

Skagit Valley Beekeepers



Seth Smith, President
William Markus, Vice President
Chuck Howell, Secretary
Scott Rhodes, Treasurer
Bruce Bowen, Board

770-0481
630-5086 or 661-0452
630-5634
856-2652
422-5146

Rob Johnson, Board 770-6170
Steven LeBlanc, Board 202-2266
Charlie Langseth, Honorary Board 293-6853
Robert Niles, Editor robert@yakima.net

July 2015

Article Header

The next meeting will be our Annual "Potluck" Barbecue on **July 19th, 2015 at 12:00 NOON** at Bill Markus' home, located at [5779 Brookings Road, Sedro Woolley, WA](#). Bring a food dish, eating utensils, beverage & family. Maybe folding chairs? Speaker/Topic TBD.

The blackberries now are starting to lose their petals and the blackberry flow is waning.

I can tell this because those tens of thousands of bees that are normally nowhere to be found are now visiting every clover, every flower that they've been neglecting since the start of the blackberry flow.

Soon - and it's early this year, some of you will be harvesting some of that honey. I had a small taste of what the bees are producing here. It was nice and sweet with a touch of spicy. Oh, I'm no honey connoisseur but it was just perfect! Enjoy!

Things To Do This Month

- Blackberries will be done and over by the time you read this but I'm finding that the bees who were back-filling the brood's nest are now moving that nectar up.
- Maybe think about how and when you're going to extract your honey. The club has an extractor you can borrow. Talk to the board members to see how you can obtain it. Or for those of you with a few hives, you can crush and strain ([small article in the August 2014 newsletter about Crush and Strain](#)).
- After removing honey supers, for those of you that do, you might want to check and possibly treat for mites. At least check. There's nothing wrong with knowledge.
- After the honey, It might be a good idea to re-queen if her majesty is an old one. In our climate,

I hear that it is better to re-queen in the summer/fall and let her overwinter than re-queen in the spring.

Raising Queens (Part 2)

Last month we covered creating queens by grafting, commonly called the **Doolittle Method**. This month we'll cover other methods for raising queens. There's a method for everyone, even if you only need one queen or dozens of them.

Some of the reasons for using alternative queen raising methods are:

1. Eyesight

I don't know about you but age sure has an effect on eyesight - just can't see what I used to be able to see without some sort of magnification. These alternative methods don't require you to stare down cells looking for larvae smaller than that miniature rice grain that they call an egg.

2. Timing

So what happens when your eggs are going to hatch on the same day that you are now required to be elsewhere? That's happened to me. So I had to figure out how to cram everything into one day or something is going to get delayed.

3. Smaller amount of queens

Some of these methods are perfect if you just want a few queens.

4. Just plain easier and faster than grafting

Ah! A reason for us lazy folk. OK, you don't have to be lazy to need things to be easier or faster. Faster and easier can make those days a little less stressful when there's a world of other things you have to get done. With some of these alternatives, I can just use eggs. Put them in the starter and I'm done.

Just like with the Doolittle Method we talked about last month, you need a starter and a finisher for most of these queen rearing methods. (See: <http://skagitvalleybeekeepers.org/newsletters/SVBA-June-2015.pdf>)

Hopkins (Case) Method (laying frame on it side) is pretty much the "you can raise queens too" method. The only downside is that you'll need a spacer so that you can lay the frame of eggs above or between the brood's nest

For the Hopkins method, you'll need:

- A starter hive
- A frame with eggs or just hatched larvae (1 day old)
- Two 2x2" lumber cut about 6 inches long or something along this sort of thing that you might have laying around the house.
- An empty box or spacer

Make a queenless starter (see the June 2015 newsletter).

Take the frame that has the eggs you want to have raised as queens, it's easier if this frame has new-ish comb, not that really dark brown comb, and **on one side containing eggs**, flatten 2 to 3 rows of comb, all the way across, left to right. Now skip a row of cells and then do it again, flatten all the cells, all the way across the frame, left to right. Repeat this all the way down the frame.

When you're finished, you'll have these rows of hills and valleys, the valleys being the portions you flattened.

Next, on the hills, using a stick, matchstick or even a finger, flatten 1-2 cells, skip a cell, then flatten 1-2 cells, keeping doing this all the way across the row (the hill) .

Once finished, you'll have a bunch of mounds. The cells on these mounds will be the potential queen cells.

In your starter hive, using a couple 2 inch blocks, lay that frame with the side you manipulated face down, using the 2 inch blocks to suspend the face down comb above the brood nest below it.

Ten days later come back and carefully remove the frame and you should notice the queen cells.

Depending on the size of your frames, you can create a large amount of queens - or just a few, it's up to you.

Carefully cut these queen cells out and place them into

new hives (splits?) or into mating nucs.

Smith Method,

This is a bit like the Doolittle method but instead of grafting, you cut out rows of comb from a frame that has eggs or just hatched larvae. For each of these strips of cells, you take an empty frame (no foundation either) and using melted wax, wax the underside of the top of the frame and then attach the strip of comb to the underside of the top part of the frame. Like in the Hopkins method, go across the strip and flatten 1-2 cells, skip one and repeat. When finished, holding the frame right side up, you will have the strip of comb and eggs/larvae facing straight down.

Place in starter hive just as you normally would.

Don Kuchenmeister aka "the FatBeeMan" has an excellent video on how to do this at <https://youtu.be/y64cKn4rLNM>

Bee Queenless!

No matter which queen rearing method you use, you need to make sure your starter is queen-less!

If you have a queen in your starter, the bees are just going to look at those eggs and say, "Meh!", ignoring the eggs and will most likely fill in your attempt with comb.



Cell Punch Method

A bit like the Smith method but instead of cutting out strip, you cut out cells. You can do this with a "cell

punch", a tool you can buy or make out of various things and you punch out a cell (doing so with newer comb is much easier) and then wax that cell to the bottom the top bar of a frame (again, with no comb or foundation). Make a row of these cells all along the frame.

One person mentioned that he always has problems with these "punches", so he simply cuts out little squares around the cell he wants to use.

Dave Cushman mentions a few things that work as a cell punch:

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

And this site had a great overview of the process with some nice pictures:

<http://www.hudsonvillehoney.com/2011/07/18/backyard-queen-rearing/>

Miller Method (zig-zag foundation or comb)

This is a very simple and very old method for rearing queens.

This method take existing comb or wax foundation, remove the bottom third of the comb or foundation in a zig-zag pattern. Place it in the brood chamber and let the queen lay in it. When the larvae hatch, move it to a starter hive

More details can be found at: <http://www.dave-cushman.net/bee/millermethod.html>

OTS Method

Another very easy method to raise a few queens is with the **Mel Disselkoen's** OTS (*On The Spot*) Method. This method can done using a starter hive or a strong hive that is queenless (doesn't have to be broodless).

If you don't want to use a starter, select your hive and remove the frame with the queen on it, along with all the bees clinging to the frame and place that frame in a nuc. Grab a couple more frames of brood with the bees on it and place that in the nuc as well. Now you have a queenless hive.

Find a frame from a suitable queen and find a row of 7 - 8 cells of eggs or just hatched larvae.

Using your hive tool **break and bend down the bottom cell walls** of those eggs/larvae.

What this is supposed to do is enlarge the cell and force the bees to treat it as if it was a queen cell. The bees will draw that cell out and down and raise a queen or few.

You do this for as many sections on both sides of the frame that you would like queen cells. Making a lot or a few, depending on your needs.

See the first PDF file "*Helpful Hints for Notching*" at: <http://www.mdasplitter.com/> for a great set of pictures on how to easily do this.

Apparently there are lots of different methods for raising queens but the underlying principle is the same, "raise your own" and save yourself a few dollars while ensuring you have local queens with the characteristics you prefer.

Using Swarm Master To Attract Bees

By Anita Anderson-Johnson

One thing I'd like to mention to the group, I'm a believer in the product "Swarm Master".

I set up a remote hive and within 3 days it became occupied. That surprised the heck out of me! The stuff is a bit pricey with the shipping and all, but it worked like a charm. I set the hive up in a rural location just 2 fields down from where WSU has ten research hives. It could have come from there, but there are several farms in that general area that do bees also.

So I caught this one about 10 days ago and if the old adage holds true "A swarm in May is worth a ton of hay, a swarm in June a silver spoon, and a swarm in July ain't worth a fly." Apparently, I have a silver spoon! It rings true what Seth meant when he said that a July swarm never seems to make it through the winter. --*Anita and the Jubilee Bees.*

