



# ***First Year Expectations***

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# What is beekeeping?

- **Philosophical**
- **Spiritual**
- **Commercial**

*Husband: “There’s no money in bees!”*

*Wife: “Not the way you keep them.”*



# What is Your Purpose?

- Why are you keeping bees?
- What do you want from your bees?  
*“The battle for achievement is half-won when one knows definitely what is wanted.”*
- Long-term goals, marketing
- Expansion?
- Opportunities knocking? Doors opening?
- Dreams – vision – passion – energy  
*“Our purpose in life is not necessarily waiting to be discovered, as much as it is to be created.”*

# What makes a good beekeeper?

- Read, stay informed, engage discussion  
[www.beesource.com](http://www.beesource.com) – log in to discuss  
[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) – search topics

**Know the vocabulary and the jargon**

- Books cost money, library books are free, however, most are quite old, still good

*“Books are expensive, but what does it cost you if you don’t read it?”* --Mark Twain

- My recommendation: “The Beekeeper’s Handbook” by Diana Sammataro, \$20



# Finding Information

- **Magazines**

*Bee Culture,*

*American Bee Journal*

- **Mentoring** – making connections, sharing insights

- **Groups, Clubs and Associations**

I can't teach everything; You can't learn everything

“Teaching” beekeeping is very difficult

Beekeeping is more art, than science

Beekeeping is “caught” more than “taught”

Bees make the best teachers. Work your bees.

“Bees make better beekeepers than  
beekeepers make bees.”

# Clothing – Protection - Confidence







# First Year Dilemmas

- “How often do I inspect my hives?”
- “I can’t find my queen! What does she look like?”
- If you have eggs, pearly white larvae, capped pupae...you have a queen. You don’t have to find her every time you open the hive.

# Where will I acquire my bees?

- Packages
- Nucs (Nucleus, mini-colony)
- Swarms
- Purchasing whole hives
- Taking feral colonies out walls and trees
- ***Different sources will raise different expectations, yield different results.***

# Packages

- Easiest to start, easy to acquire
- 1 Queen, a bunch of loose bees, unrelated
- Place caged queen in your hive
- Shake bees around her, close up and feed
- It takes the queen one week to be released and start laying eggs.
- It takes three weeks for those eggs to hatch and emerge as adults.
- It takes a package four weeks to start building up. Older bees start dying.



























































# Feeding ?

- I suggest seven weeks of 1:1 syrup and a pollen patty, Honey-B-Healthy
- Why seven weeks?
  - Four weeks until first generation hatches
  - Three weeks as house/nurse bees until they become foragers
- I highly recommend wax foundation
- Donate brood frames frames from existing colonies = very, very helpful!

# Nucleus Colonies

- Basically a mini-version of the hive
- Beekeeper makes nucs after buying a mail-order queen, then splits their hive
- Laying queen, already accepted
- 4 or 5 frames of bees and “brood”
- Ready for expansion into the big hive
- You have a four week jump on packages because you have brood in all stages.





















# Feeding (?)

- At least two weeks with 1:1 syrup and pollen patty, Honey-B-Healthy suggested.
- If you have other colonies, pulling one or two frames of brood from them to add to this nuc will greatly enhance it's growth.
- Nuc producers tend to put older “junk” frames into nucs, frames with dark, black wax. Plan on replacing these.



# Swarms

- Typically feral colonies living in the wild
- Send out swarms in late spring and early summer to repopulate the local area.
- Will be an old queen and half of the original hive (old hive raises new queen)
- Easy to settle into a bee hive, **very motivated to draw out comb and get going**
- Will eventually supersede that old queen













# Swarms

- Cheap! Free! And unpredictable!
- Can't be scheduled
- Can't always be retrieved (40 feet in the air)
- Will sit still for 20 minutes up to 2 days.
- When called, you really need to go NOW
- Best to retrieve them at dusk
- Great public service – get on “swarm list”

# Buying Existing Hives

- Often neglected, but not always
- History can be fuzzy, why are you selling?
- REALLY HEAVY
- Have to be moved with bees in them
- Best to move after dark, entrances screened, bees agitated, and hot
- Better yet, split into nucs, requeen and lighten the weight.



# Bee Removals

















# What to expect your first year

- Spring – build up of brood, add boxes *pro re nata*
- Summer – bees store nectar, make honey, maybe some surplus honey, maybe not
- Late Summer – start treating for mites, etc.
- Fall – insure adequate stored honey or feed sugar syrup, queen slows down, consolidation
- Winter – worry needlessly because it's so cold and you think your bees won't make it.
- Spring – suppress mild shock as bees start flying. Cycle starts over with build up of brood.
- Now you're faced with second-year issues



Some bees die

“If you’re raising live stock  
you have to get used  
to dead stock.”

# Getting bees established

- Once established, bees know how to take care of themselves.
- Start bees in one box, intersperse comb
- 70% rule = when 7 of the 10 frames are drawn out with comb, add a second box.
- When 7 of those 10 are drawn out, add a third box. Bring bottom box to the top.
- Objective: build colony to be strong enough to survive the coming winter



# Record Keeping

- More like a personal blog (publish it on the Internet if you wish!)
- Write things down in a notebook
  - Date
  - What I saw and observed
  - What I did, action
  - Take pictures

# Equipment

- New? Used? Build your own?
- What if I decide not to continue, resale value? Who will buy my stuff?
- “Will I make honey my first year?”
- Do I need a queen excluder?
- “Do I need an extractor (honey spinner) for my first year?”
- What if I find out I’m allergic to bee stings?



# Every beekeeper is Different

## Every Hive is Different

## Every Year is Different

- Shoot first, then call whatever you hit the target.  
“I meant for that to happen.”
- Nothing important merely happens. Plan, anticipate, expect success, keep learning!
- There is no “try,” only do.
- Everyone started out with a “first year.”
- Many people started over in their second year.
- Charleston Heston in “Ben Hur,” Cecil B. DeMille