

Honey Bees at the Community Garden

Background - Deb Wright (Treasurer from 2012 to 2014) had contacted Bob Colson who had been on the original committee in developing the garden and now is head of the Dunn Co Zoning. He said bees are permitted as the zoning is agriculture. Willie Miller and his friend Adam placed hives at the garden in 2013. Adam was not a gardener with MCG at that time. The Beekeepers organization wanted to put an educational hive somewhere so this was a perfect place – their hive was accepted with the Willie being in charge of the hive. In the spring of 2014, a new gardener, Trudy N., wanted to bring in 1-2 hives. We did not have a policy and in talking about it (Willie M. and Mary L. with Trudy) several points helped develop the policy. It was also felt that having bees at the garden was a benefit to the garden but if the presence of hives and bees caused a concern and negative reactions, we would definitely address it to resolve the problem presented and if it could not be resolved the hives would leave. Owners would be given several weeks to find a new location for their hives. The management of the hives is the responsibility of the beekeepers not the MCG management. This includes recognizing the presence of disease in the hives. If a beekeeper does not address and resolve the problem, any beekeeper or representative of MCG can call the state honey bee inspector for inspection and follow the inspector's recommendations. The number of hives was determined by existing ordinances in subdivisions in the county. Public opinion when it relates to negative attitudes has shown to carry more of an emotional response and sway others attitude greater than a positive attitude. We did want and continue to want hives to be a part of the garden and provide a space for gardener/beekeeper to have their hives. People sometimes don't verbalize their complaints to the Board but may go to the city directly. We encourage open communication to prevent issues from arising.

We did have a complaint from one perhaps two people in 2014 about the bees being too close and flying at a person and getting tangled in hair. The gardener stated she was allergic to bees. The bees were located on the south end of the garden at that time. It was at the end of the gardening season. The bees were moved to the north east end of the garden the following year where the distance was greater between the hive and gardens. This solved the problem. The hives now remain in the shadows now until mid morning. Ideally the hive should have sun as early as possible. Next year they may be moved further to the west.

The Menomonie Community Garden is a 2 acre plot leased from the City of Menomonie. The lease was extended in 2013 for 10 years and is based on good stewardship and no complaints from gardeners or neighborhood. MCG is a non-profit organization with Farmer to Farmer, Inc being the fiscal agent. The MCG Gardeners are involved with decision making and management of the gardens.

Policy on honeybee hives at MCG

- Six honey bee hives is the limit at MCG (this is the same number as in the Dunn Co. Ordinance)
- Hives should be the Langstroth style with removable frames
- Water needs to be provided for the bees by the beekeeper
- Hives shall be at least 100 feet from a residential dwelling preferably more
- The flyway for hives shall not go over a garden where gardeners are working. Although flyway is typically stated as 6 feet, we felt it should be perhaps 20 ft to keep it a more comfortable distance for people working their garden.
- The beekeeper must have a garden plot, do active gardening and be in good standing (follow rules and be a contributing gardener member)
- Any gardener who has comments or complaint about the bees or hives should address it to the Board of MCG. That concern will be taken to the individuals keeping bees and a solution found.
- At any time the presence of the hives and bees becomes a liability and issues cannot be resolved, the hives with bees shall not be permitted at MCG.
- Menomonie Community Gardens is a non-profit whose focus is sustainable agriculture, education and involvement of its members and larger community.

Mary Lotten, President

2014