



Honey Bees and Golf Courses, One Sweet Partnership Part 3

Rebecca Masterman, UMN Bee Squad Coordinator

When the University of Minnesota Bee Squad opened Somerset Golf Club's hives yesterday, they found, beneath thick coatings of healthy-looking bees, good stores of honey. They added supers to both last year's "parent" colony, and to this year's "divide," so the bees will have more room to take advantage of the mid-July nectar flow and continue making and storing honey. Like last year, the hives' sponsor Brian Smith will be doling out some of this bounty to members at the end of the summer. Of course, harvest-

ing honey is a privilege only practiced when hives are doing well, and have more than enough food for the bees' own wintering.

Brian and golf course superintendent James Bade joined squad members on the roof the other day to see for themselves how well the hives were doing. Brian took photos, and James helped lift the heavy deep boxes to reverse their order. Reversals are done so that the queen always has room to move up in her hive, which encourages her to keep

laying eggs, as she has the perception she's never running out of space. She seems to prefer building her brood from the bottom up (don't we all?) so once the queen is laying eggs in the top deep (usually the third,) the Bee Squad will move that box to the bottom of the stack, and she'll re-start her upward ascent. Most importantly, a reversal allows workers to store honey in the new top deep (previously the bottom) which is where the colony will spend the winter eating and shivering together.

The bees have become a favorite topic of conversation amongst Somerset Golf Club members and guests, and that, says Brian, is the whole point of keeping them on the golf course property. The answer to the honey bee crisis is a very complex one involving multiple factors, from mites to management, but there are simple ways to work towards a solution: spreading interest and awareness about the importance of pollinators through gardens, hives, and conversations with neighbors, learning to keep bees, or sup-



porting research on honey bees and other at-risk pollinators.

Remember, planting food for bees and other pollinators on golf course properties can be as simple as selecting plants that provide good pollen and nectar sources throughout the growing season (Plants for Minnesota Bees). It's also imperative to care for all pollinators in ways that will ensure that their food is clean (<http://www.pollinator.org/golfcourse.htm>). For more information about the UMN Bee Squad, visit us at www.beesquad.umn.edu.





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