

COMB Courier

Mid-Michigan—Land of the bee

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Editor: mike ffrench

Seventy-Six winters

For better or worse I have been on this earth for seventy-six years, whereas my bees can't even get through one. Why is this? They have a nice home, plenty of food, and someone who loves them, so why can't they muscle through like I have?

Every spring I have the heart-rending sight of seeing my bees on their backs with their six tiny legs pointed skywards. My bees have one thing in common; they are all package bees from warmer climes—southern belles from Georgia, or surf-skirts from California.

When I put my bees up for winter, I feel like Jack the Ripper of the bee world. Do I like putting my bees on death row? Damn right I don't! I would like to see all my girls in the spring, healthy and raring to go.

What I need is bees who work-out during the year and build themselves up so they are capable of lugging twice their weight in honey back to the hive every time they go out to forage. Bees who can tough it out through the Michigan winter. Bees so strong, they can throw any other bee from one end of the hive to the other.

Yes, I realize my lifespan is much greater than that of the bees, but for crying out loud, why can't they winter over—just once! Is that too much to ask? Yes, I do know they are infested with varroa, and various other bee ailments, but other forms of life in the insect world do not suffer the catastrophic losses that beekeepers do on an annual basis.

The answer starts at source—the package dealers. If they won't do it of their own accord, then we need help from the people most affected—us! Us means the whole U.S. population, since we all are in the same boat, eating the same food pollinated by the same bees. Of course we could get used to a steady diet of grits flavored with soy sauce and neonicotinoids, but do we want to? To what extent would our health suffer from lack of vitamins and trace minerals present in foods pollinated by bees, and so vital to good health?

C.O.M.B. Monthly meeting.
2nd Monday of the month 6:30pm.
MSU Pavilion, Farm Lane, E. Lansing

For sale

New, 6 5/8" 10-frame honey supers, frames, foundation, painted, ready-to-use \$40 each.
Call Loie: 517-851-8408

Bees in Basra

One doesn't normally associate bees with Basra, Iraq, but here is an article from *Lapham's Quarterly* Volume X number 1, about bees in the year 950 C.E. Basra, Mesopotamia (Iraq is the modern term for this part of the world).

Said a parrot to an assembly of humans, "That you have artisans and masters of diverse crafts does not set you apart from the rest of us animals. Several kinds of birds and crawling

and swarming creatures share with you in this. Bees are insects, but they make their cells and build dwellings more aptly and skillfully than your artisans, better and more ingeniously than your builders and architects. They build their homes as round, multistoried hives that look like stacked shields just by setting one chamber atop another. With their consummate wisdom, craftsmanship, and builder's art, they form each apartment as a perfect equilateral and equiangular hexagon. They need no compass to guide them, no straightedge to rule, or plumb line to drop, nor any angle to try their corners as human builders do."

This is taken from an encyclopedia written by the Brethren of Purity, a group of Shia Muslim scholars who published their encyclopedia two centuries before the Latin world.

Ed: As a point of interest, C.E. the common era, has supplanted A.D. anno domini (year of Our Lord) in the Gregorian calendar. This is a curiosity too, since the Gregorian calendar was named after Pope Gregory. Basra is at the confluence of the two great rivers, Tigris and Euphrates, just before they empty into the Persian Gulf.

ANR week

March 10th-11th, is ANR week at the Kellogg Center at MSU in East Lansing. There will be something for all beekeepers at the conference. Bring your wallet, there will be vendors galore eager to lighten your load.

Bee packages

Shaun Strubel, Nectar Sweet Apiaries, Howell, MI COMB

Contact: **Mary Hobbs** blackberrymary@yahoo.com Tel:

517-242-4463 or **Robert Johnson** ioniapcwizard@gmail.com Tel: 616-841-1083 or packagebees@combbees.com for more information. Prices: 3lb. package \$102.00, 2lb. package \$97.00 **Final payment due:** April 1st.

Delivery date: April 16th.

Dale Woods beeman53@wowway.com Tel: 517-294-0425,

Kay Barber barberk@msu.edu Tel: 517-927-3541

NUCS \$160.00 each. **Delivery date:** last week in April.

Dave Anthony A.W.S. Bees LLC 1268 Nichols Road, Swartz Creek, MI 48473

www.awsbeesllc.com Tel: 810-621-4371 Prices: 3lb. package \$122.00; 2lb package \$112.00;

Queens \$30.00 each. **Delivery date:** April 10-15

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Deadline for next issue is April 30th