



Kelley Bee News

ISSUE 30—DECEMBER 2012

Modern Beekeeping



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The Buzz

Remember that helpful article on small hive beetles? Looking for that recipe for honey dog bones that you know you saw in a newsletter? Wondering if the strangely behaving honeybees in your backyard are the zombees described in....what issue was that?

We routinely get these kinds of questions, and decided to do something about it—in the form of a holiday gift. As our newsletter chugs toward its fourth birthday, there's quite a collection of knowledge in it that you may want to reference. Now that should be much easier. We've assembled an ever-growing index, which we've sent with this newsletter, and will keep up-to-date on our website as it expands monthly as well. Remember, you can access all back issues, and now this index, at www.kelleybees.com.



Meanwhile, in this issue you'll find plenty of information on one of your favorite subjects, and our usual assortment of fabulous photographs and beekeeping fun.

As the year draws to a close, it is a time of reflection upon everything, including honeybees.

We hope you're going to continue to help this essential insect in 2013, and hope that you'll turn to Kelley's, your partner in beekeeping, for your needs.

Thank you and happy holidays.

M. Jane Burgess
Kelley's CEO & Partner

I Will Save You Money



Send me a list NOW of what you are going to need for next year, and I will be pleased to quote you **FREIGHT PRE-PAID** to your station.

My prices are very low ---but not too low to give you the very best quality.


5--CYPRESS standard 10-frame dovetailed hives complete with metal covers, inner covers, bottom boards and soft white pine frames - **\$10.95**

F. O. B. Houma

WRITE FOR FREE CATALOG

Gulf Coast Bee Co.

Houma, Louisiana



Bee Thinking About

For December, 2012

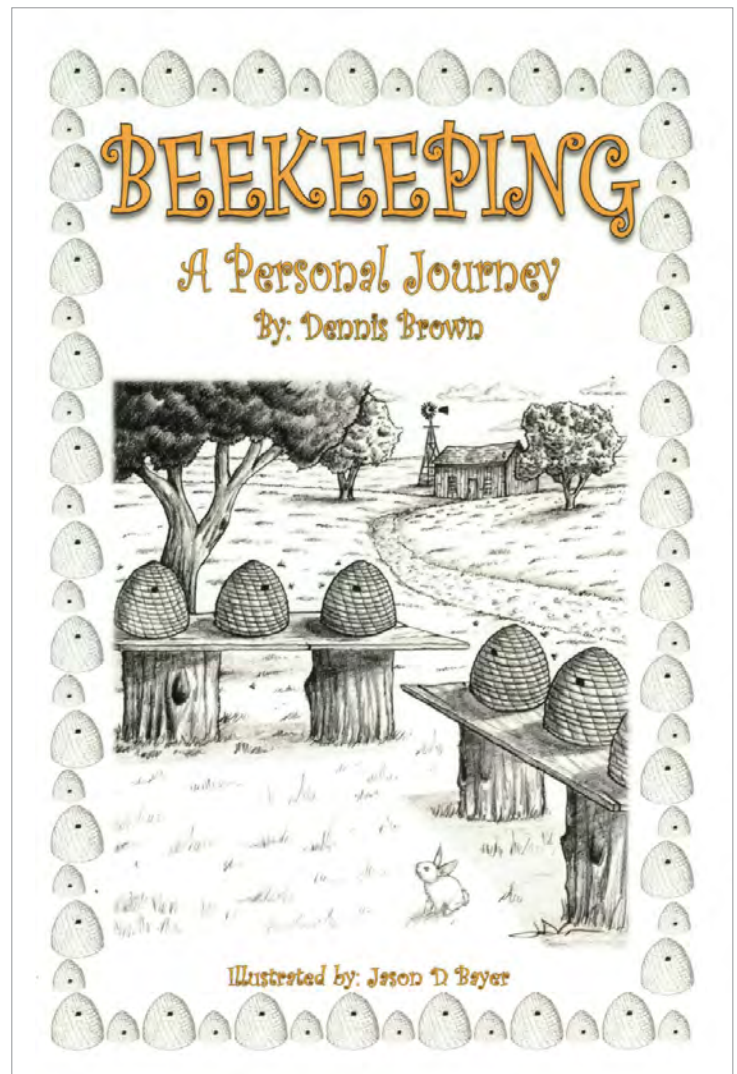
Along with other holiday preparations, here are some geographic and weather-dependent considerations for what to do in your apiary this month. For area specifics, we suggest you talk with other local beekeepers and/or check with your bee club for common practices this time of year. We've covered these topics extensively in the last three years, more ideas, insights and examples may be found in back issues, at www.kelleybees.com.

Both northern and southern climes: Wrapping hives, mouse guards, entrance reducers, solid bottom boards, hive ventilation, reducing space—this all should have been done by now. See November's issue for more information. Northern beekeepers, there isn't much we can do except monitor hives to be sure branches haven't fallen on them, that covers are in place, and that snow is cleared from ventilation holes.

South: Weather permitting...

Honey placement: We turned to beekeeper and prolific writer Dennis Brown for this advice:

- Most of us in the South are thinking about preparing our bees for winter and that includes making sure that the bees have enough food stores to carry them until spring. Feeding sugar water is the most common way to beef-up those food stores however, we all know that feeding honey to our bees is a much healthier solution.
- The most common practice for beekeepers fortunate enough to have extra filled honey supers is to place those honey supers on top of the hive for the bees to eat throughout the winter months. As the temperature begins to drop, the bees will move into the upper box to form their winter cluster. If you have a honey super as the top box, the bees will move into it for the winter.
- Now let's think about it. We would really like to keep our honey supers as honey supers and not have any brood in them. During the winter months the queen will lay brood in the top box where she is located and you will not have that honey super available in the spring time ready for the honey flow.
- The solution is really simple. Instead of placing the honey super on top for the bees to winter on, place the honey super on the bottom. Bees will always move their honey stores up as winter



Dennis Brown is author of "Beekeeping: A Personal Journey" and shares his extensive knowledge of bees at www.lonestar-farms.net. His book, catalog #684, is available from Kelley's.

time approaches so that it will be available to them while they are in their winter cluster. The lower box is usually empty by the time February arrives (in the south) and can be removed at that time and stored until the honey flow begins or remove the empty box when you perform your first inspection of the year.

- The key is to add this super at least six to eight weeks before the cold hits. That will allow the bees enough time to move the honey from the bottom to the top box.
- As you can see, your honey super offered your bees the food supply they needed and it will be available for the spring honey flow without having been used for brood activity.




Windbreak against winter's chill, photo courtesy of Christine Jacob.

Enough food? If you don't have enough stores consider supplemental feeding and pollen patties, only helpful though 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 article in last month's issue.

We're sure we've forgotten something!

As always, your comments and contributions welcome, email KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com or visit kelleybees.com/blog. 

Healthy Bees

Mite Collection Request

Courtesy of Catch The Buzz.

Hi all treatment-free beekeepers. How about helping me collect data on the actual mite levels in your hives over the course of the year?

Here's the simple protocol:

Alcohol wash is most accurate. Can do with only a level 1/3 cup of bees, which is slightly over 200 bees. Follow procedure at <http://scientificbeekeeping.com/sick-bees-part-11-mite-monitoring-methods/>.

The sample should be taken from the same place in the hive each time—we prefer the first non-brood frame adjacent to brood, since less chance of getting a queen.

Samples should be taken each month, at about the same time of month. All samples from the same hive(s), and kept track of for hive number. Two or more hives would be most desirable.

Such results would allow me to plot the mite population curve for the year in your hives, which would be of great interest for non-treated colonies that survive.

Record hive number(s), date, and mite count for each sample.

Send me the data and location after you have collected for a year. We'll make the data available to anybody interested on the web page, and let you know when it gets posted.

Randy Oliver
Grass Valley, CA
www.ScientificBeekeeping.com

Editor's Note: Please only open hives weather permitting.



Not sure what to get
your bee-loved honey
for the holidays?
Consider this...

A Taste of Top Bar Hives

By Camilla Bee, Editor

While most readers of this publication work “standard”, Langstroth hives, more and more folks are working top bar hives (TBHs). We’re discussing them again now, as this is the time of year when many folks are considering how they might expand their apiary next year, or are pondering beekeeping for the first time.

There are many differences between Langstroth and TBHs. Many beekeepers who like TBHs offer a variety of reasons for doing so, a key one being that the bees in it seem happier. Happier bees are not only easier with which to work, but they seemingly make more honey.

There is a wealth of information available on TBHs. Because they’re non-standard, there are lots of different styles, plans, and types. Due to their increasing popularity, Kelley’s offers one model, as shown in the photo.



Kelley's Top Bar Hive

TBHs are definitely worth considering. Following are some pros and cons.

PROS

- 1 Less expense: no frames, foundation, covers, bottom boards, etc.
- 2 No storing hive bodies when not in use; there are no hive bodies
- 3 Happier bees, many claim
- 4 Less heavy lifting: a huge advantage for all of us who don't like what a filled honey super weighs
- 5 Higher “way cool” factor: bees build comb in these lovely circles and loops. Many TBHs have built-in observation windows.
- 6 More wax: for every bar of honey harvested, there's also an entire bar of wax that was crushed in the process but is now available for a variety of purposes



What bees tend to do when they're not being 'framed.' Bamboo skewers were used to try and guide the bees in making straight comb.

CONS

- 1 Fragile comb: it cannot be easily examined or manipulated like the comb in frames, and bees tend to attach comb to the structure
- 2 As noted above, bees tend to attach it to the structure, so more monitoring, correction and comb destruction may be required to keep comb freely movable
- 3 Less knowledge and expertise available from other beekeepers, but that's changing
- 4 Because comb doesn't conform to a standard, it is hard to swap resources between TBHs
- 5 Bees have to rebuild comb each year if bars are removed for extraction. Of course, there are advantages to replacing comb, and some TBH beekeepers feel bees build their own comb faster than from foundation...



A beautiful "bar" of honey. The bees didn't get the hint about building straight along the bamboo skewer.

Reader Roberta, who works several TBHs, shared some insights from her experiences: "I use a follower board to keep the hive compact and to give the girls kind of a pattern to follow so they will hopefully build the comb straight. I have also been experimenting with different methods of encouraging them to get the comb straight.

I feel the bees tend to be nicer to deal with any time the hive has to be opened, at least my girls are (am I prejudiced, or what?)

After watching the honey man struggle with the heavy supers full of honey, I'm glad that I chose TBHs. It is a bit of a mess in the kitchen to get the honey processed, but if one had enough hives to warrant a honey house/room, it would not be such a chore. Maybe someday...

My suggestion for anyone considering beekeeping is to find a local club or association and to join it. I have found that beekeepers are free with information and most willing to share their knowledge with 'newbees'. Don't forget to read, read, and read. There is tons of information out there. Utilize it; sort/sift through it and find what works for you... Beekeeping is an evolving experience."

Reader James, a relatively new beekeeper, hesitated to give advice because his beekeeping experience thus far may be summarized as:

1. I didn't kill the bees and
2. I didn't kill myself.

Salute James! That's certainly commendable!

James did however share a key insight from an experienced TBH beekeeper buddy, with regard to the straight comb-building issue: "leveling the hive body in all three axes is critical, since the bees will build comb perpendicular to the earth without regard to the box that surrounds them."

What are your experiences and challenges with TBHs? We'd love to share them with our readers. Please email us at KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com or visit kelleybees.com/blog. Thank you. 🍯

Bee-Havior

Do Honeybees Bite?

By Ol' Drone

A frequently asked question at any honeybee exhibit and demonstration is “do the bees ever bite you, mister?” I’ve always enjoyed joking with the visitor by telling him—“no they don’t bite but bees use the other end and can sting you!” Now we have the truth!

Recently released by research scientists from Greece and France, is a study published in the professional journal “PLOS ONE.” titled “Secrets of the honeybee bite.” This previously unknown defense weapon is used by the bees to protect their hive from some predators but also has far reaching potential benefits in other scientific fields including human health.

Researchers were surprised to find that the sharp mandibles (mouth parts) transfer to the bite a natural anesthetic immobilizing the victim while it can be disposed. The bees use this technique to bite and eliminate pests too small to sting such as wax moths, larva, and Varroa mites. The discovery of this highly effective natural anesthetic, with huge potential, will be of great interest to the pharmaceutical industry eager to develop better local anesthetics.

The compound used by the bees is a recognized, FDA-approved, food additive known as 2-heptanone. This compound is also naturally found in bread and beer (enough beer can have an anesthetizing effect by itself!). The mode of action by this compound is similar to the action of Lidocaine, commonly used in humans and other mammals.

Beekeepers have long searched for methods to control parasitic Varroa mites and other pests. Good results have been found by breeding “grooming behavior” traits in strains of bees. This grooming behavior includes biting of pests and now the anesthetized nature of the bite enhances further behavior studies.

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



Where there are
flowers, there's sure
to be honeybees!

Keep reading to find
some of the sweeties
adorned as adorable
insects.

Bee-Yond & Bee-Hind the Hives

Who is Really Behind the Hives

One of the wonderful things about Kelley's is the people who work here. We love them, and they must love Kelley', because so many of them have made it a career. Their knowledge and talents are greatly appreciated.



Left to Right: Mary Doris Simon 29 years, Keith Dennis 38 years, Vicki Williams 29 years, Earl King 37 years, Ray Dupin 29 years, Maxine Edwards 41 years, Kenny Day 43 years, Kenny Milner 46 years. Not pictured Mary K Franklin 27 years, Bonnie Hill 39 years, & Daymond Higdon 39 years.

As the season draws to a close...

Beginners Department: As the honey gathering season draws reluctantly to a close, we are inclined to wonder how many of those who started with bees last spring are still beginners and how many are real beekeepers.

All have no doubt made mistakes.

Those who have blamed themselves for their errors, taking steps to correct them and prevent their happening again are real beekeepers, while those who blame the bees, the weather, the package bee shipper, the equipment manufacturers and everything else in sight are still just beginners.

This excerpt appeared in the October 1925 edition of **Modern Beekeeping**. It was written by Ralph Ziegler.

“Those who have blamed themselves for their errors, taking steps to correct them and prevent their happening again are real beekeepers...”

Buzzing About Our Walls

Do you think your Kelley's hive bodies are a thing of beauty? Behind their craftsmanship is our Woodshop Team, appropriately take pride in what they do. These talented employees include local artist Jesse Willis, who recently stepped away for a bit to paint these murals in our office area.

Thanks Jesse. If only queens were always that easy to find...



A-Bee-Cs

Thinking About Keeping Bees? Part 1: Costs, Time and Intangibles

So, you're thinking about keeping bees...

Well, no surprise here, but this free newsletter from a bee supply company isn't going to discourage that thought! We think the world would be better off if practically everyone kept bees! We also think that you should understand—as well as possible—the tangibles of cost and time.

How Much Does It Cost?

When we asked nearly a thousand beekeepers what they wish they'd known prior to keeping bees, about 5% mentioned cost as one of the factors (there were often multiple factors listed.)

A few said this was the best fun-to-cost hobby they'd had yet, but most who cited cost said it was more expensive than they had assumed.

Assumptions

Keep in mind that you could keep bees with no investment, other than hard work and skills for building what you need, and luck in capturing a swarm. Keeping bees with no initial cash outlay can happen, but rarely. For the majority of us, some purchases will be necessary. Here are the assumptions upon which the rest of this article is based:

- You will purchase equipment.
- You'll use a Langstroth hive. There are other options—top bar and Warre hives are becoming increasingly popular. Langstroth though, because of its standardized approach and widespread use, is our recommendation for beginners.
- You will purchase bees.

Three Expense Groups

One way to look at the cost of beekeeping is to divide expenses into three general categories.

- Initial equipment investment: what you need for the housing and care of bees
- Honeybees: the actual bees
- Operating equipment: the equipment that helps you best work with your bees and optimally manage them

1. Initial Equipment Investment

Most of these expenses are an initial investment that will last for years, as would be golf clubs or a bass boat if you're going to pursue those interests. What you'll need to invest in subsequent years will decrease, unless you add more colonies of bees.

Plenty is written about what you must have for housing bees. An excellent resource explaining what components are essential versus optional and their costs is found at <http://www.michiganbeekeepers.com/beekeeping-basics/costtogetstarted>.

Housing

Each colony of bees requires its own living structure, called a hive. That investment is about \$200/hive. That price varies by hive type, quantity discounts, shipping expenses, and options. This investment typically includes all the needed components of a Langstroth hive, such as a top cover, inner cover, bottom board, frames and foundation, although foundation is considered by some as optional.¹

Please give careful consideration to 10-frame versus 8-frame equipment, and hive body size. (A hive body is the box into which you put frames and bees.) Opting for medium boxes, versus a combination of deep and shallower boxes, has its advantages. There are pros and cons for the number of frames/box. Research and talk to other beekeepers about their preferences.

While we will discuss this more in later issues, going with all medium equipment means you only have one size to handle for the box, the frames and foundation. Many of our surveyed beekeepers said they wished they'd known about the all-medium option when they started.

Used housing? No.

Yes, we sell what you need, but that's not the reason we say no. Unless you **know** why the equipment is available and how it was used, you may be slowly or quickly killing your honeybee investment by putting them in dangerous equipment. Used equipment may be carrying diseases that killed its previous occupants and left residues that live for years. The equipment, especially drawn wax, may also contain chemicals or a chemical build-up that will negatively impact your bees.

Hive Preparation

Beyond the hive, there are costs in hive preparation. The hive requires painting or something to protect it from the elements, and a hive stand and bottom board for bottom ventilation. The hive stand may be as simple as a couple of concrete blocks, to a manufactured hive stand. We'll **estimate \$20/hive**, although you may already have what you need for preparation.

Apiary Preparation

There may be additional costs in apiary preparation. Some of our surveyed beekeepers said this was where they spent unexpectedly. Once they fell in love with their bees they spent unplanned funds making a friendlier, more bee-supportive area, such as extensive landscaping to include bee-friendly plants, and even including a comfortable sitting area from which to watch the apiary.



Kelley's Kentucky Special includes everything you need for housing. Bees and protective clothing, books, etc. are extra.

¹ If I'd written this article five years ago, I would've listed foundation as a required start-up cost. I, and most beekeepers, still recommend foundation...but it isn't required, and the wave of letting bees build their own is growing.

Foundation also needs to be replaced over time due to residues. It absorbs chemicals from what bees find on plants they visit, the environment itself, and any chemicals you may elect to use in the hive.

2. Honeybees

Purchasing Options

Honeybees are typically purchased in one of two ways, a package, or a nuc.

- A package is generally three pounds of bees, with a separately caged queen, all in a screened box. The package bees must be moved into a hive. A package in 2013 from the Walter T. Kelley Company will start at \$89.
- A nuc is a small nucleus colony, containing typically 3-7 frames, bees already drawing comb and tending to eggs and larva, and a freed queen working to expand the colony, all in a small hive-like box. A nuc can remain in the small box for a bit. A nuc in 2013 from the Walter T. Kelley Company will start at \$137.

Each has its pros and cons. I'm personally biased toward packages because, to me, being part of the package-to-thriving-hive process was head-over-heels totally fascinating. From going to the Post Office to pick up a wire "shoebox" of insects and the sea of people parting when I carried it out, to hearing that buzz and feeling the warmth of that cluster, to seeing how, in only two short weeks, they'd began to transform sheets of formatted wax into the perfect structures that has to have hosted them for centuries...witnessing that remains one of my highlights in beekeeping.

I have a beekeeping buddy who only purchases nucs. He wants a proven queen and a colony well underway. He doesn't want to worry about feeding the package to assist in getting started, and what happens if it is cold and rainy the first month.



Addicted-to-beekeeping hobbyists prepare to install eight packages of bees. If you order more than one package, they will be shipped from Kelley's bundled in groups. Each of these boxes is a package.

One-time Investment?

Hopefully you need to buy bees only once. However, honeybees succumb to plenty these days—Varroa mite infestations, small hive beetle (SHB) infestations, hard winters, wet springs, dry summers, Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), and plenty of beekeeper ignorance. I've known dozens of beginning beekeepers over the years; I don't know of any who haven't lost at least some if not all of their bees on any given year. I also know only one who hasn't gotten "right back on the horse". Once you catch up in honeybee magic, it is nearly impossible to escape their spell.

3. Operating Equipment

Operating equipment generally includes the following basics. While we suspect most beekeepers would agree with this list, there are beekeepers who say none of this is needed. Please note that a hive kit, such as those offered by Kelley's, includes most everything you need from the following list and then some.

For many of the surveyed beekeepers who were surprised by the cost, it was for items in this category such as those offered by Kelley's and shown to the left.



Cat #365-NE, the price and comprehensive offerings are hard to beat.

The cost of items in this category may vary widely due to individual preferences.

OPERATING EQUIPMENT			
ITEM	INVESTMENT	ESSENTIAL?	COMMENTARY
Hive tool	\$5 to \$20, although most hive kits come with one. Kelley's sells an economy tool for less than \$5. Having a couple or more of these is handy.	You can use a paint scraper, a crowbar, or any of a variety of other tools, but this low-cost tool made for the job helps protect your investment in hive bodies and frames, and makes working bees easier.	You'll hope it is a one-time purchase, but hive tools tend to grow legs and go for walks.
Smoker	\$18 - \$50, included with most hive kits.	There are beekeepers who never smoke bees; there are beekeepers who work bees with a lit pipe so they have smoke at the ready. If you ever work a "hot ² " hive or are robbing a hive of honey, smoke is a wonderful thing.	Associated expenses might include smoker fuel, and a smoker box for transporting a smoker safely.
Protective clothing	\$0 – several hundred depending upon size and features. You can use nothing or home-made items. For beginners, we recommend gloves and a veil at a minimum, included in many starter kits. You can use your own clothing (shirt, pants) if cost is an issue; suits (full or half) range in price and features.	For years now my scared-to-death-of-stings cousin has used only a \$10 veil, dishwashing gloves, and a \$6 pair of overrun-warehouse coveralls. His only on-going expense is new gloves (frequently) and a roll of duct tape to ensure no bees get into his veil as it doesn't attach to his overalls. I prefer my full suit with attached hood, elastic cuffs, etc. Lets me focus on working bees, not worrying where they might find a hole.	This was another area of unplanned expenses, often because multiple sets of protective wear were desired so beekeepers could share the experience with family and friends.
Feeding: Feeder, supplemental feed/feeding equipment	A feeder ranges from \$3 – less than \$30, depending upon features and size. Annually, on a per-colony basis, you may spend anywhere from \$0 to \$50 if you elect to feed honey, sugar, corn syrup, patties, etc.	Feeding at package installation is HIGHLY recommended, as is in times of dearth.	The type of feeder to be used varies by your preferences. There are plenty who will argue for and against all those feed types, as well as if it should ever be done.

2 A term used to describe a very aggressive hive

Medications	On a per-colony basis, anywhere from \$0 to hundreds each year, depending upon your preferences	Depends upon whether you're keeping bees organically or not.	This is another area of unexpected expense noted by many beekeepers. Avoiding that expense is perhaps also then another reason for keeping bees chemical-free?
Honey processing/handling equipment	\$0 – hundreds, depending upon your goals and production	Crush and strain works for the first few years/hives, although larger volumes make that impractical and inefficient.	There are many levels of investment here, from nothing, to a two-frame extractor, to complete honey houses. For the hobbyist, a bee club or fellow beekeepers may be willing to share equipment until you see where you want to go with this. ³
Honey containers, labels	\$0 – hundreds or more, depending upon your desires and honey production	Does honey in an old jam jar taste any less heavenly?	
Furthering education	\$0 – several thousand dollars	How engaged and involved do you want to be?	There are plenty of free resources out there (like this newsletter) and some amazing books. Attending local bee club meetings is generally free or very low cost; attending state and annual meetings may be a fun way to better keep bees, but they have associated costs.

³ One beekeeper surveyed said she has spent over a thousand dollars in equipment she no longer uses—most of it involved in honey extraction. She hesitated to spend the big money until she was sure she knew where her interests would take her. While she regrets those small expenses that added up, it was an essential part of the learning and discovery process.

Bottom Line?

If you take advantage of an offering like Kelley's beginner kit, and purchase a package of bees, you can get into beekeeping for less than \$500.

It is **strongly** recommended that you don't start with just one hive however—not only by us, but by dozens of beekeepers we surveyed. Don, of Bittersweet Bee Farm in Indiana, shared “I wish I had known when I started that, if money permits, one should really start out with two hives, not just one. With one you have nothing to compare to know if your hive is healthy and normal or if it is in need of some TLC.” The website noted earlier offers a compelling reason to start with three. If you have at least two, you can use the resources of a strong hive to assist a weak hive; increasing the chances of success.

Does It Cost More?

A thriving colony of bees grows exponentially. Our readers shared that their passion for beekeeping usually does as well. There will be costs associated with that, but most of our surveyed beekeepers said those were investments they willingly make, agreeing with Jeff who said he wished he'd known “How expensive it would become. But the experience has been worth it.”

How Much Time Does It Take?

If that's the question, most estimates range from 15–30 hours a year to tend one colony of bees. Of course, preparing the equipment the first year takes longer. Also, more hives equals more time, but the time/hive decreases a bit.



Photo courtesy of Lucas Beachler.

A better question is “how much time do you want to give it?” You can play a round of golf in two hours, but doing it well and enjoying the outing may take double that, and learning to do it well takes countless hours, most of which are rewarding as you challenge yourself to become better.

It's the same with beekeeping. You **need** to spend 15–30 hours that first year, **but to learn to do it well takes time.** You'll need to research, discuss and study both the bees and information on how to best manage them.

So, figure a minimum of 15-30 hours per hive that first year, knowing that as your interest in and desire to do it

well grows, that may easily turn into a couple hundred hours a year counting time at bee meetings, talking with others, studying and researching, thinking about bees, and watching them.

Chances are, the more you put into them, the more you'll get out of them, as survey respondent Joe explains: “I thought bees were self-help animals and was told that they didn't require much care. Well they don't if I don't much care. The more investment of money, time and care increases my care dramatically. When they produced about 16 pounds of honey this year, I began to care a lot more.”

Dennis from Ohio noted “I think I found the right activity as I near retirement, one that takes neither too little nor too much time, carries new learning.”

Perhaps Ernie from Oklahoma summarized it best: “Time spent working hives is like a soul refreshing time.”

Concluding Considerations

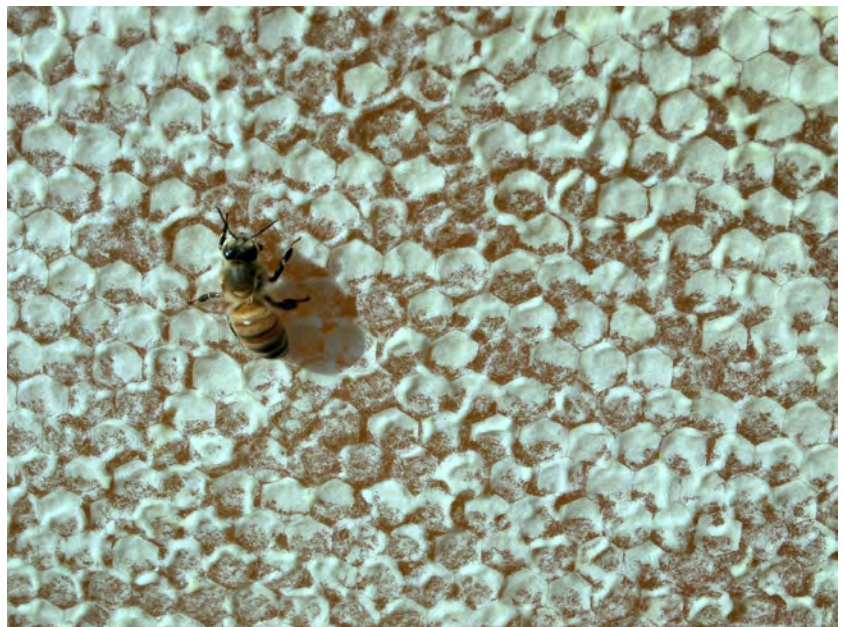
Here are some voices of experiences:

“I think a lot of people under-estimate the time commitment required to be successful. Being a beekeeper instead of a “bee-haver” as they say... Also, the upfront costs of getting set up can rapidly keep piling up, one must understand that there is a significant startup cost to gathering the required equipment and supplies. Some of the best advice I got was to start with two hives instead of one; they all progress at a different rate and experience different issues AND you can easily rescue a failing hive with help from its neighbor!” **Luke, Missouri**

[I was surprised at] “How much money you can spend on a hobby! Just glad I don’t own a boat too.” **Jeff, Texas**

“I’m glad I didn’t know some things when I started beekeeping. If I had known how much money it would cost me to get started, I would probably not have done it! I went to the beekeeping school at KSU and read lots before I started but I wish I had worked with someone with their bees before I began. But: I keep bees because I like honey (a lot!). My husband and I started keeping bees after our kids were grown... It has been a great way to reconnect with each other, appreciate each other’s strengths and enjoy each other’s company.” **Peggy, Kentucky**

“For me the thing I wished I had understood is that you don’t have to invest a lot of money at once to work with bees, you can start with one hive and work up to as many as you want. You can purchase the items that you need slowly as you learn.” **Pam, Missouri**



A honeybee inspects capped honey.

“We wish we had known how much it would cost in start-up fees and ongoing expenses. On the other hand, we never dreamed that there is a never ending depth of things to learn from our bees and from other bee keepers!” **Diane & Rich, North Carolina**

[I wish I’d understood in the beginning] “probably the costs involved if you want to do it right. Yet it’s my only true hobby. I really like getting others involved. In the last two years I have gotten seven friends into beekeeping. Our wives think we are all nuts but love the honey when we bring it home.” **David, Indiana**

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

BeeCause

The Bee Lords

By Elizabeth Forbes, Beekeeper, Bowling Green, Kentucky

Some of you may remember reading in the April edition of Modern Beekeeping about a community screening of the documentary **Vanishing of the Bees**. It was hosted in Bowling Green, Kentucky on Earth Day by a group of concerned organizations and beekeepers including myself. In the audience that day were two seniors from Bowling Green High School. David Wesley and Paige Hughart were no strangers to a good cause. David was the founder and president of the high school's "Rock the Boat" club, which had already started a school-wide recycling program and continually worked towards various other political and earth conscious projects.

The following day, these students went to the high school principal and explained what they'd learned, and asked if they could start a beehive at the school. The principal in turn called me, a beekeeper and

school district employee, to see if I could offer some assistance. This was exactly what I hoped would come out of the community screening of *Vanishing of the Bees*. I went to meet with them and from there, things took off!



No, this photo isn't part of the Bowling Green High School effort. It is a "teaser" for an upcoming BeeCause article on the Boston School Nature Trail. They sent us so many awesome photos that we're sneaking one in early. Look for the complete story in a future issue.

The students didn't want to wait until the following spring to get the hive started, they were graduating in exactly one month, and they wanted to leave their mark before they left. They also decided they wanted to install a Langstroth hive, as opposed to a top bar or other style, because they wanted to be able to extract honey and recycle wax to make candles, etc., with proceeds going back to support the program. I volunteered to try and round up donations of equipment and bees, and the students were charged with rounding up more students to participate in the bee project.

My first phone call was to Walter Kelley's, where an always gracious customer service rep suggested I email Jane Burgess with my entire wish list and just see if she would be willing to donate any of our equipment needs.

I did just that, and in the blink of an eye, Jane emailed me back and said, "Sure, we can do that." I did a double take. She was giving us everything we needed to get started...an entire Kentucky Special hive kit with frames and foundation, a veil, gloves, and smoker. Not wanting to wake up from this dream I emailed her back and said I'd be there the next morning to pick it up! Every afternoon for the following week, students came over to my garage and assembled and wired all of the hive components.

Once constructed, the hive bodies were taken to the BGHS art department, where art students painted on the finishing touches. Meanwhile, David and Paige attended the Allen and Warren County Beekeepers meetings during the months of April and May, explained the project, and asked for some additional donations of protective gear, and most importantly they asked for bees. Both clubs volunteered to cover the expense of two more sets of veil/gloves, and other members donated extra items they no longer used. John Benham, from the Allen County & Mammoth Cave Beekeepers Association, donated a 5-frame nuc of bees. The bees were installed on May 23, 2012, the day before school got out for summer. Gathered were students of all grade levels 8-12, beekeepers, alumnae, and the high school principal.

School was getting out for summer. I have to confess, a small part of me was wondering if I was going to be caring for this hive solo until school resumed in August. My worries were soon squelched. As soon as the bees were installed, the students started a Facebook page (The Bee Lords of Bowling Green High School) so we could all stay in touch and stay informed. Within two days there were close to 60 followers. Generally every three weeks, one student or another would get on Facebook and coordinate an inspection. The interest grew and we often had students, parents, and family friends all in attendance. What made it even better was the temperament of the bees. We could not have hoped for a stronger or more gentle colony of bees to serve as ambassadors into the world of beekeeping for these students.

There have been so many impressive acts over the last few months: The students' courage to take action for this cause; and the principal for having the foresight to realize that a beehive at the school impacts more than just the students who suit up to inspect it. There are opportunities for the horticulture department, the wood shop, the art department...the list goes on. For the students who may not even know about the hive yet, it may be the one thing that gets them connected to their high school experience. And a world of gratitude goes to Walter T. Kelley Company and the local beekeeping community for their support, enthusiasm and generosity.

School is now back in full swing for the 2012-13 school year, and we are all excited about the future of this project at Bowling Green High School. We invite anyone interested to please join our group on Facebook: The Bee Lords of Bowling Green High School, and if you're in the neighborhood when we're inspecting, grab your veil and come on!

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

Beek Hint

As apiaries grow quieter with winter's approach, we're sharing some non-technical beekeeper hints for this issue, based on our survey question "What's one thing you wished you'd known/understood when you started keeping bees?"

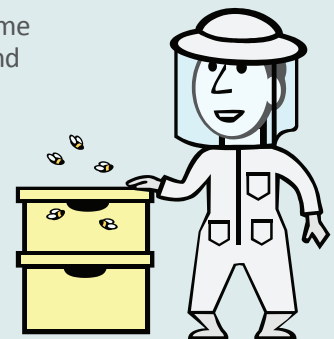
Beekeeping is an art as much as a science. There is more than one answer to every question. The correct answer depends on where you are coming from and there may be no real absolute correct answer. *Xharpspah via the internet*

I wish I knew how addictive beekeeping was. I would have started a long time ago if I had known. *Debbie P.*

Bees give back in proportion to the amount of effort that you put into them. The more time I spend, researching and coddling, the better they do. (Within reason of course, dearth and deaths just happen sometimes.) *E. Reading, Missouri*

I wish I had known how important and time saving keeping a record of each hive can be—what I do to them and what they look like and how they are performing. Then I wouldn't have to guess about when I treated or which queen was from where. *J. Hill*

The only thing that would have been good to know is that "you just can't figure bees" and to understand that the bees don't need you. *Peter Z.*



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: When is it warm enough to open a hive?

A: Answers (of course!) vary by beekeeper, but a generally, at least 50° F., with little or no wind, or when you see many bees flying about (not just 2-3.)

Q: I belong to the Big Sky Beekeepers Club in Hamilton, MT. Could I get on the mailing list for your monthly newsletter? Thank you. J. Hamilton

A: Sure, and all your club members also. Anyone can sign up, and there's no charge, at www.kelleybees.com.

Q: I have had major problems with wax moths this year. I have tried everything I can think of with no success, thus losing each of my new, weaker hives. I have seen advertisements for cedar hive bodies. Since cedar is supposed to prevent moths in a closet, would that prevent moths in a bee hive? B. Kelly

A: If it was that simple we would all have cedar hives. Strong colonies are the only thing that prevents wax moths.

Q: When can I order package bees?

A: Starting December 1. The advantage of ordering early is that you have your choice of delivery dates. We only have a certain number of packages available for each week.



A load of nucs at Kelley's last spring.

Q: My honey is crystallizing. What does this mean? What do I do about it? M. Clark

A: All honey crystallizes over time. It isn't a bad thing; it is just what honey does (with a very, very few exceptions.)

There are a few things that affect how fast honey crystallizes. One of these is the composition of its various sugars. The amount of any particular sugar in honey depends upon the nectar the bees gathered. Honey higher in glucose will tend to crystallize faster.

Honey that contains particles will also crystallize faster, as they are the "starters" upon which glucose crystals grow.

Temperature is also a factor. Honey stored at about 57° F. crystallizes the fastest; temperatures above and below that slow down crystallization.

Preventatively, you can remove most of the particles with severe filtering after harvest, but those particles contain many of honey's unique flavors, aroma and nutritional properties—the things that make your honey more wonderful than the processed commercial product available at the grocery.

We suggest you do some filtering to remove many particles, and accept that your honey, like almost all honey the world over, will crystallize over time. To return those sugar crystals to liquid, slowly heat the honey. Too fast and you negatively impact its color, flavor and nutritional properties. Don't heat it to over 100° F.

Q: Is there a difference between the honey buckets Kelley's sells and the buckets I can buy at the home improvement mega-store? Robert W.

A: Yes, most likely. Those buckets are probably not food grade. You can buy a food grade bucket at other places however, like food service facilities. Restaurants, cafeterias, etc. may have plenty they'd like you to take away as well.

Because buckets are expensive to ship, you may want to purchase a bucket locally and drill your own hole to add a gate. Of course, we hope you'll buy your gate from us!



Kelley's 5-gallon Plastic Bucket
with Lid, Catalog #317-P



Kelley's Plastic Gate to control
honey flow, Catalog #219-B

Kelley's CEO Jane

Burgess prefers the 1 ¼" gate as you can install it closer to the bottom of the bucket. That's less scraping honey out of the bucket when you hit near bottom.

Questions or comments about this article?

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Sweet as Honey

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For those readers wishing the newsletter was available in hardcopy...as we explained last issue, that's cost-prohibitive. Dr. Hough shared this option:

“If person has an e-mail address, (simple to get) go to the local library and get the newsletter on their computers—and the librarian will help you. Thank you. Enjoy the Newsletter very much.”

Thank-you Dr. Hough!

“I thought I'd share our Halloween picture of my four granddaughters, daughter and son-in-law and me. I have two Kelley beehives I keep in our chicken coop.” Janice C.

“I always enjoy articles written by Dennis Brown. I purchased his book and found invaluable information and it is an easy read. The price is right and I highly recommend it.” Gracie in Oklahoma

Dennis' book is available from Kelley's; we recommend it also!

“I'm thankful for the newsletter, makes me feel like we are in this together, not just a company and customer relationship”. Stacy & Cindy H.

Regarding the article on dealing with combs of unsealed honey, we had a couple readers respond.

“Ian J., from “across the pond” offered this approach: “I have had the same problem with the bees putting honey up rather than taking it down. Many years ago an old beekeeper pointed out that bees put honey up above the brood nest, (which is why we put our supers on top) so he told me to put the super on the floor and the bees would move the honey upwards. I now do this and in the Spring when doing the first inspection the super is clean and ready to go back up above. I think the super on the floor also protects the brood nest from the cold draughts associated with open mesh floors. I don't know how this would work in places with SHBs; here in the UK we are thankfully free of that pest at present. I have not had any problem with wax moth as the bees seem to take care of the combs.”



Photo courtesy of Janice C.

“Sandra from Indiana suggested “Run the uncapped frames through your extractor. Save this nectar/honey (in jars) to feed back to the bees using the plastic bag method. If the frames have capped honey as well as uncapped, uncap and extract for human consumption.

Pros: No robbing

Distributes nectar/honey to brood chamber

Healthier than sugar syrup

Every cell of capped honey is extracted for human consumption

Cons: Frames run through extractor twice (once capped, once uncapped)”

2012 Halloween Pics

There were plenty of honeybees at the Grayson County Chamber of Commerce-sponsored Halloween event. The Walter T. Kelley Company, located in Grayson County, participated and showed folks a great off-season use for a swarm bucket.



Foraging for Fun

My Secret Life as a Bee

By Jim Hamilton

I decided to give beekeeping a try and after ordering hive accessories, I experienced a bout of déjà vu. As I viewed the different kinds of bee protective suits, I remembered that this wouldn't be the first time I'd don some type of apiary apparel. You see, back in my college days, I masqueraded as Barney the Bee, fearsome mascot for the St. Ambrose College Fighting Bees; St. Ambrose was the patron saint of apiarists in the Catholic Church. My college was an all-male institution located along the Mississippi River in Davenport, Iowa.

Let me say a few words about St. Ambrose. He was born in Germany in the 4th century and legend has it that as an infant, a swarm of bees settled on his face while he lay in his cradle, leaving behind a drop of honey. His father considered this a sign of his future eloquence and honeyed tongue. Better this incident than what befell poor St. Bartholomew, who was martyred by being skinned alive, and for this reason is the patron saint of tanners.



Thanks to Jim Hamilton for the photo and his time in bee suits.

The Catholic Church has had strong links to bees, and beekeeping is a resource for some monks and brothers. These monasteries kept bees to provide honey for sweetening and the monks made mead from fermented honey. Wax candles were always in great demand and, as a result, apiculture was practiced on a commercial scale in the ancient empires of Egypt and Rome.

But I digress. It was during my junior year that I briefly jumped into the Barney outfit and joined our Lady Bee cheerleaders, volunteers from Marycrest College, during the time outs. The student playing Barney was a fellow Ambrosian who suffered a leg injury. Coach asked me to step in because I could fit into the costume; I agreed and the rest is history.

My bee suit was state-of-the art for its day, replete with paper mache head, antennae, wings, a big stinger, ballet slippers and gold gloves. I was a sight to behold and duly impressed many of our fans, to include a few slightly inebriated male students at our home game versus the Creighton University Bluejays. Creighton is a Jesuit school from Omaha and its star player at the time was All American Paul Silas, who later played in the NBA and coached several pro teams. He is formerly the coach of Michael Jordan's Charlotte Bobcats (formerly the Hornets) in North Carolina.

It was during the Creighton game that I gave my finest performance. Whether holding up signs that read "Killer Bees in Da House" or "Fear the Swarm," I took the execution of my duties to the next level, just as our team did against a really good opponent. So what if we were playing Creighton at the Assumption Catholic High School gym on a Sunday afternoon after church?

Unfortunately, the aforementioned besotted bee boys decided I was a hot item. They also thought I was female as they wanted to know where "you girls," meaning the cheerleaders and I, were going after the game. I ignored them until one of the soused scholars grabbed my thigh and whispered through my large ear hole that he and his buddies could get us into some really upscale bars in beautiful downtown East Moline after the game. That did it. I jumped up, turned my big bee head 180 degrees and yelled through my auditory aperture, "Hey, buddy, Barney is a guy's name."

The poor young man had a confused look on his face and immediately informed his pie-eyed compatriots that I was a drone and not a queen. Then the band kicked in with a rock rendition of “Flight of the Bumblebee,” which meant I had to jump up and perform the “Bee Circle Dance” with the cheerleaders. This was a routine where the forager honeybee circles in one direction, turns around, then circles back the other way. The student section was buzzing in unison and throwing popcorn at me.

I have to say that this performance usually brought down the house, especially after I leapt into the circle of cheerleaders so they could hoist me into the air, then toss me back down near mid-court where I’d do my guy splits. I’m pretty sure Paul Silas was impressed because I’ll never forget the look on his face when I ran by him after the game. I think he gave me the thumbs-up sign, but I’ll never know for sure because my oversized head was turned sideways after one of his teammates popped me on the noggin.

This summer I was back in a bee suit again. I think both St. Ambrose and Barney were pleased.

Questions or comments about this article?

Please go to kelleybees.com/blog. 🍯

You get some weird burr comb when you slip up and put 5-1/2 inch wax in 6-1/2 inch in super. We suspect the bees rolled their eyes when they discovered this mistake.



Photo courtesy of Jim Dunn.

Beekeeping Funnies

We’re especially thankful to British beekeeper Stuart Ching, editor of “The Eke,” for sharing funnies from “across the pond.”

**Butterflies are merry things
Gaily painted are their wings
And they *never* carry stings.**

**Bees are grave and busy things
Gold their jackets, brown their wings
And they *always* carry stings.**

**Yet – isn’t it extremely funny
Bees, not butterflies, get honey?**

ABJ, 6th September 1891

**Every revolutionary idea in beekeeping
evokes three stages of reaction:**

1. It is completely impossible – don’t waste my time
2. It is possible but it is not worth doing
3. I said it was a good idea all along

Words you don’t want to hear your neighbor say: “I would have thought that tree would have fallen away from your hives!”

What’s the difference between a beekeeper and a bee? A bee can put down a deposit on a BMW.

It’s difficult to believe that Noah only took two Varroa mites into the Ark.

What is the difference between a stung beekeeper and an incontinent one? Ones going to itch and the other is itching to go!

What do you get if you cross a wax moth with a glow worm? An insect that can find its way around a dark hive.



Show Schedule



44th Annual Convention of the American Honey Producers Association
 • January 8–13, 2013
 • Sheraton San Diego Hotel & Marina, San Diego, CA



Allen County Beekeeping School
 • February 2, 2013
 • Scottsville, KY



Audubon Bee School
 • March 2, 2013
 • Henderson, KY



North American Beekeeping Conference & Tradeshow
 • January 8–12, 2013
 • Hershey Lodge, Hershey, PA



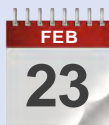
Southeast Beekeeping School
 • February 9, 2013
 • Williamsburg, KY



Bluegrass Beekeeping School
 • March 9, 2013
 • Frankfort, KY



Eastern KY Winter Beekeeping School
 • January 19, 2013
 • First Federal Center Building on the campus of Hazard Community & Technical College



Northeast Beekeeping School
 • February 23, 2013
 • Morehead, KY

Dronings from a Queen Bee

Really?!

By Charlotte Hubbard

I'm thinking of writing a different column each month for this publication. Instead of 'Dronings from a Queen Bee', it'd be called **"Really?!!!"** And instead of being written for humans, I'd write it for bees.

I got the idea mid-October, after refilling the feeder on a hive that is going into winter a bit light. I've been reinforcing their food stores by offering syrup in a jar feeder, positioned over the inner cover's hole.

These little darlings had been sucking down a quart of syrup every three days for about a month. I figured they were getting used to me popping the top and refilling the jar, but I always suited up just in case. On this particular day, I wore my half-suit, perfect for a chilly fall day when I'm already in long pants.

I popped the top, and found the bone-dry jar and a lot of eyes staring at me in anticipation. And by a lot of eyes, I mean probably a quarter million or so. Like other insects, honeybees have hundreds of single eyes, each with their own lens, and each usually looking in a different direction ... except this time the quarter million eyes were all staring at me accusingly.



Really? I should be able to find the queen in three nano-seconds or less?!

"Sorry I'm late Ladies," I muttered. "But there still is goldenrod out there you know."

They seemed unbothered that I'd opened their hive, and greedily swarmed the jar of warm syrup I settled over the inner cover's hole. Yep, this was yet another time when I'd worn protective clothing for nothing, but better safe than sorry.

I gently closed the hive, and started walking back up the hill. I saw my mistake within seconds, or actually—I felt it. I hadn't checked my legs to verify there were no honeybees crawling on them, and one must've felt threatened by my movement, and stung me on my "seat."

My first reaction was pain. Even through the jeans, there was no mistaking what that burning spike meant.

My second reaction was "really?!!!" Did they miss the lesson on "don't bite the hand that feeds you? And don't sting her tail either?"

I've been stung through jeans before. There's the initial painful sting, but because the stinger can't really get imbedded, it's typically no big deal.

This one however was a big deal, for two reasons. First, because I really couldn't believe that a bee would give up her life as I was trying to help save the lives in her hive, and second, because of where she stung me. My back end is large enough before bee sting inflammation.

As I rubbed my tail, the guardian honeybee fell to the ground, her tail beyond repair. Poor dear. Was stinging me necessary? Really?!

I have plenty of topics for the column “Really??!!”, such as:

Really?! You think swarming Labor Day is a good idea?

Really?! You thought crawling in that little gap where my zipper is bent at the top would end well for either of us?

Really?! You wanted to see my bathroom? How and when did you get in the house?

Really?! You think swarming again mid-September is a good idea?

Really?! You thought it'd be fun to ride in the car?

Really?! You thought four of you chasing my bee-loving niece a quarter of a mile would be good exercise for her?

Really?! You thought I couldn't break through 45 pounds of propolis to pull that last super?



Really? I'm supposed to put the top cover back on without injuring any of you?!

Of course, if there's a column written for bees, it's only fair we give them equal space.

I suspect they could have their own “Really??!!” column, including such topics as:

Really?! You can go to the moon but you can't do anything about Varroa?

Really?! You think we can't find a way through all that “protective” clothing?

Really?! You think we wanted to swarm again mid-September? We had to because _____.
(The bees will have to fill in the blank because I sure as heck have no idea why they swarmed.)

Really?! You think putting on a mouse guard after the varmint was already in our hive was helpful?

Really?! You think we enjoy seeing our life's work in plastic bears?

Really?! We make honey and we share it. You make mead and you don't. And you wonder why we sting you in the tail?!

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