

Buzzing At Honey Crest Farm

(Continued from Page B14)

plaque with many show ribbons attest to his previous involvement in the industry.

Mathias teaches beekeeping to students at Milton Hershey School. He helps students set up from start to finish.

"When the class is over, the students have a product to sell,"

Mathias said of the six students assigned to his tutelage. Few seem wary of the possibility of bee stings while working with the hives.

Although he gets stung occasionally, Mathias said that beekeepers learn quickly to leave bees alone before oncoming

thunderstorms, high humidity, and hot weather. It's important to be aware of the flight pattern of bees so that one doesn't stand in that area when working with the hive.

Because warm hives encourage more bee activity, hives should be positioned to face toward the sun and protected by tree or bushlines. One of his hives in Clinton County was molested by a bear. With a buddy, Mathias devised a hive placed inside an abandoned refrigerator and cabled to a tree. An opening cut in the refrigerator side allows the bees to come and go. Despite markings showing that the refrigerator has been scratched and clawed by a bear, the hive remains protected.

"The hive is placed 2000 feet atop a mountain and produces a different tasting honey," Mathias said.

On a strong hive, Mathias makes what he calls splits. He takes the frame of brood bees to another location and introduces another queen bee, and the hive process is repeated. Typically queen bees are shipped from the south where they appear earlier

in the season because of the warm weather.

In addition to teaching classes at the Hershey school and at other places when requested, Mathias often provides observation hives for classroom usage and for craft shows where he also sells honey.

Mathias thrives on the interest students show in beekeeping.

"I don't get paid for this, but I enjoy it. My goal is to see one of my students become the next secretary of agriculture," he said.

Mathias has pictures of him extracting honey before such celebrities as Gov. Thomas Ridge and his son.

Depending where bees feed, he said, honey has a different flavor. People looking for asthma relief should use honey gathered from the area where they live. Honey produced from the area helps prevent allergic reactions to pollen and airborne seed.

He bottles wildflower, locust, and clover honey. He calls locust

honey the ideal honey.

Most of the cooking with honey is left to Mathias's wife Carol, but he does experiment with bread making. Using a breadmaker and different varieties of honey, Mathias has discovered his favorite combination is buckwheat flour and whole wheat flour.

It seems that Mathias never tires of finding new beekeeping-related projects. Parts of the wooden hives that are saturated with honey deteriorate. Rather than discard them, Mathias cuts the pieces to form birdhouses.

A former president of the Capital Area Beekeepers, Mathias now serves as treasurer of the promotional fund and as assistant manager of the association's booth at the Farm Show, Ag Progress Days, and Keystone International Livestock Exposition. He initiated having logos designed for both the county and the state associations. These logo patches are available to attach to hats and shirts, and other clothing.



From discarded beehives, Mathias cuts out hundreds of bluebird houses to place on his property. He enrolled 12 acres in the Forest Stewardship Program. The 10-year plan to return the land to nature includes the establishment of fence rows, brush piles, and more trees.

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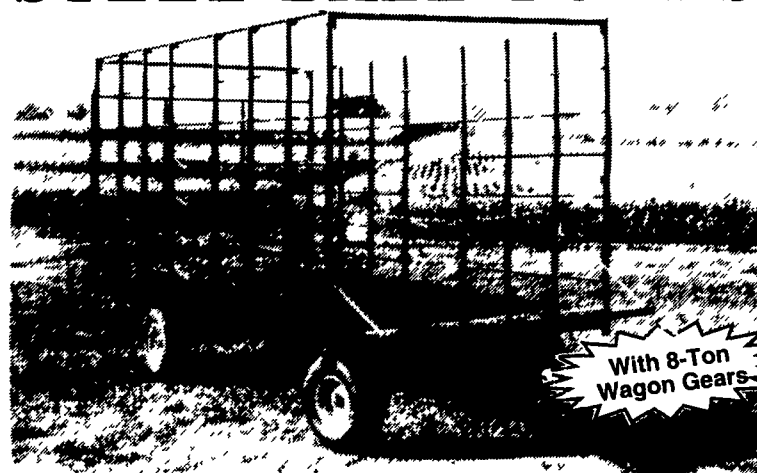
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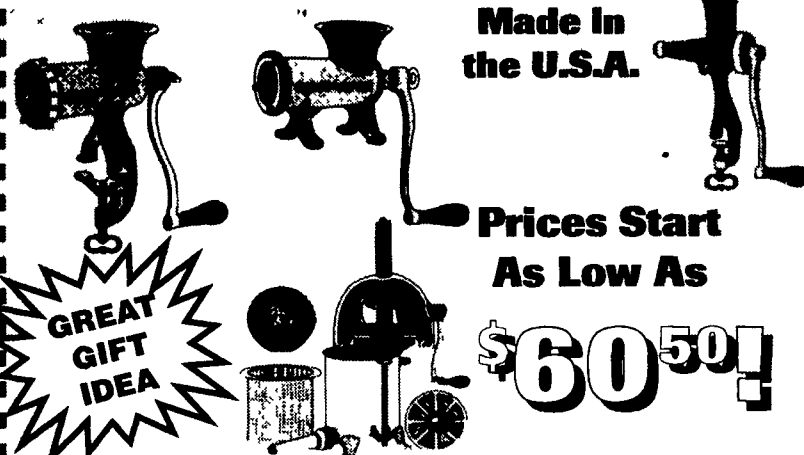
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