



"Beekeeping is an addictive hobby," Julie said. She holds some of the cinnamon-scented cranberry beeswax ornaments that she sells at craft shows. One of her most popular pieces are floating roses and poinsettia candles, which are placed in a glass bowl with water. The flaming flowers make attractive table centerpieces and burn 2-3 hours.

Bee Ranch Buzzes With Bee-Related Hobbies

LOU ANN GOOD
Lancaster Farming Staff
AUBURN (Schuylkill Co.) — Visit Twin Oaks Bee Ranch and it's difficult to tell what causes owners Rick and Julie Freeman the most excitement: bees, honey, or the wonderful ornaments and figurines formed from beeswax.

One thing is certain: the couple's artistic talents using the beeswax is the most eye-catching.

Rick has garnered blue ribbons along the Eastern Coast and Canada for his molded beeswax figurines and Julie sells beeswax ornaments at craft shows.

Rick makes his own molds, which are so unique that he often relents and sells them to insistent buyers. A picture of a handsome cat molded in beeswax by Rick appears on the hardcover book, "Beeswax Crafting," by Robert Berthold Jr.

The one thing that makes Rick's work so unique is that lifelike glass eyes are molded into the wax—no

easy feat when using liquid wax when pouring the molds. Rick perfected the technique after several mishaps of having the eyes slide sideways before the wax set.

The molded wax animals transmit a sweet aroma and last for years.

"Beekeeping is an addictive hobby," Julie said. "We've had so much fun. We always ask what if we had more bees?"

About 10 years ago, the Freemans purchased one hive for use in their own small orchard. They now own 120 hives.

"I originally became interested in bees because we wanted a better fruit crop in our orchard, but now the orchard plays second fiddle to the bees," Julie said.

After extensive reading on beekeeping, the Freemans heard about an older gentleman going out of business. They purchased his hives and transported the hives in the trunk of their car. When they arrived home, bees were all over

their trunk and flying about because some of the hives had tumbled over. From their reading, the Freemans knew the best thing to do was to reconstruct the hive as close to the car as possible. Rick removed the hives from the car, but left the trunk open. The Freemans went to bed with the bees still buzzing in the trunk. When the sun arose, the bees crawled back into the hives by their own accord.

Another interesting way to retrieve a swarm of bees, the Freemans said, is to lay down a white sheet and shake a swarm on it. When the queen bee is placed in the hives, the remaining bees march into the hive almost like little soldiers.

Broken hives happen in more ways than by transport. Last year, Rick went up the hill in the woodland in front of their home to check on his beehives and found that a black bear had already discovered the honey. The bear had scattered the parts of five hives all over the place.

"But we had 50 colonies there, so it could have been much worse," Rick said of the five lost colonies.

Since that incident, the Freemans strung high tensile fence around the area to keep out the bears.

Although mites continue to be a problem for honey growers, the Freemans are able to control the damage compared to two years ago when the mite problem had reached epidemic proportions.

"We lost about 30 percent of our hives," Rick estimated. The loss was mostly the result of other beekeepers not treating their hives. The virus quickly spreads.

The Freemans transport hives to fruit and vegetable growers who request it. Generally, the hives are transported in April to strawberry fields. In addition to orchards, the hives are also set in fields of tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers until frost hits.

The Freemans concentrate on the bee part during the growing season and the molding projects in the colder months. They recall being stuck in the mud in a remote orchard during the middle of the night.

"Beekeeping requires late hours



Rick Freeman has garnered blue ribbons along the Eastern Coast and Canada for his molded beeswax animals. He makes most of his own molds. Notice the picture of a handsome cat molded in beeswax by Rick appears on the hardcover book, "Beeswax Crafting," by Robert Berthold Jr.

when pollinating because you can't do it during the day. You must wait until the bees are finished flying," Rick said.

The Freemans have taken beekeeping and beeswax classes offered at Delaware Valley College.

As Rick and Julie talked about bees, honey, and beeswax, their 2-year-old son Brendin took a bite from a piece of realistic Indian corn formed of beeswax.

As his mother calmly said, "The nice thing about bees-

wax is that it's entirely safe, especially for children."

Pure beeswax burns longer and cleaner and transmits a delicate aroma. Julie also colors and scents beeswax for those who prefer ornaments in colors other than the natural color.

She also makes customized wedding candles with the wedding invitation embossed on the candle, rolled beeswax candles, figurines, and hanging ornaments.

One of her most popular pieces

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HOMESTEAD NOTES



About 10 years ago, the Freemans purchased one hive for use in their own small orchard. They now own 120 hives. Julie and Rick now have a son Brendin, 2, who shows great interest in beekeeping.



Two-year-old Brendin thinks fallen apples are balls to be thrown.