



A u g u s t 2 0 2 6
Monthly Newsletter for the Austin Area Beekeeping Community

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FEATURE ARTICLE

When the Flowers Go Quiet: Surviving the Central Texas Dearth

by Elissa Sexton, President

If you've kept bees in Central Texas for more than five minutes, you've probably learned one important lesson: **the weather makes the rules.**

One week, the bees are bringing in nectar like there's no tomorrow. The next, it's 100°+, the ground is baked hard, and the bees seem to be asking, "Where did all the flowers go?" Welcome to the **dearth**. A dearth is simply a period when little or no nectar is coming into the hive. And here in Central Texas, our dearths can be especially interesting because our bees have to deal with heat, drought, unpredictable rainfall, and a landscape where a flower can be blooming beautifully one week and completely finished the next.

Green doesn't always mean nectar.

This is one of the great Central Texas beekeeping traps. After a little rain, everything can turn green almost overnight. Roadsides and pastures may look like a buffet, but that doesn't necessarily mean the bees are finding enough nectar to fill the pantry. Our bees take advantage of whatever is blooming—mesquite, huisache, prickly pear, wildflowers, clover, sunflowers, vitex, and all the other plants that make Central Texas such an interesting place to keep bees.

But blooms come and go quickly, especially when summer heat arrives. By midsummer, many of the big spring nectar sources have finished, while the combination of heat and dry conditions can shut down or reduce nectar production from other plants. A pretty landscape doesn't always translate into a productive nectar flow.

In other words: **don't judge the buffet by the color of the parking lot.**

When the pantry starts getting low.

During a strong nectar flow, the hive can be a madhouse of activity. Bees pour through the entrance, pollen is coming in, nectar is being processed, and the supers start getting heavy. During a dearth, things change. Foragers may have to travel farther to find worthwhile sources. The colony begins using its stored honey, and brood production may slow as the bees become more conservative with their resources.

And if the temperatures are climbing into the triple digits? The bees have another job besides finding food: **keeping the hive from turning into a sauna.**

You'll see bees fanning at the entrance, hanging around outside, and sometimes forming a "beard" of bees on the front of the hive. Don't automatically assume something is wrong. In Central Texas heat, sometimes they're simply trying to keep cool and improve ventilation.

Dearth = robbery season.

This is also when Central Texas beekeepers need to keep an especially close eye on robbing.

When natural nectar is scarce, a colony may decide that somebody else's honey sounds like a much easier source than flying across the neighborhood looking for a few flowers. And bees are remarkably good at finding opportunities. A little spilled syrup beside the hive? Opportunity. An open bucket of honey? Opportunity. A sticky hive tool tossed on the truck tailgate? Opportunity. An unattended honey super? Opportunity with a capital O.

Once robbing gets started, things can become chaotic very quickly. Weak colonies and small nucs are particularly vulnerable, so keeping entrances reduced when appropriate and avoiding exposed food around the apiary can make a big difference.

To feed or not to feed?

Ah, the eternal beekeeper question. During a Central Texas dearth, don't automatically reach for the syrup just because the bees aren't bringing in much nectar. First, look at the colony and its stores. A strong colony with plenty of honey may be perfectly capable of riding out the dearth. A new colony, nuc, swarm, or colony with light stores may need supplemental feeding.

The important thing is to know what is actually happening inside the hive. Are they running short of food? Is the queen still laying? Is there a healthy brood pattern? Is the colony strong enough to defend itself? Are they consuming stores faster than expected?

Those observations are much more useful than simply looking at the calendar and declaring, “Yep, must be feeding time.” And remember: feeding during a dearth can increase robbing pressure if we're careless. Keep feeders secure, keep syrup contained, and don't turn your apiary into the Central Texas equivalent of a roadside barbecue with the smell drifting for miles.

Don't forget water

In our part of the world, water is a big deal. Bees need water for cooling the hive and for other colony needs, and during hot, dry weather a reliable water source can become extremely important.

If you provide water for your bees, establish the source early and keep it available. Bees are creatures of habit, and once they decide that your neighbor's swimming pool, dog's water bowl, or dripping faucet is the best water source in town, convincing them otherwise can be difficult.

A dependable bee watering station can save you—and your neighbors—a lot of frustration.

The dearth isn't a failure

It's tempting to think of a dearth as something that has gone wrong. It hasn't. A dearth is simply part of the seasonal rhythm.

Here in Central Texas, our bees have evolved to take advantage of big nectar opportunities when they appear and then tighten their belts when those opportunities disappear. Our job as beekeepers is to understand that rhythm and help our colonies when they genuinely need it.

So during the dearth, keep an eye on the basics:

- **Food Stores**
- **Colony Strength**
- **Brood Condition**
- **Water Availability**
- **Heat Stress.**
- **Robbing Pressure**

And maybe most importantly, don't panic. Central Texas weather has a way of making a beekeeper think, “Surely nothing is going to bloom again.” Then a rain comes. A plant wakes up. The bees suddenly get busy. And before you know it, you're wondering where you're going to put all that honey. That's Central Texas beekeeping.

Feast, famine, 105 degrees, then—surprise!—flowers!

Keep your bees fed when they need feeding, cool when they need cooling, protected when they're vulnerable, and otherwise let them do what bees do best. And if they're a little cranky during the dearth? Well, it's August in Texas. Can you blame them?

N E X T M E E T I N G
Monday, August 17, 2026
Lamar Senior Activity Center

2874 Shoal Crest Ave · Austin TX 78705

6:00 PM Doors open — Meet, Greet & Eat
6:30 PM Business Meeting
6:45 PM **SPEAKER: Charlie Agar**
7:45 PM Door Prizes
8:00 PM Meeting Ends

BRING:
SNACKS TO SHARE!



F L O R A & F A U N A
August Flora: Austin & Central TX

What's in Bloom
for the Honey Bee in
Austin, Texas – August



Black-eyed Susan
(Rudbeckia hirta)



Flame Acanthus
(Anisacanthus quadrifidus)



Lantana
(Lantana camara)



Mexican Sage
(Salvia leucantha)



Sunflower
(Helianthus annuus)



Purple Coneflower
(Echinacea purpurea)



Mistflower
(Conoclinium coelestinum)



Joe-Pye Weed
(Eutrochium fistulosum)



Goldenrod
(Solidago spp.)



Crape Myrtle
(Lagerstroemia indica)



Silk Tree
(Albizia julibrissin)



Texas Mountain Laurel
(Sophora secundiflora)

— Nectar & Pollen Sources for Honey Bees —

FINANCIALS :

by Rachael Lam

Account	Starting Balance	Debits	Credits	Ending Balance
Checking	2322.31	170.68	167.09	2325.90
Savings	5020.03	0	0	5020.03
Square	0	0	47.74	47.74
Grand Total	7342.34	170.68	214.83	7386.49

Homemade Honey Ice Cream

by Kellie Sherrill, Vice President

What could be better on a sweltering Texas Summer day than homemade honey ice cream with chewy bits of honey praline mixed in? Try this easy recipe timed perfectly to your recent honey harvest.

INGREDIENTS

Ice Cream:

- 12 egg yolks
- 200 g caster sugar
- 1200 ml double cream
- 500 ml milk
- 100 g honey
- Pinch sea salt

Honeycomb:

- 200 g caster sugar
- 100 ml honey
- 2 tsp baking of soda

INSTRUCTIONS

Add the egg yolks & sugar to a large mixing bowl & whisk together for 1 min until pale. Add the cream & milk to a large saucepan & heat until just steaming. Pour the liquid into the egg yolks very slowly, whisking until combined. Pour the mixture back into the saucepan & cook over low heat until it starts to thicken (at about 80°C or when it coats the back of a spoon). Once thickened, transfer to a large container, allow to cool, then pop in the freezer. Every hour or so, give it a stir with a whisk. After 3-4 hours it should have started to set. Add the honey & sea salt, stir & place back in the freezer to finish setting.

Before serving make the honey praline. For the honey praline, heat the sugar & honey in a saucepan until the sugar has dissolved & the mixture is bubbling. Preferably until it reaches 300°F. Add the king soda & stir quickly. Once it bubbles & foams, quickly pour onto a parchment lined baking sheet. Leave to cool until set. To remove, cut the praline with a large kitchen knife and chop into small pieces. It should come away in shards.

To serve, crumble the honeycomb over the ice cream or mix it in & enjoy.

Events for August

National Honey Bee Day Celebration

- **Date:** Saturday, August 15, 2026
- **Time:** Varying morning tour times
- **Location:** [Bee Friendly Austin](#) apiary network, from Dripping Springs to Georgetown, TX

Little Stewards Workshop: Many Bees, One Hive

- **Date & Time:** Saturday, August 15, 2026, from 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM
- **Venue:** Whole Earth Provision Co. (1014 N Lamar Blvd, Austin, TX)
- **Description:** Geared toward kids ages 7–12, this hands-on workshop explores the lifecycle of honeybees. Hosted by conservation advocate Stephanie Saldivar, it teaches children about pollination, teamwork, and colony survival through storytelling and a creative art project.
- **Cost:** Free (RSVP required).
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Top Austin Farmers Markets for Local Honey

Texas Farmers' Market at Mueller

- **The Buzz:** Features the [Austin Honey Company](#), which sells hyper-local raw honey harvested straight from hives across Austin neighborhoods.
- **Schedule:** Every Sunday from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM.
- **Location:** 2006 Philomena St, Austin, TX 78723

Bee Cave Farmers Market

- **Date & Time:** Every Sunday in August (August 16, 23, 30) from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM
- **Venue:** [Bee Cave Farmers Market](#) at Hill Country Galleria (12700 Hill Country Blvd, Bee Cave, TX)
- **Description:** A weekly market featuring over 35 local vendors. It is an excellent spot to purchase raw local honey, artisan beeswax goods, and meet regional producers.

