

# Skagit Valley Beekeepers



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April 2015

## Go With The Flow

The next meeting will be **April 9th, 2015 at 7:00 PM** at the Skagit Farmers Supply CENEX Administration building, located at 1833 Park Avenue, Burlington WA. **The topic is Spring plants For Honey Bees And Spring Feeding.**

The commercial beekeepers have gotten their bees back. The nucs have arrived a bit earlier than last year. Swarms have been reported already and there are so many things in bloom. Hopefully you've been seeing fields of dandelion, which means a flow is on. Maples too, at least in my area.

Winter is definitely over and the bee season has started!

## Swarm Season Starts

Already seeing reports of swarms. A couple hives that I had the opportunity to inspect had queen cups and the hives stuffed full of bees. Definitely time to read up on swarm prevention and while I'm at it, I should be prepared to catch a few swarms as well. A nice way to increase your hives.

For swarm prevention, there are a few good sites out there on the *interwebs* that might help you keep your bees in your hives and out of someone else's.

Bush Farms Swarm Prevention

<http://www.bushfarms.com/beesswarmcontrol.htm>

How To Prevent Swarming (For Dummies Book series)

<http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/how-to-prevent-swarming-when-beekeeping.html>

Swarm Prevention By Demaree Method (PDF)

[http://countryrubes.com/images/Swarm\\_Prevention\\_By\\_Demaree\\_Method.pdf](http://countryrubes.com/images/Swarm_Prevention_By_Demaree_Method.pdf)

Swarm Control of Honey Bee Colonies

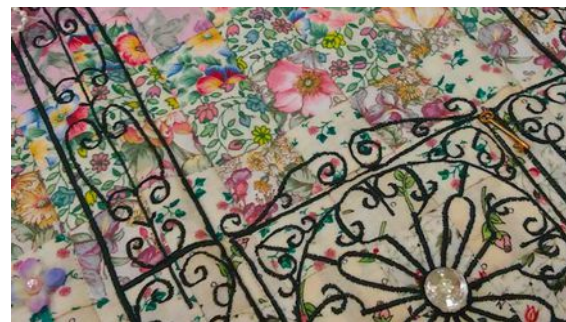
<http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/swarmcontrol.html>

## Things To Do This Month

- The nucs have arrived! Bring your questions to the meeting!
- Packages will be available soon. Packages need special care! Feed 1:1 syrup to get them fed drawing out wax. Feed pollen substitutes. Keep it up until they're able to care for themselves.
- Peek at queens every 7 - 10 days - or just check for eggs. If the queen dies or is having problems, you'll need to replace her quickly.
- Consider mite treatments while there is no brood but do nothing that will interfere with the queen.
- For established hives, feed if needed/desired but check for signs of overcrowding/swarming. Have boxes ready to add. The dandelions are blooming. Are the maples blooming in your area?

## The 2015 Potluck / Silent Auction

A great time at the 2015 Potluck and Silent Auction. The food was wonderful - a special thanks to **Diane Dong** for her part in putting this all together and having the ham ready!



Lots of items were available at the auction and a few bidding wars took place. **Rob Prieisburger** brought a fantastic looking fireplace ring that gained a lot of interest and a lot of bids!

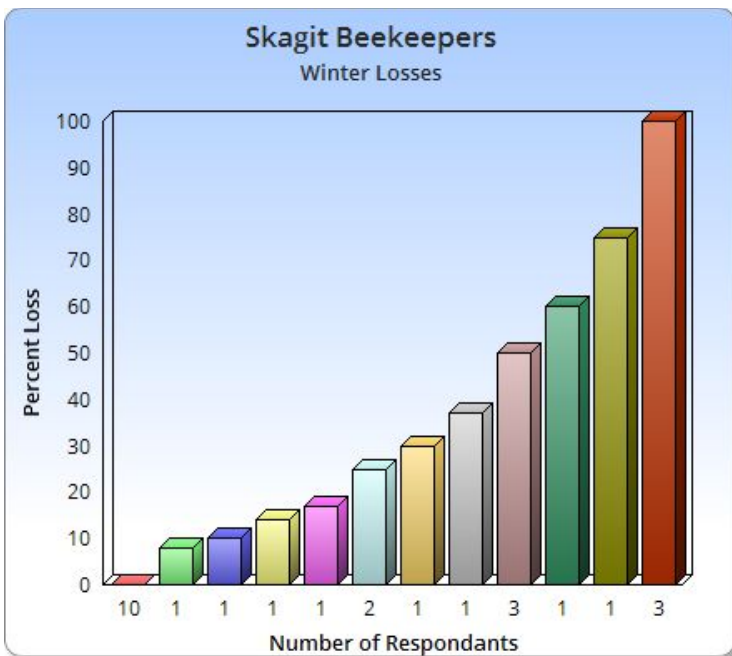




There were also books, a gorgeous quilted item, soap and flower seed packets, a fancy bee vac and a whole lot more! Thanks to all who donated and to all those who participated in the auction!

## Winter Losses

Overwintering your hives can be difficult here in the wet portion of the Pacific Northwest and everything can look perfect in October with fat bees, a wonderful laying queen, plenty of honey and pollen all stored in combs.



Then comes November and those other colder, wet, damp, moist, soggy, dripping months where everything seems to go wrong. Some hives are bursting at the seams and then hives right next to them (which started out and were managed the same way) just dwindle down to nothing in a seemingly inexplicable way.

Lots of things can go wrong. Varroa, Nosema and other diseases, lack of stores, damp hives, and old or unknown

queens.

For me, the biggest correlation I found was that those bees that I had that came with my packages were the ones which died. Those with local queens, or new queens raised by my bees survived.

I had ten hives and four nucs going into November. By December, three hives just kept dwindling down to nothing. No mites, plenty of food. Those hives were even nice and dry. The queen wasn't laying though.

By the end of March I had 7 hives left three of those queens just not laying. Those three hives made it through the winter but the queen isn't doing so good. They will be replaced.

All this got me asking how the rest of the association fared with their bees. Thankfully twenty six of you responded, some with great news and some with a bit of sad news.

Quite a few respondents reported no losses. Those with no losses had 1 to 6 hives. And sadly there were a few with 100% loss. One person lost all 6 hives, the other two who lost all their hives only had one hive to begin with.

Emotions covered the spectrum, *"One hive, no losses. Ladies are quite happy with the early spring!"*

Then I got, *"50 %...as I hold back the tears."*

Sometimes, there is some good news with the bad, *"I lost 25% i.e. 1 out of 4. The three are doing well and the 2 frame hive from our living room did so well, they just went out, joined a couple more frames of brood and bees and are nearly ready for super #2, so we are back to 4!"*

The SVBA as a whole we had an average loss of 28.88%, very close to the industry expected loss of 30%.

One person mentioned, *"It would be interesting to know who in the club treated (or not) for varroa and what method they used and their hive survival rate."* I agree and hope that we'll be able to include that information next year!

## The Nucs Are Back In Town!

Thanks to all the hard work by Seth Smith and Joe McConaughy for all their hard work to get Nucs available for purchase by the club members. This year 175 nucs were purchased, and according to Seth, this was his biggest Nuc run to date.



## Additional Articles Of Interest

**Sue Cobey in GoodFruit Grower Magazine**

<http://www.goodfruit.com/breeding-better-bees/>

**Few Bees in Vineyards**

<http://www.goodfruit.com/few-bees-in-vineyards/>

