The Beekeeper’s First Year

March

• Bees
  • Go out on cleansing flights if >47 F
  • Foraging if >55 F
  • Increased egg laying

• Beekeepers
  • Start checking honey stores/food weekly
    • Wait until it’s warm and not windy
  • Pollen patties
  • Feeding
  • Do NOT take out frames if it is <50 F
April

• Bees
  • Population is growing, new bees emerging
  • Overwinter bees dying off
  • Drones appear
  • First bloom
    • Dandelions are friend AND food!

• Beekeeper
  • Full inspection time!
    • Check for all stages of brood
    • Find the Queen
    • Feed and pollen patties
    • Test/Treat for mites
May

- Bees
  - Population is growing rapidly
  - May swarm if they don’t have enough room
    - Look for swarm cells with larvae
- Beekeeper
  - Prevent swarming with an added hive body
  - Mite check
  - Hive inspection for brood/disease/honey
  - Add honey super in May or June

June/July

- Bees
  - Population is still growing
  - Honey flow increasing
  - Lots of drones
- Beekeeper
  - Add the honey super
  - Add another if the first is capped off
  - Splits (more typical in hives >1 yr)
  - Hive Inspections, look for brood and space
August

• Bees
  • Hit their peak population
  • Drone laying stops
• Beekeeper
  • Harvest honey
    • Bees need ~100 lbs (10 full frames of honey) to make it through winter
  • Quick hive inspections
  • Be on the alert for robbing by wasps and neighbor bees

The Honey Conundrum

• You will likely NOT get honey your first year. And that’s okay!
• If you really want honey, get ready to buy and feed a lot of sugar syrup
• Bees overwinter better with honey
September

- Bees
  - Population is decreasing
  - Mite population on the rise
  - Drones are kicked out of the hive

- Beekeepers
  - Treat for mites and Nosema
  - Final inspection
    - Look for eggs/larvae/capped brood
    - 10 frames of honey
    - Combine hives/resources if needed
    - Entrance reduction
  - Feed

October

- Bees
  - Winter bees emerge
  - Begin to cluster at ~41 F

- Beekeeper
  - Continue feeding until freezing temperatures
    - Not if they have 100 lbs of honey
  - Winterize the hive
Winterizing

- Make sure they have enough food (100 lbs/10 honey frames)
- Low mite numbers
- Healthy laying Queen
- 2 Hive openings (upper & lower)
- Protection from the wind
- Make sure entrances are uncovered

Winterizing Options

- Tar paper
- Foam insulation
- Moisture board
- Mountain Camp Method
- Reflective outside
- Bales
- Experiment!
Winterizing Options

• Signs of too much moisture
November-February

- **Bees**
  - Will cluster and eat to stay warm
  - Cluster is 68-85 F
  - ~50% of bees will die
  - Some laying occurs in Feb.
  - Dead bees will litter the ground

- **Beekeeper**
  - Learn more about bees
  - Order equipment and bees
  - Prepare equipment
  - Only opens hives when it’s >47 F
  - Check hive weight, feed if needed
  - Make sure entrances are clear
First Year Tips

- Don’t smell like/eat bananas
- Always wear protection
- Be purposeful when doing inspections
  - Keep them short and to the point
- Be open to new, research-based beekeeping findings
- Experiment!
- Take records.