

# *The* Richmond Beekeepers Newsletter

January 1, 2024

## January news



Now is the time to start planning for the new beekeeping year ahead. Do you plan to get more bees? Should you get nucs or packages? Ron Stilwell, our resident bee whisperer will walk you through this decision at our next

meeting. Please be sure to look at his Packages vs Nuc comparison chart under the [Bee School](#) heading further in this newsletter. This will help you make informed decisions and may spur some questions for Ron.

We will also hear from some of our mentees about what their first year was like. It should be an interesting evening!

Doug Anderson "Honey and the Hive" will **not** be at this month's RBA meeting. If you need equipment please contact him before 1/10/23 to arrange purchase and delivery.

804-501-8266

[info@honeyandthehiveva.com](mailto:info@honeyandthehiveva.com)

Join us Thursday January 11th at 7:00 pm at Greenwood United Methodist Church located at 10040 Greenwood Road, Glen Allen, VA 23060.

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# Speaking of New Bees...

Swarm season will be here shortly, if you're interested in capturing swarms please reach out to Steve White ([slwhite63@gmail.com](mailto:slwhite63@gmail.com)) to get on the list of Swarm Catchers. No experience is required. You can either go out on your own or have the help of an experienced beekeeper with you. A couple of things you will need to have in place before you capture your swarm, first a new hive to house them. You may need to feed them at the beginning. A box to carry them home in, this can be a cardboard box if it's all you have. If you have an extra hive that you can close off you can use that too.

## Bee Studios



In January we will start a new study group for the Virginia State Master Beekeepers Program. This will be discussed in greater detail at the January meeting. If you can't attend, reach out to [Steve White](#) and he will be able to inform you of the details.

## Bee Talks



Has someone heard you are a beekeeper and asked you to give a talk to their organization? Have you thought, “Wow, I’d love to share my love and knowledge about honey bees but I don’t know where to start...?” Lucky for you Wayne Surles has done a lot of the work for you. He has several presentations ready for you to use. But, if you are not the type to get up in front of people and talk, Wayne can also try to find someone to speak at the event so you don’t have to. Wayne can be contacted at [wayne.surles@gmail.com](mailto:wayne.surles@gmail.com)

# Heart of Virginia Bee Conference



Registration  
NOW OPEN!

KEYNOTE SPEAKER  
DR. LAWRENCE J. CONNOR!





HAMPDEN-SYDNEY  
COLLEGE

FARMVILLE, VA

**JANUARY 13**  
9:00 AM—4:00 PM

For more event information and registration, visit:  
[bit.ly/HOVBconference](https://bit.ly/HOVBconference)

Screenshot

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# Bee School

From Ron Stillwell

## Buying Your Bees: Packages vs Nucs

January is typically the time that new and experienced beekeepers are looking for honey bees to fill newly constructed hives. For over one hundred years, packaged bees have been successfully used to start new colonies. However, more recently the trend has moved toward using locally-sourced nucs. There are good reasons for this trend. Of course the choice of which type of starter colony to use is up to each individual beekeeper. There are positives and negatives associated with each:

Nucs	Packages
More expensive.	Less expensive.
Typically 5 drawn frames of comb including frames of developing brood, pollen, and stored honey. Queen is mother of many or all worker and drone bees- Approx. 10,000- 15,000 bees.	No comb, no frames, no pollen or honey. Queen is recently mated and unrelated to other bees that have been collected from different colonies. Queen is enclosed in a queen cage to separate her from colony during shipping. Approx 3 pounds of bees (10,000 bees)
Produced by local beekeeper that is available for questions/concerns in advance of sale and for follow-up support.	Provided by local beekeepers or bee clubs and produced by commercial beekeepers—typically in Georgia—who may or may not provide after-sale support.
Genetically adapted to local conditions.	Generally considered genetically inferior. May have been used for pollination services. May have unwanted traits (defensiveness) that will be introduced to local honey bee



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Queen bee is local and of proven quality.	Queen bee is stranger to other bees. She is prone to substandard mating due to scale of industrialized production. Reputation for queen being superseded by colony (replacement of queen by worker
Installation of frames of comb and bees from wooden or plastic nuc box into an 8 or 10 frame hive.	Installation involves shaking bees from screened shipping container into an 8 or 10 frame hive.
Sugar syrup feeding may be helpful to support rapid growth of colony.	Significant sugar syrup feeding is required to help colony build comb and support growth.
Overwintered nucs usually available mid-late March. Spring nucs usually available mid-May.	Usually available mid-April to late April and possibly early May.
Required to be inspected prior to sale by a local representative of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. <a href="#">See Here</a>	Required to be inspected by a representative of the state from which the package originated. No local inspection is required. <a href="#">See Here</a>
Available through a few local suppliers.	Readily available through a number of national suppliers and local and state suppliers.

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**Note:** Overwintered nucs are created in the late Spring or early Summer of the previous year and have overwintered as a functioning colony. These colonies typically come out very strong in the Spring and grow fast. May swarm if left unmanaged. They are likely to be honey-producing colonies and may often be split in April or early May to create another colony.

Spring nucs are available later in the Spring of the current year once the weather conditions allow for the production and mating of virgin queens. Once mated, these laying queens are combined with bees from another colony or colonies. Once the queen is successfully accepted, this colony is ready for sale. They grow at a moderate rate and are unlikely to produce a honey crop first year, but should be overwinter successfully if prepared adequately by beekeeper.

Both Winter and Spring nucs come in a number of sizes--- 3, 4, 5, 8, or even 10 frame colonies and on either medium or deep frames. The larger the nuc, the more expensive it is likely to be. Reminder---It is NOT imperative to start with a deep nuc, though it is traditional. You CAN start with a medium nuc and place it in medium equipment and add a deep box later as the colony develops, since the bees really don't care about our traditions.

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# January Honey-Do List

- Order bees for next year
- Be sure to have a plan for supplemental feeding if needed
- Be sure the entrance is not blocked by dead bees or snow
- Put your ear next to the hive and listen for humming bees
- Carefully check the weight of your hive by slightly lifting it from behind.  
If it is light be sure to add supplemental feed on a warm day.
- Put up wind blocks around hives if needed.
- Start reading that book about beekeeping that you didn't get to this summer.
- Repair and build equipment for next year. We will be catching swarms before we know it!





# December Meeting Moments







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# New Website

Brian Schollenberger and Domenic DiStefano have been working on updating the Richmond Beekeepers website. You will start to see new features such as a members area and a local bee form. As part of this work we moved to a new hosting location which will save us a few hundred dollars a year.



## RBA is on Facebook!

If you are a member of RBA please join us on our new Facebook group. It's a great way to stay in touch, ask a question, share a swarm capture, share a mishap, or just see what fellow members are up to.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/478487129904285/?ref=share&exp=3bcf>

## Got Something to BUZZ about?



Do you have news or photos to share with RBA members? Just send your news or pictures to [bee.geek1@gmail.com](mailto:bee.geek1@gmail.com) by the first of the month. We will include them in our next newsletter.

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## Executive Board

Steve White: President

Samantha Forbes: 1st VP (programs)

Terry Harper: 2nd VP (membership)

David Cox: Secretary

Karen Nickolaou: Treasurer

Ron Stilwell: Member at large - Education

Nancy Essid: Newsletter

Check out our website <https://richmondbeekeepers.wordpress.com/>