

## **HOLLAND AREA BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION MENTORSHIP GROUPS**

HABA's mentoring program is modeled after a program initiated by Meghan Milbrath with the Ann Arbor Backyard Beekeepers (A2B2). It has served members of A2B2 well since its inception.

If you choose to participate in HABA's collaborative mentorship program, you will be a member of an email forum on Google Groups that will allow you to post a question to all of the other members of your group. Your group will be composed of other beekeepers in your immediate area.

Our goal is to provide the means for members to share beekeeping expertise efficiently. Each group will include a sufficient mix of experience levels to provide support for first and second year beekeepers. Keep in mind that you will all have many opportunities to learn from one another, regardless of your level of expertise.

We use Google Groups email forum to connect group members to each other. Groups are organized by geographic location.

- Each group is 'closed' in that nonmembers will not be able to see communications within the group.
- Members are encouraged but not required to share additional personal information with other group members such as telephone number and specific home or apiary location.

The program provides opportunities for beekeepers at all levels to learn from one another.

Group members will be able to:

- Email the entire group to ask beekeeping questions:
  - Not sure what fuels are okay to use in your smoker and which work best? Ask your group! You will probably get a lot of different opinions. Figure out what works best for you.
- Host group discussions
  - For instance, discuss varroa testing results and what to do about your results.
- Collaborate
  - Arrange for one group member to pick up packages from a distant vendor such as AWS (in Swartz Creek, about 2 hours or so from Holland), pitching in for the transportation cost.
- Arrange to meet up
  - You may just want extra eyes to find the queen, or help with a hive inspection. Members of the group may want to arrange a local field day to practice doing sugar rolls for varroa.

As a group member, we ask that you:

- Be open-minded and respectful of others in your group.
- Welcome new members as your group grows.
- Do not share the personal information of other group members outside of your group (for instance, to a business)
- Keep in mind that there are often multiple answers/approaches to questions you post. You will need to determine what solution makes the most sense for your situation, or that best suits your beekeeping style.

- Remember that Beekeepers Helping Beekeepers is intended to supplement the information you will get from coming to HABA meetings, not replace it.
  - Take advantage of the monthly HABA meetings to learn from the variety of speakers provided and to connect in person with other beekeepers.
- Give back.
  - As you become the more seasoned beekeeper, stay with your group, remembering what it was like for you those first years when you were up to your elbows learning the ins and outs of keeping honey bees.
  - Contribute your time and talents to HABA by volunteering for Bee School, or the HABA Board, as one of our Outreach speakers who respond to requests from schools and community groups, or any of the other volunteer opportunities announced at meetings and through the newsletter.