



JANUARY 2012  
NEWSLETTER OF THE ALAMANCE COUNTY BEEKEEPERS

## Remember...

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Meeting Thursday, January 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 at the Ag Building

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Turn in your renewal to Janice for your local and state membership. Membership form is in the newsletter.

*Happy New Year to All!*

### This month's meeting...

**Will be at the Ag Building at 6:30 PM on Thursday, January 19, 2012.**

The topic for Dr. Tarpay's session is: "Coming out of winter. That time of year (late winter/early spring), that is critical for the beekeeper to do everything they can to ensure colony survival, and he will discuss the various methods of doing so."



### For the Bees: What's Blooming in Burlington, NC?

By Geoff Leister

If you are one who monitors the NCSBA list of primary piedmont "NC Honey Plants" webpage, you will not find much activity reported until February. However, the dandelion (*Traxacum officinale*) is currently in flower, due to the mild winter and higher than normal daytime temperatures. These weather conditions have also triggered early flowering in the following local plants of interest: Leatherleaf Grape Holly, Japanese Apricot, Winter Jasmine, and the native Carolina Jessamine.

**Leatherleaf Mahonia** (*Mahonia bealei*) is also known as Beale's Oregon-grape holly or barberry. This frequently planted small 5-10 ft ornamental shrub from China is an invasive species and can be found as a component of understory forests in NC. It is particularly common in bottomland forests like my backyard. The growth habit makes the plant easy to recognize with thick alternate pinnately compound dark evergreen leaves composed of sharp, spiny leaflets somewhat resembling holly leaves. This upright, evergreen shrub produces terminal clusters of fragrant lemon-yellow flowers in early January into early March. The resulting fruits are green berries, about a half-inch long, turn bluish gray in early summer, hang in grapelike clusters and are attractive to birds. Birds, no doubt, spread seeds of *Mahonia*. The Tennessee Exotic Pest Plant Council lists *Mahonia bealei* in its "Alert" category because of its invasive characteristics.

Since December 22, 2011, honey bees have been busy gathering nectar and pollen from several flowering Leatherleaf Mahonia's in my yard.



**Japanese Apricot (*Prunus mume* 'Peggy Clarke')**

trees are in full bloom in Burlington City Park near the children's playground and the numerous trees that are resident in the center median along the Rockwood extension. The trees are native to China, Taiwan, Korea and Japan. W. B. Clarke introduced the trees into the U. S. in 1941 and he named this variety after one of his daughters.

Japanese pink flowering apricot trees are primarily grown for ornamental purposes, and in particular for its late winter flowering of pink blooms. It is an upright deciduous tree that typically grows to 15-20' tall with a rounded form. The rose-pink double flowers have a spicy fragrance with yellowish stamens and flowers in late winter before the leaves emerge. During the first week of January I saw numerous honey bees foraging nectar and pollen from the showy fragrant flowers of these trees.

**Winter jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*)** is a hardy plant found throughout our state. It was first introduced into America in 1844 and is native to northern China. This rambling, deciduous viney shrub sheds all of its opposite, pinnately compound leaflets at the end of the growing season. The spreading fountain of arching branches exhibits fine, willow like stems that are bright grass green during winter creating a rounded, many stemmed shrub about four feet high to six or seven feet wide. From January to early spring, these branches are sparkling with six-petaled lemon yellow single flowers. Examples can be found in landscapes across Burlington and are now in full flower. Unfortunately, the winter jasmine has no fragrance. But that doesn't stop the interest by bees.

**Carolina Jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*)** is sometimes mistakenly referred to as Carolina "Jasmine," but true jasmines belong to the genus *Jasminum*. This Jessamine is one of more widely grown evergreen vines in the southeastern U. S. and extremely popular cultivar in nursery trade. Gardeners are always looking for ways to disguise a fence, create privacy barrier, shade a patio, or add color to the landscape. I planted the double-flowered form of Carolina Jessamine called, 'Pride of Augusta' in my backyard to cover chain link fences. This variety of Jessamine has long been in commercial culture. Once the vine is established it is low-maintenance, deer resistant and pest-free. The simple opposite leaves are widely spaced on wiry reddish-brown stems covered with double vibrant yellow fragrant in early spring. This year flowers have opened early. The non-cultivar and native Carolina Jessamine is native to the southeast and is the state flower of South Carolina. It is found covering trees in open woodlands and along fence rows. This plant, unfortunately, carries some unwanted baggage, because the plants flowers and foliage are poisonous if ingested. These plant parts contain toxic strychnine-related alkaloids called gelsemine and gelseminine that affects the central nervous system of all animals with backbones and possibly honey bees. Skin contact with the plant sap could cause a contact dermatitis reaction in some. Nectar containing gelsemine reportedly reduces visits to flowers from native bees and honey bees. Over the last four years, I have never witnessed bees gathering nectar or pollen. It may be due to the tightly compacted double tubular flowers that detour bees from their foraging activity.

Recipe of the Month

**Fruit Smoothie**



**Makes 4 servings**

- 1 pint fresh strawberries or 2 cups frozen strawberries, stemmed and sliced, slightly thawed
- 1 cup 1% milk
- 1 cup (8 oz.) plain or vanilla low-fat yogurt
- 1/2 cup honey
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup crushed ice

In a blender or food processor container, combine all ingredients; process until smooth. Serve immediately. For variety, use 2 cups any fresh or frozen fruit or combination of fruits such as sliced strawberries and bananas or sliced peaches and whole raspberries.

**Nutrition:** 220 Calories \* 48 g Carbohydrates \* 2 g Fat Total \* 78 mg Sodium \* 6 g Protein \* 1 g Dietary Fiber \* 6 mg Cholesterol \* 7% Calories from fat



Questions & Suggestion Box

This is going to be a new feature for the newsletter. If you have a question that you would like covered in a meeting or suggestions for meetings, this box will be in each newsletter. You will then be able to turn it in to one of the officers for discussion.

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