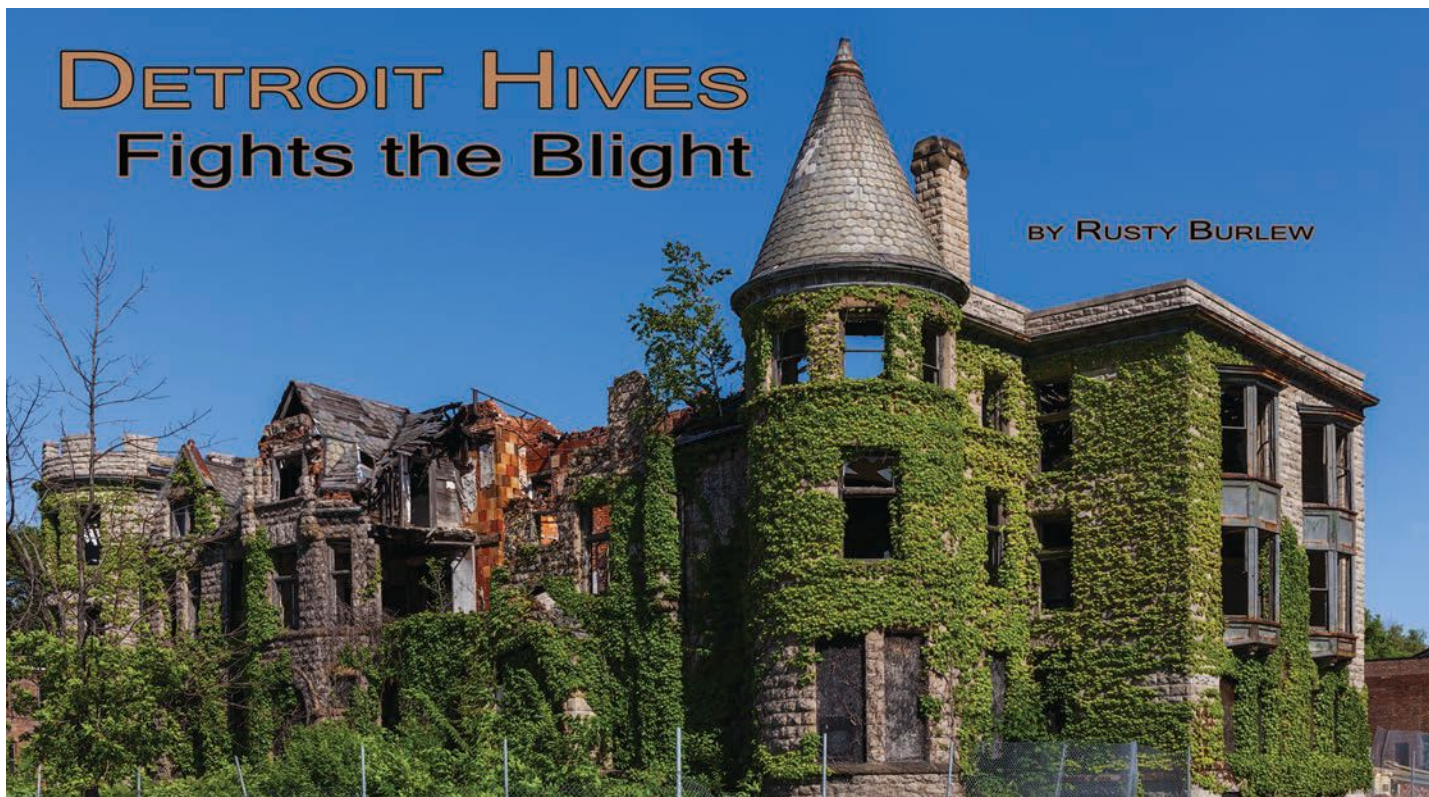


DETROIT HIVES Fights the Blight

BY RUSTY BURLEW



Nestled among the vacant lots and abandoned buildings of Detroit's East Side is a tiny farm. Once a repository for derelict tires, household trash, and battered furniture, the small plot has turned green. The sweet scent of mint floats on the air and, if you listen carefully, you can hear the soft purr of thousands of honey bees. Welcome to Detroit Hives, a small farm with a big heart.

Not long ago, Detroit photographer Timothy Paule was suffering from a cough that wouldn't quit. He tried everything he could think of, but the cough persisted. Finally, a shopkeeper recommended he try local honey. Paule gave it a try and never looked back. "Local honey has medicinal properties," Paule explained. "It's a type of immunotherapy."

Both Paule and his girlfriend, Nicole Lindsey, were impressed with honey's curative powers. They also began to think about urban blight and the proliferation of ragweed growing on the abandoned properties in their neighborhood. They wondered if the ragweed was triggering allergies and what they could do about it. And they thought about local honey.

AN IDEA IS BORN

Neither of them are sure how the idea first took hold, but they began to consider keeping bees on some of

the vacant lots in their Detroit neighborhood. After contacting the South-eastern Michigan beekeepers, whose classes were already full, they were referred to beekeeping courses taught by two organization, Green Toe Gardens and Keep Growing Detroit.

They enrolled in both. Green Toe Gardens taught them the basics of bee biology, bee equipment, choosing apiary locations, and approaching the neighbors. Keep Growing Detroit, which emphasizes organic practices, included sections on hive

maintenance, honey extraction, and wintering.

Before Paule's lingering cough, beekeeping had never entered their minds. "I was aware of bees in my subconscious mind," Paule said, "But I was always afraid of them." Lindsey, on the other hand, had heard of the problems bees were having. "I was aware of the decline of bee populations, and I wanted to do something."

The two of them studied hard and received some solid hands-on experience. By early spring, they were ready



The new entrance to Detroit Hives.



A vacant lot in Detroit filled with wildflowers.



Detroit Hives co-founder Nicole Lindsey smokes a hive.

to set up their hives. But when their first bees arrived—two packages and a nuc—their mentor failed to show. Determined to make it work, Paule and Lindsey dove in and set up their apiary without help.

BUYING THE FARM

With the help of the Detroit Land Bank Authority, Paule and Lindsey were able to purchase a vacant parcel for their new bee farm. The land bank allows non-profit organizations to purchase land at reduced rates in order to put abandoned properties back into productive use. It's a win-win for both the community and the organizations that envision a different future for their city.

Paule and Lindsey created Detroit Hives for the purpose of educating the public about the importance of bees. For \$340 they purchased an abandoned city lot of approximately 5,000 square feet that once contained a house. "It was a dumping ground," Paule said. "And the trash went deep into the grass. But it was great for bees, full of flowering weeds, thistles, and dandelions."

THE FIRST YEAR

Their first year was busy and more successful than they imagined. They harvested a modest amount of honey—a couple frames per hive—but left most of it for the bees. "It has a minty taste," Paule said. "You could see the bees on the mint, clover, and dandelions. And all of it is chemical-free. No one's out there spraying the weeds."

"The neighbors love it," Lindsey added. "They said they saw more butterflies this year, and their gardens are doing better, too. We advise people to let the grass grow, plant wildflowers, and not use chemicals. It helps all the pollinators." So far, they've had no complaints about stings or swarms. Instead, neighbors like the idea of a well-kept farm in their neighborhood.

Paule and Lindsey are also learning that bees are endlessly fascinating. Lindsey said that during the summer dearth, she was surprised to have the bees greeting her. As soon as she parked, the bees approached her car as if to say, "What's up? What's going on here?" But she made sure they had plenty to eat, and the bees

came through their first dearth just fine. And now that winter is in full swing, the bees are thriving. In spite of wildly fluctuating temperatures ranging from 0 to 50 degrees F, all three hives are content.

CREATING A BUZZ

While the bees were busy doing their thing, both Paule and Lindsey were speaking to local school groups about the importance of bees and other pollinators. "It's hard at first," Paule said. "There is a stigma, a fear about bees. Yellowjackets are mistaken for bees, and people are afraid."

As a way to increase public awareness and reduce the fear of bees, Detroit Hives hosted a mural painting day in September. The mural was painted on the six-foot high wooden fence that surrounds the farm. And although the weather was bad, 30 to 40 people braved the rain to help paint a "Save the Bee" mural. The following month, Detroit Hives helped host Socktober, a month-long sock drive in advance of winter weather. All donations were then turned over to the local soup kitchen for distribution.



Eric Andrews, founder of Peace Tree Parks, installs a raised planting bed at Detroit Hives.



Volunteers Debraya Edwards and Malki Murray help plant the community garden.



Anne Frank, a neighbor of Detroit Hives, receives free samples grown on the bee farm.



Reggie, a resident of East Warren, works on the Save the Bee community mural.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Timothy Paule and Nicole Lindsey are as busy as they bees they admire. In addition to their full time jobs—Paule specializes in portrait and product photography, while Lindsey is a staff member at Henry Ford Optim Eyes—they are working on plans to expand Detroit Hives.

“It’s like a ghost town around here,” Paule says. “We’d like to see the two abandoned houses behind us torn down so we can expand out there.”

They are hoping to enlarge their urban vegetable garden and add a lavender garden for the bees. They also would like to provide space where other beekeepers can keep their hives. “We’d like to have a honey market where beekeepers can sell their local honey, and a teaching center where the public can learn about bees.”

Then there are the enormous concrete flower beds in downtown Detroit. “No one has been planting them for years,” Paule said. “The concrete planters and the Adopt-a-Highway median strips could be used to plant food for native pollinators.”

GROWING STRONG

Right now, Detroit Hives is growing faster than their resources. They are looking for donations, especially bee suits and learning materials for kids. They also need hives, tools, and

smokers, as well as an extractor, an observation hive, and a tent.

Detroit Hives has a memorable tagline: *Work Hard, Stay Bumble*. “Detroit is a city of hard workers,” explains Paule, “It’s a city where



Assisting beekeeper Nicole Lindsey, are Marlon McDowell and his daughter KiMya, and Edward Williams II with his daughter Kennedy and son Edward Williams III.



Nicole Lindsey, co-founder of Detroit Hives, and Nurse Bee Mentee, Skylar Rose Gilliam, examine a frame of bees.



Nicole Lindsey and Jamar Briggs, an East Warren resident and volunteer, examine a frame.



Asia Morris, a student from The James and Grace Lee Boggs Academy, learns about bees.

folks need to be tough. And humble." When you look at the photos and the faces, when you encounter the transformation of the landscape, you can see the love. Detroit Hives is making an indelible mark on the city, on the people, and on the bees of Detroit.

Rusty Burlew has studied agriculture, honey bees, and environmental science for over 30 years. She is a passionate advocate of native bee conservation and founded the Native Bee Conservancy in Washington State. You can visit her website at <https://honeybeesuite.com> or email her at rusty@honeybeesuite.com.



SMITH APIARIES



- QUEENS -
Italian & Carniolan

Selected For:

-  Honey Production
-  Hygienic Behavior
-  Gentleness

- PACKAGE BEES -

Ken Smith
Paradise, Ca

Ph: (530)520-1463




Dadant & Sons, Inc., Hamilton, IL or your nearest branch

Your one-stop shopping center for beekeeping supplies in 2018! Be sure you receive our big catalog in 2018. Check out our new products!

1-888-922-1293 www.dadant.com

Cypress & Pine Equipment **Package Bees & Queens** **Books**









Call in to order your packages bees or queens!
Package Bees Pickup Only

Best books for first time Beekeepers.

Suits & Jackets **Containers** **Starter Kits**







We offer Glass or Plastic Containers.

Choose your Starter kit from Cypress or Pine!



**Rossman
Apiaries**
INCORPORATED

Visit Us At
www.gabees.com

Call Us At
1-800-333-7677