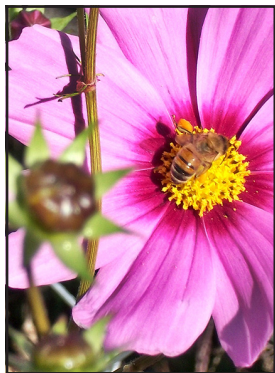


# Tualatin's Beekeeper



BY MELISSA KELLEY



It has been said that the key to the survival of the beleaguered honey bee lies in the many backyard beekeepers and its surroundings. Our agricultural food supply depends on the existence of these tiny pollinators.

I have two hives and each one has its own personality. For example, during the hot summer evenings, when all the bees are home for the night, the members of one hive will form a tear dropped cluster of bees that hang down off the side of their front hive entrance, while the other hive will be massed all over the face of the hive, with the guard bees marching back and forth at the top of the hive, keeping a watchful eye out for intruders. In other words, on hot nights, when it is hot in the house, they like to hang out on their front porch just like we do.

There are three types of bees in a hive. The largest bee is the queen bee, who lives an average of two to three years, and lays up to 2,000 eggs during peak season. The eggs hatch out every 20-25 days. The male drone bee lives 40-50 days and does no work other than hanging around the hive in the hope of mating with a new queen. However, if he is lucky enough for that honor, he dies directly after. The third member of the hive is the female worker bee whose lifespan is four to six weeks during the busy summer months, but four to six months in the winter where she may never live to see the light of day.

Each worker, guided by an inner clock, does certain chores as she reaches a certain age. She progresses from cleaning the hive, defending and guarding the hive, to making necessary repairs within the hive. She also feeds the larva, the

queen and the drones until finally, she flies as far away as 2-3 miles in search of pollen and nectar to store inside the hive to provide food for storing for the long winter months.

In late summer, early fall, food sources become scarce, so the hive starts making its transition into winter. The queen slows down her egg production, and since there will be no new queens developed in the winter, the drones are kicked out of the hive. No work, no food. Sunflowers, asters, bluebeards, and mint are some of the fall food sources, as is the knotweed that tends to grow by the riverbanks.



It takes about an acre of continuous blooms to keep one hive healthy and strong. One particular acre does not typically provide that, so they must search the surrounding areas and neighborhoods for enough food so they can go into the winter months strong and well nourished.

The old adage that it takes a village to raise a child also applies to bees.



**Melissa Kelly** has lived in Tualatin for almost 30 years. She has been a learning specialist assistant at Bridgeport Elementary for about 16 years. She has been keeping bees for about three years.