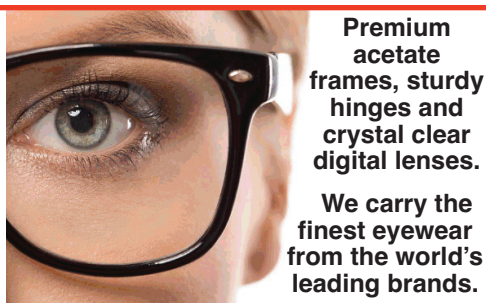


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Statewide Burn Ban Remains in Effect; Anson County Urged to Stay Cautious

North Carolina's statewide burn ban remains in effect, and residents in Anson County are being reminded to avoid all outdoor burning as dry conditions continue to increase wildfire risk. The ban, issued by state officials in late March, applies to all 100 counties and prohibits open burning, even for those who previously obtained permits. Officials say the restrictions will remain in place until conditions improve and it is safe to lift the order.

While the ban covers most outdoor burning, residents can still use grills and outdoor cooking devices, provided they are attended and used safely. However, activities such as burning yard debris, leaves or brush piles are strictly prohibited.

Anson County residents are urged to take extra precautions, including clearing dry leaves and debris away from homes, avoiding parking vehicles on dry grass and properly disposing of cigarettes. These small steps, they say, can help prevent accidental fires during high-risk conditions.

Fire officials also remind residents that violations of the burn ban can result in fines, as well as liability for firefighting costs if a fire gets out of control.

With wildfire danger still elevated across the state, authorities are asking residents to remain patient and vigilant until weather conditions allow the ban to be lifted.

Don't Panic, Those "Ground Bees" Are Good Neighbors

If you've stepped outside lately and noticed what appears to be a small swarm of bees hovering just above your lawn, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission says there's no need to panic - and definitely no need to reach for anything flammable.

Each growing season, the agency receives calls from concerned homeowners reporting "a bunch of little bees hovering over the ground." In most cases, these are burrowing bees, a common - and beneficial - part of North Carolina's ecosystem.

Believe it or not, most of the more than 500 native bee species in the state actually nest underground. These solitary insects often gather in large numbers, creating clusters of small burrows that can look alarming at first glance - especially if you weren't expecting to share your yard.

Despite their numbers, experts say these bees are not aggressive. Unlike honeybees or wasps, they do not defend a hive, and their natural instinct is to avoid people. In fact, only female bees can sting, and even then, they rarely do.

Another bit of good news for uneasy homeowners: their visit is temporary. Most ground-nesting bees are only active above the surface for a short time, typically disappearing within two to three weeks. So while it may feel like your lawn has been taken over, the "tenants" are usually just passing through.

Wildlife officials emphasize that these bees play a critical role in pollination. More than 80 percent of flowering plants rely on pollinators like wild bees, and their work contributes billions of dollars to agriculture each year. In other words, they may be buzzing around your yard today, but they're helping put food on tables tomorrow.

Common species of ground-nesting bees in North Carolina include mining bees, cellophane bees and sweat bees. They are often mistaken for yellow jackets or even ants, adding to the confusion - and sometimes the overreaction.

Rather than attempting to eliminate them, the commission encourages residents to coexist with these important pollinators. And if you're worried about stepping on one, a simple solution might be as easy as wearing shoes outdoors - a tip that's both practical and, as it turns out, surprisingly effective.

To learn more about bees and their nesting habits, visit www.ncwildlife.org. For questions or concerns, contact bee expert Gabriela Garrison at Gabriela.Garrison@ncwildlife.gov or call the Wildlife Helpline at 866-318-2401.

Anson County Beekeepers to Meet April 23

If you've ever wondered what all the buzz is about - and maybe what to do if you hear it in your mailbox - the Anson County Beekeepers have you covered.

The group will hold its regular meeting this Thursday, April 23 at 7:00 p.m. at the Anson County Extension Office, 501 McLaurin Street in Wadesboro. No meal will be served, so attendees are encouraged to eat beforehand - though the bees, as always, will have already taken care of their own "honey-do" list.

Guest speakers David and Tammy Stewart of Stewart's Pee Dee Bees and Baskets will lead a discussion on swarms and splits, two topics that sound like dance moves but are actually essential beekeeping practices. Swarming is a colony's natural way of reproducing, while splitting helps beekeepers manage hive growth and keep their buzzing residents happy and productive.

There will also be 50-50 drawings to raise funds for the association. Those attending are invited to bring items to contribute, with organizers noting that donations are always appreciated - and no, jars of honey are never considered a bad idea.

Beyond the local interest, the meeting highlights a much bigger picture. Bees play a critical role in agriculture worldwide, pollinating crops that make up roughly one-third of the food we eat. From fruits and vegetables to nuts and even coffee, many everyday favorites depend on these tiny workers. Without bees, grocery store shelves would look noticeably emptier - and a lot less colorful.

However, bee populations continue to face significant challenges. Habitat loss, pesticide exposure, climate change and diseases like colony collapse disorder have all contributed to declines in bee numbers in recent years. That makes the work of local beekeepers more important than ever, as they help maintain healthy colonies and support pollination efforts both locally and beyond.

Not a member but curious about beekeeping or local educational programs? Need a beekeeper to safely re-home an unexpected swarm that decided your yard looked like prime real estate? Visit the "Anson County Beekeepers Association" Facebook page for more information - because sometimes the best way to handle a surprise guest is to call someone who speaks fluent "buzz."

NC Pre-K Site Proposals Sought for 2026-27 School Year

Organizations interested in helping shape early childhood education in Anson County are invited to apply to become NC Pre-K sites for the 2026-27 school year.

Anson County is currently accepting Requests for Proposals (RFPs) from qualified providers who would like to host NC Pre-K classrooms, part of the state's effort to ensure children enter kindergarten ready to learn and succeed.

An interest meeting will be held on Monday, April 27 at 12:00 p.m. via Zoom. The session will provide an overview of the application process, program requirements and expectations for participating sites.

Applications are available online at www.ansonchildren.org. For information contact Elizabeth Rizzo at elizabeth.rizzo@ansonchildren.org.

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