



Next Meeting

Wednesday, August 17 Time: 7 PM
 Gateway Centre Suites 1313 E. Maple St.
 The Rainier Room, Ste. 301 Bellingham, WA
 "Bee-giners" session: 6–7 PM Rainier Room

And, speaking about whether or not to start keeping bees, from the excellent resource, *Keeping Backyard Bees*, (keepingbackyardbees.com) here is a blog from one of their contributors. *Be sure to wander to some of the hyperlinks, highlighted in blue, throughout her article.*

REMEMBER THE FAIR!



THE NORTHWEST WASHINGTON FAIR RUNS FROM AUGUST 15–20; COME AND VISIT THE MBBA BOOTH, WHICH EXPLORES THE THEME:



5 THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE GETTING BEES

By Hilary on July 30, 2016
 Visit [Hilary's Website](#)

The booth will feature exhibits with bee information, but importantly, will also encourage the public to support pollinators, not necessarily by getting into beekeeping, but planting for bee-friendly flowers and avoiding pesticides.

For all information regarding tickets, hours, and events, click on: www.fair.com.

Lately, it seems like everyone I meet wants to get into backyard beekeeping. Maybe it's the popularity of the Flow Hive that enticed this new wave of would-be beekeepers or maybe it's the headlines about bee die-offs. If you've been thinking about getting bees, but haven't taken the plunge yet, read on to find out exactly what you're in for!

1. Beekeeping is more complicated than you think.

Despite what you might have heard, seen or even read, beekeeping is not easy. A lot of potential beekeepers have the notion that setting up a beehive is akin to setting up a birdhouse. I'd say it's more like having a vegetable garden... a vegetable garden that can attack you when you make it unhappy. It takes a tremendous amount of research to be a successful beekeeper and no matter how many books you read or [classes](#) you take, you will probably still fail and make mistakes in your first few years. The problem is losing an entire colony of bees is much more demoralizing than when you lose your tomato crop. Beekeeping takes patience and a thick skin (in

And from a painting project following a Save The Bees event in London, maybe the most salient statement about our relationship to the plight of the honey bee:



more ways than one)!

2. It's an expensive hobby.

You might be surprised to find out how costly beekeeping is. When you total up all the woodenware, bee suit, tools and bees, you are looking at a big initial investment. Expect to spend over \$500 to get started and that's with just one hive. I recommend you start with two hives! (See number 9 on [this list](#) for why.) Not to mention the ongoing costs: you will at some point need more supers, honey harvesting equipment and likely a queen bee here and there. If you want to get into beekeeping to save money on honey, you are in for a rude surprise.

3. It's not always fun.

I [love beekeeping](#). I get to spend my days in the sun, playing with insects and covered in dirt. When I am working my hives, I often fall into a peaceful trance. I think standing in the center of a swirling [swarm](#) is one of my favorite things in life—but I have also lost the use of my hand for three days because of the swelling from a sting. I have angered my hive and legitimately feared for a neighbor's life. I have cried over dead bees. I have wrestled with guilt and sorrow after accidentally squishing a queen. My point is: beekeeping is full of [highs](#) and [lows](#).

4. It's physically demanding.

There is hard physical labor involved in working your hives. Bees and especially honey are HEAVY. You will be lifting boxes, soaked in sweat and baking in the sun. I have been told, though my youthful ears regret to listen, that back problems are inevitable for life-long beekeepers. Of course, there are some workarounds for this. Using smaller boxes (mediums) or 8-frame boxes or both can help. [Top Bar Hives](#) are an even better way to evade heavy lifting, but you will still get sweaty.

5. It will change your perspective.

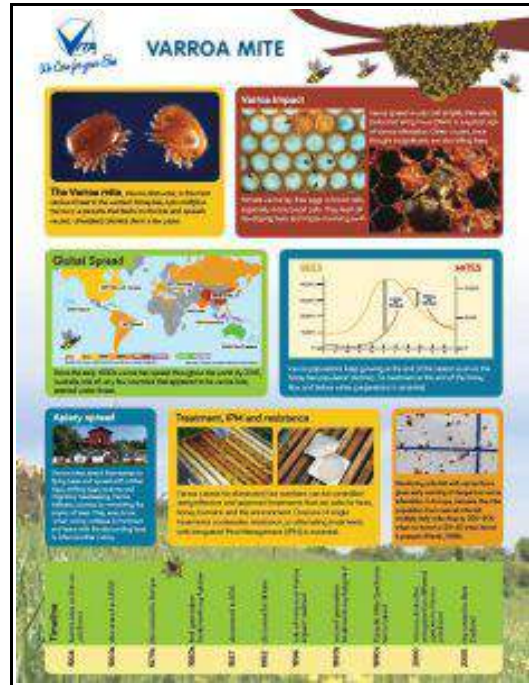
Beekeeping transformed my world view. I am so much more aware of my environment now. I know what [flowers](#) are blooming and when. I pay much more attention to weather patterns. I'm hyper-conscious of what chemicals my neighbors are using. I think more about where my food came from and wonder about the bees that pollinated it. I have learned so much about [native bees](#) when before I indifferent to them. I believe beekeeping connects people to the world they live in and inspires them to make positive change to improve that world.



For two of the main challenges of beekeeping, see the following information about Vita Europe.

VITA EUROPE

Vita (Europe) Limited (vita-europe.com/) is a mite control and honeybee health specialist group that takes a rigorous and ethical approach to research and development into honeybee health. They have a fantastic gallery at their website, and will send you notices of important information, like varroa and swarm graphics that you can download. Here are the links to those, although you may have to register (for free) to download them.



vita-europe.s3.amazonaws.com/VarroaInfographic.pdf



<http://vita-europe.s3.amazonaws.com/SwarmInfographic.pdf>

AND FOR SOME FUN—PHOTOS

Dick Steinkamp was a beekeeper some years ago, and just this year jumped back in, with help from instruction at the Outback Apiary. Here are some beautiful pictures that he shot in his lush backyard, which is certainly a bee haven.



And here's Dick's honey-colored queen trying to duck out just after she got marked.



Images of this year's Sequim Lavender Festival





When a honeybee colony gets too hot, specialist drinker bees fly off to collect water. Helga R. Heilmann

KEEPING THEIR COOL

FROM THE SEATTLE TIMES

By Lynda V. Mapes, Seattle Times environment reporter
(lmapes@seattletimes.com)

You think you're hot. Try living in a space no bigger than, well, a beehive with 20,000 of your closest friends. Or, wearing a down coat as summer temperatures start to cook.

People have their strategies for cooling down as the mercury rises. So do animals.

On a really hot day—like the mid-80s expected Friday—you'll see crows and other birds holding their mouths open. They are practicing what scientists call gular fluttering—panting.

“Since they don't have sweat glands, the best way for them to achieve evaporative cooling is to pant like a dog,” notes John Marzluff, a professor of wildlife sciences at the University of Washington.

Seattle nature photographer Gerrit Vyn also notes birds flatten their feathers in the heat, to reduce their insulating capacity—the opposite of fluffing up in the cold.

Bees have multiple strategies to beat the heat.

For bumblebees, flight is the ticket. The convective cooling of their self-made breeze helps them cope.

But honeybees, cooped up by the thousands in their hive, have to take multiple steps to survive—and protect next year's brood, maturing in cells deep in the hive.

For starters, like people, they'll head outside. As much as a third to half the residents of the hive will evacuate on a hot day, diminishing the heat all their bodies are generating.

If that isn't enough, they will practice what Tom Seeley, professor of Neurobiology and Behavior at Cornell University, calls “social ventilation.” The

bees will stand at the entrance to the hive, line up, and beat their wings in synchrony to generate air velocities of more than 6 feet per second. “It's quite a breeze, you can put your hand in front of a hive and actually feel a draft,” Seeley said.

But on really hot days where all that does is pull in more hot air, it's time to turn to the specialized skill of the water-collection bees. Elders in the hive, they are the only ones trusted with this crucial task.

But how do they know when it's time to head out to get water to cool down the hive? Seeley and his team reported in their paper published in *The Journal of Experimental Biology* in March, they take their cue from other bees begging them for water. All it takes is an antenna tap and tongue touch from a begging bee, and they are out of the hive, on their lifesaving mission.

With their proboscis, they will lap and suck up water, which they store in their honey sac, taking only about 60 seconds to tank up. Each bee can carry only about 50 micrograms of water in a flight—80 percent of her own body weight, and doubling the size of her abdomen—yet only about a quarter of one drop of water. A water-collecting bee will make flight after flight after flight for the good of the hive.

Specialized spreader bees back at the hive offload their water, sucking it into their own bodies, then painting it with their tongue in a thin film over the brood cells, where it evaporates, cooling the hive.

When the begging stops, the collector bees finally rest.

To help bees out on a hot day, Tim Lawrence, director of Washington State University Extension for Island County, recommends providing water with a drip from a hose, or even in a dish—as long as there is something floating in it, so bees won't drown.

Lawrence said he has been fascinated with bees since he cut down a bee swarm on a tree branch in the third grade, took it to his mother and told her he wanted to become a beekeeper. “Everything they do is incredible.”



For another look at this subject, see *Bee Culture* magazine's August 3 post in *Catch the Buzz*: “Keeping the Colony Cool. Fanning, leaving, and collecting and storing water in the hive.”