

SAVING THE BEES

Written by John Doe



Beekeepers, Glen Andersen and Tim Wessels, are trying to breed a queen bee that will survive over the winter to help boost the honey bee population.

Two men walk down a street in Northeast Portland. In their hands they hold white jumpsuits, mosquito netting and a wooden box filled with metal tools. Glen Andersen and Tim Wessels, urban beekeepers and founders of Bridgetown Bees, are on a mission to breed a regional specific queen bee for the Portland area that will over-winter or survive the winter.

Queen bees from much warmer areas like California or Hawaii do not over-winter very well in Oregon. After years of losing colonies, Andersen and Wessels partnered in 2013 to create a solution.

“Tim and I were tired of losing bees over the winter and having to replace them. We started to see if we could breed and raise bees that over-winter better,” says Andersen.

Glen Anderson (left) and Tim Wessels (right) walk down a street in Northeast Portland to their Bridgetown Bees’ hives where they work on their Portland specific queen bee breeding project.

With this came the start of Bridgetown Bees. Andersen and Wessels take a queen larva from a queen that survived the winter and try to get a colony of bees to take on this stronger queen bee.

“That’s our only criteria,” says Andersen. “If a colony over-wintered, then we will use that stock.”

In addition, Andersen and Wessel do not treat their bees with any types of chemicals.

“I tried one of these harsher chemicals once, and I just decided I wouldn’t use them because I wouldn’t use them on my garden, so why would I use them on my bees,” says Andersen.

In fact, according to Andersen’s records, his bees were dying at the same rate whether or not he was treating them with chemicals. And Andersen and Wessels do not even use smoke to calm the bees.

“We’ll probably know more next year. If 60 percent of our Bridgetown bee queens survive and only 40 percent of the other queens survive, then we’ll know we are heading in the right direction,” says Andersen.

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-Jane Doe

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-Someone Else

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