

The following report has been compiled from several different incarcerated bee club members.

The Stafford Creek Bee Club is a peer-led program, instructed and lead by incarcerated individuals. The staff sponsor is very hands-on, and knowledgeable but allows students and instructors to voice their own thoughts and ideas along with research and textbook information. This gives instructors and students confidence, and a boost in self esteem to be able to learn and problem solve together as a team. With this ability to communicate and work together we have accomplished a great deal this beekeeping season.

The Garden Curriculum college course grew several variations of pollinator flowers to plant in our newly developed apiary garden. The colorful flowers transformed our basic bee garden into a visually stunning area in the facility.

The 2023 season began with 3 donated nucs from Evergreen College, Sustainability in Prison Project (SPP). As the colonies grew, we tried to stay ahead of swarms by adding more room and created a successful split. Our biggest challenge of the season was staying ahead and on top of swarms by regular hands-on classes with students working towards their journeyman certification. Due to several swarms, we currently have 8 strong healthy hives which will be reduced to 6 going into fall. We are looking to re-home two mated queens before combining smaller hives to ensure success through the winter.

We are currently using Langstroth wooden 8 frame hives, and Apimaye 10 frame hives. Our preference is towards the Apimaye due to smaller entrance holes, better feeders, and most importantly how they stand up against western Washington weather conditions. Wooden hives have always been a battle with mold and moisture which we do not have with the Apimaye.

Our apiary will also be going through a dedication ceremony soon. In August of 2022, bee club member Cory Lewis passed away. A wooden plaque for Cory is being created at this time and will be placed in the apiary garden in his memory. Corey loved working with bees and would often say after a class that working with bees made him feel like for a moment that he wasn't in prison. This is a phrase often heard from students along with "this was the best day ever".

