



Whitefield News

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Keeping the Bees: A Backyard Beekeeper's First Summer

Q & A with Brandi Grady

By Cheryle Joslyn

When did you become interested in beekeeping?

My love for beekeeping began when I started learning about homesteading and how to live a more sustainable life. I have always loved gardening, which led me down the path to more homesteading projects; like raising chickens for eggs and meat, composting, canning, and bees! I have always been fascinated by bees, but never knew much about them, so it was always something in the back of my mind that I hoped one day I could be a part of.

How did you begin?

I began learning about bees and beekeeping by reading many texts, researching online, and talking to other people who were also interested in bees. I took an introductory class this past Spring at **Spicer Bees**, right here in Whitefield! I have also joined some beekeeping groups and plan to take more courses to further my experience with bees.

What did you have to do to prepare for your bees' arrival?

My plan was to take the class at **Spicer Bees** and then decide whether or not I REALLY wanted to get into beekeeping. As I suspected, I was hooked after the first class. I got all of my equipment, including my package of bees, right through **Spicer's**. I purchased the boxes and frames needed to establish my hive, as well as a protective jacket, smoker, hive tool, feeder, and brush. To set up my hive, I looked around our property and took note of what areas were a bit wet, where the sun rises and sets, possible shade from trees, and any walking paths that might



Brandi Grady

Photo by Brandi Grady

interfere with the flight of the bees. I picked a spot where they would get morning sun and also some shade in the afternoon. I laid down a few wheelbarrow loads of wood chips to prevent tall grass and weeds from growing in front of the hive, and then laid down a wooden pallet. On top of the pallet I placed two cinder blocks to put the hive stand on. Having the hive off the ground helps prevent against predators. I had my hive situated about a week before the bees arrived.

...and when they arrived?

Unfortunately, I was out of town the day the bees arrived. At first, when I found out the bees were arriving on April 18th my heart sank. I knew I would be in North Carolina and figured I would miss my opportunity to keep bees this year, but luckily I have some great friends who were also becoming new beekeepers who offered to install my hive for me. I ordered a package of Italian Bees through **Spicer's**. Originally, I wanted to begin with two

hives, but the initial investment was too much for me to afford this time around. The report from my friends who installed my hive was positive; nobody got stung! They picked up the bees the day they arrived, brought them to the hive, shook them out into their new home, placed the queen package in the hive, fed them some medicine and a sugar water mixture, and that was it! They came back a few days later to make sure the queen had made it out of her holding tank and to take a peek at the bees to make sure everything looked okay.

Continued on Page 2

Greenhouse Project at Whitefield School

by Sally Allen

(Lead Teacher Middle School ABLE Program - Whitefield Elementary)

The ABLE program (Aquaponics-Based Learning and Education) at Whitefield School is adding curricula that emphasizes hands-on learning through hydroponics and aquaponics. To that end, we wrote a grant request to the Perloff Family Foundation which enabled us to build a 10' by 24' greenhouse out behind the gym at Whitefield School. The greenhouse has been built with all-volunteer crew consisting of Josh McNaughton, James Willigar, Sally Allen, and Stacey Sutter. At this point it is ready for the steel roof to be installed. Our students have also been heavily involved with researching, building raised beds, and



Whitefield School's new greenhouse ("learning through growing") is nearly complete (photo by Sally Allen)



Greenhouse construction (photo courtesy Sally Allen)

growing lettuce hydroponically in a pool, as well as growing herbs and vegetables in a window garden in our classroom. Our ultimate goal is to encourage learning through growing; as well as to supplement our food pantry and weekend backpack program with healthy and fresh vegetables during the school year. You can follow our progress on our facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ABLEAquaponics>.

Bees From Pg. 1

Bee sightings?

The first time I saw a bee in our yard was on a dandelion. It was the coolest thing to see that little bee from my hive gathering pollen to bring back to its home. As summer progressed, I saw bees everywhere! They seemed to be partial to my cucumber and squash plants, though.

Feeding your bees?

I fed my bees a sugar/water mixture until the dandelions began to bloom. It is now September, and I haven't fed them since. I will monitor their honey stores as we get into Fall and feed when necessary; in hopes that they will make it through the winter! My fingers are crossed!

Did you "get into" the hive this summer?

The first time I checked my hive, I was incredibly nervous, but super excited all at the same time. I had two friends join me for the hive inspection who were also first time beekeepers. I don't know how, but we spotted the queen right away! My queen is not marked, but she was clearly larger than the others and a beautiful caramel color, so she stuck right out. We checked to make sure she was laying and to see how the progress was going as the bees began to draw their comb. The hive was buzzing and the bees were so busy. They moved right along and didn't seem to take notice of us. They crawled on our hands, clung to our jackets, and buzzed through the air, but even with all of the commotion, I felt incredibly calm. There's something about being in the midst of thousands of bees that puts you at ease. I'm guessing it's their steady hum.

Throughout the summer I continued to check the hive every other week. When inspecting the hive alone, I made sure my husband kept an eye on me since I wasn't sure how I would react to a sting. Luckily, I made it through the summer with no stings thus far! Let's hope my luck continues! As summer set in, the supers began to get increasingly heavy! The bees were filling the comb with beautiful honey and this made it very heavy to lift by myself, so I enlisted some helpers again. In late July, I harvested about 20 pounds of honey. I wasn't sure if I would be harvesting any honey my first season with the new hive, but they worked steadily and I was able to gather my bounty. As mid-September approaches, I will be taking the supers off, treating for mites, and possibly harvesting some more honey if the hive is well-stocked for themselves.

Any swarm activity?

Luckily, I have not had any swarm activity with my hive. I did have a rookie scare, though, in mid-June. It was a Sunday evening around 7:30 pm, and a friend came over to visit. He asked how the bees were and as we chatted he looked over at the hive. He noticed a large clump of bees on the side of the hive, and I immediately panicked. The temperature had been cool and it was early evening, so I didn't think they were just cooling themselves off. Of course, I jumped to the worst case scenario: SWARM! I frantically ran into the house and grabbed a super and threw it on the hive in hopes that giving them more room would convince them to stay. Shortly after the super was put on, the bees began to filter back into the hive. After reading blogs online and talking with experienced beekeepers, they ensured me that the bees were not intending to swarm, but thought I made a good move by putting on that super. Phew!

How did you harvest honey?

Harvesting honey seems impossible if you don't have the right equipment. Luckily, my friend purchased a honey extractor on eBay and was kind enough to let me use it. To harvest the honey, we set up in my basement. We had a long table, a sharp knife, a bucket with a honey gate, strainers, a pot with hot water (to rinse the knife and heat it up), and plenty of towels! The most difficult part was cutting the cappings off the frame since we didn't have a fancy uncapping knife, but our bread knife worked well enough. The extractor held two frames at a time and you had to spin it by hand. It was fun and so exciting seeing the honey whip out of the frames, but it was a bit time consuming. That didn't bother me at all, though, because I knew I would be more than thrilled to taste that fresh honey. Once we had spun all of the frames (we had 6) we poured the honey from the



Harvesting the honey!
(photo by Brandi Grady)

extractor into the bucket. I let the bucket sit for a few days allowing some of the air bubbles to float to the top. Then I filled about 20 one-pound jars and licked the bucket clean!

Advice for other new beekeepers?

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Beekeepers are always willing to share their experiences with "newbies". I have learned a lot this summer and know there is still much more to learn! Before you take the plunge and purchase your first package of bees, make sure you are prepared. Take a class, read books, join a beekeeping club, ask local beekeepers how they manage their hives, and, most importantly, don't be afraid! Know that eventually you will be stung, no matter how careful you are. The reward of seeing your bees in action, tasting honey right from your backyard, and educating yourself on the importance of bees, is worth every minute you spend in your hive.

Has this been a good experience for you? (Brandi's answer is obvious!)

This experience has been so rewarding. I feel like I am doing something good for myself and for the environment.

...and your future in beekeeping?

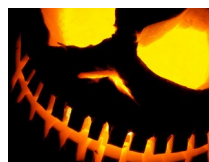
Eventually, I would like to add more hives to my apiary. I don't think I would want any more than 4, but you never know! I plan to continue learning about bees and how they work and how I can manage them more effectively. I teach kindergarten and would love to incorporate beekeeping into my classroom. I think it is incredibly important to expose kids to as much as possible; especially at a young age. Who knows, I may inspire a student to be a beekeeper some day!

Whitefield School's playground addition completed



(photo courtesy Whitefield School)

Whitefield School's playground addition is complete and being thoroughly enjoyed by the students. New climbing bars and walls, balance walkways, spiral slides, 50 yards of new wood chips, new fencing, and more... makes it so exciting for our young students' return to school. Much appreciation goes to Mr. McNaughton, Louis Shorey, Sue Peaslee, Todd Cook, and Josh Shorey for their efforts to construct the new structure.



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Whitefield Historical Society "Just Yesterday"



Masquerade Ball held at the Union Hall in the early 1950's. Do you recognize anyone? (courtesy Lawrence Felt Collection)

A Roads Update

by Whitefield Roads Committee

As this is written in mid-September with summer slipping into fall, a number of road improvement projects are in various stages.

Roadside vegetation is a continuing project. The Town's annual roadside mowing has been completed. A contract for clearing brush along Heath, Hunts Meadow South, Hunts Meadow Center and Hunts Meadow North Roads has been awarded. This latter work will involve cutting of trees, limbs and bushes up to 4 inches in diameter within 10 feet of the road and some 15 feet high. The contract was awarded to Spicer Tree of Whitefield with the work to be done by November 1. We hope that removal of brush will "open up" roadways to provide better clearance and visibility.

In the Coopers Mills area, Road Commissioner David Boynton has worked to replace culverts and dig ditches to improve drainage. This work includes Windsor Road as well as Main Street. With the drainage addressed this year, the plan is to repave these roads next year, leaving the area with upgraded roads.

To evaluate the condition of several paved roads, a geo-technical engineering firm has made borings to determine the soil conditions under the pavement and recommend ways to best address problems. About 60 borings were made on Townhouse, Hunts Meadow Center, Hunts Meadow North, Vigue Road, and Balltown Lane (the road leading to the Recycling Center). This work has shown that the roadbeds are generally pretty good, although sections of Townhouse Road will need to be improved. Knowing what is under the pavement is important to decide where rehabilitation of a section is needed or if the existing surface can be repaved as is.

On three roads – northern Vigue, Hilton and Devine – cracks are to be sealed. Crack sealing is being tried for the first time in at least recent history as a way to "keep good roads good". If relatively small cracks are sealed, water penetrating into the pavement can be reduced to retard damage from freezing and extend the life of the pavement.

Vigue Road from Route 126 to Howe Road and Balltown Lane are being scheduled for paving this fall. This work will include building up some low spots, repair of broken pavement, and then applying a finish coat of new pavement. If all goes well, this work should be done by the end of October.

The Road Commissioner will be working on other improvement projects. Some sections on Doyle Road will be built up in areas that historically have springtime drainage and mud problems. He also plans to improve ditches on sections of Doyle and Townhouse Roads. A grader will be contracted to improve the shoulders on selected roads to allow water to more easily drain off the road to prevent damage to the surface. This will also address places where erosion has begun to undermine edges of the pavement.

If you are interested in learning more about this or other road work, please feel free to contact the Town Office; copies of the Road Committee's report done last fall are available. People interested in participating in the Roads Committee are always welcome and can also contact the Office.

A Farmer's Update -Fall report-

(courtesy of Ben at Sheepscot General)

Planting?

By October I'm not really planting anything anymore, except for garlic. Plant your garlic before the ground freezes. You want your garlic to put on some root growth before winter, but you don't want it to sprout out of the ground. Usually the middle of October is a good time to plant garlic.

I try to pack as much spinach into my greenhouses as possible. That's my favorite fresh winter crop. You have to get it well-established before the middle of November. This is the time when we get less than 10 hours of sunlight (the Persephone period), which lasts until the middle of February. Plants stop growing from the lack of light, but some plants, like spinach, will stay alive, even through deep freeze. I had spinach overwinter in an unheated greenhouse last winter. It stops growing in November, but it'll put on new growth in February.

Harvesting?

Everything! I'm always focused on getting the frost-sensitive things harvested first (squash, tomatoes, peppers, corn, potatoes). I like to let my carrots and cabbage get a couple frosts to sweeten them up. Cold hardy crops often produce sugars when it gets cold. It's a natural form of anti-freeze, so I'll leave the leeks, brussel sprouts, kale and spinach well into November in most years.

Soil Prep?

October, and prior to that, is a good time to amend your soil with minerals and fertilizer/compost. Get your soil tested, most soils around here need at least calcium and phosphorus, and a most gardens would benefit from some micro-nutrients, but the most important element in any soil is the biology (the living component). Plan your fertilizer program to benefit your soil biology. Get a cover crop planted. If you haven't planted anything by now, winter rye is about the only thing that will establish this late in the season. It will germinate and overwinter and continue to grow next spring. Be careful, especially if you want to grow a garden next year, that you don't let the rye grow too much before tilling the ground. By now, I have finished my soil preparations; I have a well-established stand of oats and peas that will winter-kill and leave a nice mulch that is easily worked into next years strawberry ground. I have planted rye wherever I plan to fallow next year.

Storage?

I have climate-control storage (big coolers), but that isn't necessary for everyone. Root cellars worked for a long time. The most economical walk-in cooler technology that I know about is called the Coolbot, a lot of small farms use it. It's basically just a simple circuit board that works with a regular air-conditioner and tricks it to run longer but keeps it from freezing up. I run one of those and pack a 6x12 room with storage crops (carrots, beets, potatoes, apples, cabbage, etc.) I end up having to run a little space heater when it gets really cold outside.



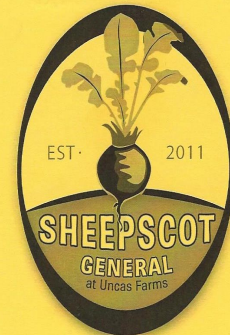
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OCTOBER 2015 COMMUNITY EVENTS CALENDAR

- 1st **Senior Men's Group**, Sheepscot General, 10 am
 2nd **Whitefield Food Pantry**, St. Denis Hall, 1-3 pm
Music & Nature Benefit Concert for SVCA, 7:00 pm at the Sheepscot General
- 3rd **Newell Family Band- Traditional Folk** at Sheepscot General, 6:00 pm
 5th **Coopers Mills Fire Dept.**, All are welcome. No obligation. 7 pm
Kings Mills Fire Dept., 7 pm
 6th **Select Board**, Fire Station, 6 pm
Laughing Yoga with Karen Stultz Join us and discover the fast and easy way to reduce stress, and have fun doing it. Sheepscot General, 6:30 pm
Kings Mills Union Hall board meeting, public welcome, 7 pm
 7th **Arlington Grange Meeting**, Potluck Dinner 6 pm, meeting 7 pm - All are welcome
Whitefield Historical Society meeting 6:30 pm
 8th **Senior Men's Group**, Sheepscot General, 10 am
RSU School Board Meeting Chelsea School, 6:30 pm
- 9th-12th **Timber Frame Construction Workshop**, A Timber Frame Construction Workshop on Columbus Day Weekend, Friday to Monday, Hidden Valley Nature Center
- 10th **Open House at Country Manor** — On Saturday October 10 Country Manor will hold an Open House from 9 am until 3 pm to include light refreshments, tours and free blood pressure clinics. Thank you so much, and we hope to see you there.
- 11th **Whitefield Athletic Association (WAA)**, Whitefield School, 6 pm
 12th **Whitefield Municipal Fire Dept.**, Fire Station, 7 pm
 13th **Women of Whitefield**, Sheepscot General, 10 am
Select Board, Fire Station, 6 pm
- 15th **Senior Men's Group**, Sheepscot General, 10 am
 16th **Open-Mic Night**, Sheepscot General, 7-9 pm
 17th **DRUMMING CIRCLE**, Sheepscot General, 6:30 pm, Open to the public, all ages
 19th **Woodlot Management Workshop for Women at Hidden Valley Nature Center**, The program cost is \$45 (\$40 for HVNC & MOFGA members). Some scholarships are available thanks to support from Maine Farmland Trust and Coastal Enterprises, Inc.
- 20th **Select Board**, Fire Station, 6 pm
 21st **Planning Board**, Fire Station, The Planning Board will be meeting at 6:00 pm on Wednesday, Oct.21 in the Whitefield Fire Station meeting room for a one-hour work session with members of the Select Board to begin drafting a Floodplain Management Ordinance for the Town of Whitefield. The regularly scheduled, monthly meeting of the Planning Board will follow at 7:00 pm.
- 22nd **Senior Men's Group**, Sheepscot General, 10 am
 27th **Women of Whitefield**, Sheepscot General, 10 am
Select Board, Fire Station, 6 pm
- 29th **Senior Men's Group**, Sheepscot General, 10 am
 30th **Children's Halloween Event- book reading and pumpkin carving** at Sheepscot General, 5:00 pm
 31st **HALLOWEEN**



Do you have an event? Contact whitefieldtownnews@gmail.com
 We'll add you to the town calendar website and newsletter.



October 8, 1925 - View of Kings Mills taken from the "upper switch" (Rt. 218) by the WWF Station Crossing. (courtesy of the Westbye Collection)

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