



Kelley Bee News

ISSUE 29—NOVEMBER 2012

Modern Beekeeping



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The Buzz

We're very thankful for honeybees, and all of our wonderful customers who love the insect. To show our appreciation, in part, we have a money-saving offer toward the end of November. Check out the ad inside, and thanks!



Also inside is our usual assortment of photographs, information and fun. Whether your winter is forty degrees and four weeks long, or started two months ago and hits 4 below, we've got insights on how to prepare hives for overwintering.

In this issue there's also an article on having materials tested; a subject of interest to many of our customers.

And an article on beekeeping terms.

And an article on gift ideas for your favorite beekeeper.

And an article on what "honey" now means to our Queen Bee (see the last article in the newsletter).

And on and on and on—lots of information for our varied readers.

Thanks for your interest in this newsletter, the Walter T. Kelley Company, and all things bee.

For that we are most thankful.

Jane Burgess
CEO/Partner
The Walter T. Kelley Company



QUEENS
40c EACH
ANY NUMBER

W. T. Kelley

We are producing 150 queens daily. Send us your rush orders. All queens guaranteed purely mated, fertile, and satisfactory. Shipped in large 6-hole cages.

WE BREED ONLY 3-BANDED ITALIANS

2 POUND PACKAGE BABY BEES WITH FERTILE 1932 QUEEN	\$2.00 each
3 POUND PACKAGE BABY BEES WITH FERTILE 1932 QUEEN	\$2.50 each
50 SHEETS MEDIUM BROOD FOUNDATION (5 SHEETS PER POUND)	\$2.50

We will trade you any of the above items for your beeswax. Let us work your beeswax into bee comb foundation. Write for complete 1932 catalog of cypress bee hives, bees and queens.

Gulf Coast Bee Company, Houma, La.

Bee Thinking About

For November, 2012

Here are some things, geographically and weather-dependent, to consider for your apiary about now. Remember, this is in geographical generalities. For area specifics, we suggest you talk with other local beekeepers and / or check with your bee club for common practices this time of year. We've covered these topics extensively in the last three years, so more ideas, insights and examples may be found in back issues from the fall of each year. All back issues may be found at www.kelleybees.com.

Things to check inside the hive, weather permitting!

Honey placement: The books tell us the best place for honey is above and to the sides of the brood nest. Your bees however may not have read the books. You may need to redistribute their honey a bit.

Enough food? How much is needed varies widely by geographic area, and the beekeeper you ask. See last month's issue for some weight estimates by geographical area, and weighing methods.

If you don't have enough stores? Consider supplemental feeding and pollen patties, which is only helpful before the cold sets in and the bees go into cluster.

Not sure? A good insurance policy is an emergency sugar ceiling. See the Mountain Camp Method sidebar. >>

Things to do outside of the hive for winter preparation.

North: depending upon how far north you are, these probably should've been addressed in October.

South: Use as appropriate, depending upon how far south you are.



This photo, taken on a balmy day in February in Michigan, shows bees feasting on their emergency stores via the Mountain Camp Method.

Mountain Camp Method

Place a 2" spacer rim atop the frames.

Place 2 sheets of black and white newspaper directly atop the frames. This will cover roughly 2/3 of the surface area, leaving 1/3 of the frames visible. Be sure to keep the newspaper within the spacer rim. If it extends to the outside, it may wick moisture into the hive.

Mist the newspaper with a spray bottle of water.

Dump about a third of two pounds of white sugar on the newspaper; mist until it begins to clump.

Repeat until all of the sugar has been applied.

Place the inner cover atop the rim spacer, and then the top cover. The reason for the light mist is to get the sugar to clump a bit so the bees don't carry it out as foreign material.

Install mouse guards, entrance reducers and solid bottom boards—if you use them. Not sure what to do? Talk to others in your area, and experiment if you have multiple hives of seemingly comparable strength. For example, some of our Canadian readers report NOT using solid bottom boards for purposes of ventilation, as long as they have windbreaks around their hives. Yet, central Illinois readers report using solid bottom boards.

Wrapping hives—for the north, windbreaks against strong prevailing winds are important. Many northern readers wrap their hives with roofing paper; many do not. If you get strong winds, consider a brick or two atop the hive...any time of year.

Ventilation methods—see article in this issue. Ventilation is essential. Bees can generally survive being cold, but can't handle being wet and cold.

Redistributing of honey stores (if needed)—frames of honey should be touching the brood nest on either side, and above it. Less-than-complete frames of honey in the hive? Consider moving those to the outsides. Chances are the bees won't get to them; bees tend to eat what's above them over time. The heat they generate above the cluster warms the honey for their consumption.

Medications—if you use them.

Removing honey / supers: Unless you're in the middle of a substantial nectar flow, it's probably time (or past time) to remove. A reader asked if she can leave her full honey super atop the hive in New York. No surprise here—some beekeepers say yes, it is good insurance for them in case they eat up that far. Some beekeepers say no, if they've got plenty of other honey that's just more space for them to heat. Good luck!

Reduce space: South—reduce the hive to ensure the bees can patrol everything to keep critters in check. North—hopefully this is already done.

We're sure we've forgotten something! As always, your comments and contributions welcome, email KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com.

Ventilation is essential. Bees can generally survive being cold, but can't handle being wet and cold.



A wrapped hive, complete with a windbreak and beautiful snow. There's a brick atop the hive, just in case Mother Nature decides to really gust."

Questions or comments about this article?

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. ☀

Healthy Bees

The Critical Fall Inspection (for Texas / Southern Climes)

By Dennis Brown

Winter is upon us and the beekeeper's most important activity of the year is here: the fall inspection. What you do in the fall will determine how successful you will be in the spring. If you perform a good fall inspection, you will limit the number of losses you will have from winter. If your bees can't winter successfully then spring really doesn't matter. Winter is the hardest time of the year on your bees and they need to be prepared.

If your bees can't winter successfully then spring really doesn't matter.

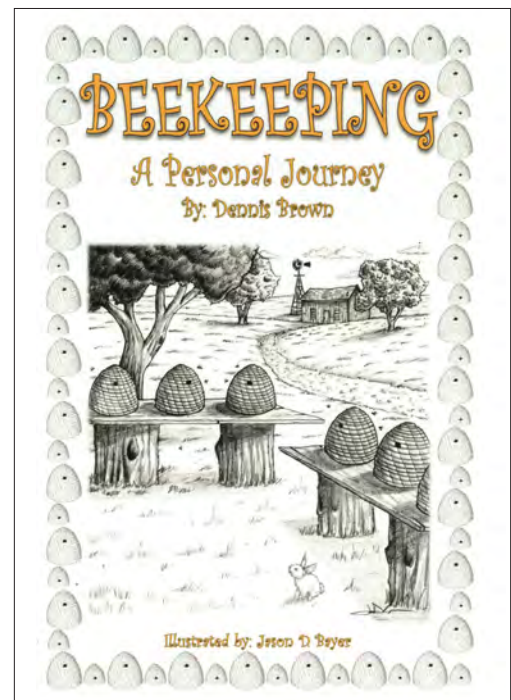
As managers, that is where we come in. If the bees have everything they need to withstand the winter months, they stand a good chance of surviving the winter and going into springtime with a strong and healthy hive.

These are some things every beekeeper should take into account during their fall inspection:

1. Evaluate the strength of the hive. If numbers are not adequate, unite the hive with another hive. Don't wait until the winter months or you'll kill the hive. Five frames of bees per brood box are adequate.
2. Determine the amount of stores the bees have to winter on. In the southern U.S. you should leave a minimum of forty pounds of honey for the bees. In the northern regions, you should double that amount. A full brood frame of honey will weigh approximately seven pounds.
3. Monitor the mite load in the hive. If the mite load is too high, perform powdered sugar treatment every week for a minimum of four weeks. If the mite load is still too high, repeat the treatment. Plan on requeening the hive in the spring.
4. Make sure the hive equipment is in good condition.

Our hives don't have to suffer and become a winter statistic. By making sure that our hives have everything they need, our bees will be successful and so will we.

Dennis Brown is author of "Beekeeping: A Personal Journey" and shares his extensive knowledge of bees at www.lonestar-farms.net.



Questions or comments about this article?

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 🍯

Beekeeping: A Personal Journey, by Dennis Brown.
Cat # 684

Hive Heating

By Gary S. Reuter, Department of Entomology, University of Minnesota

In this article I would like to discuss the factors in a honey bee colony that pertain to winter and early spring. How does a colony make it through the cold winter? What are some of the hazards? What can we do to help?

I am not going to go into step by step how to prepare a colony for winter. For this you can go to www.BeeLab.umn.edu and click on Resources for Beekeepers, then Free-bees and download posters on the steps for commercial winter cover or tar paper.

Some of what you do with your bees from April until now affects their preparedness for winter. Watch for my article in February or March when I will discuss these management practices.

There are some similarities between the way the bees heat their hive and we heat our homes. There are also a lot of differences.

First we need fuel (gas, oil, electricity, solar etc.) and so do the bees. The bees use honey for their fuel. Imagine what would happen in the middle of the winter if you ran out of fuel with no way to get more! This can happen to the bees if you do not leave them with enough honey in the fall to get through winter. One big difference is that the fuel is also their food so they don't usually freeze to death but rather starve to death. Not that that is much of a distinction if you are the bee because you are dead either way.

A major difference between bees and us is that we heat our entire house; the bees only heat the area they are in at the time. It would be like gathering your family together under a bunch of blankets on the bed to stay warm with no other heat source. You really would not care how cold the room is as long as you have enough blankets and can stay under there bundled together. I hope you brought enough food under the blankets with you!

The bees do not have blankets so they cluster together in a ball to stay warm. Some of the bees are on the outside of the cluster with the hairs of their bodies touching providing the "blanket" or insulation. The bees on the inside of the cluster are around the food and will eat it and flex their flight muscles (shiver) without moving their wings to create heat. So the bees create heat just like you would under the blanket. The colder it is the tighter they cluster together. The bees take turns and rotate jobs on a periodic basis. One day a bee is a blanket the next she may be a heater.

What happens when you run out of food under the blanket? Someone will have to go get more food or you will starve. How can you do that without freezing to death? It may depend on how cold it is outside. Can everyone go and bring the blankets to keep warm or should just one person run and bring back a load of food?

This happens to the bees when they run out of food under the cluster. If all goes well with the weather there will be days when it is "warmer" and the cluster can expand. During this expansion they can move the cluster to access more honey. If it stays very cold for an extended period of time the bees cannot loosen the cluster to move to more food.



A hive in Minnesota, ready for winter. Photo courtesy of G. Reuter.

Most of us heat with some kind of combustible fuel (oil, gas). This causes a large amount of air to be passed into the house to provide for burning of the fuel and exhausting of fumes. Bringing outside cold air into the warm house causes the humidity in the house to be low. If you have electric or solar heat you would actually have high humidity in the house. Bees use internally produced and moisture is produced from metabolizing honey; therefore, without ventilation their hive will have high humidity. High humidity is not good for insects in the winter. Therefore, you must be sure to leave openings for ventilation to bring in some dryer air.

Speaking of entrances, now you know you must leave an entrance. You should provide an upper and a lower entrance. You should be careful not to leave a large entrance on the bottom that would allow mice to enter the hive. Mice are a problem because they build a nest in an unprotected (by the bees) area and destroy comb and stink up the hive. So how small of a hole can a mouse fit into? I have used 3/8" entrance reducers for years and have not had a mouse go



Examples on entrance reducers. Middle is a standard entrance reducer. Bottom is entrance reducer that has been modified by mice. The top one is an entrance reducer modified by beekeeper to prevent modifying by mice. Photo courtesy of G. Reuter.

in. EXCEPT when they chewed out the reducer to make the hole bigger. They did not have to make it much bigger; in fact I think they just needed to round it off. I have now stapled a piece of 8 x 8 hardware cloth on the opening so they can't chew it. You can use any metal you have around.

What you need to have to get a colony through winter is (in no particular order):

1. Sufficient population of healthy bees
2. Enough honey
3. Healthy young queen
4. Adequate moisture control
5. Pollen stores available in late winter.

Entomology website: www.entomology.umn.edu

Gary's website: www.tc.umn.edu/~reute001

Lab website: www.BeeLab.umn.edu

Questions or comments about this article?

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 



Gary S. Reuter, Department of Entomology, University of Minnesota. Photo courtesy of G. Reuter.

Winter Ventilation

By Charlotte Hubbard

Like many females, I have trouble keeping warm. I also live in Michigan, where most people have trouble keeping warm at least a few months out of the year.

Unfortunately, that meant I overreacted the first year I winterized my hives. That November I'd put in solid bottom boards, wrapped each hive tightly in black roofing paper, reduced the entrance to about an inch, put hay bales around each hive, and told the ladies I looked forward to seeing them in the spring.

They were probably dead before Christmas. I had a few other things on my mind¹ and had never kept bees, and I totally missed the “need to vent part.” Ladies, so sorry.

I have successfully overwintered since then, and I think ventilation was a key missing ingredient.

¹ See “Dronings from a Queen Bee” in the September 2010 issue.



Here's one of my hives prepped for winter, showing the “skirt” around the bottom, and a windbreak in the back because of the gusts it gets off the lake. The entrance is reduced somewhat by the mouseguard, but is otherwise not reduced. I would've told you I always reduced entrances, but pictures don't lie and this surprised me! Other photos of last fall's hive prep shows some with entrance reducers, and some not. Hives both with and without entrance reducers survived.

Why Ventilation is Essential

The colony maintains heat by clustering, and the warm air from the cluster, like all warm air does, rises. When that air, containing moisture from the bees' shivering, hits the top of the cold inner cover, it condenses and moisture drips down on the bees. Bees can generally survive cold; wet and cold—not so much.

How Much Ventilation?

How much ventilation does a colony need? Each year I've added more opportunities for air flow; each year my survival rate increases. I suspect there's a correlation.

Let's look at some of the venting options:

- Hole drilled in the front of the upper deep. I used to drill a 3/8" hole; I now drill a half inch, and sometimes even 5/8" if I can't find the right drill bit. Seems like a bee can get stuck in 3/8", and that negates the ventilation purpose. Yes, I drill into the hive body when it is on the hive; they'll clean up any wood shavings that fall in. They might also come after you, so dress appropriately.
- Popsicle sticks (or comparable thin wood) glued to the four corners of the inner cover's "down" side. Most inner covers have a flat side and a side with a lip, so whichever side you are putting down. (See blue box above.) I recommend Popsicle sticks since that means you get to eat the Popsicles first.
- Screened bottom boards versus solid boards. Lots of us up here in sled dog territory use screened bottom boards; we just make sure there's some sort of windbreak around the bottom of the hives (at least until the snow buries the bottom) so cold blasts don't directly sweep up into the hive.
- An absorption "blanket" below the inner cover. There are several options here, including:
 - A hive body filled with a few inches of filler—wood shavings, dry pine needles, newspaper, etc. The hive body has a screen tacked across the bottom so the filler doesn't fall into the hive; it is placed below the inner cover.
 - A homasote board²
 - The Mountain Camp Method (overviewed elsewhere in this issue)

There are lots of other venting options. Which one(s) you decide is up to you, although you may want to confer with other beekeepers in your area to see what works.

If you have multiple hives, you may also want to experiment and see which options work best. The bottom line? We need bees, and they need ventilation.

Questions or comments about this article?

[Please go to \[kelleybees.com/blog\]\(http://kelleybees.com/blog\).](http://kelleybees.com/blog) 

Inner cover up or down?

Like most things in beekeeping, there are varying opinions on which side goes down in the winter. If you're undecided, experiment or keep asking beeks until you have a recommendation that makes sense to you. What you decide is somewhat dependent on what other ventilation tricks you are using.

There's a point to be made for "lip side down" if the inner cover is going over the top box of frames, with no filler box between, as that lip provides a bit of room for bees to go over the frames more easily when they are moving to honey stores.

2 See "Winterizing Practice" in the October 2011 issue.

Our Stand on Re-using/Re-running Stories - CCD

By Camilla Bee, Editor

I strive to not reprint too many articles available from other sources. After all, a search engine can find those for you. We want this publication to be much more than the results of a search engine and lots of links to other places. However, there's some great information out there! Sometimes it seems to make more sense to point you to it rather than recreate it.

And other times, when it is key information, we'll duplicate it here to be sure you have a chance to see it. A recent article on Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) is, we feel, such key information. In case you missed it elsewhere, we're sharing important points here.

The adjacent article—Mystery of Disappearing Bees Solved—may be found in its entirety at <http://blogs.reuters.com/great-debate/2012/04/09/mystery-of-the-disappearing-bees-solved>.

Mystery of Disappearing Bees Solved

For 15 years, dedicated researchers and scientists from around the world have been studying the mysterious disappearance of alarming numbers of honeybees. Evidence has been inconclusive, until recently.

According to the article “Mystery of the Disappearing Bees: Solved!” by Richard Schiffman, “three new studies point an accusing finger at a culprit that many have suspected all along, a class of pesticides known as neonicotinoids³.

In the U.S. alone, these pesticides, produced primarily by the German chemical giant Bayer and known as “neonics” for short, coat a massive 142 million acres of corn, wheat, soy and cotton seeds. They are also a common ingredient in home gardening products.

Research published in the prestigious journal Science shows that neonics are absorbed by the plants' vascular system and contaminate the pollen and nectar that bees encounter on their rounds. They are a nerve poison that disorient their insect victims and appear to damage the homing ability of bees, which may help to account for their mysterious failure to make it back to the hive.

Another study published in the American Chemical Society's Environmental Science and Technology journal implicated neonic-containing dust released into the air at planting time with “lethal effects compatible with colony losses phenomena observed by beekeepers.”

Purdue University entomologists observed bees at infected hives exhibiting tremors, uncoordinated movement and convulsions, all signs of acute insecticide poisoning. And yet another study⁴ conducted by scientists at the Harvard School of Public Health actually re-created colony collapse disorder in several honeybee hives simply by administering small doses of a popular neonic, imidacloprid.

But scientists believe that exposure to toxic pesticides is only one factor that has led to the decline of honeybees in recent years. The destruction and fragmentation of bee habitats, as a result of land development and the spread of monoculture agriculture, deprives pollinators of their diverse natural food supply. This has already led to the extinction of a number of wild bee species. The planting of genetically modified organism (GMO) crops—some of which now contain toxic insecticides within their genetic structure—may also be responsible for poisoning bees and weakening their immune systems.

[Questions or comments about this article?](#)

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 

3 <http://motherjones.com/tom-philpott/2012/03/bayer-pesticide-bees-studies>

4 http://news.mongabay.com/2012/0405-hance_colonycollapse_pesticides.html

Bee-Havior

Voting for Bees

By Ol' Drone

Our American form of government, crafted by our Constitution, is not perfect. But history has shown that it is far better than any other form. Our Bill of Rights assures our citizens ample opportunity and freedom not found anywhere else. This is why millions of immigrants risk their lives to sneak into our country.

I am convinced however that we could improve our system if only we would pay attention to the more efficient method of prompt replacement of leaders employed by the honeybee society.

The queen bee, only one to a colony, must perform effectively or the colony will collapse and die. A good queen lays 2000 eggs per day; a poor queen just can't lay enough eggs. If there are signs that the queen is not doing her job, the worker bees (some 50,000 of them) communicate by pheromones and take immediate action to assure sustainability of the colony. Pretending that the queen is an elected official, she really needs to be responsible for the welfare of the colony. The workers, acting as voting citizens, recognize the threat to survival and immediately start to raise a half dozen new queens, as if they are nominating a new slate of competing queen candidates. Worker bees take 21 days to hatch from egg to adult bee but as they are in a hurry to get a new queen, they feed the queen larva plenty of royal jelly and hatch them out in 18 days. Ruthless as politicians, the first new queen that hatches kills all her competitors and soon takes over and begins laying eggs.

With our form of government we elect some officials that are better than others but we are sometimes "stuck" with our choice for four years! The bees are smarter—they throw out promptly those that don't do their job. We could learn from the honeybee society as they have perfected their succession methods over 40 million years.

Questions or comments about this article? Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 🍯

Beek Hint

The cartoon strip "Crankshaft" ran a series of beekeeping cartoons this summer. We'd like to quote what the main character said, as it nicely summarizes how important attitude is in working your hives:

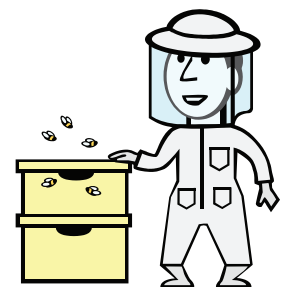
"The trick to beekeeping is learning to approach the hive with a calm demeanor ... because da meaner you are ... da meaner the bees will be."

Special thanks to Crankshaft creators Tom Batiuk and Chuck Ayers for their wisdom and beekeeping cartoons!

E. Minche of Georgia offered some great words of advice about what would have been helpful to know from the beginning of beekeeping:

"I wish I had understood that I had to make so many judgment calls. I had thought that there was basically one way to keep bees—HAHA.

"I found it confusing that every beekeeper I asked a question of seemed to have THE answer, but none agreed. I finally decided to 'go with the science' and stop driving myself nuts thinking I must change what I'm currently doing based on the last person I asked advice of. After three years, I still am a newbie and ask veteran beekeepers for advice, but rely on checking with the local university for validation, keeping my mites down and my bees fed."



Bee-Yond & Bee-Hind the Hives

Wonder What's Really in Your Hive? Analysis via the USDA National Science Laboratory

By Lady Spirit Moon

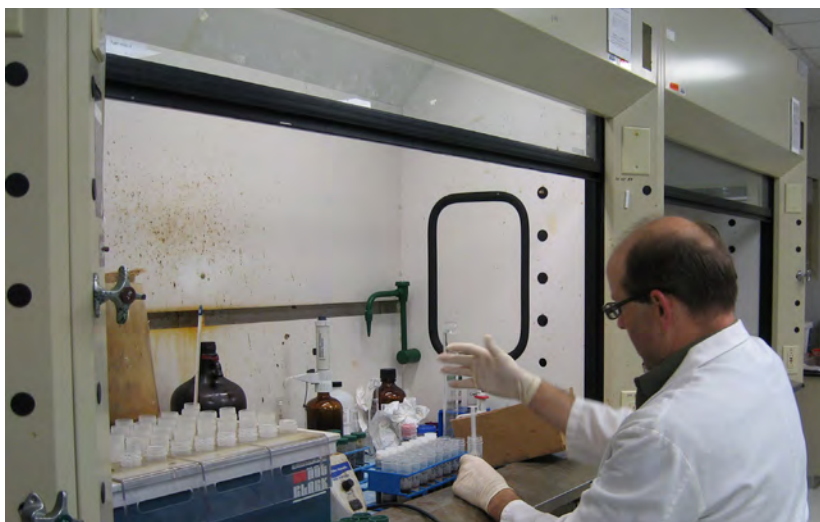
I signed in and received my visitor's pass, thinking "This is going to be another boring government tour with everyone talking over my head." I was in for a pleasant surprise. Roger Simonds, Laboratory Manager, and I went into his office and talked about what, why and how the lab does what it does. Enjoying crime and forensic programs, I was thrilled to actually see a gas chromatograph-mass spectrometer up close and personal.

I went to the USDA lab to have my beebread tested for the Cry1Ac protein found in GMO corn, otherwise known as BT corn. With my bees acting strange and a couple hives not having queens and just a few bees, I thought they may be a victim of CCD. My 2011 records indicate a major dearth from mid-June through mid-fall. All my girls had to feed on was the GMO corn grown between my two apiaries. Research on the internet, in particular by John McDonald, beekeeper and biologist, indicates BT corn may be interfering in the bees' ability to learn. They leave the hive to forage and don't remember how to get back.

According to their website, "The National Science Laboratory (NSL), www.ams.usda.gov, in Gastonia, NC is a full service laboratory testing facility assisting producers and stakeholders in meeting international regulatory requirements, domestic purchase specifications, and imported product testing requirements. NSL offers a wide range of food and fiber product testing, chemical, microbiological, bio-molecular and physical analyses of poultry and poultry products, egg products, dairy products, fish, meat and processed meat products,



Roger Simonds and Lady Spirit Moon.



Tobacco being extracted.



Apiculture samples ready for testing.

fresh processed fruits and vegetables, and domestic and imported tobacco, and other agricultural products.”

Roger says the Gastonia lab is a user-fee supported federal facility. Funding comes from fees received for chemical, microbiological, and bio-molecular testing services provided on a wide variety of agricultural products. It is an Agricultural Marketing Service program facilitating the efficient, fair marketing of U.S. agricultural products. People in all agricultural fields selling their products can send their products to the USDA lab to have it analyzed for pesticides, fungicides, herbicides, etc. The beebread I brought from my apiary was tested for 174 such chemicals.

Upon receipt, pesticide residue samples are prepared for analysis by a homogenization technique, usually by grinding with a high speed food processor or mill. After the homogenization step, pesticide residue samples are processed using an official method that utilizes the solvents acetonitrile and toluene as well as other salts and sorbents to extract the pesticide residues from the sample material for subsequent analysis. Chromatographic and mass spectrometry instrumentation is utilized to identify and quantify pesticide residues present in the extraction of the sample.

Commodities such as poultry and eggs that are used in the USDA's school lunch program are also tested for microbial contamination. The lab also tests for pesticides on other commodities like fruits and vegetables. They even test MREs for the military, known as K-Rations for old timers like me.

Gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) is a method that combines the features of gas-liquid chromatography and mass spectrometry to identify different substances within a test sample. Besides what the lab tests for, other applications of GC-MS include drug detection, fire investigation, environmental analysis, explosives investigation, and identification of unknown samples. GC-MS can also be used in airport security to detect substances in luggage or on human beings. It can also identify trace elements in materials that were thought to have disintegrated beyond identification.



A gas chromatograph (above) directly coupled to a mass spectrometer (below).



DNA machine. Don't know if I was expecting to see bright lights and hear bells and whistles, but the unassuming appearance of the DNA machine was somewhat disappointing.

While showing me the GC-MS, Roger explained the polarities of oil and water. Beeswax is a non-polar substance, making it more like fat or oil. Coumaphos and Apistan are non-polar and can build up in the wax. Examples of household non-polar compounds include cooking fats and oils and petrol/gasoline. Therefore, most non-polar molecules are water-insoluble (hydrophobic) at room temperature. However, many non-polar organic solvents, such as turpentine, are able to dissolve polar substances. As a Master Herbalist, I use glycerin to combine oil and water or essential oils and alcohol. Lecithin can often mix oil and liquids.

Honey is a polar substance and it is thus more like water or has an “affinity” for other polar chemicals like water. Examples of common household polar molecules include sugar, for instance the sucrose sugar variety. Sugars have many polar oxygen-hydrogen (-OH) groups and are overall highly polar. Due to the polar nature of the water molecule (H₂O) itself, polar molecules are generally able to dissolve in water. Oxalic Acid, Formic Acid, and Fumigilin are also polar chemicals. Honey is hygroscopic, meaning it draws water, and can also draw in polar chemicals. Since almost all synthetic pesticides are non-polar in nature, i.e. Coumaphos and Apistan, they tend to have an affinity for and accumulate in the non-polar wax rather than the polar honey. This is why, although we might observe an abundance of synthetic pesticide residues in wax, very few are observed in honey and when a residue is observed it is at a very low amount. The more polar “soft” organic acid miticides do have a higher affinity for honey than the non-polar synthetic miticides but they have little or no toxicity and already naturally occur in honey at low levels.

I worked in the corporate world for over 30 years and was genuinely impressed by the USDA staff’s professional, yet warm demeanor. Clearly, everyone enjoyed their work and it wasn’t long before we were telling stories, especially with Kendall and Craig, who handle all of the apiculture samples that come through the lab.

The Gastonia Lab is where you send hive products for testing; contact Roger Simonds to get a quote for the type of pesticide screening you need. They do a lot of testing on hive products. However, the lab did not have the equipment to test my beebread for the protein Cry1Ac found in BT corn.

You can email AMSLaboratoryDivision@ams.usda.gov for quotes and charges, usually done by the hour.

All they found in my sample was 3 PPB (parts per billion) Coumaphos, which is insignificant. It wasn’t even my frame but came with a nuc. Yep, I live in a pristine area.

Lady Spirit Moon is the Ambassador for the non-profit Center for Honeybee Research located in Asheville, NC. This year the Center has put in place two bee yards in which to do their research. Go to www.chbr.org to stay up with what we are doing and our events, sign up for our newsletter, and/or use our tax-deductible Donate button.



Kendall (in front) and Craig.

Questions or comments about this article?

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 🍯

Beekeeping: From 0 to 10,000 Quickly!

By Tim Carter

Editor's Note: At Kelley's Field Day in June, I ran into this enthusiastic couple and asked if they were beekeepers. (Yes, I knew the chances were good.) They enthusiastically shared that they were—and recent beekeepers in fact. Like parents of a newborn, they offered to show me pictures. Their story was so inspiring that I asked if they'd share it to encourage others. Here it is.

How did we get into keeping bees? WOW—what a whirlwind of events in such a short time!

About two years ago, my wife Donna asked what I thought about us becoming beekeepers. Being one to shy away from things I know nothing about, I told her, “We live in an urban area, a subdivision, and probably wouldn't be allowed, even though we have an eight-foot backyard privacy fence.”

Well, things were fine until April 25th. Then, our newspaper featured a story about Lorie and Ted Jacobs in Louisville, who kept backyard bees.

I gave the article to Donna and asked if she really thought we could keep a hive or two in our backyard. You should have seen her eyes light up. She looked like a young girl who had just gotten her first pony for Christmas.

I'd been talking about retiring for some time. We could keep bees; it would be something we could do together.

We told God if He would allow us to become beekeepers, as we harvested the honey we would give it to people we visit in the hospital and who have attended our church for the first time, as a way to glorify Him and tell others of His awesome creation and love. I didn't know one prayer would open doors so quickly.

Donna wanted to laminate the article, so we went to the local supply store. The lady at the store noticed the article about beekeeping. She said if we were going to become beekeepers then we needed to go to Kelley's Bee Factory in Clarkson, Kentucky, talk to someone there and take a tour.

We decided to drive to Kelley's. As we're en route, I'm thinking we'll just tour, talk with someone and maybe purchase a hive and take our time to assemble it and be ready to start next year.

We arrived about two hours before closing. The lady at the counter asked if she could help us and were we there to place an order. Donna asked where we could sign up for the next tour.

Immediately the entire office was silent; all attention focused on us. Tours were over for the day.

As Donna and I stood there with disappointed, “What do we do now?” looks on our faces, a young lady stepped around her desk and told us that she would be happy to answer any questions we might have.

She showed us around, answered our many questions and gave an overview of the Deluxe Beginners Kit (Cat # 365NE). Eventually Donna and I looked at each other and decided, “Enough talking, let's do it!” Again, we were thinking we would have the rest of the year to get ready for bees.



Donna shows a beautiful brood pattern. All photos courtesy of Tim and Donna Carter.



Yes, a great place for bees.

We then asked how and when could we get bees, and were told by the end of March there are no bees available.

I had taken photos of our back yard to show them where we were going to put our hive. After looking at the photos, the lady said “We need to get them some bees. Look at this yard—they need bees.”

We were then asked if we could be ready for bees tomorrow.

I said, “Yes,” and Donna said, “But we don’t know anything about keeping bees.”

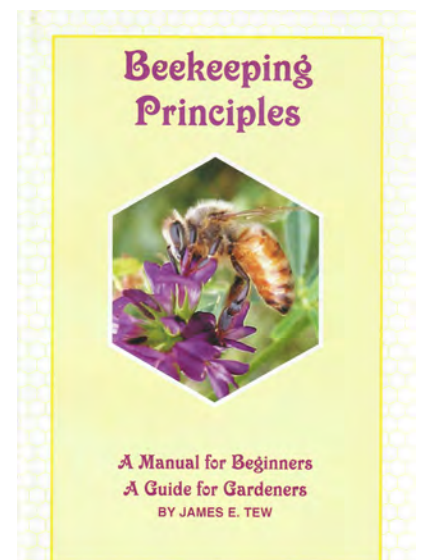
There are two books that come with the kit. The lady suggested we read on our way home, and asked for our phone number. There was a chance there might be an extra package of bees the next day.

So, back to Louisville we drove with our hive in the back and Donna reading *Beekeeping Principles* by Dr. James Tew (Cat # 615) out loud.

Nervous, thinking, “What have we gotten ourselves into,” but excited, we were up until 11:30 that night assembling.



Deluxe Beginners Kit, Cat # 365NE.



Beekeeping Principles by Dr. James Tew, Cat # 615.

About 11:15 Louisville time the next morning, Donna asked if Kelley's had called. I told her no. She asked what number I gave them.

I thought she had given them the number! Here we were, waiting for Kelley's to call, and neither of us gave them a number!

We called at 11:20. Kelley's said they had bees for us if we could be there by noon. We were on the road in five minutes. I'm not one to drive over the speed limit, but I think we made record time, arriving ten minutes before noon.

As we walked in, we heard, "There you are! We have your bees." We could sense their excitement for us. We purchased our bees and returned to Louisville with the excitement of a young couple taking their first baby home from the hospital.

We placed our hive in the back yard and installed the bees. As we stood looking at our bees and one another—WOW, what an awesome feeling, our first hive.

An Update

We caught up with Tim and Donna about six weeks into beehood and their bees were doing great. While they originally thought about having one hive, now they're thinking more like four next year.

They added, "Who would have thought, in less than 24 hours, so many doors would open? Going from thinking about it to hiving a package of bees. Many thanks to Lorie and Ted Jacobs, President of the local K.B.A. in Louisville for the article on urban beekeeping and many, many thanks to the folks at Kelley's for their encouragement, their patience, and their excitement for us.

Every time we go to church now, people ask how our bees are doing and everyone wants to come to our house to see our bees. There are two families in our church that have shown a real interest in keeping bees ... Even the deliveryman noticed the package from Kelley's he delivered. He started asking questions and got excited about bees. Simply amazing."

Questions or comments about this article?

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 🍯



Tim installs the ba-bees.



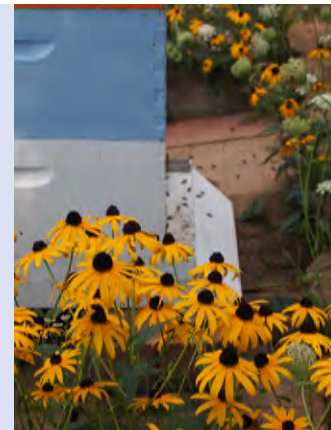
Thriving!

Why Do We Keep Bees?

Earlier this year, we asked readers three questions (see sidebar).

We received several hundred responses that made us laugh, cry, and appreciate everyone who works to help our favorite insect. We'll continue to share them, and still welcome your answers if you didn't previously participate. Our free magnet offer is over, but our interest remains. Please send your answers to KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com.

1. What's one thing you wished you'd known / understood when you started keeping bees?
2. What do you like / dislike about this newsletter?
3. Why do you keep bees?



“ I love Bees, I love honey, and I like to make a little money. I like to extract the wax from the comb, and then burn it in my home. It smells so sweet, and all my friends think it's neat. When people call and say “I have a swarm!” I show up and take them home. So this is why I keep bees. I wished I had more.
Wesley, Kansas

Judy, from Indiana, shared:

“ Because I love to watch them work so hard for the purpose of the whole colony survival and of course that sweet gift they give us—honey.

Ronnie, from West Virginia, said:

“ When I first started it was for honey, now I would still do it without any honey; my garden does superb every year thanks to my little friends. I could inspect hives all day; I just enjoy being around them.

Questions or comments about this article?

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 

Show Schedule

Wisconsin Honey Producers Fall Meeting

- Thursday Nov 1, 2012
- November 1-4 Waupaca, WI 54981

Ohio State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Saturday Nov 3, 2012
- November 3rd at the Ohio Department of Agriculture, Broomfield Building, Reynoldsburg, OH

Pennsylvania State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Friday Nov 9, 2012
- November 9-10 Lewisburg, PA 17837

Grant County Backyard Beekeepers

- Monday Nov 12, 2012
- Cooperative Extension Office, 105 Baton Rouge Rd, Williamstown, KY
- **NOT A KELLEY ATTENDED EVENT** Sean Burgess will be the Guest Speaker

Iowa State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Friday Nov 16, 2012
- November 16-17 Marshalltown, IA 50158

Garfield Park Conservatory “Tales and Tunes from the B-Side”

- Saturday Nov 17, 2012
- 5th Annual Bee Forum on Saturday, November 17th, 10:00am- 3:00pm located at the Garfield Park Conservatory in Chicago, IL

Louisiana State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Monday Dec 31, 2012
- December – More Details To Come

A-Bee-Cs

Term Matching

When we asked “What do you wish you knew about beekeeping before you started?”, a couple of you mentioned terminology. Beekeeping is abuzz with lots of lingo.

Thus, we thought this review might be helpful for new and experienced beekeepers alike. We got help from a worker bee to ensure the most accurate definition.

Term	Definition from a Worker Bee
1. Nuc: _____	A The superfluous box placed atop the hive to expand for additional colony growth and honey. Also, what we say when you let us be, or when we nail one of you in the face.
2. Shallow Body: _____	B Our protein source, containing a variety of vitamins, minerals, amino acids (protein), enzymes, and hormones.
3. Robbing: _____	C The sweet liquid part of a flower, comprised of several sugars and minerals. It's what lures us to a bloom.
4. Drone: _____	D Some pronounce it like it rhymes with “duck,” but you’re confusing flying things. It rhymes with “nuke,” because when done right, it’ll explode with bees. A small colony, typically in a small box.
5. Swarm: _____	E &!#%\$* invaders!!! Get them!!
6. Propolis: _____	F Fermented pollen, fed to the queen and brood.
7. Super: _____	G A fun, well-organized event we do, preferably right in front of you and to a location you can’t reach, when we need to establish a new colony or we don’t like our current location.
8. Pollen: _____	H Our tendency to stick with one type of plant per foraging trip, so we can transfer pollen from a particular plant to another bloom of that same kind of plant. Bet you didn’t realize we did that, did you?
9. Varroa mites: _____	I You guys mean a smaller box which we’re to fill with honey so it is easier for you to lift (rolling our eyes); we use the term for someone who doesn’t pause to think about what all those lawn chemicals and pesticides are doing to us, and to you!
10. Constancy: _____ (in pollination)	J Our glue. A sticky, brownish gum we use to seal cracks and drafts in the hive. Why do you guys mutter bad words when you find it?
11. Nectar: _____	K My big brother—and I do mean big—who gets away with everything and eats more than his fair share. Enjoy the great outdoors in November Bro!
12. Bee bread: _____	L When another pest (hornet, human) takes our honey.

Answers:

1-D 2-I 3-L 4-K 5-G 6-J 7-A 8-B 9-E 10-H 11-C 12-F

BeeCause

Honey Straws to Trooper Island Camp

Earlier this year, the Walter T. Kelley Company donated honey straws to Trooper Island Camp. This camp was developed by the Kentucky State Police as part of a long range program of public service to the youth of Kentucky. It is a place where the tensions and turmoil of our everyday lives can be forgotten; and for one week young people can be given a touch of hope and desire for a better tomorrow.

Each Thursday at camp, Troopers prepare the picnic meal and distribute straws afterward. Camp Director / Commander Sergeant Craig Sutton noted that the kids really enjoy the honey straws, but that “We had to sacrifice a few straws on ourselves to show them how to get the honey out.” Honey straws were also used to reward campers who helped in cleanup at the cafeteria throughout the week.

For more information on Trooper Island Camp, visit www.kentuckystatepolice.org/island.htm.

Questions or comments about this article?

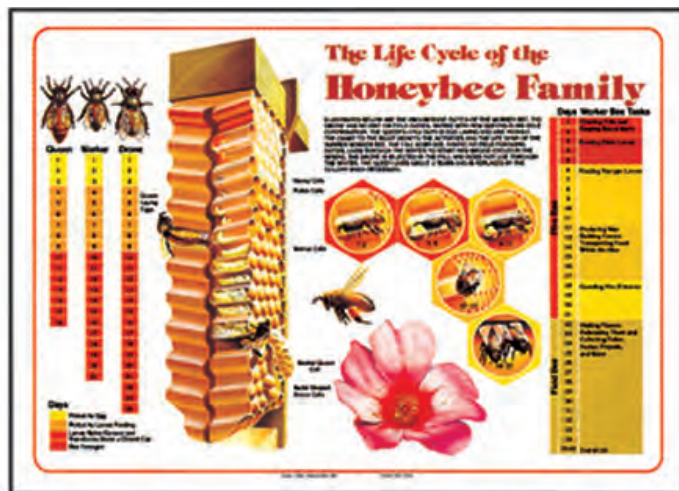
Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 🍯



Featured Products

Take advantage of our free shipping* for orders over \$100 later this month by ordering what you need for your apiary, your holiday gift giving, and of course, yourself. Here are some suggestions:

* Some restrictions; please see ad on next page.



Life Cycle Chart. Cat # 269.



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Bee Angel Tapestry Tote. Cat # 3-T.



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- Special Note: Free shipping will be given on the items to the right if the order ships via motor freight truck.
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- No free shipping on:
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 - » Bee-go
 - » Swarm traps
 - » Bee Pro Patties
 - » Buckets, including bottling kits

FAQs

-Please note: Correspondence submitted to the Kelley Bee News Modern Beekeeping newsletter (or subsequent publications) becomes the property of the Walter T. Kelley Company. We reserve the right to print or not print any correspondence and it may be edited for length and/or clarity. It may be published or republished in any format or medium and/or licensed to others for publication. If we publish your correspondence, we may attribute it to you and may include your name and city, unless you expressly request that you remain anonymous.

Q: Recently, after removing the telescoping top for inspection, I noticed LOTS of bees on top of the inner cover, and all seemed to have their abdomen raised in the air, almost straight up. I've not seen this before, and wondered if it is an alarm action. This was also after a cool night, and I was not using smoke.
Thanks, G. McHenry

A: They are fanning their Nasonov glands. If you look closely you can see the gland; this is to lead the other colony members back to the hive.

Q: A while back it was mentioned that you would have 1-1/4" wide frames sometime August or September. What is the status with this?
G. Aubel

A: We now have the 1-1/4" narrow end bars for deep frames sold in packs of 100; we are working on the medium. Due to the additional labor required we are not sure we will carry these permanently. Call 800-233-2899 and request the narrow frames 82-Thin if you would like these in deep frames.

Q: About a month ago I was checking my bees and getting ready for harvest. I noticed the bees had little to no honey. I fed them about eight gallons with a top feeder between two hives. This greatly helped them and produced a lot of honey. I just checked them again today and while the hives were healthy with plenty of bees, there isn't very much honey. I am worried about the reserves for winter. Have you had any problems or seen this before with new hives? Should I continue to feed them? And if they are almost at max capacity except for maybe three or four frames empty should I add another super? Thanks in advance.
David

A: This time of year you probably need to heat the water (depending upon how cold your fall is) so the sugar dissolves, and do a 2:1 mixture. They have pulled nectar and pollen from the goldenrod and asters but if you do not have enough stores then you should feed.



Fanning honeybee exposes Nasonov gland (white-at tip of abdomen) releasing pheromone to entice swarm into an empty hive. Photo and caption courtesy of http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nasonov_pheromone.

Q: Any thoughts about collecting uncapped honey? I can't just leave 2-3 supers on top of the hive all winter, can I?

B. Weakley, Tennessee

A: Regarding the last part of the question, you probably don't want to leave 2-3 supers on all winter—that's a lot of room for bees to patrol, keep warm, etc.

We turned to Dennis Brown, author of "Beekeeping: A Personal Journey" at Lone Star Farms www.lonestarfarms.net for his insights. He shares:

It is normal for beekeepers to think they should not extract uncapped honey because that is what you read in most books. However, if you think about how the bees handle nectar that is coming into the hive, the answer will become clear.

Let's think past the general answer you read in the books and do what the bees do. When the field bee gathers the nectar from the flower, she stores it inside her honey pouch. While the nectar is there, enzymes from the bee will mix with the nectar. When the field bee gets home, she will pass this nectar off to a house bee. The house bee takes the nectar into her honey pouch and enzymes from her will mix with the nectar. These enzymes along with moisture evaporation are what change the nectar into honey.

The house bee stores the nectar in a cell. The nectar will stay in the cell until the moisture content evaporates down to about 18%. When the moisture level reaches this magic number, the



Example frame, showing capped and uncapped honey—and the handy Kelley's frame grabbing tool (Cat # 107).

bees will seal the cell. This seal will help prevent any further moisture outside the cell from reaching the honey.

So, now we can answer the question. If the honey super has been on the hive at least three or four weeks and the bees still haven't capped the cells over, it is probably OK to go ahead and take it for extraction. By that time the excess moisture has evaporated. Sometimes the bees don't seal the cells because the honey flow has ended and the house bees have quit producing fresh wax.



This practical and affordable tool can help ensure your honey won't ferment, Cat # 340-S.

Sometimes the bees don't seal the cells because the honey flow has ended and the house bees have quit producing fresh wax.

Most wax production takes place when there is a large amount of nectar coming into the hive. That stimulates the house bees' wax glands. Just to be safe, you should purchase a refractometer and check the moisture content of the extracted honey. If the moisture is too high, place the open buckets in a room and raise the room temperature up to about 90 degrees for a couple of days. Then check it again.

You can leave the honey supers on the hive through the winter but remember, bees move up during the winter. The bees will move into the honey super and in January or February the queen will start laying eggs in that honey super. You will not be able to use that super for the spring flow because it will still have brood in it. You can't use a queen excluder under the super because it will restrict the queen from joining the winter cluster in the upper box.

It would be best to go ahead and extract the honey and store the supers unless your bees are light in stores, then you can leave it on.

I hope that this has helped you. Good luck.

Q: I don't use my email much so I couldn't get the newsletter. I want the newsletter, but it is a hassle for me to get it electronically. Have you thought about mailing it? Phil, Kentucky

A: We have Phil, but printing and mailing costs would mean we'd have to charge something for it, as well as get the issue completed several weeks prior to mailing. We'd rather help the bees with insights and knowledge at no charge.

Unfortunately for folks who aren't frequent email users, that means you have to track it down. We always send it out the last few days of the month prior, should you want to make a point to check your email around then.

Questions or comments about this article? Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 🍯

Sweet as Honey

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“Great newsletter. How do I get my bees to read it?
MS, Alabama

“I was going through some back issues; one had an article on this girl tending hives when her husband was sick. While reading her account of the effects of bee stings (pain, itching, swelling) I thought I should let you know so you can inform other beekeepers that there is a weed that stops the pain, itch and swelling resulting from bee stings—if applied soon enough.

It is “plantain,” or more commonly known as rabbit ears. We used to pull the leaves and feed them to pet rabbits. As soon as you can after being stung pull a leaf off of the plant, chew it up then spit it into your hand and apply it to the sting areas. It will stop the pain and itch and you will not swell up. My sister also made a salve from the plant and gave it to me to use, then I don’t have to run around looking for some of the plants after being stung. Most useful when moving the bees after dark and getting a few stings; nice to have the salve and not be running around with a flashlight looking for plants.

V. Wright, PA

“Great newsletter; I only wish I had been receiving it earlier! I did the unthinkable (not “August is a bust”): I collected a swarm in the middle of September. I don’t know what to rhyme with September but will likely “remember” my mistake. They are taking a quart of 50:50 syrup per day and appear to be working like crazy with



Photo courtesy of V. Wright.



A honeybee with long ears? Only at Clarkson Honeyfest! Maddie Keown and her bunny were the winners of the “Pet Look-a-Like” Contest at the 2012 Clarkson Honeyfest Amateur Pet Show.

lots of goldenrod nectar and pollen being collected. I plan on giving them a full shallow super of honey from my strongest 8-frame hive and will also give them a full deep frame feeder with 50:50 syrup and some bee curd. Maybe in a sunny spot they will survive. I worry more about them not being able to move in the stores during the cold rather than being too warm and depleting the stores.

W. Potter, Illinois

Jennifer from Virginia wrote:

“ I look forward to your newsletter every month and forward it to several friends. I love the descriptive pictures, especially of diseases / conditions. It helps SO much... I like to read what others are doing; in my experience most of us beekeepers are kind of loners. I've been keeping bees for 12 years. Been a Kelley customer the whole time!

Folks, please help us help beekeepers everywhere by sending in pictures of things going right, and wrong. We love your pictures of anything bee-related, like the one from Herb Lester. We also appreciate any story ideas. They should be sent to KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com, thank you.

“ Just got your newsletter which I enjoy very much. Thought I would let you know when I click on the high speed link it takes me to September's issue. Not a real problem as I found it OK on your home page. I always download and save each month. I look forward to your newsletter and for all the info in it. Thanks for sending. Matt N., KY

Yes, we realized that September's issue came up as October's for about a day last month, but quickly got it fixed. Thanks to the 8, 414 of you who let us know! (Seriously. It was wonderful to know it was being read so quickly!)

As Matt said, he found the issue he wanted at our website, which is a great reminder that ALL issues (even from three years ago) are there.

Speaking of internet links, a few of you sent us the link to the story of candy-tainted honey. We appreciate all the possible story ideas you send us, and we find the ones involving quirky bee incidents and candy especially delectable. Here it is if you haven't seen it:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/04/us-france-bees-idUSBRE8930MQ20121004>. 🍯



We all know there's a pot of gold at the end of this rainbow!
Thanks Herb.

Foraging for Fun

Beekeeping Funnies

As always, we're appreciative of British beekeeper Stuart Ching, editor of "The Eke," for sharing funnies from "across the pond."

“ Q: Why are recipes for honey wine kept secret?
A: Mead men tell no tales.

“ Q: What is the purpose of the waggle dance?
A: To ensure all loads lead to comb.

“ Beekeeper's Headstone:
Please heed this stone, passing stranger
If you want to keep from danger.
If you continue keeping bees
Refrain from taking swarms from trees.

“ Never be afraid to try something new in
beekeeping. Remember: Amateurs built
the Ark—professionals built the Titanic.

“ This beekeeper had poor credit so
when he ordered some equipment the
supplies company posted his invoice
and he was asked to pay with cash.
Later that week they received a parcel
which, when opened, revealed the cold
embers obviously from a beekeeper's
smoker. The note inside explained, "I
don't understand this either but could
it be that the 'C' key on your computer
keyboard doesn't work?"

“ People are always asking me "What do
bees do in the winter?"
I tell them "They do what any smart
critter would do; snuggle up with their
honey."



Savannah (King) York, daughter of our own Earl King who is often seen at meetings, and her Yorkie, Lexie, were part of this year's Clarkson Honeyfest Amateur Pet Show. A real crowd pleaser, Lexie was as sweet as honey in her honeybee costume!

2012 Clarkson Honeyfest

The annual Clarkson Honeyfest was held September 26-29, saluting all things bee, especially honey!

There were many highlights, like the wonderful weather, the community support of our favorite insect, and the Kelley's float winning three ribbons.

Pictures are worth a thousand words, so we'll let them do the talking.





Dronings from a Queen Bee

My Drone

By Charlotte Hubbard

Long-term faithful readers may recall that I lost my husband Tom in 2009.

Tom and I always found that expression of “losing” someone amusing. It suggests that, like misplaced keys or a cell phone, the object may show up if you just keep looking.

It sure would be wonderful, handy and awesome if Tom showed up!

Of course, it'd also be a little awkward, because I began dating about a year after Tom passed away.

I dreaded dating again after nearly three decades of marriage, but wanted to find someone with whom to share my life. Our kids had moved out and on with their lives. My dog, two cats, and half-million winged insects were great companions, but not easy to take to a movie. Getting gussied up and getting out to meet strangers was hard, but it was something that needed to be done. I figured there would be years of getting gussied up and out before I found the next Mr. Charlotte, with many broken hearts and amusing stories to be collected along the way

Having not dated in 30+ years, I was unsure how to even go about it. Friends urged me to try online dating, and so I reluctantly, cautiously did.

It was thought-provoking to enter my requirements on the dating website. I'm tall. Feeling a little shallow, I specified guys who I could look up to, 6'2" or taller. Assuming I had years of dating ahead of me, I wanted to at least a few times wear heels on a date.

I also pondered listing “must love honeybees” but feared that would really narrow my dating options. Many folks don't understand why people keep bees. When I'm lifting a deep box in 90 degree heat and 40,000 bees aren't happy about it, even I wonder why I keep honeybees.

February 2011 found me merrily dating tall men who initially matched my criteria, but whom I could tell, after just one date, I'd never bring home to meet the pets.

One day, as I was reviewing more potential dates, the site suggested someone who met most of my criteria. Marshall was only 6', but he was local and had also lost his spouse. I figured that made him convenient to meet and, for a change, I wouldn't have to hear stories about the guy's lousy ex-wife who divorced him just because he stopped playing video games only to golf.

Marshall and I met for coffee on a Saturday morning. I won't say it was love at first sight, but there was definitely something there...such that I cancelled my other two upcoming dates to explore what it was.

That “something there” grew because Marshall didn't play video games endlessly, and like me, loved long winter walks in the woods with the dog. Two weeks later, as we trudged through the February snow of my backyard, we wandered by



the hives. I stopped to study them, and was elated to see bees out flying.

After doing several cartwheels, I explained to Marshall why brown specks in the snow were cause for celebration. Marshall seemed to share my excitement, although he didn't cartwheel.

Unfortunately, many of those hives alive in February were no longer around by March, but Marshall still was. My feelings for him grew deeper when he helped lug deep boxes into the garage, and spent his day off tearing down dead-outs with me.

April arrived, and so did my annual shipment of package bees. Marshall calmly helped install them.

He was also eager to check for queen release and brood patterns, and enthusiastically built frames and painted boxes. It appeared that he really, really liked bees.

My first husband's parents were my parents-in-law for decades; their opinion is important to me. In telling them about Marshall, I shared that he even liked bees.

"Some guys," chuckled my father-in-law, "will do anything to get the girl."

I appreciated his opinion, but it made me a bit nervous. Part of me wondered if Marshall was really interested in me, or if I was just a bridge to his real true love—honeybees. I figured time would tell.

In time, Marshall took his share of rookie stings. He was itchy and puffy, but still enthused.

More time passed. We pulled honey, and he liked hanging out even when I was in a sweat-soaked bee suit. We did mite counts and powdered sugar blasts together. We assembled frames for hives busting with bees, and made nucs with queen cells. By August he could read a hive as quickly as I could. We had long discussions about the future of a few weak hives, and somewhere in all of that—discussions of our future as well.

By the end of September, after meeting the last of my brood, we decided to make it official. Time was critical in our relationship, because winter was soon approaching. Late fall is when you kick out any drones you don't want.

In October, Marshall removed the top cover of a hive we'd made from a queen cell, and found a couple of wedding rings atop the inner cover, covered in thriving honeybees that were pouring out.

I answered the stunned questioning look in his eyes. Yes, the hive was doing great, and yes, I was proposing. The queen bee is really in charge of everything!

A few weeks later, in the corner of my Dad's vineyard not far from my out-apiary, we put those rings on our fingers. The ceremony was attended only by our widowed octogenarian fathers, the pastor, the dog, and this large metal bird that shows up unexpectedly around my Dad's farm. Birds called overhead, brilliantly colored fall maples witnessed our vows, the dog chased squirrels, and the sun shone warmly.

It was like it was meant to be.

Questions or comments about this article?

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 🍷

