

Welcome

Introduce yourself and tell us why you want to play with bugs that sting.

The scope of today's get together is for you to garner enough information to enable you to make an informed decision whether to keep bees or not and to answer any questions you may have. A secondary purpose is to introduce you to the Warren County Beekeepers Association and also SWOBA so that you will know where to get your questions answered when they arise.

Before we start there are some other things that are not important but fun.

Bees never sleep

One pound of honey represents the life work of approximately 300 bees and a flight distance of two to three times around the earth.

The queen may lay 600-800 or even 1500 eggs each day during her three or four year lifetime. This daily egg production may equal her own weight.

Honey bees must consume 17-20 pounds of honey to be able to biochemically produce each pound of beeswax.

We will discuss initial cost and time commitment. The other aspect that only you can address is your enthusiasm and willingness to play with the bees.

A hive consists of: (Demonstrate)

Hive Stand, which can be two concrete blocks.

Screened Bottom Board

Brood Box with Frames and Foundation (one to start with, but eventually two)

Queen excluder (Optional)

Honey Supers with frames and Foundation (I try to have four per hive)

Inner Cover

Telescoping Cover

This setup will cost about \$180 for one colony. If you possibly can you should try to have two colonies. That way you have something to compare against and if you need to exchange frames from one to the other you can.

A three pound package of bees with a queen was \$62 thru the club last year, and will probably be around \$70 this year.

So, you're looking at \$250 per hive.

In addition to the colony you will need to look like a beekeeper;

Bee Suit and veil (different configurations) Just a hat and veil @ \$26 to a Sheriff suit at around \$200

Smoker \$35

Hive tool(s) 2 @ \$6.75

Bee Brush \$3.50

Extracting equipment can be borrowed until you decide on your own.

There are all kinds of information on the internet, to the point of information overload. In my opinion, the best beginner's book is "Beekeeping for Dummies" by Howland Blackiston. You should also consider subscribing to the two bee magazines, [Bee Culture](#) and the [American Bee Journal](#).

### THE BEEKEEPER'S YEAR\*

This is a suggested checklist of activities for the beekeeper. Note that weather, climate, neighborhood and even the type of bees you have will influence such activities. The list gives you an overview of what's going on each month in the hive. It also suggests some important tasks for the beekeeper, and provides a rough estimate of the amount of time you might spend with your bees during a given month. Check this site frequently for additional detail and special notes.

#### January

**The Bees.** The queen is surrounded by thousand of her workers. She is in the midst of their winter cluster. There is little activity except on a warm day (about 45-50 degrees) when the workers will take the opportunity to make cleansing flights. There are no drones in the hive, but some worker brood will begin to appear in the hive. The bees will consume about 25 pounds of stored honey this month. If light use Mountaincamp method to feed granulated sugar.

**The Beekeeper.** Little work is required from you at the hives. If there is heavy snow, make certain the entrance to the hive is cleared to allow for proper ventilation. This is a great time to catch up on your reading about bees, attend bee club meetings, and clean, build and repair equipment for next season. Order package bees (if needed) from a reputable supplier.

**Time Spent.** Estimate less than an hour.

#### February

**The Bees.** The queen, still cozy in the cluster, will begin to lay a few more eggs each day. It is still "females only" in the hive. Workers will take cleansing flights on mild days. The bees will consume about 25 pounds of honey this month.

**The Beekeeper.** On the first warm day (above 50) start feeding 1:1 syrup and give them a pollen patty to encourage brood rearing. Attend those bee club meetings. Read. Attend bee club meetings, and get your equipment ready for spring.

**Time Spent.** Estimate less than one hour.

#### March

**The Bees.** This is the month when colonies can die of starvation. However, if you fed them plenty of sugar syrup in the autumn this should not happen. With the days growing longer, the queen steadily

increases her rate of egg laying. More brood means more food consumed. The drones begin to appear. The bees will continue to consume honey stores at an ever increasing rate.

**The Beekeeper.** Early in the month, on a nice mild day (above 45), and when there is no wind and bees are flying, you can have a quick peek inside your hive. It's best not to remove the frames. Just have a look-see under the cover. If you do not see any sealed honey in the top frames, you may need to begin some emergency feeding. But remember, once you start, you should not stop until they are bringing in their own food supplies. You can begin to feed the hive medicated syrup. If you are fortunate to have a warm and still day (55 – 60) do your first comprehensive inspection. Can you find evidence of the queen? Are there plenty of eggs and brood? Is there a nice pattern to her egg laying? This is a good time to apply powdered sugar. If the top box is full and the bottom empty reverse the hive bodies. Otherwise do it later in the month, on a very mild and windless day, you should consider reversing the hive deeps. This will allow for a better distribution of brood, and stimulate the growth of the colony.

**Time Spent.** Estimate 2 hours this month.

## April

**The Bees.** The weather begins to improve, and the early blossoms begin to appear. The bees begin to bring pollen into the hive. The queen is busily laying eggs, and the population is growing fast. The drones will begin to appear.

**The Beekeeper.** Install new packages. Make splits if you desire. On a warm and still day do your first comprehensive inspection. Can you find evidence of the queen? Are there plenty of eggs and brood? Is there a nice pattern to her egg laying? Apply powdered sugar at two week intervals. You should consider reversing the hive deeps. This will allow for a better distribution of brood, discourage swarming and stimulate the growth of the colony. Towards the end of the month the honey flow will start. Add a queen excluder (optional) and honey supers when the dandelions bloom. If using foundation add one super at a time.

**Time Spent.** Estimate 3 hours.

## May

**The Bees.** Now the activity really starts hopping. The nectar and pollen should begin to come into the hive thick and fast. The queen will be reaching her greatest rate of egg laying. The hive should be bursting with activity.

**The Beekeeper.** Watch out for swarming. Mother's Day is the peak of the swarm season. Inspect the hive weekly. Check your beeyard for swarms. As supers get six or seven frames full add another. Attend bee club meetings and workshops.

**Time Spent.** Estimate 4-5 hours this month.

## June

**The Bees.** Unswarmed colonies will be boiling with bees. The queen's rate of egg laying may drop a bit this month.

**The Beekeeper.** Inspect the hive weekly to make certain the hive is healthy and the queen is present. Add honey supers as needed. Keep up swarm inspections. Attend bee club meetings and workshops.

**Time Spent.** Estimate 4-5 hours.

## July

**The Bees.** If the weather is good, the nectar flow may continue this month. On hot and humid nights, you may see a huge curtain of bees cooling themselves on the exterior of the hive.

**The Beekeeper.** Not much chance of swarming by now. Continue inspections to assure the health of your colony. Add more honey supers if needed. Keep your fingers crossed in anticipation of a great honey harvest.

**Time Spent.** Estimate 2-3 hours.

## August

**The Bees.** The colony's growth is diminishing. The honey flow is over. Drones are still around, but outside activity begins to slow down as the nectar flow slows.

**The Beekeeper.** Harvest your honey at the beginning of the month and if there is a dearth consider feeding later on in the month. Treat for Varroa mites. Watch for honey robbing by wasps or other bees.

**Time Spent.** Estimate 6–8 hours..

## September

**The Bees.** The drones may begin to disappear this month. The hive population is dropping. The queen's her egg laying is dramatically reduced.

**The Beekeeper.** Remember to leave the colony with at least 60 pounds of honey for winter. Check for the queen's presence. Feed and medicate for Nosema towards the end of the month (only the first 2 gallons is medicated). Continue feeding until the bees will take no more syrup. Attend bee club meetings.

**Time Spent.** Estimate 2-3 hours.

## October

**The Bees.** Not much activity from the bees. They are hunkering' down for the winter.

**The Beekeeper.** Watch out for robbing. Install inner cover wedges for ventilation. Install mouse guard at entrance of hive. Place insulite boards under hive cover to help keep colony dry. Setup a wind break if necessary. Finish winter feeding. Attend bee club meetings.

**Time Spent.** Estimate 2 hours.

## November

**The Bees.** Even less activity this month. The cold weather will send them into a cluster.

**The Beekeeper.** Store your equipment away for the winter. Attend bee club meetings.

**Time Spent.** About one hour this month.

## December

**The Bees.** The bees are in a tight cluster. No peeking.

**The Beekeeper.** There's nothing you can do with the bees. Read a good book on beekeeping, and enjoy the holidays!

**Time Spent.** None