



Orchard Bee  
ASSOCIATION

# Orchard Buzz

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## Executive Committee

[executives@orchardbee.org](mailto:executives@orchardbee.org)

President:

Kimball Clark

[pres@orchardbee.org](mailto:pres@orchardbee.org)

Vice President:

Theresa Pitts-Singer

[vicepres@orchardbee.org](mailto:vicepres@orchardbee.org)

Secretary:

Cory Stanley-Stahr

[secretary@orchardbee.org](mailto:secretary@orchardbee.org)

Treasurer:

Ron Bitner

[treasurer@orchardbee.org](mailto:treasurer@orchardbee.org)



Female blue orchard bee on an almond blossom. Photo: Derek Artz, USDA-ARS

## Integrated Crop Pollination

### A New Project Puts a Buzz in Specialty Crop Pollination

Facing the reality of declining bee populations, specialty-crop farmers are looking for new ways to ensure adequate pollination and profitable yields. Integrated Crop Pollination (ICP) is a concept that combines the use of managed pollinators (such as honey bees and mason bees) with the restoration of habitat for wild pollinators, and the adoption of bee-friendly farm practices.

These strategies are the focus of a new research partnership: Project ICP – a multi-year project which began in late 2012 and is funded by the USDA’s Specialty Crops Research Initiative (SCRI). Project ICP is a coordinated effort of nearly 50 individuals from fifteen organizations, including research institutions, federal agencies, and other interdisciplinary stakeholders. The Project ICP team is working closely with farmers of almond, apple, blueberry, cherry, raspberry, pumpkin, and watermelon crops to investigate and refine the use of ICP. The overarching goals of Project ICP are to find ways to improve the sustainability and stability of pollination and to increase crop yields.

During the project’s first year ICP research teams monitored bees and other insects visiting focal crops on over 100 farms across the country. Pollination and crop yield were measured, and will be used to learn more about which floral visitors contribute significantly to crop pollination.

Wildflower plantings were established on some farms, in order to better understand how such habitat enhancements can attract and support pollinators. Habitat enhancements are an investment that takes some time; wildflower plantings can take several years to fully establish and start to bloom. The long-term funding from SCRI for Project ICP gives researchers the opportunity to ask important questions



Pollinator habitat adjacent to a blueberry field in Michigan. Photo: Brett Blaauw, Michigan State University

that take several years to answer. Results will be used to develop new best practices for the enhancement of farm habitat to bolster bee populations.

The Project ICP team is also evaluating alternative managed pollinators. Blue orchard bees were added to almonds in the first and second years of the project, producing intriguing and exciting preliminary results. This 2014 growing season, the second year of the project, bumble bees and *Osmia* spp. will be added to several other focal crops, with the goal of improving techniques for managing these bees for specialty crop pollination.

Another unique aspect of Project ICP is a strong focus on outreach and dissemination of research findings to a diverse group of stakeholders such as farmers, crop consultants, and USDA personnel. Social scientists will be surveying farmers throughout the project to assess the best ways to incorporate ICP strategies on farms as well as barriers to ICP adoption. Survey results will also lead to the development of new outreach strategies to help farmers to better manage crop pollination. In the first year of the project, ICP team members gave over 45 presentations involving aspects of Project ICP, and numerous future workshops and farm events are planned in the coming years.



Bumble bee visiting a blueberry blossom. Photo: Rufus Isaacs, Michigan State University

In the months and years ahead, Project ICP will be producing a number of tools that will be useful to specialty crop growers, farm educators, pollinator contractors, and conservationists.

Specific outcomes of Project ICP include:

- Publications such as a guide to Integrated Crop Pollination, region-specific guides for establishing bee habitat on farms, a guide to alternative managed pollinators for fruit and vegetable growers, and a guide to monitoring crop pollination in the field.
- Decision support tools to help guide grower investments in habitat enhancements and other management strategies, and tools to help growers minimize pesticide impacts on pollinators.
- Direct technical support will be available for farmers interested in implementing ICP practices on their land, on-farm demonstration sites will showcase ICP practices, and workshops will provide training to growers, extension agents, crop scouts, and consultants.

To learn more about Project ICP, project partners, ICP resources, or to sign up for e-newsletters, visit Project ICP's web site ([www.projecticp.org](http://www.projecticp.org)).

You can also connect to the project through Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/IntegratedCropPollination-Project>), where you'll find articles, photos, and videos relating to ICP.

*-Jennifer Hopwood, Project ICP Extension and Xerces Society*

## Message from the President

In my mind, there are few things more beautiful than watching and hearing various bee species pollinate fragrant fruit blossoms on a warm spring day. It is my hope that in some future day, this style of crop pollination will be found in most backyards, and of course, in orchards.

The Orchard Bee industry is growing. The inbound calls I receive are ever-increasing. I know I am not alone. We in this small association are in the forefront of that growth, yet we still have so much to learn.

Because we are on the forefront, each of us is viewed as a solution to an ever-increasing demand. Therefore, we have great responsibilities. Extreme warmth or frigid cold has kept us, and should always keep us, on our toes. Together, millions of unique solitary bees depend on our care throughout the year.

I recall a conversation with Glen Trostle. I asked him, "What, in your opinion, kills our bees the most?" His answer was short yet profound: "Us—poor

management.” I have heard similar responses from leaders in the Apis industry.

Of all the extreme orchard bee loss stories I know—and I am not claiming innocence—carelessness is the most notorious killer. It is a human problem. To fight carelessness, I encourage our members to:

Bee Aware

Bee Responsible

Bee Prepared

Being aware is an active pursuit, not a passive one. Albeit through books, phone calls, emails or sheer time-tested experience, the ribbon of awareness is worn by those who seek and recall information. Ignorance is its valid antonym. Shun ignorance. Bee Aware.

Being responsible requires heart, passion and an active interest. I once stressed concerns about the welfare of a bee shipment with Gordy Wardell. He exclaimed, “Of course I’ll be careful—these are living organisms.” Somewhere in the depths of Gordy’s nutty heart I could tell he loved bees, particularly the very bees in that single shipment. Have a heart, and Bee Responsible.

Being prepared is closely related to awareness, but I separate it due to the climatic demands of our industry. Of all the seasons, being prepared before and during Springtime will have tremendous payoff, and is a recipe for success. Actively keeping tabs on temperatures, emergence, and the provisioning of sufficient bee cavities should haunt the keeper’s mind. Quit scolding yourself at cocoon harvest, and Bee Prepared at the appropriate times.

*-Kimball Clark, Orchard Bee Association President*

## Orchard Bee Association Update

A lot has happened since our last newsletter. We have been continuing work on non-profit status for the association, continuing work on the website, annual meeting arrangements, and further solidifying our standards committees and our awards committee.

### Committees

We now have chairs for our five committees. They are:

- Propagation - Jim Watts & Dave Hunter
- Development - Glen Trostle
- Commerce - Karen Strickler
- Pollination - Matt Allan
- Awards - Mary Centrella

I’m sure I speak for the entire association in thanking our committee chairs and members for their service. They are busy working on updating our standards and will be presenting at the upcoming meeting. If you are interested in volunteering to serve on a committee, please contact me at [secretary@orchardbee.org](mailto:secretary@orchardbee.org).

### Website

I am preparing to upload the membership list to the “Members Only” section of the website. The purpose of this is to foster comradery and encourage sharing of knowledge amongst members. All information in this section of the website is password-protected. However, some of you may still not want to be included on this list. You need to contact me at [secretary@orchardbee.org](mailto:secretary@orchardbee.org) as soon as possible if you do not want your name and email address posted.

I recently updated the membership page of the website. It now contains more complete information on joining OBA, as well as links that will enable paying dues online with your credit card. If you would rather pay by check, you may contact Ron Bitner, OBA Treasurer, at [treasurer@orchardbee.org](mailto:treasurer@orchardbee.org) to make arrangements. If you have not yet paid your 2014 dues, I urge you to do so as soon as possible. Orchard Bee Association relies on these funds for its ongoing expenses, as well as financing the annual meeting, which is quickly approaching.

*-Cory Stanley-Stahr, Orchard Bee Association Secretary*

**Don’t Forget the New  
Website!**

**[www.orchardbee.org](http://www.orchardbee.org)**



Our website is constantly evolving, so visit often to see what we’ve added. If you have a suggestion for the website or a submission the newsletter, contact [secretary@orchardbee.org](mailto:secretary@orchardbee.org).

# 2014 Annual Meeting

-Cory Stanley-Stahr, Orchard Bee Association Secretary

Our annual meeting has been scheduled for September 25-27 at the Utah State University Kaysville Education Center in Kaysville, Utah. As more information becomes available, it will be updated on our website at <http://www.orchardbee.org/oba-2014-annual-meeting/>. Meeting admission is free to members' whose dues are current. We have begun working out the details of the agenda, with more to follow. I urge you to contact Kimball at [pres@orchardbee.org](mailto:pres@orchardbee.org) or Theresa at [vicepres@orchardbee.org](mailto:vicepres@orchardbee.org) if you would like to suggest a speaker or if you have other comments and suggestions pertaining to the meeting. A block of rooms will be reserved at a nearby hotel very soon. Be watching for emails from Orchard Bee Association as more details are confirmed. The executive committee is excited for another successful meeting, and we would love to see you there!

## **Tentative Schedule for 2014 Meeting**

### **Thursday, September 25 (Members Only):**

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 12-3 p.m.   | Committee reports and discussion of Standards                  |
| 3-4 p.m.    | Business meeting: Updates from executive committee             |
| 4-5 p.m.    | Network and visit vendors                                      |
| 5:30-? p.m. | Optional restaurant dinner (cost not included in registration) |

### **Friday, September 26 (Members Only):**

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| 8 a.m.-12 p.m. | Science presentations  |
| 12-1 p.m.      | Lunch (cost included in registration)  |
| 1-4 p.m.       | Business meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Group discussion</li><li>• Election of new officers</li><li>• Goals for next year</li><li>• Location of next annual meeting</li></ul> |
| 4-5 p.m.       | Network and visit vendors  |
| 5:30-? p.m.    | Optional restaurant dinner (cost not included in registration)   |

### **Saturday, September 27**

- Pollination Symposium - Public Event
- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| 10 a.m.-2 p.m. | Basic talks (biology, how to) with a 30 min lunch |
| 2-3 p.m.       | Network and visit vendors                         |

Orchard Bee Association is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit professional society governed by a board comprised of members. More information about membership can be found on our website, <https://orchardbee.org> or by emailing [info@orchardbee.org](mailto:info@orchardbee.org). Photos and information contained in this newsletter cannot be used without the express permission of the OBA executive committee, [executives@orchardbee.org](mailto:executives@orchardbee.org).