



Bees at the MRH School District

The Bees

In April of 2010, the MRH School District purchased honeybees and introduced them to two hives built by students. The bees are Italian honeybees with hygienic queens. This breed is known for its gentle behavior and resistance to disease. This is the most common bee in the United States and is responsible for pollinating most of the crops that sustain us.

Rationale

In recent years, disease, pests, and a strange phenomenon called Colony Collapse Disorder in which the bees vanish from their hives have assaulted honeybees in the U.S. As a result, the population of bees has plummeted and there are concerns about national food security. Beekeeping organizations have sought more people to become bee hobbyists and MRH is participating in this effort.

Educational Benefits

Beekeeping practices embrace all parts of the curriculum. There is data collecting and analyzing that is used to make decisions about hive care. Students study bee biology and anatomy in order to understand bee behavior. They must work together and organize time and equipment to efficiently manage our hives. Later, when we have honey, they will have an opportunity to learn cooking skills. The study of insects is part of the elementary curriculum and Bee Club members help to educate younger students about the role honeybees play in our lives.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How much do the bees cost the school district?

A: Very little. The initial cost of the bees was minimal, under \$100, and the hives were constructed with lots of recycled materials. Regular maintenance is also minimal.

Q: Where are MRH bees kept?

A: The two hives are located on property near the middle school. They are located in a secured area, surrounded by a six-foot fence, which ensures that the bees fly above people's heads when they leave the hive in search of nectar or pollen.

Q: With all these bees around, isn't it much more likely that people and pets will get stung?

A: No. Our managed bees will gradually replace feral bee colonies. Wild bees build hives in trees, attics, etc. Our bees already have a home so they will not be looking for another.

Q: Isn't there a chance the bees will swarm?

A: Bees do swarm when they need more room, but our bees are checked and managed weekly to prevent such an occurrence. Our plan is to maintain two hives only.

Q: If there are beehives, how do we know there won't be "killer bees" someday?

A: Fortunately, Africanized bees cannot survive in our climate.

For more information about the MRH bee program, please contact the school district's central office at (314) 644-4400.



Know Your Bees

1. Bees feed us.

Bees are the only insects that produce food for humans. In addition, many suggest that honey has medicinal value.

2. Pollination is important.

Bees are pollinators vital to our food chain. Most of the fruits and vegetables we eat would not be available without bees.

3. Bees are vital to our economy.

The harvest from honeybees of honey, pollen, wax and propolis has nutritional, craft, manufacturing, and medical applications.

4. It's no joke...bees are busy.

Bees from the same hive visit about 225,000 flowers per day. One single bee usually visits between 50-1000 flowers a day. It takes about 2 million flower visits to make one pound of honey.

5. Suburbs are a great place to have bees.

Moderately dense communities like ours with the multitude of gardens and flowers are ideal for bees.

6. Bees have an interesting way of communicating.

When a bee needs to tell others about flowers with nectar and pollen, the bee can communicate the exact location by a special "waggle dance."

7. Beeswax is everywhere.

Beeswax is used in all kinds of things, from lip balm to waterproofing for shoes. You can find beeswax in furniture protectants and polishes, in lubricants for sewing machines, medical creams, candles, and more!

Learn More

Eastern Missouri Beekeepers Association
<http://easternmissouribeekeepers.com>

Mid-Atlantic Apicultural Research Consortium
<http://MAAREC.cas.psu.edu>