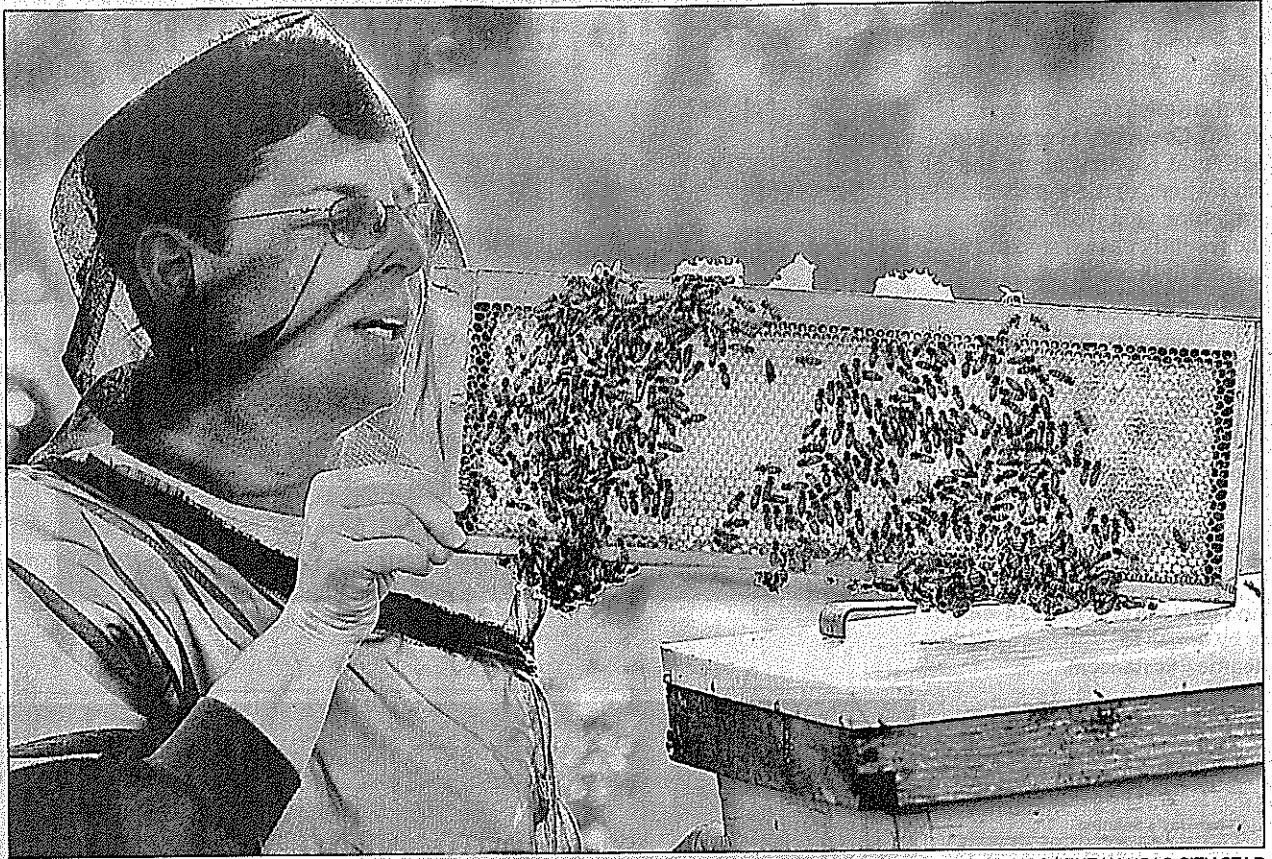


Joli Winer (right) and her husband, Cecil Sweeney, raise bees and run Heartland Honey and Bee-keeping Supplies in Spring Hill.



FILE PHOTO BY RICH SUGG | THE KANSAS CITY STAR

PASTIMES

Beekeeping: The buzz grows

Gardening benefits and devastating disease spur interest in raising the industrious insects.

By IRENE SEGE
The Boston Globe

All morning one cool, drizzly April Sunday, cars pull up to the Reseska Apiaries warehouse in Holliston, Mass. The occasion is the arrival by truck of 270 three-pound boxes of honeybees from Georgia, all ready for pick-up

by a diverse and burgeoning cadre of backyard beekeepers.

"When I signed up for bee school, I thought there would be six people," says Kristina Ward, a 38-year-old landscape designer from Norfolk, Mass. "It turned out there's a whole subculture."

Subculture indeed. Ward is among almost four dozen aspiring beekeepers who recently completed the Norfolk County Beekeepers Association introductory "bee school," up from 17 two years ago.

Across Massa-

Interest in beginning beekeeping is growing in many areas.



SEE BEES | E6

FILE PHOTO

BEEES: Hive can boost productivity

FROM ET

chusetts and beyond, interest in beekeeping is exploding.

The Massachusetts Beekeepers Association has 320 members with 2,000 hives, up from 93 members with an estimated 1,500 hives in 2006.

Spurred in part by news of the mysterious colony collapse disorder that has decimated the nation's commercial honeybee population and in part by the popularity of gardening, the surge reflects a rising interest around the country.

"In 20 years I have not seen the participation in beginner classes that I've seen this year," says Kim Flottum, editor of *Bee Culture*, who sends samples of his Ohio-based magazine to bee schools. "For the first time in 20 years, I've run out of magazines."

'Beekeeping connects you with nature'

The packages piled in the Reseska warehouse are simple screened boxes, 15 inches wide by 8 inches tall by 5 inches deep, each with 12,000 bees clustering around a queen and generating enough heat to make the boxes warm to the touch.

Peter Hauschka, a 65-year-old biochemist from Needham, arrives to collect his order. He gets twice as many peaches and raspberries from his garden since he started keeping honeybees two years ago, he says, not to mention the 200 pounds of honey he harvested from two hives.

"Beekeeping connects you with nature in a way you haven't before, because you become very observant, watching what's blossoming," he says. "You think like a bee."

What honeybees do for Hauschka's garden they do on a grander scale by pollinating

PROGRAM FOR FIRST-TIME BEEKEEPERS

The Kansas Honey Producers Association sponsors "scholarship students." These are first-time beekeepers who receive everything they need to set up a hive — for free. To be eligible, you must be age 12-17 and a resident of Kansas. The program includes mentoring, including assistance from members of the Northeastern Kansas Beekeepers' Association.

To apply, contact Becky Tipton of the Kansas Honey Producers at bstbees@wildflower.net.

some 90 crops that account for one-third of the food Americans eat.

Since late 2006 large commercial beekeepers, who bring their honeybees from crop to crop in state to state, have reported losses of 30 percent to 70 percent, often to the so-called colony collapse disorder characterized by inexplicably abandoned hives.

Since September 2007 more than two-fifths of commercial beekeepers surveyed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture have reported abnormally high losses.

"It's one of the major threats to American agriculture," says USDA bee researcher Kevin Hackett.

The honeybees' plight — documented on PBS' "Nature" and CBS' "60 Minutes," as well as in many newspapers — motivated Robin Lamperti, a yoga studio owner from Walpole, to

'SUPER FUNDAY' IN LAWRENCE

■ Sponsored by the Northeastern Kansas Beekeepers' Association

■ 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., June 7 (always the first Saturday in June) at the Douglas County Fairgrounds in Lawrence

■ The event is open to the public, with registration from 8 to 8:45 a.m. at the door, but organizers recommend advance registration.

■ The cost is \$25 per person for those pre-registered, \$30 at the door. Children 6-18 are \$10.50.

■ This is an all-day, hands-on event.

For information or an application:
www.nekba.org.

attend bee school.

"I'm actually a gardener. I've always noticed certain plants I had attracted honeybees," Lamperti, 46, says. "For several years I thought I would do beekeeping, and then all this attention was given."

She mentioned her interest to her brother-in-law, Peter Tullock, a furniture maker in Wrentham. "I said, 'That sounds like a ball. Let's give it a try,'" Tullock, 40, says. His 8-year-old daughter, Madison, became curious, so he bought her a protective hat and veil, too. Now they're making a day of picking up bees and setting up hives.

The next stop is Howard Crawford's Akin-Bak Farm in Franklin, where Crawford and Norfolk County Beekeepers

AREA BEEKEEPING GROUPS

■ Northeastern Kansas Beekeepers' Association

■ Midwest Beekeepers Association

■ Missouri State Beekeepers Association

■ Kansas Honey Producers Association

AG HALL OF FAME

The National Agricultural Hall of Fame in Bonner Springs has a new permanent exhibit about honeybees.

For information, go to www.aghalloffame.com/news4.aspx.

| Lajeane Keene, The Star

Association president Ed Karle show the "newbees" how to install bees into their hives.

Crawford, 84, started keeping bees 45 years ago to pollinate his apple orchard and garden. Most of the trees are gone now, and much of his land is untended, but he still has hives.

"I love the bees. Some people think they're mean. I like them. I just sit and watch them come in and out of the hive. It's relaxing," Crawford says. "You never see a beekeeper that's real depressed or anything."

The new beekeepers don their veils for Crawford's demonstration.

After their bees have been installed, they must wait at least three days to open their hives to give the queen time to escape her cage and the workers time to accept her. If all goes well, by August each hive could house 60,000 honeybees.