



→ AustinBeekeepers.org →
 S E P T E M B E R 2 0 2 6
 Monthly Newsletter for the Austin Area Beekeeping Community

IN THIS ISSUE Sexton: Managing Varroa Without Chemicals | Lam: Board Update | Sherrill: Local Events
 Mills: Roasted Sweet Potatoes Recipe | September Flora

WHAT'S BLOOMING

September Flora: Austin & Central TX

Here are common pollinator-friendly plants in bloom around the Austin area this month. Bloom timing varies with rainfall, temperature, and microclimate — keep an eye on what's actually opening near your apiary.

NEXT MEETING

Monday, September 21

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: Dodi Stillman: All About Wax - Make & Take Home
7:45 PM	Door Prizes
8:00 PM	Meeting Ends

BRING:
SNACKS TO SHARE!

5 FALL FLOWERS TO WATCH FOR AUSTIN AREA HONEY BEE FORAGE

Nectar + Pollen = Healthy Bees + A Healthier Environment



Gregg's Mistflower
Conoclinium greggii

NECTAR + POLLEN

Bloom Time:
 Summer – Fall
 (in flower now through fall)

Native:
 Yes (Central Texas native)

Best For:
 A top native for the Austin area; attracts many pollinators, including honey bees.



Fall Aster
Symphyotrichum oblongifolium

NECTAR + POLLEN

Bloom Time:
 Fall
 (usually Aug – Oct)

Native:
 Yes (Central Texas native)

Best For:
 Provides abundant nectar and pollen when many other flowers are fading.



Goldenrod
Solidago spp.

NECTAR + POLLEN

Bloom Time:
 Fall
 (usually Sept – Oct)

Native:
 Yes (many species in Central Texas)

Best For:
 Important late-season nectar and pollen source; very attractive to honey bees.



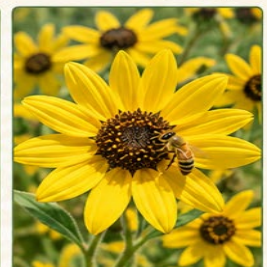
Frostweed
Verbesina virginica

NECTAR + POLLEN

Bloom Time:
 Fall
 (usually Sept – Nov)

Native:
 Yes (Central Texas native)

Best For:
 Small white flowers pack a big punch for bees; often covered with pollinators.



Maximilian Sunflower
Helianthus maximiliani

NECTAR + POLLEN

Bloom Time:
 Fall
 (usually Sept – Nov)

Native:
 Yes (Central Texas native)

Best For:
 Large, long-blooming flowers provide nectar and abundant pollen for strong hives heading into winter.



Healthy Bees
 Support a Thriving
 Austin Ecosystem

A FEW QUICK TIPS FOR A BEE-FRIENDLY YARD

- Plant native species when possible.
- Let some areas grow wild, especially in fall.
- Avoid broad-spectrum pesticides.
- Provide a water source with a few rocks or sticks.



More blooms.
More bees.
 A healthier
 Central Texas.

More Biology, Less Chemistry: Managing Varroa Without Chemicals

Most of us got into beekeeping because we like working with bees—not because we were looking for another excuse to keep track of mites! Unfortunately, *Varroa destructor* has become part of the beekeeping equation. For those of us in Central Texas, the challenge can be especially frustrating. Our relatively mild winters mean our bees can keep raising brood for much of the year, giving Varroa plenty of opportunities to reproduce.

The good news is that there are ways to manage mites without automatically reaching for a chemical treatment. These approaches aren't magic bullets, and they require more observation and hands-on management, but they can become an important part of a low-chemical or treatment-free beekeeping program.

The important distinction is this: **treatment-free doesn't mean mite-free, and it certainly doesn't mean ignoring Varroa.**

Start by Watching the Mites

If you're going to manage Varroa without chemical treatments, you need to know what's happening inside the hive.

Regular mite monitoring is probably the most important tool we have. A colony can look fantastic from the outside while the mite population is quietly building inside.

Alcohol washes or other reliable sampling methods give us a much better idea of what's really going on than simply looking at the bees or counting mites on the bottom board.

For a treatment-free beekeeper, those numbers are especially important. We're not just asking, "Do I need to treat?" We're also asking: Which colonies are doing a good job of managing their own mites?

Those are the colonies we want to pay attention to.

Breed From the Survivors

One of the most promising long-term strategies is simply to raise queens from colonies that demonstrate natural mite resistance. Some bees are much better than others at dealing with Varroa. They may groom mites off themselves, detect and remove infested brood, or interfere with the mites' ability to reproduce. You've probably seen this in your own apiary. One colony seems to have a mite problem every time you check it, while another colony sitting 10 feet away has remarkably few mites. That second colony deserves our attention. If it also has a good temperament, a strong population, a nice brood pattern, and produces honey, it may be an excellent candidate for raising queens. The idea is pretty simple: **breed from the bees that require the least help.** Over time, we can hopefully build colonies that are better adapted to our Central Texas conditions and better able to live with Varroa.

Give the Mites a Brood Break

Here's one of the more interesting things about Varroa: they reproduce inside capped brood. No capped brood means no place for mites to reproduce. A natural swarm or a period when a colony is replacing its queen can create a brood break. We can also deliberately create brood interruptions by making splits or using other queen-management techniques. A brood break doesn't necessarily eliminate Varroa, but it can interrupt their reproductive cycle. It also gives us a period when most of the mites are riding on adult bees instead of hiding inside capped brood. Central Texas beekeepers should keep in mind that our bees can get back to raising brood pretty quickly. A brood break here may be shorter than we would see in colder climates, so timing and follow-up monitoring are important.

Take Advantage of Drone Brood

Varroa love drone brood. Drones take longer to develop than worker bees, which gives mites extra time to reproduce inside the capped cell. We can take advantage of that preference by giving the bees drone comb and removing the capped drone brood before the drones emerge. In effect, we're giving the mites a nursery—and then taking

the nursery away. Drone brood removal isn't a one-and-done solution. It works best when it's part of a regular management program during the time of year when colonies are producing a lot of drones. And there's no need to declare war on every drone in the apiary. Drones are an important part of a healthy bee population. The goal is to use some drone brood strategically to help manage mites.

The Most Powerful Tool May Be a Notebook

If you're serious about treatment-free or low-chemical beekeeping, **keep records.** I know—it's not nearly as exciting as opening a hive. But after a couple of seasons, your records can tell you things that your memory can't. For each colony, record things such as:

- Mite counts and the date they were taken
- Colony strength
- Brood pattern
- Queen source and age
- Honey production
- Swarming or queen replacement
- Signs of hygienic behavior
- Whether the colony needed intervention
- How the colony made it through the summer and winter

After a few years, you may start seeing patterns. Maybe Queen A's daughters consistently have low mite counts. Maybe Queen B produces beautiful colonies but they always end up with high mite loads by late summer. That's the information we need if we're going to improve our bees instead of simply treating the same problem over and over.

What Might This Look Like in Central Texas?

A low-chemical Varroa program doesn't have to be complicated.

In spring, start monitoring early as colonies build. Pay attention to which colonies are maintaining low mite levels and which ones are struggling. This is also a good time to think about drone brood management and identify potential breeder colonies.

In late spring and summer, consider splits or other methods of creating brood breaks. Continue monitoring rather than assuming that a colony that looked great in April will still be fine in July.

As summer progresses, keep a particularly close eye on mite levels. Our long season can give Varroa plenty of time to build.

In late summer and fall, look carefully at the colonies you're considering for next year's queens. The colonies that remain strong and healthy with relatively low mite levels are the ones worth propagating.

In winter, when brood production naturally slows, take some time to look back at your records. Which colonies performed well? Which ones needed the most help? Which queens produced your best bees? Then use that information when making your spring plans.

The Bigger Picture

The goal of treatment-free beekeeping isn't to prove that we're tougher than Varroa. It's to get to a point where **our bees are doing more of the work themselves.** Every time we raise a queen from a colony that has maintained low mite levels, we're giving those genetics another chance. Every time we choose not to propagate a colony that consistently struggles with Varroa, we're making a selection in the other direction. It won't happen overnight. In fact, it may take several generations of queens and plenty of record keeping. But that's what makes this approach exciting. We're not simply trying to keep bees alive from one treatment to the next. We're trying to develop bees that are better suited to living in our particular part of Texas. Central Texas can be a tough place for honey bees—and a tough place for Varroa. But it's also a great place for us to learn what our bees can do when we give them the opportunity.

Watch the mites. Pay attention to your colonies. Keep good records. Breed from the best. And maybe, over time, we can let the bees do a little more of the work.

Oven Roasted Honey-Glazed Sweet Potatoes



Ingredients

- 3 - 3 ½lbs [sweet potatoes](#), cut into about 2-inch pieces (or 3-3 1/2 lbs yams, cut into about 2-inch pieces)
- ½cup [butter](#)
- ¼cup [honey](#)
- 2teaspoons [lemon juice](#)
- [salt](#) (to taste)
- [fresh ground pepper](#) (to taste)

Directions

1. Set oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Pat all the potato cubes thoroughly dry using paper towel/s.
3. Arrange the sweet potato cubes (if possible in a single layer) in a lightly-buttered 13 x 9-inch dish.
4. In a small saucepan or the microwave stir together butter, honey and lemon juice until butter melts.
5. Pour butter mixture over the sweet potatoes; toss well to coat.
6. Sprinkle with salt and lots of black pepper.

Bake uncovered until just fork-tender stirring and turning with a spatula or wooden spoon (about 40 minutes, might take shorter or longer time depending on the size of sweet potato pieces, try not overbake the sweet potatoes or they will be too soft).

Events for August

Ask a Beekeeper and Taste the Seasons Honey by Nona Evans

Date: September 1, 2026 at

Time: 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Location: The Natural Gardener, 8648 Old Bee Caves Rd, Austin, TX 78735

<https://tngaustin.com/events/ask-a-beekeeper-and-taste-the-seasons-honey-by-nona-evans/>

Bring your questions for our "ask a beekeeper session" and get practical advice from an experienced beekeeper. Common beginner questions will be covered about hive setup, bee care, seasonal tasks, and harvesting honey. We will wrap up the class with a honey tasting, giving you the chance to sample different honeys and experience the unique flavors bees can produce.

Antonelli's Cheese & Honey Pairing Guided Tasting with Two Hives Honey

Location: Antonelli's Cheese Shop

Date: on September 1, 2026

Showcasing local honey and cheese pairings.

Science in the Park - Pollinators

Location: San Gabriel Park

Date: Friday, September 18, 2026, at 5:30 PM.

A special pop-up event geared toward children focusing on local pollinators and science projects (445 East Morrow Street, Georgetown, TX).

Con' Olio & Two Hives Honey: The Ultimate Tasting Experience

Location: Con' Olio's Arboretum Tasting Room in Austin

Date: Friday, September 18, 2026

Guiding participants through a unique honey tasting experience.

Austin Butterfly Forum Monthly Meeting

Location: Zilker Botanical Gardens

Date: Monday, September 28, 2026, at 7:00 PM.

Features retired park ranger Craig Hensley discussing butterfly surveys and pollinator data management, plus a plant/seed swap (2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin, TX).

Bee Cave Artisan Market

Location: The Hill Country Galleria

Date: October 3, 2026, starting at 11:00 AM

Featuring local vendors, foods, and family-friendly community booths.

The Roots and Wings Festival in Austin, Texas

Dates: October 17 through November 1, 2026.

www.rootsandwingsfest.com

This annual, city-wide and community-driven event spans 16 days and celebrates local trees, pollinators, and nature. It combines Austin's celebrations for Arbor Day and Monarch Appreciation Day with activities hosted across various parks, libraries, and green spaces.

FROM YOUR BOARD

FINANCIALS by Rachael Lam

Account	Starting Balance	Debits	Credits	Ending Balance
Checking	1973.64	200	0	2173.64
Savings	5020.03	0	0	5020.03
Square	0	0	0	0
Grand Total	6993.67	200	0	7193.67

Beekeeping Associations in Central Texas

Austin Area Beekeepers Association: Monthly Meeting

AABA Monthly Meeting August 17 · 6:00 - 8:00 PM | Lamar Senior Activity Center, Austin. Honey Extraction Workshop. All are welcome. Bring snacks to share!

Bastrop County Beekeepers Association: Monthly Meeting

Basic 101 class starts at 6 PM | Bastrop area. Beginner learning and local beekeeper networking.

Texas Natural Beekeepers Association monthly meeting and Hive Happenings: Monthly Meeting

5:30 - 8:30pm | Vespa Rossa Restaurant, 3799 US 290, Dripping Springs | Free and open to the public. Topic listed by TNBA: capturing swarms, removals from structures, and relocating bees.

Hays County Beekeepers Bee Social: Monthly Meeting

4 -7 pm | Bee Mindful Bee School and Farm, Driftwood | Public Q&A, networking, or hive demos. This comes from a Facebook search snippet, so I'd confirm before driving.

Williamson County Area Beekeepers: Monthly Meeting

7:00 – 9:00 PM | Georgetown Public Library, 402 W 8th St, Georgetown | Local beekeeping association meeting.

Hays County Beekeepers Bee Social: Monthly Meeting

Bee Mindful Bee School and Farm, Driftwood | Recurring Friday public Q&A, networking, or hive demos. Confirm first.