



Kelley Bee News

ISSUE 18—DECEMBER 2011

Modern Beekeeping



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“ Like the bee, we should make our industry our amusement.

~ Oliver Goldsmith



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The Buzz

What makes a really great hive?

Lots of things, but a really great queen is essential.

What makes a really great newsletter? We ask ourselves that all the time as we try to anticipate and meet your needs. Again, lots of things, but really great readers are essential. And wow, do we have them!

This newsletter is now fairly interactive. We get captivating photos, challenging questions, wonderful stories, wisdom and insights from you.

We've been collecting those, waiting for a month when we had few urgent, seasonal issues to cover. We hope you enjoy the philosophy, fun and beyond-bee bee topics covered in this unique issue.

We sure enjoy working with you to help your bees.

Best regards and happy holidays!

Jane Burgess
CEO/Partner
The Walter T. Kelley Company



An advertisement for Cypress Hives. It features a circular portrait of a man in a suit and bow tie. To the right of the portrait, the text reads: "My Cypress Hives", "LAST LONGER", "COST LESS". Below the portrait, it says "Walter T. Kelley, Prop. Gulf Coast Bee Company." The main text of the ad says: "The Cypress Hive is pretty. The Cypress Hive is good. The Hive that lasts forever Is made of CYPRESS wood." Below that, it lists "5--CYPRESS standard 10-fr. hive-bodies, complete with sugar pine frames, K. D. in cartons" for "\$4.95". At the bottom, it says "Write for Free Catalog", "Gulf Coast Bee Co.", "Houma, Louisiana", and shows an image of a wooden hive box. The name "F. O. B. Houma" is also visible.

Healthy Bees

Small Cell Bees: Working with Nature

By John Seaborn

Editor's Note: This article is based upon information John Seaborn recently presented at the Tennessee Beekeepers Association in Cookeville. John often speaks with Trevor Qualls on small cell bees and other bee topics. Their website, www.wolfcreekbees.com, has lots of good information for beekeepers on natural remedies.

There is not a silver bullet in beekeeping for the beekeeper to use, but we can employ a wide spectrum of techniques in the safe and efficient care of honeybees. We should look at the bees as part of a complex system of nature. The use of IPM (Integrated Pest Management) with such things as screen bottom boards, sugar-dusting techniques and herbal treatments has given us a promising tool in the fight against mites. Man has interfered with nature and has not worked with nature.

The honeybees as we know them are not native to the Americas but were first introduced into this country in the late 1500s by settlers from Europe. By most accounts they were believed to be the Dark German Bees or Black Bees. The Native Americans of that time called them the white man's flies.

The German bees were predominant for some time until the mid 1800s. It was at this time that the gentle Italian bees were brought in because the Black Bees were very defensive.

The German Black Bees can still be found in the back woods of Hickman County. They are small in size when compared to the bees of today. The size of a bee is dependent upon two things: their heritage and the size of the cell into which it is born.

Enlarging Bees

The honeybee worker cells prior to 1893 were about 4.9mm in diameter in both the bee hives and the bee trees throughout the U.S. In that year several beekeepers throughout the country started to tinker with the idea of enlarging the cell size to make a bigger bee that would gather more nectar. One of these men was A.I. Root, who settled on 5.4mm as the proper size of the bee cell. This set the standardization of the artificially enlarged cell to 5.4mm and a wax milling machine to embrace the large cell size, thus cornering the market on the sheet wax foundation.

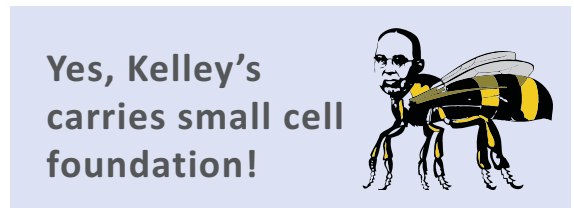
In 1997 the USDA did a study on the 4.9mm bees and confirmed that small cell bees do have fewer mites.

It is the number of bees that makes the honey, not the size. You have all heard the saying, "I would rather have one hive of 60,000 bees than 2 hives of 30,000 each because the 60,000 will make more honey." If you look at a medium frame and count the cells of both the 5.4mm and the 4.9mm on the foundation, you will find that the 4.9mm foundation has 520 more cells per frame than the 5.4mm frame. Thus more bees should equal more honey.

Problems from Enlargement

This artificially bigger bee worked for 93 years, but now the bee-enlarging has become a problem. The bigger bee has a larger tracheal tube which makes a perfect breeding ground for the trachea mite. The Varroa mites not only lay in the drone cells, but because of the enlarging of the worker cells, the problem is escalated.

The trachea tube of the 4.9mm bee is smaller. The capping time of the cells of the 4.9 bees is 12 hours shorter and the post-capping time is shorter by 12 hours. This interrupts the life cycle of the Varroa mite, which means that less Varroa will reach maturity. Also, the Varroa mites do not like to lay their eggs in the 4.9mm cells.



In 1997 the USDA did a study on the 4.9mm bees and confirmed that small cell bees do have fewer mites.

In the February 2009 issue of Bee Culture, Jennifer Berry, who works at the UGA, wrote an article about beeswax and the effects that chemicals used to control mites have on queens. As part of the study, she needed wax that did not have any chemicals. She went to Brazil in South America because they do not treat for mites since they don't have a problem with them. Brazil is the birthplace for the Africanized bees of all the Americas. These bees are 4.9mm in size.

If backyard beekeepers were not having success with keeping 4.9 bees without chemicals, you would not be seeing every major beekeeping supply house carrying the 4.9mm wax.

Benefits of Propolis

By mixing the genetics of the Russian, Italian and Carniolan bees, we have a bee that goes to work at 38 degrees if the sun is shining and the wind is not blowing. They are also good honey

producers as well as gentle. We are reversing years of breeding out the bee's ability to produce propolis. In countries where antibiotics are not available, propolis is used to heal wounds of all kinds such as burns, cuts, ulcers and inflammation, hence the nickname "Russian penicillin."

Propolis has been found to be antifungal and antibacterial. The bees coat the inside of the hives with it, which helps to protect the bees. The properties of propolis vary from hive to hive because of the plants and trees that the bees visit.

The bottom line is this: We need to learn to work with nature and stop thinking we know best by working against nature. The use of harsh chemicals and pesticides have failed us. We need to change our approach as to which types of treatments we choose to use on the bees. We should be using treatments that are more natural and that have been proven to be safe and effective.

John Seaborn was born in 1948 in Hermitage, TN. where he grew up on the family farm watching the honeybees in the early spring. He would lie in the cool white clover-covered bank just below the south side of their smoke house where the country hams were stored. While the warm sun shone down he would often fall asleep and then would awaken to the buzzing of the foraging honey bees as they flew over his head. Now each time that he hears the buzzing of the bees it takes him back to those times with his dad and his granddaddy as they would work the bees.

John and his wife are members of the Nashville Area Beekeepers Association where he served as vice president for two terms. They are also members of the Columbia Area Beekeepers Association, the Memphis Area Beekeepers Association, the Tennessee Beekeepers Association and the Three Rivers Bee Association where John is currently serving as president.

For the past two years John has given lectures on the natural management of bees at the Tennessee Organic Growers Association Conference and Walter T. Kelley's June Field Day. He has also spoken to various bee clubs about natural beekeeping in Tennessee, Arkansas and Kentucky. 🍯

Bee-Havior

What Style Frames Should I Use?

By Sean Burgess, Kelley Employee & Beekeeper

This is the time of year when beekeepers repair and clean-up existing equipment and dream about next year in the apiary. If you're expanding operations or replacing some of your equipment, there are many options to consider. The following information may help.

When choosing the frames for your bee hives, you should first consider what type of foundation you want to use. Beeswax foundations have been the standard for a long time, but with the advancements in plastics we find many plastic foundations in use today. Commercial operations almost always use plastic—for speed of installation and the ability to power wash the foundation if necessary. You also have the choice of a



one-piece plastic frame and foundation molded as a single unit. First let's discuss foundation.

Foundation

It has always been in my thought that if bees live in trees and make wax how can you go wrong by using a wooden frame and a wax foundation?

I still believe this to be true. But now, with helping to manage hundreds of hives, I can appreciate the need for plastics. Wax foundations (as well as plastic) have the hexagonal cell imprinted on them just as the bees will make in nature on their own. The standard in the industry for the last hundred years has been to make the size of this cell at about 5.4mm as measured across 10 cells. It is generally thought that bees in nature will draw a cell slightly smaller than is the industry norm.

Cell sizes have been all over the board in past years with a lot of extremes. With the advent of Varroa, there is a school of thought that a smaller cell size (4.9mm) will help to control this pest as it may shorten the development time of the honeybee, thereby disrupting the brood cycle of the Varroa Mite. However, if you're installing bees that have been raised on a 5.4mm cell size onto 4.9mm foundation you may experience some problems. Queens that have been raised on 5.4mm may not like to lay eggs in a smaller cell.

It has been my observation that if you put a package of bees raised in 5.4mm cells on 4.9mm cells they will chew through the wax foundation and engage in a lot of strange comb building. One theory suggests taking your bees from 5.4mm to 5.1mm for a year or so, then taking them down to 4.9mm. Dee Lusby has done a lot of research on this and there is enough information available for several more articles so let's move on.

We believe Kelley's wax foundation is the finest foundation made anywhere in the world. From beginning to end exacting standards are met to produce this foundation.

Pros and Cons of Wax Foundation

Pros

- More closely imitates nature
- Bees take to it more readily
- Crush and strain methods of harvesting can be used
- Lower initial cost
- Can be used in cut comb or chunk honey

Cons:

- Typically take longer to install (especially if cross wiring and adding support pins)
- Cannot be power washed
- May act as a sponge for chemicals used in hives (but so will plastic foundation when drawn)

Wax foundation comes with and without wires. Insights into what is best for your apiary are discussed below.

Pros and Cons of Plastic Foundation

Pros:

- Speed of installation
- Ability to scrape and clean (will need to be re-wax coated after scraping)

Cons:

- Bees generally won't draw it as fast
- Strange double-comb sometimes built off of it
- Cannot be used in comb or chunk honey or crush and strain harvesting methods
- Higher initial cost

One-piece plastic frames and foundation have about the same pros and cons with the addition of more places for the Small Hive Beetle to hide due to the molding processes.

Frames

All of our wooden frames are made of Eastern White Pine and feature the lock corner design and the heavy duty top bar. What that heavy duty top bar means to you is durability

Mike's Frame Preference

I am from Lower Alabama, almost halfway between Montgomery and Mobile. We have small hive beetles (SHB) and they can be a real problem here. I am also an old coot and so am modifying my hive structure to reflect that situation. I don't like lifting full hive bodies so I'm modifying my hives to all Illinois (medium) supers. That said, let me tell you my preference for frames.

I personally like the grooved top bars, not the slotted top bars because the SHBs love to hide in the slots in the tops of the bars. The bees of strong colonies seem to keep them under control there but I still don't like the idea of them taking up residence in the hive at all. If I use slotted top bars, I will be using wood putty or wax to fill the voids as soon as I get the foundation installed.

I really like Kelley's new slotted end bars. Those give additional support to the plastic foundation that I install. I glue and nail the top bar and the two side bars together, install the rigid foundation and then glue and nail the slotted bottom bars in place. If you wait to install the rigid foundation until after putting the frames together, it's an almost impossible job; the foundation doesn't give enough to fit into the slots of the frames. Sometimes I will roll additional wax onto the waxed foundation so the bees won't have to use as much honey to produce the wax to draw out the comb.

in that piece of the frame that takes so much prying, shifting, shoving and duress from manipulation. Our wooden frames also have holes predrilled into the end bars for cross wiring and or support pins.

Sizes

We offer different sizes of frames in shallow, medium (or Illinois) and deep. Plenty has been written about these size options; selection depends largely upon your geographic location, apiary operation and strength of whomever is doing the lifting.

In summary: shallow frames are most frequently used for honey stores; mediums and deeps are predominantly used for brood chambers. Some beekeepers recommend standardizing on all mediums. Others—especially those in colder climates—rely on two deeps for overwintering and then lighter shallows and mediums for ease of lifting and manipulating honey boxes. At a glance, a deep box is 9-9/16" tall, a medium is 6-5/8" tall, and a shallow is 5-3/4" tall.

About Wedge Top Bar Frames

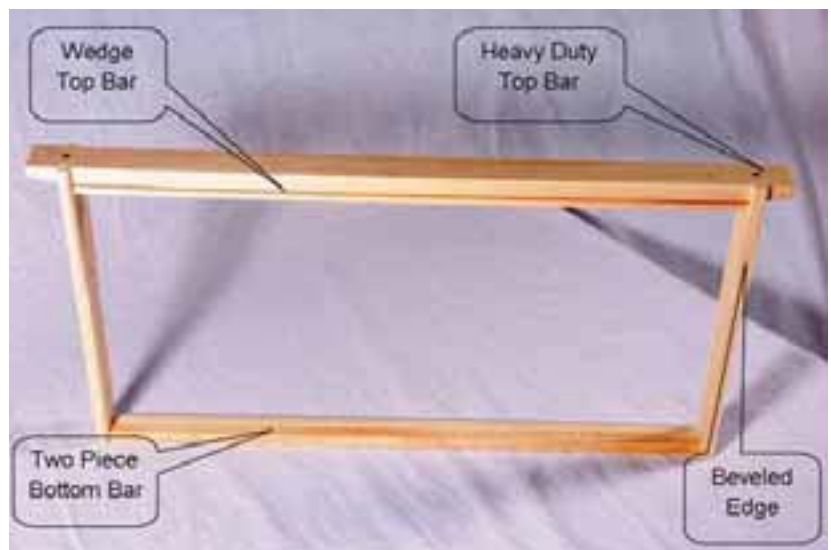
The wedge top bar is nothing more than a piece of the top bar that has been sawn almost all of the way through. This piece of wood is removed by the beekeeper prior to installing a wax foundation. This creates a 90 degree angle in the bottom of the top bar onto which you will lay a wax foundation with hooks. The wedge is then nailed back in place after the foundation has been installed. This wedge or cleat is what supports the foundation at the top. You may choose to add support pins or crosswire this frame style. Any wedge style frame should be used with a wired wax foundation that has hooks.

We offer seven styles of frames:

The "D" style frame has a removable wedge (nailed back in place) in the top bar and a two-piece bottom bar. The bottom of the sheet of foundation is inserted through the two pieces of the bottom bar, and then pulled back up to the shoulder that was created by removing the wedge. You then nail the wedge back in place over the hooks.

This design holds a wax foundation with embedded wires, which helps stabilize the foundation. This stabilization is seen as a real plus to many beekeepers. The wires run out the top of the foundation and we bend it into hooks at the proper angle to fit under the wedge without distorting the foundation.

Summary: The bottom foundation drops between a two-piece bottom bar and then is pulled up to the shoulder that was created by removing the wedge. The wedge is replaced over the hooks in the foundation and nailed back in place. Support pins or cross wiring this foundation are options. I would at least use support pins.

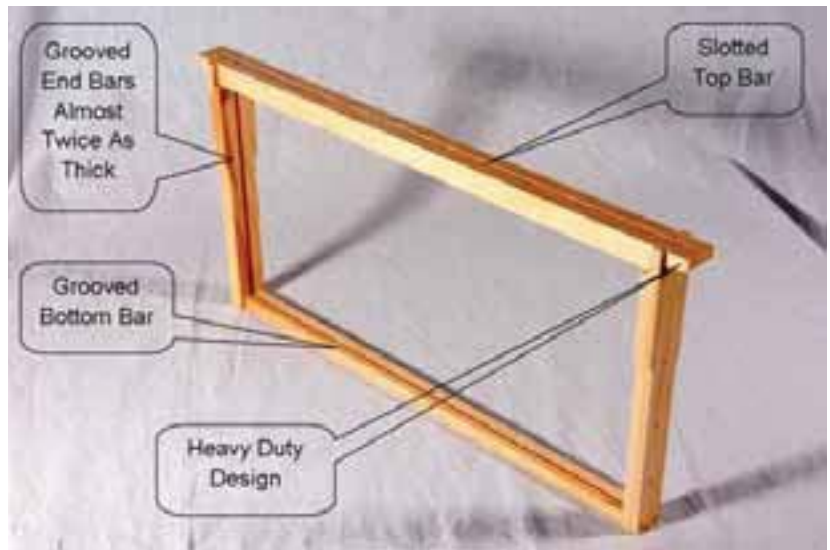


D frame.

Our “N” style frame was invented by us and has caught on like wildfire. This frame has a top bar with a slot running the length of it and grooved end and bottom bars. This frame is designed for a wax foundation with or without wires that load into the frame from the top and is supported by the end and bottom bars.

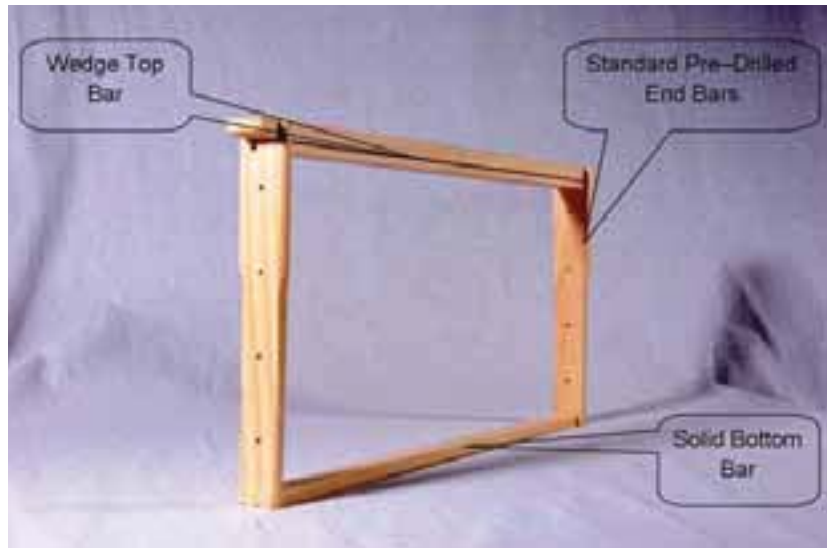
It is advisable to use at least two support pins per side to help keep the wax foundation straight in the frame until the bees draw it out. Cross wiring is also an option.

Summary: Loads from the top, wired or wireless foundation, support pins advisable. Cross wiring is also an option. This is a very fast method of wax installation.



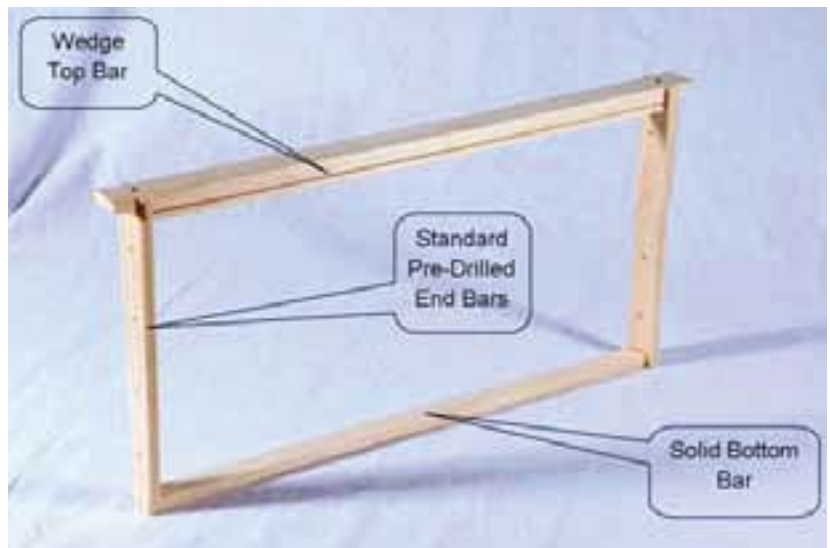
N frame.

Our “S” style frame has a removable wedge (nailed back in place) in the top bar and a solid bottom bar. This is designed for a wax foundation that has wires and hooks. Some people have a preference for the solid bottom bar and prefer to wax melt the bottom of the foundation onto the solid bottom bar. This is the frame for them.



S frame.

Our “SG” style frame has a removable wedge (nailed back in place) in the top bar and a grooved bottom bar, again designed for a wax foundation that has wires and hooks.



SG frame.

Our “SGX” style frame has a grooved top and bottom bar and while it can be used for a wax foundation it is ideal for plastic foundations, with the plastic easily snapping into place. These are also available without the pre-drilled end bars.

Our “Thin slotted top bar frame” is designed for a wax foundation with no wires for comb honey production. The thin top bar gives it more surface area for the comb honey.

Our “F” style frame (also invented here) requires no foundation. The bottom of the top bar has been beveled to provide a starting place for the bees to draw their own foundation. It is required to paint some liquid beeswax on this starting place to encourage the bees to draw it. Also, when adding a second story you will need

to give the bees a guide (such as a drawn frame from below) so they will draw the second story correctly.

Happy Beekeeping- Sean Burgess 🍯

What style frames do you prefer?



Why? Please share your insights with KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com.



SGX frame.

Why Everyone Should Have At Least Two Hives

By Jane Burgess, Kelley CEO and Partner

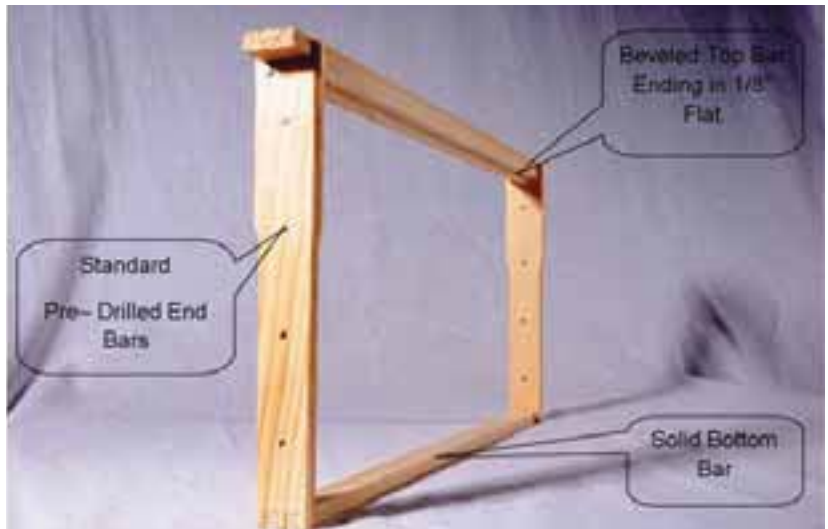
You don't have to read much of this newsletter or talk to any of us for very long to know we're passionate about bees. We think everyone should have them!

We also think everyone should have at least two hives. It isn't because we want to sell you more (although that's a helpful byproduct!) It's because it is so helpful to have two hives so you can compare their actions.

Like humans, all bees are different. There are many factors that influence a hive's success—the weather, available forage, hive placement, etc.—but a primary one is the queen. She needs to lay lots of eggs in a great pattern for the hive to thrive.

It's hard for a beginning beekeeper to know what we mean by "lots of eggs" or "a great pattern." Your seeking knowledge is one of the reasons we publish this newsletter.

But, this newsletter is only one source of information, and there's no greater resource than having two or more hives so you can watch and compare. Not only is it twice the fun, but if and when you start to see differences, we're here to advise you on whether they're a cause for action, or just differences.



F frame.



F frame close-up.

We recently received this email from P. Heiskell, a new beekeeper in Kentucky. It underscores how four seemingly “identical” hives, treated the same, can vary.

“ In April, I purchase four – 3# packages, with a marked Kelley Queen. In June, I put on a second brood box. In July, I put two supers on just to allow them to start making comb if they had extra time. Oct 22 I took the supers off all hives:

- Hive 1 - No comb and no honey (both empty) - also had to transfer three frames of honey from stronger hives to this one.
- Hive 2 - 1 super of comb and 80% honey (2nd empty)
- Hive 3 - Both supers so heavy, I thought they were glued to the brood box, 100% full comb / honey
- Hive 4 - Both supers so heavy, I thought they were glued to the brood box, 100% full comb / honey.

All hives were in direct sunlight all day in the middle of 100 acres in Green County. I am very happy - will be reading how to keep them healthy and harvesting my honey.

We're Monday-morning quarterbacking here, but Hive 1 may have needed a new queen early in the season. Based on the relative (and huge) success of the others, it appears as if the location and conditions were more than appropriate.

Such variance in four hives may be a bit extreme, but thank goodness this new beekeeper had four so he could experience such success in light of a struggling hive.

We're delighted he is “very happy,” and want all our customers to feel the same.

So, when you're considering how many hives to have, consider at least two to help the bees and to help you on this fascinating life-long journey of learning how to best keep them.

We stand ready to help. 🟡

Tough Time of Year to be a Drone

By Daniel Hill

I have been keeping bees in southern Ohio for about 40 years. My dad kept them for 60 years right up to his death at 92. In the fall of the year, as most beekeepers know, the worker bees physically escort the drones from the hive. Since their services are not needed over the winter, the colony figures there is no sense wasting food on them that the colony might need. I have seen this played out many times. However for the first time this year, I actually saw worker bees removing drone larva from the hive. It appears that the colony does practice infanticide. 🟡



I Wonder

By Lady Spirt Moon

Picking up the second end board, I use the brush and stroke glue on the exposed edges of the mock dove-tail edges, stroke...stroke. *I wonder what kind of machine makes these notches so square.* So many boxes are needed for beeking. *Had I known in the beginning, I wonder if I'd have stayed in the game.* I pick up my glue brush for the other edge, stroke...stroke. Made my last three top covers all by myself. Sure am proud of that. It was the first time in over six years I was able to create anything. Stroke...stroke.

Fitting the edges together, I watch the glue run down the sides of the box. I take up the wet rag and wipe the glue into the edges and into the exposed ends, wipe...wipe. Glue keeps them from deteriorating too fast in the weather. My mind saw stuff dripping and drying down a box last summer, not cool-looking. *I wonder if it was honey syrup.* Doing the dishes that night, it kept running through my mind about taking the feeders off too soon. Others told me mid-November was late in the season to be feeding. Wipe...wipe. I remember looking out the picture window over my sink and there was a bee looking back at eye level, seeming to float in mid-air. She flew up, down, then in a counter-clockwise circle before she stopped and stared at me...did that two more times. "What do you want?" I asked.

"We're hungry," was the silent reply.

I dried off my hands and grabbed my heavy-duty apron as I walked into the utility room. Mixed three gallons of honey/sugar syrup and set them outside for the truck bed. I then went out and put the feeders back on. Fed my girls for four more weeks.

Picking up another box and placing it on the short side, I pick up a nail and tap, tap to start the nail down the predrilled hole. *I wonder if I imagined that conversation.* A loud TAP, TAP, a lighter tap, tap then another tap for good measure. *I wonder why we feel the need to hit one more time when the nail is seated.* Tap tap. *Perhaps, two more times.*

I pick up another nail and place it into the predrilled hole, tap..tap...TAP..TAP. *Didn't want to get this involved...just wanted a couple hives - that's all - wasn't planning on assembling my own boxes, either.* Another



nail...tap..tap...TAP..TAP..TAP. *I'm glad the new bees this winter are not the same ones who experienced my grievous errors last spring.* A nail...tap..tap...TAP. TAP...tap. Another nail. Then two more.

The bees last summer stung me over 40 times in one visit, so arrogant was I. Didn't know fear had gripped me until I went back after putting on my suit. Upon my approach, I saw one of them go back into the hive. I swear I heard her say, "She's back." Silence lulled inside the hive for a hair's-breadth moment before an uproarious sound broke out. I sensed laughter.

A nail...tap..tap.TAP.TAP...tap. *Did they laugh at me? So help me I heard one of them say, "Who does she think she's kidding. Even if she was running, we can pump her full before she gets to the house."* *More laughter?* Tap..tap..BANG.BANG..BANG..tap, tap. Another nail, tap. BANG BANG BANG..tap. They were right about one thing. I would have forgotten. I'll drive the truck. Nail...chuckle, tap..TAP.BANG. *Shucks! Too hard.* Tap. Tap.

I stare out the kitchen window at the beehives in the distance. I always wonder at their size in relation to all the work they do, distance traveling, fanning for warmth or cooling. Always moving, rarely stopping. No wonder they don't live very long. Tap.tap...TAP..tap..tap. Another nail. They make the only whole, perfect food in the world. Tap.tap..TAP..TAP..tap. It never spoils. Another nail. *I wonder if the lack of foraging, traveling, storing...is the reason they live longer in winter?*

The Propolis, honey, wax, pollen – all of it heals. *They are such amazing creatures.* They ask only to be left alone and give wealth back to us. I see one more hole and take my time, Tap...tap...TAP. TAP...tap. I wonder why nailing the last nail saddens me as I place the box next to the framing square. They're never off. My fingers touch the nail heads as I give the box one last critical look. Looking up at the clock, I see I have time to paint the two coats of primer.

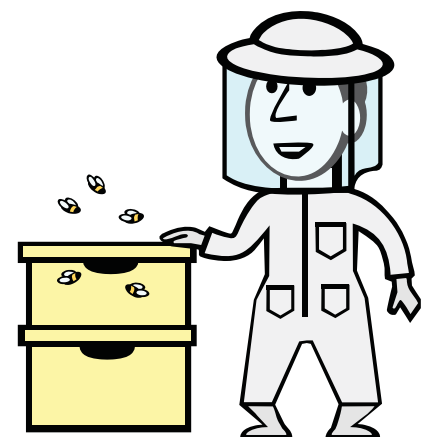
I wonder what color and design they're going to want on this box. 🟡

Beek Hint

Get creative when painting your hives! If you use different colors and / or designs, it will help bees differentiate between their hive and the one(s) next to it. Called "drifting," it happens! Bees laden with nectar, pollen and water may not take the time to ensure they're headed in the right door, especially when the doors all look the same. That's why in rows of hives, nearly identical-looking hives toward the ends contain the larger populations.

When being creative with paint, keep in mind what bees see:

We See:	Bees See:	In Sunlight(UV Rays):
Red	Black	Purple
Orange	Yellow/Green	Same
Yellow	Yellow/Green	Purple
Green	Green	Same
Blue	Blue	Violet
Violet	Blue	Blue
White	Blue/Green	Same
Black	Black	Same



December 10th Beekeeping 101

On Saturday December 10th Sean Burgess of the Walter T Kelley Co. will lead a one-day class on Beekeeping 101 at the Clarkson, KY location.

The class will begin at 9:00 am CST and end at approximately 3:00 pm.

There will be a morning break and a one-hour lunch break.

This class will cover equipment choices, hive locations, installing package bees and nucleus colonies, when to feed, how to care for your bees, medications, when to add additional boxes, how to determine colony strengths and weaknesses, combining colonies, harvesting overview, requeening, identifying most common diseases and how to deal with them, winter preparations and first spring inspections.

The fee for this class is \$30.00 per person; class size is limited to 50 people. There will also be classes taught in January, February and March. If weather permits we will do a live inspection of an active hive. 🍯



Sean and Jane Burgess.

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Bee-Yond & Bee-Hind the Hives

Kick Starting a Club into Action, Part 1

By Dana Stahlman, President-Elect, Ohio State Beekeepers Association

Editor's Note: A reader recommended we tap the expertise and unbounded enthusiasm for bees of Dana Stahlman. We contacted him, asking if he'd like to share some of his insights with our readers. Luckily, he said yes!

Following is the first part of a two-part series on what can help a bee club be successful. We'd appreciate insights from other readers as well—what's worked for your club, what hasn't? Please send them to me at KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com, thank you.

The kind of beekeeping association one belongs to can easily be determined by the kind of elections the organization has. I speak and attend many bee association meetings. There are the ones that beg for members to run for office—any warm body will do. Then there are the ones that present the members with a slate of uncontested candidates for the officers and trustees. And then you have the ones that have real elections—two or more individuals running for the same office.

I prefer real elections because more energy is present in those organizations. Some organizations in fact limit the number of terms a person can hold office. Beekeepers need to realize that like bees replace a queen, it is necessary to supercede the officers. An under-performing officer is one of the main reason clubs lose membership, lack organization, lack dynamic programs, and drift aimlessly along picking up a member now and then but generally just existing.

A typical poor performing organization/club may think it is doing great—at least the officers feel that way. The officers may complain that no one wants to volunteer for various things. For example, a club may have a bee yard but no one shows up for demonstrations, or fail to keep the bee yard cleaned up and have any interest in hive management.

The guy in charge of the bee yard is quick to blame the membership and as a result ends up with the complete job of managing the club's hives. Possibly the person in charge of the bee yard may believe that no one else is capable of managing the hives. Whatever the reason, there is a problem with this club's bee yard.

Club presidents have a tendency to feel empowered with the position. No one else is capable of running the club or they talk themselves into believing that others are not interested. I observed a club at one time hold an election. It went something like this: the president recognized an election committee who presented a slate of candidates to the membership. Before anyone on the floor had a chance to nominate another candidate, a person stood up and moved to close the nominations. The president quickly took the motion and within a blink of an eye, another person seconded the motion. Elections over! No one objected and the new officers were the same as the last term.



The Central Ohio Beekeepers Association working together. Photo courtesy of Jodi Croley Jones.

If you belong to an organization that seems to resemble the above, realize that changes can be made. Almost every organization has a Constitution. Read it and understand it. Constitutions limit power and clearly state the rules of the association.

From Social to Thriving

Let's take a look at the Central Ohio Beekeepers Association (COBA), located in the heart of Ohio. Five years ago the club was primarily a social club. It had several general meetings during the course of a year, a pancake breakfast, a summer picnic, and a fall banquet. It offered a bee school for many years, membership was somewhat static. It had few board meetings; decisions for the club were generally made by a president and a secretary/treasurer. All of the officers were well-meaning individuals and often ended up working hard to keep the organization going. Without their dedication, the club would not have been what it was.

Along came CCD. What were usually considered big classes at the bee school turned out to be a thing of the past! One session ended up being two sessions and two sessions ended up being three. What had been a club of 50 turned out to be a club of 300 within a few years.

Changes had to be made to keep the new beekeepers involved. It would require more volunteers, different management styles, and some conflict. What was an "I" club—I did this, and I did—that became a "WE" club.

Check the Constitution

A likely first step to kick start a club is to revise the Constitution to addresses current needs and conditions. Many examples of Constitutions can be found online including COBA's. One can be cut and pasted together easily to fit almost any situation.

Accommodate Needs

If you tap into the growing interest in beekeeping and the beekeepers' tendency to want to share, discuss and socialize (are many of us just bees in human forms?) , chances are what was done in the past likely won't address a growing club with diverse interests, ages, challenges and social networking at their disposal.

Examine the number of meetings, size of meeting rooms, website, contact lists and other issues for the club to ensure they're appropriate for your evolving membership.

In our case, there were those challenges, and the feeling that more activity was expected by members—especially the new members. "WE" did a number of things to address these problems:

Plenty of Activities

A Fun in the Bee Yard activity is held every week of the spring and summer bee season. Brainstorming is very important in putting an activity such as this together.

We decided that new beekeepers needed to see what hives started from packages and nucs look like. They could compare their own newly started hives with those in the bee yard.

The first year we started simple. The club purchased equipment and bees for six new hives. We were fortunate to locate a site at The Ohio State University Waterman Farm complex in Columbus, Ohio. We asked members to volunteer time to share and teach beekeeping beyond the beginning class subject matter.

One of the early decisions on the part of the members in the bee yard was to introduce a picnic with members carrying in food. In this way, members could look forward to eating and learning about bees at the same time. Meetings started at 6:00 p.m. and usually lasted until it started getting dark. Meetings actually continued monthly on through the winter, at various members' homes. A family of friends was created.

People who six months earlier did not know each other were now wanting to continue the discussion about bees into the winter.

One glaring need was recognized by the bee yard committee that first year: We had no place to store our equipment. Plans were made to build a storage building in the bee yard, with permission granted by OSU. Some concern arose about the money needed to do all of this. During the second season, a plan was developed to raise money to support the bee yard. The money would pay for the equipment need in the bee yard as well as the building.

We could not just keep adding six new hives to the bee yard each year; OSU most likely wouldn't like that. The decision was made to sell the overwintered hives late in the summer to new beekeepers. We would always have six new hives in the bee yard and six hives with drawn comb that would hopefully overwinter. If not, they could be used to show the beginning beekeepers the development time of a package of bees put into a hive with drawn comb versus the development time of a package put into a hive with foundation.

Masters in the Bee Yard

We had provided engaging activities for new beekeepers, but what about those with one or two full years of experience? "Fun in the bee yard" did not quite meet their requirements.

That second year a Masters in the Bee Yard was held each Saturday during the spring and summer to deal with subjects such as swarming, making splits, extracting the honey crop, making money by selling nucs and even shaking package bees.

From the myriad Masters in the Bee Yard activities came funding opportunities beyond selling the six mature hives. There was an interest in raising queens, and the bee yard committee decided to add a queen project to the mix. Since then, COBA has raised and sold 100 queens each year, thanks largely to Joe Latshaw donating his time to artificially inseminate virgin queens raised and caged by the bee yard committee for the past two years. The queen classes have trained 35 individuals who have taken a 10-day course spread out over July to raise queens. Those successfully passing two tests—one written and one demonstrating skill in grafting—are made members of a select "Order of the Queen" group. This group is now in charge of the bee yard, continue to raise funds for its operation, and will certainly be leaders in the future of the association.



COBA members beam after completion of the new storage shed. Photo courtesy of Nina Bagley.

And the Money Follows

The only fees charged in the bee yard are for taking the queen rearing class (\$25), buying a queen (\$20), and buying a hive of bees (\$225). Fun in the Bee Yard and Masters in the Bee Yard are free. The club treasurer has gone from saying, "the bee yard is going to bankrupt the club," to now being of the opinion that we are making too much money.

Next month: Stahlman shares an amazing list of innovative activities that COBA provides. Look in next month's issue for more information on those activities, as well as more insights on what can help make your bee club thrive. 🍯

Other Hive Products: Just Do It!

An interview with Bonnie Funderburg

You've probably lined up your just-bottled honey on the kitchen counter and thought, "They're so beautiful. I could sell these!"

Did you ever look at your plastic baggie of cappings and wonder what you could do with them?

Have you seen all the honey and wax-based products for sale at boutiques, health food stores, craft fairs and shows, and thought "I've got those raw ingredients, I wonder if I could do that?"

Yes, you could.

We recently interviewed Bonnie Funderburg, of Alabama, who has all the business she wants selling products from bees at a just a few festivals each year. Bonnie's bottom line message is "You can do it, and you should, if you want to have some fun."

Bonnie started about 2003, when her curiosity led her to attend a class on making "other hive products" while at a bee conference with her husband Lonnie, a beekeeper. Prior to that, she and her husband had bottled their honey and sold it at local shows but their hobby was just something to get them out of the house a couple of times a year.

Making and marketing of products was new to her, and Bonnie wasn't sure what her customers would want. The labeling / business aspects initially also seemed intimidating. Following the same advice she gives us, Bonnie just jumped in and did it, doing much of the research on her computer. The internet was a wealth of information for requirements, opportunities, recipes, marketing assistance, product ideas, and product ingredients.



While the Funderburgs had been selling their honey for years, they now expanded their offerings to just a few hive-based products—beeswax lip balm, beeswax lotion bars, honey soap and a skin cream with beeswax in it. Of those "lotions and potions," her lip balm and lotion bar are the most popular, shares Bonnie. "People love the way they smell and feel."

She also makes nativity sets and several different candles, with a popular seller this time of year being fall candles such as pumpkin, turkey, leaf, corn, and apple in a cornucopia.

Another great seller are gift bags that Bonnie assembles with a variety of products. She purchases the Walter T. Kelley gift bags with the bees on them in bulk. Into each of those go the cookbook that Mrs. Kelley wrote, (*My Favorite Honey Recipes*), a honey dipper, (from Kelley), and—depending upon inventory—a bear of honey, a small candle and a beeswax product, or sometimes a few honey sticks or honey candy. Bonnie noted that “We buy sheets of colored wax and let children roll their own beeswax candles at our shows, and we always sell thousands of honey sticks.”



This “hobby” grew quite large for a while, requiring more wax than their hives could produce. The Funderburgs occasionally buy wax from other beekeepers if they know it is pure and natural. There’s an idea you may want to consider if you have surplus wax: contact people in your area who sell hive products. Bonnie says she usually pays \$2 - \$3 per pound.

One of the wonderful things about their hobby is that what they create seems to be in great demand. Bonnie knows they could always do more shows or get bigger with a website or brochures, but they like how the festivals they’ve chosen keep them just busy enough. In fact, they’ve scaled back a bit to just a few major shows a year. (The even more wonderful things called “grandchildren” are competing for their time.) Nonetheless, their success with this small business continues. Their profits allow them to generate what Bonnie calls “fun money” for Christmas presents, some travel, and of course, spoiling the grandchildren.

Bonnie shared several tips, including:

For lotions and potions: start with a small amount of whatever you decide to make; you may want to tweak and adjust a bit, as well as see what sells.

“What sells” can vary greatly by the venue, so don’t get discouraged if something doesn’t sell at a particular event.

You can spend a lot of money and time on trying different things. Essential oils are expensive, for example. Start slowly until you figure out what your customers want and what works for you. There are challenges to keeping inventory, ordering raw ingredients, labeling, and pricing. Get a handle first on how you’ll do all of those.

People appreciate all-natural products. Capitalize on that in your sales pitch if they are all-natural.

If your products are all-natural, don’t get too far ahead in production. Those products, while highly desired, don’t have a long shelf life. Tossing products that have gone bad is discouraging.

Even if you just have a little honey and/or a little wax, you can start small with local craft shows. The investment is minimal. Bonnie started with a double-boiler before working up to a wax melter, and lots of pantyhose for melting and straining.

Bonnie doesn’t have any secret recipes or magic formulas. She does what anyone can do using information from the many publications on the subject and other recipes she’s found on the internet. Most recipes were obtained just attending classes at bee meetings. The secret to her success is “just doing it!”

So if you’re interested, just do it! 🍯

Featured Products

This month we decided to feature many of the products mentioned in the accompanying article, "Just Do It."



Catalog # 278, a very popular publication.



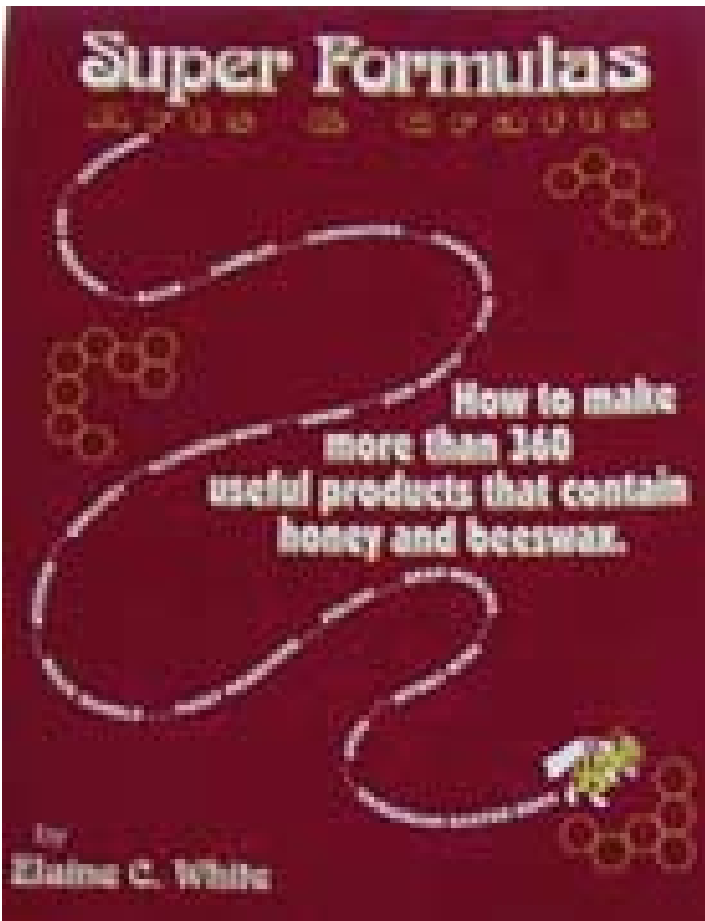
These attractive gift bags, catalog # 3-GB, come in various sizes.



Catalog # 3-D—everyone needs honey dippers!



Honey sticks, catalog # 75, are a great selling item at craft fairs and festivals, and a fun way to promote honey.



This book is of course available from Kelley's, catalog # 554, and has all sorts of product ideas and recipes.

Still wondering what to get your favorite beekeepers for Christmas?

We KNOW they'll find many items they want and need, so why not get them a gift certificate? 🍯



Honey candy, catalog #270-M, wonderful stuff!



Show Schedule

Louisiana State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Friday Dec 2, 2011
- Located at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Baton Rouge, LA

Michigan State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Friday Dec 2, 2011
- Located at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing, MI

Short Course in Beekeeping - Atlanta Botanical Gardens

- Saturday Jan 21, 2012
- A short course in Beekeeping presented by <http://www.beekeepingshortcourse.com> and sponsored by the Metro Atlanta Beekeepers Association.

Eastern Kentucky Winter Bee School

- Saturday Jan 21, 2012
- Located at The First Federal Building Center on the campus of Hazard Community and Technical College in Hazard, KY. 🍯

**For the latest events,
please visit
kelleybees.com/Events/**

BeeCause

Kelley's Contributes to Paraguay Beekeepers

In our August and September issues, Peace Corps Volunteer ReBecca Sunday shared insights and challenges about helping folks in the Paraguayan countryside keep bees sustainably.

We're perhaps biased, but we thought it was a very fascinating story. In our world of internet ordering, same-week delivery and package bees, the idea of beekeeping with homemade protective gear and hives, and then capturing a wild colony is hard to imagine.

Our editor, Camilla, visited her daughter in Paraguay in mid-September. She had hoped to accompany her on a wild hive capture, but because of adverse weather that couldn't happen. As Paraguay's honeybees are Africanized, she's was not too upset about that!

Another day, they hiked a few miles to visit with one of the beekeepers with whom ReBecca works bees. ◆



A beekeeper lives about another mile down this very slippery road. ReBecca was carrying new Kelley's jackets and gloves in the red bag. We were excited to share top-notch equipment with him, thanks Kelley Bees!



One of several busy top bar hives.



Adela, 19, loves working bees although they make her nervous. She was delighted knowing she can borrow a bee jacket.



With weather threatening, Adela and ReBecca elect to check their bees another day and trudge through the fields back home.

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: Can you give me more info on the Sugar/Newspaper article? Are the two sheets of newspaper placed on top of each other? Is the newspaper cut short so that 1/3 of the ends of the ten frames are not covered? dlharper18 via email

A: Yes, and yes. And no matter what is suggested in the Dronings article, what the newspaper says is probably not important!

Q: Great newsletter! I am old time Kelley buyer, started in the late 70s and still have some of your plastic covers and bottoms from then, great product. I have a question about your free shipping policy: If I lived in zone 4 and purchased 50lbs worth of goods, you would ship free which would save me \$34.44, but because I live in zone 5 you would ship the same goods and I would pay \$42.01 less 10%. My question for you would be does it really cost you any more to package a shipment to zone 1-4 or 5-10? No, so why would I have to pay \$34.44 more because I live in zone 5? Why wouldn't you say that you will pay the amount of zone 4 shipping and the customer will pay the difference? I ask this because I have a friend that will be ordering woodenware this winter and at this time why would we pay the extra shipping just because we live in zone 5? C. Wood

A: We have to do something that is quick to handle and a cut off has to be made somewhere. We suggest folks go together with their beekeeping friends and order 200 pounds of product, making these differences a non-issue. Sorry, we have to draw a line in the sand somewhere. Customers in zone 5 are eligible for 10% off shipping or free truck shipments with minimum 200 pound order.

Q: What oh what did I do with that email from a reader wondering why our newsletter seems to have a northern/not from the Deep South slant, and would like to see more articles for issues they face? Camilla, Editor

A: Great question! Camilla, you fancy yourself organized, but that's not the first email you've misplaced and probably won't be the last. And I don't need to bring up how you once randomly stuck a shallow frame in a deep box and all the work those poor bees had to do to draw that out, do I?

To the reader who wondered why we don't cover the Deep South as extensively:

- Sorry, we'll try to do better!
- It may be because those of us north of there get a longer season off to write articles.
- I'd LOVE any insights/questions/articles on issues from the Deep South. Please send them to KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com.

Thanks, Camilla. And yes, I really did stick a shallow frame in a deep box.

Q: When can I order package bees?

A: Starting December 7.

Q: I bought a lot of stuff from y'all and have it now all painted up and ready for occupancy. I have had three nucs for months but other things just kept my attention. Is it OK to transfer the 5-frame nucs over to just one 10-frame box for each nuc? Very warm weather here and bees are active. I have found no reference to such a "housing upgrade" pro or con. J Alderman III, Georgia

A: Interesting question. This will depend on several things, including the answers to the following questions:

- If you have had bees in nucs for several months I can't believe they haven't swarmed already, probably leaving behind a virgin to be mated. Are you queen-right? Do you see evidence of eggs and larvae?
- Do they have adequate stores for the winter? How many frames of honey, brood?
- Are you feeding now?
- Are you in South Georgia?

As a rule of thumb you never want to give the bees more room than they can defend, and people do overwinter nucs successfully.

Let's assume your boxes are stuffed with stores and bees, and you are queen-right. If you are maintaining sustained temperatures of 45 plus degrees they should take liquid feed. You should be mixing 2-1 sugar syrup by weight (2lb sugar to 1lb water) and feeding them all they will take. If transferring them to 10-frame boxes, do this when it's at least 50 plus degrees so as not to chill the brood. Do this quickly and put the frames in the center of the 10-frame box in the same order they came out of the nucs and fill the ends with frames with foundation. Make sure to put new boxes in the same place the nucs came from. Reduce your entrances and feed them like crazy.

With more information, I may be able to make a more informed decision. Sean Burgess, Kelley Beekeeper 🍯

About Obtaining This Newsletter

Thanks to technology, about the last of each month, an electronic issue of this newsletter is sent to all of you on our email list. Unfortunately, it isn't always hiccup-free. Here are some common issues and options:

How do I subscribe? Go to www.kelleybees.com and create an account with the "Sign me up for the Walter T. Kelley Newsletter!" box checked.

How do I unsubscribe? There is a link to unsubscribe in every newsletter email.

Can you send me back issues? No, but they are available on our website (select Education > Newsletter.)

Why do you send links to two newsletter copies with the email? We've learned that some readers have a slow internet connection. For these folks, we save each issue with minimized picture quality and a few other things. The appearance is somewhat compromised, but it is a smaller file to download. This small PDF is always saved to be compatible with Adobe Reader 4 and greater.

My copy of Adobe Reader won't open the newsletter! Are you running the latest version? You can download it free from <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>. Try downloading the "small" PDF version. Again, the small PDF is always saved to be compatible with Adobe Reader 4 and greater. If you can't open that one either, you either have an even older version, or some other unique problem. Sorry!

My internet connection is too slow to download the 40MB Adobe Reader. Golly. You may want to upgrade your connection! Or, contact Adobe about obtaining a copy of Adobe Reader on CD. Thanks for reading!

Foraging for Fun

Bees We've Seen

We're always looking for your photographs of bees and beekeeping, along with two-legged bees, such as these.

Readers sent us these great photos of bees out foraging at Halloween, and Mindy of Indiana sent this somewhat alarming email: "I guess there is a bee shortage! I usually have 3-4 trick-or-treaters each year from the 100 or so that come to my door. This year I had my camera ready, and there were no bees!"



Jim S shared this photo of his (someday) Queen Bee Samantha.



Linda G shared this very interesting photo of a breathtakingly beautiful queen bee, who looks to be very deliberately contemplating the future of her hive.

This next picture isn't of bees, but these little guys, the Martin triplets of Idaho, have seen a lot of them as they assist their Dad. Kirt has shared more about the adventures of beekeeping with his triplet sons; watch for it in a future issue.

Please send your pictures, 300 dpi or larger, to Kelley-BeesEditor@gmail.com. Thank you! 🍯



Kirt from Idaho sent this enthralling photo of his beekeeping team.

Sweet as Honey

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Just received my first copy of Kelly Newsletter. It is very interesting and I enjoyed reading it. I have been a customer of Kelley Bees since the mid-90s, had to stop beekeeping in 1999 but I have started once again keeping bees. Started this past spring with 3 hives ... was able to increase them to 5 hives. The overwintering info in the newsletter was helpful. Thanks and keep sending the newsletter.

M Noble, KY

Just came across this food safety report and thought it may have some value for the newsletter as a link ... I love the newsletter. Keep up the good job and thanks.

www.foodsafetynews.com/2011/11/tests-show-most-store-honey-isnt-honey/

Rocky - KS

Can you tell me what type of kit these people used on this website? I would like to buy a few.

<http://bigredcouch.com/journal/?p=2626>

Mark K.

Editor: We checked out the site and enjoyed that blog entry, along with many others.

It appears to be the All Medium Kit with a Vent Super and a #12-S Hive top syrup feeder.

Outstanding issue. Great job!! Consider an article on catching swarms, plasticell foundation vs. wax foundation. Enjoyed your great newsletter!!

T. McFall

Editor: Terry, input like yours is the, um, foundation of this newsletter, thanks. Some of that information is covered in this month's article by Sean Burgess.

Readers, what are your preferences on foundation, and why? We'll feature your input and our thoughts in an upcoming article; please send them to KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com, thank you!

And come next spring, we'll certainly cover swarm capturing—thanks for the suggestion.



Last month we featured a picture of one of Kentucky's Beekeepers of the Year, John Pace. John shared this award with Joe Taylor, above.



With your help and the Warren County Ohio Beekeepers Club I started two hives this spring. I was amazed at the support from my friends and neighbors. Seems everyone had a fond memory of beekeeping in their youth. They provided the elements that produced this sign for my beeyard.

DragonsLairKY

Editor: Salute! We appreciate your sharing success and the fun photo. Folks, we'd love to hear how your season went, please send your successes, failures or just thoughts to KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com, thank you!

Last issue we told you we'd be following up with the McGraths of Bowling Green, new beekeepers we met at last spring's Bee Pick-up Day. Here's what Dad Pat shared:

It has been a great year and both of my sons have enjoyed the bees. Their sister, not so much! Samuel is the youngest and he was with me on pick up day; Owen is three years older and has found them to be fun. (Samuel is the reliable help though.) We actually are taking Owen up to Kelley today to pick up some more woodenware for next year—Owen hasn't made the pilgrimage yet!

We bought two hives (Italians) to begin with and on the day of installation one of those swarmed. But we made an effort to catch it, unsuccessfully. Samuel had named the queens and most of the bees and decided that the hive that swarmed was "his" hive. He was inconsolable.

"... have enjoyed every minute of this beekeeping experience ... every day we go to our farm to feed the goats, we stop and watch the bees for a few minutes and enjoy the time spent! We wouldn't trade it for the world."

Over the next week or two I frantically called every bee supplier in the country to buy a package or three. I happened to be running up to Kelley for some other supplies and walked into the lobby. One of the ladies on the phones was literally hanging up with a beekeeper who was calling to cancel his order for three Russian hives. He lived in Missouri and the flooding had gotten his entire bee yard. I was thrilled to take them off her hands!

During the season, we have had three hives do very well. After talking to a lot of beekeepers in Kentucky the season has been ok. We did not get any honey and I am concerned about the girls having enough supplies for the winter; the weather really stressed my hives in July and August and they ate a lot of their honey.

As for the tally marks , I have four stings for the year, the boys zero. We were looking forward to honey but have enjoyed every minute of this beekeeping experience. Maybe next year. We will have more hives, and be better prepared. Regardless, every day we go to our farm to feed the goats, we stop and watch the bees for a few minutes and enjoy the time spent! We wouldn't trade it for the world.

Pat (and Samuel and Owen) McGrath



Samuel (on the left), Mason, (Samuel's friend, middle) and Owen (older brother, right) All three of them are in the back of my truck as we were getting ready to work the bees. Samuel has been talking to Mason all year about the bees and Mason had spent the night. Samuel was so excited to show him what we did and Mason thought it was so cool. It's been such a neat experience through the year to have both boys enjoy some time together "working on the bees" as well as tell their friends and classmates about our hobby.

I just had to let you know how much I am enjoying and LEARNING from your 2011 newsletters! What a fantastic resource. I'll be placing an order on Dec. 7 for my first bees.
Thanks! Lin

Editor: Yes folks, you can start ordering your package bees in just days. Remember, the earlier you order, the more likely you are to secure the dates you want for delivery or pick-up. 🟡

Dronings from a Queen Bee

Sweet Dreams

By Charlotte Hubbard

If it wasn't for the forthcoming joys of excessive Christmas fudge, I would be quite despondent. You see, I've put my bees to bed for the winter. This necessary step soooo depresses me.

I'm putting my bees to bed because winter is coming. Winter, with its 10-degree above zero nights of howling, electrical-line-snapping winds, followed by mornings of chipping ice off my car windshield? That I can handle. What depresses me is not seeing my ba-bees for several months.

Chances are, if you subscribe to this newsletter, you also suffer from incurable "bee disease." You've watched insects go in and out of a painted pine box for seemingly only five minutes, and then wondered where two hours of your life just went.

This year, fall came slowly in Michigan. In October, as I pattered about the apiary putting the bees to bed, I had a lot of time to reflect on why this essential activity so saddens me.

First, I will miss the visual aspects of my bees. I love looking out the kitchen window at my apiary, especially in mid-summer when hives are four or even five boxes high, an assortment of uncoordinated tropical colors that rival a package of M&Ms, with non-stop take-offs, landings and an occasional swarm to keep me humble.

Winterization means shortening those hives to two deep boxes. Over a couple of transitory weeks the bees go from a colorful tower to a squatty two-story. Doesn't that hurt their self-esteem?

I add insult to injury by covering those vibrant colors with tar paper. As if those black, foreboding wraps weren't disheartening enough, I then add windbreaks. By "windbreaks" I mean an old door, a couple bales of straw, overturned lawn chairs held down by concrete blocks—the sorts of things that make neighborhood associations quickly write new restrictions. All the bee yard is missing is a rusty '81 Chevy on blocks to also be a junk yard.

A second reason I get so depressed about putting my bees to bed is that I know I will likely never see them again. I'm not talking about those bees who naturally succumb to old age in the months ahead; I'm talking about a dismal overwintering success rate that makes me one of Kelley's best package bee customers every spring. If the term "beekeeper" means not only someone who keeps bees but also keeps them alive, I'm not



Some beautiful bee hives in summer Kentucky. Photo courtesy of Pat McGrath.

a beekeeper. I'm just a girl who loves her bees, often to death.

I've tried to improve my overwintering success. Each year I research, study, talk to local beekeepers and try different things. And each spring I clean up too many dead-outs and then install new bees on some beautifully drawn comb.

One year I decided to figure out what would work best in my apiary. With great scientific planning I experimented with groups of four hives in three different locations about the yard. In one group, for example, two hives had solid bottom boards and two had screens; two had multiple vent holes next to two with just Popsicle stick venting, etc.

I had a 50% loss that year: one of each hive type died in each location. The results couldn't have been more inconclusive if I'd engineered it that way. But, even though the results told me nothing, I use the Popsicle ventilation method on every hive now, mainly so I can eat a lot of Popsicles each fall.

In 2010 I had a bit more success keeping hives alive overwinter. I attribute it to using the sugar-on-top-of-newspaper (Mountain Camp) method. This year I'm experimenting with it more and look forward to the results. Come spring I hope to be able to answer if bees with the sports pages fare better than the classified ads.

A third reason I hate putting my bees to bed is because when I can't see them, I worry about them. As you can surmise from the previous paragraphs, there's good reason for me to worry, doggone it.

While my bees are clustered out of sight, they're definitely not out of mind. I wonder if they're healthy, and if they're mentally OK. My siblings can greatly annoy me and we're not in a tight little ball for weeks on end, with each other's feet in our faces, on our backs, under our wings, atop our heads.

I also worry that the bees will get bored reading the sugar-laden newspaper over and over again. But, if I'm being honest, I have an even bigger dread: that my bees are cuddled in a ball, laughing about the time they chased me indoors, and plotting new, creative ways to sting me.

The only thing I dread more than that is the possibility of not seeing them again... 🍯



A beautiful winter day, but less than beautiful hives.