blooms on February 15th at the edge of the HoneybeeLives Apiary with the snow-covered Shawangunk Mountains in the background. Honeybees enjoyed their earliest forage of the season collecting pollen from these tiny blossoms. It was a joyous day with bee poop everywhere on the snow! Photo by Grai St. Clair Rice.

## BEELINES NEEDS YOUR HELP!

*Do you have a beekeeping story to tell or information or pictures you would like to share with fellow beekeepers? Please send text and pictures to the editor of Beelines at this email address:*

[Beelines.UCBA@gmail.com](mailto:Beelines.UCBA@gmail.com)



# AT THE MARCH MEETING

## OUR MEETING PRESENTATION DAVID BLOCHER ON “CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPRING”

David Blocher is an EAS-certified Master Beekeeper and a past president of the Backyard Beekeepers Association in Connecticut. His presentation will deal with seasonal concerns and management issues for spring, and will include a demonstration of a management technique that deters the swarm instinct.

## ANNUAL UCBA ELECTIONS

Annual elections of officers will take place. See page 4 to meet the candidates.

## PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN TRAVEL MUG . . .

. . . for coffee and tea at meetings. We don't want to use paper cups. There are always washable mugs available if you forget.

## MARCH MEETING SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

**Hive staples** will be for sale by the library table. Nine hive staples for \$1.

A casual UCBA members **Seed Swap** will take place at the March and April meetings. If you have extra seeds to share that are not expired, please divide into individual paper packets clearly marked with contents. Anyone have any cilantro?

**Please return library materials** so others may take them out and share our wonderful library.

**Renew your household memberships** for 2013, if you haven't already done so, or join our growing beekeeping association for the first time. Download a membership form from [www.Ulsterbees.org](http://www.Ulsterbees.org) or obtain one at the reception desk.

## UPCOMING MEETING SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

**We encourage members to volunteer** to greet people at the meeting reception desk, sell raffle tickets, orient newcomers, and generally participate in the community. Speak with one of the UCBA VPs to volunteer for an upcoming meeting.

**UCBA's annual plant sale** will take place before the May and June meetings in the main meeting room. This is a fun fundraiser that helps us share our wealth and spread good forage and cheer. Start extra seedlings, divide perennials, or collect plant donations. All plants should be clearly marked as to what they are and if you wish to suggest a price.

**Suggestions for future meeting speakers or topics** are greatly encouraged from our membership. We need to know what you want and need. Please inform UCBA President Mike Barton or Program Coordinator Grai St. Clair Rice, or email [UlsterCountyBeekeepers@Yahoo.com](mailto:UlsterCountyBeekeepers@Yahoo.com).

## FOR SALE AT THE MARCH MEETING

Used 8-frame inner covers (\$7) and outer covers (\$15) will be on sale at the back of the room at the March meeting. HoneybeeLives is selling these for Roosa Bee Farm, and a portion of the money will go to benefit the UCBA library fund. Please note: Roosa Bee Farm is downsizing due to relocation. Equipment is used but disease free. HoneybeeLives also has RBF used bottom boards and medium supers available at their apiary in New Paltz. Contact: [HoneybeeLives@yahoo.com](mailto:HoneybeeLives@yahoo.com) or see you at the meeting.



# ★ MEET THE CANDIDATES ★



## **MIKE BARTON, President**

I've been keeping bees as a hobby since 1996. Beekeeping is challenging and overwhelming at times. Pests, disease, weather, and other factors all take their toll on your bees and your wallet. After joining UCBA, I gained a new appreciation for honeybees. I've never enjoyed beekeeping more and love sharing that with others wanting to keep bees.



## **JIM LUCKNER, Co-Secretary**

Cindy and I joined UCBA in 2008, when we began keeping bees, and I can't say enough about how the people, programs, and resources of the club have enlivened our beekeeping. I want to help keep UCBA healthy and growing and to help other new beekeepers.



## **CINDY JOAO, Co-Vice President**

I really enjoy being a part of this beekeeping community. I look forward to our meetings and spending time each month with everyone. It just makes me happy. I would be glad to do whatever I can do to keep things going as co-vice president again this year.



## **INGE KRAUS, Treasurer**

I am new to beekeeping and still have lots to learn, but new or not, to me being part of the world of bees is ever so inspiring and healing. I have had more experience with budgets than bees, but far less joy. I am looking forward to serving as treasurer and being more actively involved in this wonderful community of beekeepers.



## **RICH HINES, Co-Vice President**

I keep bees and bees keep me. They are great teachers. Bees are an important influence towards keeping my life analog.



## **ELIZABETH STEGMAYER, Librarian**



## **MARG PANCIERA, Co-Secretary**

I've now been a beekeeper for three years. I'm happy to continue to help out in the capacity of co-secretary.



## **JAY WINSLOW, Beelines Editor**





# CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPRING

## March Meeting Speaker: DAVID BLOCHER

EAS Certified Master Beekeeper and Past-President of the Backyard Beekeepers Association (BYBA) in Connecticut

By Grai St. Clair Rice



Blocher and his father tended 20 to 25 hives together, until Blocher headed off to Austria and then Yale graduate school. In 1989, Blocher's father died in a boating accident and he returned to his family home for the summer. The bees were still there, however it was apparent that they were getting sicker and sicker as the summer wore on. It turned out that they had American Foulbrood, and all the hives had to be destroyed.

Undeterred by these tragedies, Blocher started his first solo beeyard near Yale the following year. He still tends this beeyard as one of his 13 yards around Connecticut, now totaling 100-125 hives each year.

This many hives makes Blocher officially a "sideliner," tending his bees while holding down a real job in the commercial banking industry. His dedication to his bees was accomplished in visits going to and from the commuter train station and on weekends. This lifestyle also made him have to focus on efficiency in bee management.

Blocher's bees produce approximately 5,000 pounds of honey, which is sold under the name Dave's Honey Farm at farm markets in Connecticut, and the bees also pollinate a couple of small orchards



**T**ending honeybees has a way of centering people. Of course, centering in a way that involves tens of thousands of stinging insects is a particular vocation that isn't for everyone. For others, beekeeping becomes integral to the fabric of their lives.

For David Blocher, beekeeping is a thread that has woven through most of his life, weaving together the experience of family and community with the fascination of honeybees.

Blocher's 38 years of beekeeping experience began as a youth in Wisconsin when "a beekeeping uncle of mine claimed that 'the bees do all the work, and all you have to do is rob the honey.' To a 12-year-old, this sounded like a pretty good proposition, assuming that the bees cooperated. It also struck me that it could be a lot of fun, as well as a little bit dangerous, which seemed like the perfect activity for a kid of my disposition. My dad was game, and we spent a lot of wonderful hours together learning about bees."



# CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPRING *continued*

in the Sheldon area. He has been raising some queens and nucs in recent years.

Blocher's experience in beekeeping is a very personal one, yet it also includes engaging in a larger community that often grows around beekeepers. When his father was the president of the Portage County Beekeepers for a few years, Blocher served as a vice-president when he was 15 or 16 years old. As an adult, Blocher has served as secretary, vice president, and president of the Backyard Beekeepers in Connecticut. He continues his commitment to the beekeeping community through BYBA workshops, setting up the BYBA bee yard with Leslie Huston for queen rearing and teaching, and maintaining an observation hive at the Connecticut Children's Museum for the past 11 years.

Blocher admits that his passion for bees and beekeeping also connects him to his father and the time they shared. When asked how he can juggle all the things he does and yet continue to give of his time and experience, his answer seems rather matter of fact. "I enjoy helping people discover the joys of beekeeping, and volunteerism was inculcated by my parents," Blocher explains.

"Some people belong to a church", he continues. "The beekeeping association is like a secular church



of believers who like to be out in nature. I've made many good friends there."

In 2005, Blocher passed the Master Beekeeper certification exams given each summer by the Eastern Apiculture Society, which involves in-depth preparation and testing by some very high standards, continuing his lifelong learning. This past summer of unemployment allowed a dedication to his beekeeping practice and was another learning experience. It became completely clear to him that "properly managed hives can be very productive."

Blocher seems to embody "bee" in the tireless world of the hive, and with his passion for honeybees and community he has woven a fine tapestry of life.





# A SEED DILEMMA

## Garden Commentary

By Grai St. Clair Rice

It's that time of year to finally commit to buying new seeds for our flower and vegetable gardens, or not.

Good seeds aren't inexpensive, and having a very small garden means I try to stretch those seeds over a few years, only to be disappointed when my cilantro and nasturtiums don't come up.

And then there is the concern over where seeds have been and what they many have been treated with. As a beekeeper, I have to think and plan for my bees as well as for myself. I have felt ill when looking at green-coated seeds poking up from the dirt in commercial greenhouse flats of zucchini, and I wonder how the fungicide I am told is on them may impact my sweet honeybees.

As part of a beekeeping community, we can share our knowledge and our resources. The UCBA seed swaps at the March and April meetings are another opportunity to share some fresh organic seeds with others or pick up some for yourself and your bees.

Below are some seed sources highly recommended by some of our members.

Hudson Valley Seed Library

[www.seedlibrary.org](http://www.seedlibrary.org)

Very local New York heirloom seeds and contemporary art

High Mowing Organic Seeds

[www.highmowingseeds.com](http://www.highmowingseeds.com)

Vermont-based seed company

Turtle Tree Seed

[www.turtletreeseed.org](http://www.turtletreeseed.org)

New York biodynamic and open pollinated

Seed Savers Exchange

[www.seedsavers.org](http://www.seedsavers.org)

Iowa-based seed organization

Pinetree Garden Seeds and Accessories

[www.superseeds.com](http://www.superseeds.com)

Maine-based seed company

Link to a *New York Times* article on this subject:

[www.nytimes.com/2013/03/03/opinion/sunday/look-carefully-at-those-seeds.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/03/opinion/sunday/look-carefully-at-those-seeds.html?_r=0)



# NECTAR AND POLLEN

## A Variety of Sources is Key

By Jay Winslow



*Crimson clover*

Imagine, if you will, that your beehives have no tracheal mites, no varroa mites, no small hive beetles, no nosema, and no wax moths. Let's also assume no one is spraying any pesticides within the forage range of your hives and you aren't surrounded by massive monoculture farms. Are you and your bees out of the woods and home free? As with most things in life, and with honeybees in particular, it's not that simple.

You can do everything right and have everything going your way, but your colonies can still fail if your bees don't have adequate *quantity* and *variety* of nectar and pollen within their forage range. Not only

do they need quantity and variety, but they also need a *progression* of food sources throughout the forage season. That is, as some sources wind down, others come into bloom and become available to bees. For example, if the queen is laying well and lots of brood is developing, but supplies of essential pollen suddenly become scarce because of a poor overlap between blooms of different sources, all that brood could be in jeopardy.



*Pear blossoms*

What to do? First, make a survey over the coming year of natural sources of pollen and nectar in your area. Note the order and timing of the blooms and see if you can identify any gaps. Finally, investigate bee forage sources that you can plant to fill in the gaps. Sometimes a food source can be enhanced by *not* doing something. For instance, you can forgo that carpet-like lawn and let those dandelions bloom!

Following is a small sampling of some of the more common trees, shrubs, and plants favored by honeybees, along with their normal bloom dates.

Maple – February-April

Willow – February-April





# NECTAR AND POLLEN *continued*

Pussy Willow – March-April  
Winter Aconite – March-April  
Apple – April-May  
Cherry – April-May  
Dandelion – April-May  
Peach – April-May  
Pear – April-May  
Blackberry – May-June  
Chestnut – May-June  
Poppy – May-July  
Raspberry – May-June  
Tulip Tree – May-June  
White Sweet Clover – May-August  
Borage – June-Frost  
Melons – June-Frost  
Pumpkin – June-Frost  
Anise Hyssop – July-October  
Buckwheat – July-August  
Milkweed – July-August

Virginia Creeper – July-August  
Thistle – August  
Aster – September-Frost  
Goldenrod – September-October

There are numerous online sources of information about forage sources and schedules. A few sample links:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forage\\_\(honey\\_bee\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forage_(honey_bee))

[http://plants.usda.gov/pollinators/Improving\\_Forage\\_for\\_Native\\_Bee\\_Crop\\_Pollinators.pdf](http://plants.usda.gov/pollinators/Improving_Forage_for_Native_Bee_Crop_Pollinators.pdf)

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/2000/2168.html>

<http://www.pollinator.org/PDFs/EasternBroadleaf.Oceanic.rx18.pdf>

And here's an app for those so inclined:

<http://www.pollinator.org/beesmartapp.htm>



*Borage*



# BLUE POLLEN

## Mystery Solved!

By Grai St. Clair Rice • Photo Courtesy BeverlyBees.com

A couple of years ago, a fellow beekeeper contacted HoneybeeLives to inquire about the source of the blue pollen she had collected from her hive. I was mesmerized by the variety of colors that she displayed, representing the vibrant growth of early spring, however blue pollen was beyond my experience.

The following year I also found blue pollen in early spring in my Connecticut hive, although I never tracked down the source.

I have now been enlightened by the beekeeping blog Beverly Bees, and I am delighted to know that Siberian Squills were the honeybees' target forage. These bloom right after the daffodils along the woodland garden path at my mother's home. They are delicate and hardy at the same time.

Check out Anita Deeley's wonderful entry about Siberian Squills and the rest of her very informative website: <http://www.beverlybees.com/blue-pollen-honeybees-siberian-squill/#.UTX9CO3yt4M>



## Spring Is Almost Here — Consider Starting a Hive or Honing Your Beekeeping Skills

### HoneybeeLives Organic Beekeeping Class March 9th & 10th, 10am - 6pm

This intensive two-day class, taking place in Rosendale, introduces students to organic/natural beekeeping with a biodynamic influence. Develop the knowledge as well as the inspiration to nurture your honeybees. The Saturday class is "Intro to Organic Beekeeping: Planning a New Hive for Spring," and the Sunday class is "Understanding and Caring for Your Bees." \$190 per person. Pre-registration is required. Visit [www.HoneybeeLives.org](http://www.HoneybeeLives.org), email: [HoneybeeLives@Yahoo.com](mailto:HoneybeeLives@Yahoo.com) or call 845-255-6113. The HoneybeeLives hands-on apiary class "How to Inspect and Maintain a Healthy Hive" will begin with dates in May & June.