



Kelley Bee News

ISSUE 16—OCTOBER 2011

# Modern Beekeeping



A great way to celebrate Honeyfest! See page 20.

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“ The pedigree of honey  
does not concern the bee;  
A clover, any time, to him  
is aristocracy.

~ Emily Dickinson



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# The Buzz

As this issue goes to bed, we want to send best wishes to all our northern customers, who already have or are about to put their bees to bed for the winter. (Reminder: the increasingly cold days will lure mice to the warmth and stores of the hives, so order and install your mouse guards now.)

While it is cold in the north—and wonderfully cooler here in Kentucky—our editor just returned from where it is hot-hot-hot. The last two month's Bees Overseas articles were written

by her daughter, who is beekeeping in Paraguay with the Peace Corps. Editor Camilla spent a week at that site, and then the two of them attended Apimondia, the 42nd International Beekeeping Congress, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. We look forward to her sharing what she learned and saw during her transcontinental visit in the months ahead.

While South America welcomes spring, most of our customers are embracing (or would that be bracing for?) fall and winter. This newsletter is full of information on winter preparations. We want to help you help your bees.

We also want to make it more fun. In early September, we started a monthly special / discount / giveaway (varies by month) of one of the excellent products we have at Kelley's. Read more about this in the Sweet As Honey article.

Please let me know how we can better serve you.

**Jane Burgess**  
**CEO/Partner**  
**The Walter T.**  
**Kelley Company**



Like most beekeepers, Jane Burgess has a fondness for all kinds of critters, including her dog Walter.

An advertisement for Louisiana Red Tidewater Cypress hives. It features a photograph of a wooden hive box. The text reads: "LOUISIANA RED", "Tidewater Cypress", "5 cypress, dovetailed, wood-covered hives with soft white pine frames (8 or 10 frame size)", "\$8.95", "Write for free catalog", and "Gulf Coast Bee Company Houma, Louisiana".

LOUISIANA RED

## Tidewater Cypress

5 cypress, dovetailed, wood-covered hives with soft white pine frames (8 or 10 frame size)

# \$8.95

Write for free catalog

Gulf Coast Bee Company  
Houma, Louisiana

# Healthy Bees

## Kentucky-Area Winter Preparations

By Sean Burgess, Kelley Employee and Beekeeper

September and October, depending on where you live, can be a dearth or a bounty month. What it is also varies in any given location from year to year. This is the time of year when goldenrod and asters bloom, and depending on your area this can be a harvestable crop for honeybees. (Even though when bees are working goldenrod your hives smell like a locker room, this smell does not transfer to the honey—the flavor in my opinion is good.)

Looking at the management of my hives in Kentucky (you will have to adjust to the seasons in your location) I like to have all supers removed after the fall flow. If I am not harvesting, or have wet supers, I will let the supers get robbed out by placing them some distance from my hives, standing on edge, until all available stores are gone.

These are the next steps I recommend:

- Store supers in contractor garbage bags with Para Moth crystals according to manufacturer directions. Do not put these inside of an attached garage or you will fumigate yourself along with the wax moth.
- Determine mite levels and act according to your management plan. If you are using either soft or hard chemical treatments remember to follow the directions to the letter. My choice is a powdered sugar dusting several times spaced weekly.
- Determine strength of queens and requeen accordingly. If you have a failing queen prior to going into winter you are in for heartbreak in the spring—unless you requeen with a young, strong, mated queen. Some people requeen every hive every fall regardless of the queen's performance. (And yes, Kelley's has queens.)
- Consolidate weak hives with strong ones. I will kill the queen in the weak hive and use the newspaper combine method over a strong queen-right colony.
- Add entrance reducers and/or mouse guards. The entrance reducers will minimize robbing which can be prevalent

### Newspaper Combine Method

- Cut 2 sheets of (predominantly) black and white newspaper to fit directly on the top bars. (Paper sticking out of the sides can wick in moisture and looks unsightly.)
- Place the sheets that are cut to fit the inside of the box dimensions directly on the top bars.
- Make 6-7 razor slits in the paper between the top bars.
- Place the weak colony above the paper.
- Replace inner cover, vent supers, feeder—whatever you had atop the strong hive.
- In a couple of days these colonies will be united. You may want to check to verify that the newspaper has been chewed through suggesting that the bees are intermingling. If you do check, removing any residual paper will save them the work of getting it out.

at this time of the year and the mouse guards will keep the furry pests from taking up residence in your hive.

- Feed with 2-1 sugar syrup and Fumigilin-B following directions. Fumigilin-B is a preventative for Nosema disease. This is an antibiotic and is part of my management plan. Remember to administer this following the directions and do not let the medicated syrup be exposed to sunlight as it will lose its effectiveness rapidly.
- Combine 2-1 sugar water with four times the recommended feeding dose of Honey-B-Healthy and drench each hive at least once on a warm day. Remember 2-1 is by weight and not volume; mix ten pounds of sugar with five pounds of water. I try to get about 1.5 cups in each hive, sprayed on my bees and frames. The bees will not take this concentrated dose of Honey-B-Healthy unless you force them to do it by preening. This should be done on a warm day with a warm night to follow.
- Clear away all brush and grasses from around hives. It is good management to keep your hives like this all year for ventilation and to restrict pest pathways into your hives; in the winter it will help to keep your entrances from becoming clogged with snow, possibly sealing them off. Remember on warm days in the winter the bees may take cleansing flights.
- Look up for dangerous limbs that may have to be removed prior to winter storms. This is easier to address now as putting together a toppled hive in freezing weather may be detrimental to the bees and certainly any brood.
- Manipulate the brood nest so the queen is in the bottom box with plenty of honey at the sides and place more honey above where you anticipate the winter cluster. As the queen will lay to a degree even in the winter, the bees are reluctant to move the cluster away from the brood. You need to have the honey stores in a position so they can reach this food easily.
- If using windbreaks, get them in place. Straw bales can be used to block the prevailing winter wind side(s). Stakes with landscape fabric stretched in between will work to a lesser degree. Some people will wrap their hives in areas of severe cold. I would talk to several beekeepers in your area to determine what works best for them.
- Use the Mountain Camp method just prior to winter's onset for emergency winter stores.
- Make sure your hive lids are weighted enough to keep them on in an arctic blow.
- I also like to be sure my brood nests (which are double deeps) are heavier than I can lift, filled with honey and bees.

I find that by using the above methods I have gone a long way to minimize my winter losses. We will all have losses in the winter but these methods should be of some help. Happy beekeeping! 🍯

## Mountain Camp Method

The mountain camp method I use is nothing more than a 2" spacer placed on my top box. I will then cut 2 sheets of (predominantly) black and white newspaper to fit directly over two-thirds of the top bars (leaving one-third of the ten frames visible) and not extend outside of the hive. (If the paper extends it may wick moisture into the hive).

For each hive, I fill a two-pound coffee can with granulated sugar. Using a spray bottle, I mist the paper to get it wet but not soaked. I dump a third of the sugar onto the paper and mist, repeating until the sugar is gone. You want the sugar to clump a bit otherwise the bees will carry it away as foreign material.

This method also helps to absorb moisture in the overwintered colony.



# Winterizing Practices

By Camilla Bee, Editor

Depending upon your geographic location it may be past time, the time or about time to tuck your bees in for the winter. “Tucking in” for your area might mean windbreaks, ventilation holes, solid bottom boards and wrapping the hives, or it might be something less.

So, what should you do? We’ve gathered practices from various beekeepers around the U.S. to see what they suggest for their geographic locations. More information may also be found in our October 2010 newsletter, which offered three additional articles on wintering bees, including a survey of Midwest winterizing practices. (All back issues of the newsletter are available at [www.kelleybees.com](http://www.kelleybees.com), select ‘Education’.)

As usual, and much to the frustration of those of us who would like things a bit more “this is how you do it,” there is rarely a defining single way for most things in beekeeping. But knowledge is power, so we’re trying to give you plenty of knowledge. This article includes suggestions and resources shared with us over the past year, along with answers from the geographically dispersed beekeepers we asked.

Special thanks to those contributors:

- Chicago: Naaman Gambill, head beekeeper at the Garfield Conservatory, managing 16 hives and the outreach / education / volunteers who assist.
- Maine: Phil Gavin, a hobbyist beekeeper, and proprietor of The Honey Exchange (see related article in this newsletter).
- North Carolina: Lady Cerelli, a naturalist beekeeper, located 3200’ up in the Appalachia Mountains.
- Tennessee: Nancy Schwartz, hobbyist, of Nashville.
- Texas: Jim Dunn, hobbyist, of Bryan, and author of the forthcoming book *Beekeeping: A Personal Journey*, [www.lonestarfarms.net](http://www.lonestarfarms.net).

## QUESTIONS

### About when do you pull final honey off the hive? What circumstances drive that decision?

**Maine:** In southern Maine we have a fantastic late summer/fall flow from bamboo (Japanese knotweed) and goldenrod so I try my best to ride it out as long as possible. In the last three years my timing has been dictated by the prediction of daytime temperatures so I can get the best efficacy from my soft mite treatments. I’ve used Apiguard (and most of my neighbors use ApiLifeVar) so the treatment window starts to close in mid- to late-September. This year I’m using MiteAway Quick strips, so I have some more flexibility.

**North Carolina:** We start pulling honey off at the end of May, July, and again at the end of October. The whole year’s extractions are then poured in one-pound jars in layers for holistic approach for those with allergies. We don’t usually sell season honey.

**Texas:** Here at Lone Star Farms ([www.lonestarfarms.net](http://www.lonestarfarms.net)), we usually have aster and goldenrod start to bloom in mid-August. If it is a “normal” year (which it has not been in a couple of years because of the ongoing drought), we are able to remove on average about thirty pounds per hive.

**This article includes suggestions and resources shared with us over the past year, along with answers from the geographically dispersed beekeepers we asked.**

We strive to run our hives in two deeps. This gives our bees enough room to put away enough stores to make it through winter. We only remove stores that they are able to store above their two deeps. Some years, the bees do not store above their two deeps so we do not pull any surplus off the hive that fall season. Our main honeyflow occurs in the spring.

**Chicago:** We pull early to mid-September, leaving the rest of the season for “bees to be bees” as they prepare their two deeps.

### **How do you store supers?**

**North Carolina:** We don't store supers. The wax in honey supers gets melted down for our products. All brood supers and frames are used. They stay on the hives.

**Texas:** Because we live in an area that has mild winters, we are forced to store our supers indoors. If we were to store these supers outdoors like some areas do, the wax moths, fire ants, raccoons and any number of other pests would destroy them. We use Para-Moth crystals to keep the moths and beetles at bay.

**Chicago:** We stack them quasi-indoors (a greenhouse / workshop area), and drape plastic over the top, tucking it into the bottom. This is after we've put them back on the hives so the bees can clean them up.

**Maine:** Most of my beekeeper friends have the luxury of an outdoor shed to store supers. They do their best to keep the supers mouse-proof and the hard freeze takes care of wax moths. I have a tiny shed that is completely cluttered ... but I'm fortunate enough to have a big chest freezer. I pop supers in the freezer one at a time for 48 hours each and stack them in my basement.

### **Do you feed? If so, what circumstances drive that decision? And when do you start?**

**North Carolina:** We are natural beekeepers. If we have to feed new nucs or splits and don't have the frames of honey, we feed them honey in top hive feeders. I store bee pollen in honey and feed that as well.

**Maine:** I avoid feeding sugar except when absolutely necessary. In the fall I try to eke out the last few days of nectar flow and invariably I end up with frames of unripened honey. So we spin out that first and feed it back to be stored in the hive bodies. Last year we had a summer-long dearth, so I did blend that light honey with a few pounds of 2:1 syrup per hive.

**A lot of people ask me the question about when to feed. I always ask: “Why you feed?” If your hive needs weight in the fall, you pulled too much honey.**

A lot of people ask me the question about when to feed. I always ask: “Why you feed?” If your hive needs weight in the fall, you pulled too much honey. Feed them this year and leave more honey next year. In the spring we have gotten by without feeding as well. We miss out on early brood buildup and don't maximize honey harvest, but our bees are really healthy. As backyard beekeepers we try to keep this our first priority.

**Texas:** Over the past 47 years, it is extremely rare that I have had to feed. I contribute that to running my hives in two brood boxes. I never remove any food stores from those two boxes. Those boxes are strictly for the bees to live on.

That said, the past two years have been extremely dry (drought). I fed some in the summer last year. This year I have been feeding my bees for most of the year. Next year will probably be just as bad because of this ongoing drought here in Texas. Very few nectar sources were available to the bees this year with the dry weather.

**Chicago:** Yes, either 1:1 or 2:1 syrup seasonally, and also pollen patties. We've tried various types of feeders; we're constantly tinkering to find out what works for us and our location.

### **Do you install mouse guards?**

**North Carolina:** No. We make our own front entrance covers and can manipulate the size of the entrance hole.

**Chicago:** No, we just reduce the entrances.

**Texas:** No, but I do reduce the entrances on the hives during the winter months.

**Tennessee:** Yes.

**Maine:** I have had good luck with mice. I've gotten by with entrance reducers only, and I think it helps that I put my hives up 16" by attaching 2x4 legs to hive stands. Our big problem in the neighborhood is skunks, hence the height requirement. But that seems to have kept out the mice too. A few friends had big trouble with mice and shrews, so this year I'm putting on a Walter Kelley metal guard just to be safe.

What other winter preparations do you do (or feel are suitable for your area?) This might include wrapping the hives (if so, at what temperature?), putting up wind breaks, ensuring there are vent holes or using popsicle sticks, adding a top hive body with shavings, etc.

**North Carolina:** We do get wind, and even though the leaves are gone, the trees around the apiary still break the wind.

**Tennessee:** I use a hot water heater blanket. One large one can be cut in half for two hives, then I cover that with a contractors garbage bag, and tape it with duct tape. Keeps them warm and cozy!

I make sure that the ventilation holes are open at the top or cut a piece away.

I don't put the water heater blankets on until it gets consistently cold here in Tennessee ... usually around the end of December. I take it off around the end of February when the days begin to warm up some.

It has worked so far. We had a terrible spell of cold weather with below zero temperatures. According to a beekeeping friend, several "old timers" said that they covered their hives, and didn't lose any bees. The local bee society here was advocating NOT covering, but the older beekeepers said that it worked.

**Minnesota and other severe climes:** <http://www.extension.umn.edu/honeybees/components/freebees.htm> has easy-to-read information on wrapping hives.

**Tennessee:** I leave the front of the hive uncovered. My hives do not get prevailing cold



Photo courtesy of Nancy Schwartz.

winds on the front of the hives. I have a “porch” overhang on the front to keep icy rain or snow out of the front area.

**Chicago:** We construct wind blocks of straw bales, and wrap each hive individually with black insulation paper. We’re always learning, always experimenting to see what works best; we may try two layers on some of the hives this year. We’ve found that our more sheltered hives did better.

Probably the best single thing you can do is find the right location in terms of blocking wind and moisture. Then, keep observing and learning until you find things that work for you.

**Maine:** I wrap my hives with tar paper by Thanksgiving. In my first year I painted my hives bright yellow. My intention was to match the chicken coop and to make the hives super-visible to my neighbors. I’d rather they see them and ask about bees than find me trying to camouflage the hives.

The yellow has become kind of a trademark for us, but if I had it to do over again I’d choose a dark color and I wouldn’t have to worry about wrapping in the fall. It only gets hot around here for a few weeks of the year, so light colored hives aren’t the best.

We also make sure there’s an auger hole in the top box because the snow frequently gets up to the bottom entrance. And we put a homasote board over the inner cover to absorb moisture. For the last couple of years I made almost a hundred homasote boards for sale to our county and state association members because I have a full woodworking shop and could break down 4’x8’ sheets without trouble.

### **Do you install solid bottom boards?**

**Maine:** Never. I leave the screens open all winter. I also use slatted wooden bottom boards which keep the cluster a bit further above the cold drafts, but I believe ventilation is more critical to hive health; they take care of warmth by themselves as long as they have enough honey. We’ve made it through four winters, two of which were really harsh, and we haven’t lost a hive yet. I’m going to stick with what’s working.

**North Carolina:** We leave the screened bottom boards on year round, but replace the screened inner covers with solid covers with an oval hole in them in the winter.

**Texas:** We only use Kelley screen bottom boards on all the hives.

**Chicago:** On some of the hives; we’re always experimenting to find out what works best.

## **Homasote Board?**

Phil Gavin supplied us with more information:

Homasote is a pressed-recycled paper product. It was used extensively around the second world war as a precursor to gypsum sheetrock. Now it is used as a wallboard or ceiling board primarily for soundproofing. I get it at Home Depot, or it’s available at some other lumber yards and home centers.

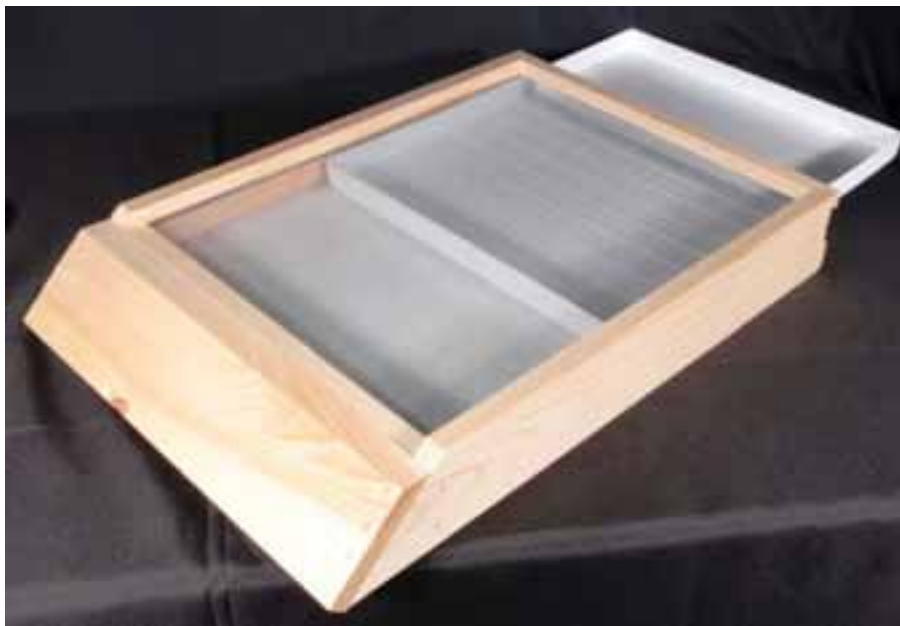
It comes in 4’x8’ sheets and makes a dusty mess when you cut it on a table saw. I cut it down to the size of an inner cover, then rout a dado that runs from the inner cover’s center hole to the dado on the cover and it goes on like that, between the inner and the telescoping covers. It does a great job of absorbing moisture over the winter, and on a winter day I can feel for dampness and know the cluster is okay beneath. Come springtime we take them off and they dry out in the sun and can be reused for a number of years.



## Anything else?

**North Carolina:** We raise resistant stock bees. Our temperatures can get down to single digits at times. We keep bees like they would like to be kept in the wild in the trees. We feel they need constant air circulation to stay healthy.

**Texas:** Fall/winter management is the most important time of the year. How you manage your bees at this time will dictate how well you will do in the spring. If you don't make sure that your bees have everything they need to make it through winter, then spring doesn't really matter.



Kelley's screen bottom board, catalog # 57-TA.

Briefly, we make sure that the bees have enough stores (preferably honey because it is their natural food source. Bees winter much better on honey than sugar water.) The population needs to be strong enough to cover the amount of space the bees are living in.

There needs to be a good queen. There needs to be a low mite count. The equipment needs to be in good shape.

I reduce the entrances down to two inches when the night temperatures stay in the forties. I love the Walter T. Kelley screen bottom board that has the slide-in screen and the slide-in board. That is one of the best inventions in beekeeping.

I usually slide the board in under the screen bottom when the temperature at night stays in the forties. When I slide the board in, I leave a one-inch opening at the bottom, i.e., slide the board in until it sticks out approximately one-inch. This will provide good ventilation during the winter months and keep the cold drafts off the winter cluster. Here in Texas we can experience a few warmer days during the winter as well. When this happens, I go and pull the boards out to provide more air flow. It is a simple and quick system that works extremely well.

None of the hives are ever wrapped. It is usually not the cold temperatures that kill bees, but rather the moisture build-up in the hive. Providing good ventilation is KEY.

Because of our fall/winter management technique our winter loss rarely exceeds 1%.

Chicago: Because we're a community outreach / education organization, we have lots of wonderful volunteers. We get plenty of help cleaning up and repairing hive bodies in the winter months; it is a great cure for cabin fever. 🍯

There's lots of information out there on bees and beekeeping. We don't want to add to the general buzz; we want to give you what you want. Please send ideas for topics and stories to [KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com](mailto:KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com). Thank you!



# Sugar Rims: Winter Feeding

By Bob and Marion Brandenburg

This month is a good time to start thinking about how you will make sure your bees have enough food to see them through the winter. Most authors we have read recommend going into winter with the brood chamber in a bottom deep hive body with a second deep hive body above them full of honey. This is normally adequate to get the bees through to spring, but if the weather becomes exceptionally warm during the winter, your bees may be out looking for food where none exists. This will cause them to consume much more honey than they would if they were clustered tightly together against the winter weather.

Though it is too early to place sugar rims on your hives now, it is not too early to construct them so they will be ready when you need them. Sugar rims, sometimes called candy boards, are a good way to help ensure your bees do not run out of food during the winter. A sugar rim looks like an inner cover with a one- or two-inch deep rim around the top. Into this wooden tray you pour thick sugar syrup that has been brought up to 238° F with a candy thermometer. When cooled, the sugar will form a solid block in the wooden tray which can be stored in a plastic bag until you give it to your bees for food.

## Making the Rim Frames

Our sugar rim frames are made from Masonite board and four pieces of wood. The Masonite board is cut to the same size as an inner cover. The 3/4-inch wide wood pieces are cut to frame out the Masonite board on top, making a 1 1/2-inch deep frame all the way around.

We dovetailed our wood pieces at the corners, but butting the wood together would work as well. Apply good wood glue to the wooden frame that will have the Masonite board on it. Using small nails (with heads), nail through the Masonite board to secure it to the wooden frame. Use clamps to clamp the wooden frame and Masonite board together while the glue dries.

To allow ventilation, we used a hole saw attached to a drill to cut doughnuts from 3/4-inch wood. We then cut a hole in the center of the Masonite boards the same size as the inside of our wooden doughnuts. We glued and nailed these wooden doughnuts in place over the hole in the Masonite board. Because of the 3/4-inch doughnuts in the center of the sugar rims, the rims cannot be filled all the way to the top without having hot sugar syrup running out the hole. But this space is needed to ensure bees are not smashed when installing the sugar rim.

The last thing we did before use was to paint the entire inside of the rim with Gesso and let it dry. Gesso is a white acrylic used by artists to prepare a canvas for painting. It is thicker than hive paint, and when dry is waterproof. You can buy it at most hobby stores that have artist paints.

One last construction point is to have a flat surface that is heat-resistant to place your sugar rim on as you pour in the hot sugar





syrup. If air can flow under the sugar rim it will also cool faster. Plan on using five pounds of sugar for each rim you intend to fill.

To apply a sugar rim to a hive, you must open the hive and remove the inner cover. Select a warmer winter day to put rims on hives, preferably 50° F or higher and not colder than 45° F because you do not want to chill the brood or the queen. Once the inner cover is removed, place the sugar rim on top of the hive in place of the inner cover making sure the sugar side is facing down towards the bees. The sugar will absorb moisture from the hive which makes it possible for the bees to eat the sugar. This also puts excess hive moisture to good use. Remember, cold does not kill bees. Moisture kills bees. If you keep bees dry, bees can keep themselves warm as long as they have food.

Bees naturally move up and down in a hive or tree trunk with the changing of the seasons. In the spring, the bee cluster is usually near the top of the upper hive body, having eaten its way there throughout the

winter. During the spring and summer, the bees store nectar above the brood area. As the comb is filled in with cured honey, the brood area is forced further down into the hive. In fall, the bees will start to eat their way back up through the stored honey and continue to do so throughout the winter. If all goes well, winter ends before the food the bees can reach is gone.

Winter 2010 was a difficult time for bees and beekeepers in Kansas. There were spells of very warm temperatures each month. One day in February the temperature was 80° F; bees were flying everywhere and eating more honey than they normally would during the winter. Of course there was nothing blooming here for them from which to gather pollen or nectar. On a 50° F day in December when we inspected the hives, we found several colonies on the top bars of the upper hive body. Seeing a cluster of bees through the bee escape of the inner cover told us the bees had eaten their way through all the food that they could get to. Though we had planned to place sugar rims on the hives in February, we placed them in December.

There was honey towards the outside of the hives which we did not discover until the following April hive inspections. Thinking back, we could have attempted to move the bee cluster down and place honey above them. But by doing so, we would have disrupted the cluster, risked chilling the brood and queen, regardless of how brief, and because of the stiff propolis at that time of year, we might have killed the queen with our manipulations. Instead we used the sugar rims, not only for our hives, but also for a new beekeeper we had just gotten started in 2010. By the time we could start feeding sugar syrup to the bees, several of the hives had eaten almost all of the sugar in their rim. The outcome was that all of our hives, and the new beekeeper's, made it through the winter and are still going strong.

There is a danger in placing sugar rims on a hive too early. This will draw the bees to the top of the hive during warmer days, and then when the temperature drops again, there they are—stuck at the top. Mid-winter is a time for waiting and watching. Lift the outer cover on days when the temperature is 45° F or higher and see what your bees are doing. But think twice before performing a full hive inspection. We could have done so that day in February when the temperature was 80° F, but satisfying our curiosity was not worth the risk; the next day the weather turned cold and blustery and snow came within a week or so thereafter. The propolis on the hives remained well sealed against the wind and wet, which it would not have had we inspected. Having seen the bees at the escape caused me to provide food (sugar rims) that we might not otherwise have provided had we not lifted the outer covers. If this dissertation causes you to make sugar rims for your bees, then our time has been well spent. They do work! 🍯

## Making Sugar Candy

- Make the candy by heating two cups of water and adding five pounds of sugar.
- At 238° F (medium ball), the syrup will turn white.
- Quickly pour the syrup into the rim before it sets up.
- Be advised that one batch requires a good-sized pot, because it really bubbles up during the cooking process. Plan on taking about 30-40 minutes per batch.
- The temperature must be brought up slowly to prevent scorching the syrup, as “syrup that has been burned or caramelized can cause high bee mortality,” according to *The Beekeepers Handbook* by Sammataro and Avitabile.
- We have also found the purchase of a good candy thermometer mounted in a metal bracket that keeps the thermometer off the bottom of the pan is invaluable! It gets pretty hot holding a regular glass-encased candy thermometer in the syrup waiting for it to come up to the required temperature.



# Bee-Havior

## Queen Behavior as Winter Approaches

By Kent, Master Beekeeper



Photo courtesy of Roy from Michigan.

Depending on forage and race, there can be an appreciable difference in the actions of a “spring-raised” or an “old” queen in spring versus fall. (“Old” meaning a queen that was raised during the preceding year or before.)

Queens raised in late summer or early fall of the current production year result in different questions and actions than those raised in spring and fall. This is the reason many knowledgeable beekeepers are advising requeening in fall, rather than spring.

Some changes in activity are due in large part to race. If the queen is of the Carniolan race, or is Russian, her laying pattern will typically reflect the availability of forage, and the ability of the foragers from her colony to gather the foodstores. With these races/sub-races the beekeeper may observe a slowing—or even complete stoppage—of brood production in times of dearth, then see a renewed, almost frenzied, production in fall if there is sufficient fall bloom.

Because these races tend to winter with smaller clusters or populations, and because their queens respond primarily to pollen (New World Carniolan) or nectar and pollen (Russian) flows before they begin serious brood production, they are usually a little slower to begin building in spring as compared to Italian-based bees. About two to three weeks is the usual difference I see with the colonies I have; though your experience may be less or more, depending on particular breeding lines, forage, and general climate.

With the Italian-based bees, forage plays a part, but in a lesser role than with NWC and Russians. Italian queens tend to respond to the stimulation of change in amount of daylight hours to a larger degree than forage. In spring, when daylight is increasing, Italian queens will begin brood production in earnest. It is not uncommon in early spring (when overly cool temperatures are more of a concern) for the Italian queen to produce more eggs than can be cared for by the “nurse” bees, which leads to cannibalization of the overage by the workers.

Just because there is a baseball-sized pattern of eggs does not mean the queen only produced the small number of eggs. She may have produced a softball or larger size area, only to have the workers trim the perimeter to a manageable size.

So, in fall the Italian-based queens will be relatively predictable in that they will gradually decline in brood production until sometime between late November and early December—when production will cease. This timeline applies to far-western Kentucky and may not match your area. Their production can be artificially stimulated to bring about a later decline by feeding heavily, both protein and syrup, but eventually the queens will stop laying eggs. The consequence of having Italians and feeding to keep the queen laying late into the fall season is the much larger cluster that will require more foodstores for the winter.

Carniolan-based bees (including the Russian sub-race) are also predictable, if close attention is given to forage. When the forage stops, the queens will slow, or stop. As with almost all other honeybee activities, it is a lot easier to stimulate the bees into continuing an activity than to stimulate them into changing their activity. In other words, in the case of Carniolans, it is a lot easier to keep the queen laying eggs by feeding than it is to cause her to restart by feeding. Carniolans respond well—and quickly—to a natural source of forage, as long as it is sufficiently abundant; but not as well or as quickly to stimulative feeding. This may be due more to the static nature of pollen substitutes in amino acid content, as opposed to the differences in spring pollen and fall pollen. Fall produced pollen (from fall-blooming plants) tends to contain different amino acids and lipids, in different proportions, compared to spring-produced pollen.

So, I suppose that nature knows best after all. The different races developed their basic characteristics due to the climate and forage in the geographic area where they are considered indigenous. Each race or sub-race can be managed well if the beekeeper understands and responds to the different tendencies of the bees in their care.

I have found these statements to be true in overwhelming percentage with our bees in our particular location. It is entirely possible that your experiences will differ slightly, but these are the general truths of the differences between queens, and seasons. 🟡

## Oct. 15th Beekeeping 101

On October 15th 2011 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 November, December, January, February and March. If weather permits we will do a live inspection of an active hive. 🟡



Sean and Jane Burgess.

# Bee-Yond & Bee-Hind the Hives

## Bees Getting a Boost in Maine

Editor's Note: The Walter T. Kelley Company welcomes a new supplier to the New England area, The Honey Exchange.

We asked owner Phil to share how he got started and the idea behind it; here's what he shared.

“The woman from the Post Office was not okay.

“Lady, there's a big box of bees in my trunk and I ain't touching them again!”

My wife, Meghan, was calm. She had never handled a three pound package of bees either but she went into the workshop for a pair of gloves and grabbed the box.

The woman warned Meghan, “See, one of ‘em got out!”

There was indeed a single bee on the outside of the screened box. I now wonder how long ago she jumped along for the ride; had she stowed away all the way from Kentucky to Maine?

I had ordered the bees the previous winter from Walter Kelley Company and wrote on the calendar the day in May when they would be shipped. The date was a Saturday; I assumed mail from Kentucky would take a few days.

So on Monday I called up the Post Office just like my beginner's beekeeping book said I should. I got an answering machine, and left a message for them to call me when the bees arrived. Later that morning I saw our mail carrier and told him the same thing. He said, “No big deal. We deal with that sort of stuff all the time.” So I went on with my day and went out to run some errands.

At the store my cell phone rang. It was Meghan who said simply, “Your bees arrived.”

The bees had showed up at the Post Office that morning and the office manager had been made very edgy by the constant buzz of a box of bees in her workplace. Somehow she got it in the trunk of her car and brought it to our house on her lunch hour. She was not taking



Photo courtesy of The Honey Exchange.



any chances to find the box structurally sound and had figured, logically, if one bee could get out of the box they could all find their way out. Meghan put the box in the workshop and the woman went off to wind down on her lunch break. I'm guessing she went to the club for a cocktail.

What's the first thing you do when a box of bees arrives at your house? You spray them with a little bit of warm sugar syrup.

I'll tell you what I did second though: I went to get my neighbor Caleb. It's not every day you get to see a box with 12,000 bees in it.

Phil Gaven and his wife, Meghan, began bungling with bees with a single hive in South Portland, Maine in 2008. The following year, Phil captured his first swarm. After four years they had expanded to three hives and their enthusiasm for honeybees was outgrowing the space of their little suburban town.



Photos courtesy of The Honey Exchange.

The Honey Exchange was conceived as a small retail store that would incorporate anything and everything to do with honey, honeybees, and beehives. The centerpiece is The Honey Room, which features local, artisan, and varietal honey from around the country; food and beverages made with honey; and beeswax products from candles to lip balm and everything in between.

The Beekeeping Room features woodenware and all the equipment from Walter Kelley any hobbyist beekeeper needs to keep backyard bees.

The professional extracting kitchen has a 20-frame motorized extractor where local beekeepers can have their honey extracted conveniently and mess-free. The Honey Exchange prefers to be paid in honey for extraction services and that honey is put into jars and labeled with an "appellation" label specific to the neighborhood where the hives are kept.

The store is located at 494 Stevens Avenue in Portland, Maine at the center of a mile-long stretch of road with public schools from kindergarten through college, plus Catholic elementary and high schools. Educational outreach is central to the mission of The Honey Exchange and they arrange school visits and field trips to educate people of all ages about the wonders of the honeybee hive.

Neighborhood residents and vacationers alike enjoy watching the observation hive in the beekeeping room. The honey room has bee-related gifts and specialty foods, and almost everything can be ordered directly from the website: [thehoneyexchange.com](http://thehoneyexchange.com).

Phil and Meghan love to talk about honeybees and are available to answer questions at the store Tuesday through Saturday 10:00-6:00 (EST), and Sunday 10-2 or on the phone at 207-773-9333. 🍯



# Show Schedule

## Arkansas State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Friday Oct 7, 2011
- The annual meeting of the Arkansas Beekeepers Association will again be held October 8th and 9th at the Ozark Folk Center in Mountain View, Arkansas

## Alabama State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Friday Oct 7, 2011
- Located at Taylor Road Baptist Church, in Montgomery, AL

## Mississippi State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Friday Oct 28, 2011
- Located at Coast Community College, in Gautier, MS

## Tennessee State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Friday Oct 28, 2011
- Located at Hyder-Burke Ag Pavilion, in Cookeville, TN

## Wisconsin Honey Producers Fall Convention

- Thursday Nov 3, 2011
- Located at Hotel Mead, in Wisconsin Rapids, WI

## Iowa State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Friday Nov 4, 2011
- Located at the Best Western in Marshalltown, IA

## Pennsylvania State Beekeepers Fall Meeting

- Friday Nov 11, 2011
- Located at the Best Western in Lewisburg, PA

## 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 🍯

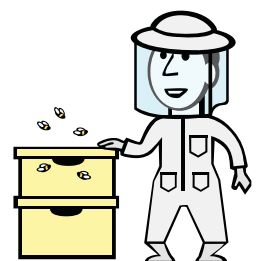
## Beek Hint

As a beekeeper (with some dismal overwintering survival rates), I ask almost everyone what they do. Sometimes I get more than I ask for, and beekeeper Jim Nedderman shared overwintering information, along with some wonderful philosophy.

On overwintering: "...top covers raised with Popsicle sticks and I have screened bottom boards."

On beekeeping: "One of the biggest surprises I've found in beekeeping is that it is very much an art rather than science ... ask two beeks a question get three answers! I'm looking forward to lots of experience and finding my own way ... beekeeping is a lot like life, find your true self. As a local sage once said to me 'I don't know much about bees but I know they know a lot about me.'"

Thanks Jim!



# Bees Overseas

## Apimondia, Buenos Aires, Argentina

By Camilla Bee, Editor

Hola. I've just returned from the 42nd Apicultural Congress, Apimondia, an amazing international event that attracted honey producers, packers and buyers, scientists, equipment manufacturers and suppliers, government / trade representatives, apitherapists, beekeepers, researchers and people from other professions involved with all honeybees do for the world.



One of the informative speakers.

Missing from the thousands of attendees? Actual honeybees. They were, of course, too busy doing what they've been doing forever, oblivious to the humans swarmed in a vast convention center, sharing secrets about these fascinating insects, and plotting how to optimize their labors.

As Buenos Aires is located in the Southern Hemisphere, spring is just beginning. New tender leaves were adding color to a brilliant blue sky, and there was the fragrance of blossoms from the well-gardened city. A few days mid-conference were unseasonably cool, but the final few days brought a taste of what's to come. As temperatures neared the 90s, I was glad I don't live in a climate where, in just a few months, temperatures of 100°–110° F and unbearable humidity will be a daily event—and it was a Buenos Aires-born and raised man who told me that the humidity is unbearable.

So while I left before the sweltering weather, it was hard to leave the energy and promise that spring brings, especially when my return to the Northern Hemisphere meant being greeted by cold, pouring rain that will turn to cold, blowing snow in a few months.

But, I have notes from a couple dozen seminars I attended and abstracts from hundreds of talks, several people to exchange information with from all over the world and more enthusiasm and passion for bees than ever. So while I'm not anxious for winter, it means I'll have more time to read, review and digest all I saw.

Some of the highlights of the trip (beyond “bee-ing” with people equally thrilled about bees) include:

- The beef: as wonderful as I’d heard.
- The ice cream: FABULOUS. To be sure it wasn’t an isolated incident, I sampled ice cream often and throughout the city. It was all incredible.
- New things. Maybe it is because I don’t get out much, but I saw many new ways to package and market honey. I examined one of the innovative honey jars from a Korean manufacturer, and had to smile. This jar had traveled thousands of miles and was there to sell the package and yet the jar—like so many of my honey containers—was sticky. No matter who you are, how much honey you have, how careful you are or how you package it, honey is undeniably sticky stuff!



Camilla Bee, outside the convention with one of the famous Argentine bulls

While we attendees didn’t have a common language, practically everyone in the bee industry has common enemies like Varroa mites and small hive beetles. No matter what language someone speaks or how far they traveled (and some attendees traveled very very far), there were other commonalities, like wanting to ensure honey is pure, wanting to unlock the potential of bee products for improving health, and wanting to find ways to more safely and economically keep bees.

In the months ahead I’ll be sharing some of what was presented at Apimondia. 🍯

## BeeCause

The Walter T. Kelley company donated over \$300 worth of equipment to the Clarkson Honeyfest.

What is the Clarkson Honeyfest, you ask? Turn the page! 🍯



Here’s an idea for a Christmas gift, although you may want to start impeccably lining up almonds in your own honey now.



# Clarkson Honeyfest

It's all about the HONEYBEE! An annual event that began in 1995 and now in its 17th year, this annual bee-themed festival celebrates Grayson County's ties to the honey industry. It has become an event Grayson County and surrounding areas look forward to each September.



This chain saw carving has been a part of our Kelley Company since the 60s. It is one of our favorite treasures, carved from a single log. If he could only talk!

Named for the Walter T. Kelley Company in Clarkson, KY, one of the largest manufacturers of beekeeping supplies and equipment in the United States, the Clarkson Honeyfest is looked forward to with anticipation from one year to the next. The entire city celebrates by decorating homes and businesses, lawns and storefronts.

Light poles proudly wave bee-themed flags and ribbon bouquets throughout the city, welcoming attendees from all over Kentucky and surrounding states. The entire community has embraced and generously supports the events that draw thousands of people into the town each September for the wholesome, family oriented atmosphere and festivities.



Walter Kelley Company float for Honeyfest 2011.





Some very creative entries in the Hat Contest. First prize was \$20.00!



Honeyfest faces.

The Clarkson Honeyfest is held the last Thursday, Friday and Saturday in September and hosts numerous activities such as a beauty pageant, decorating contest, children's rides, parade, and a karaoke contest as well as food and craft booths. There are bluegrass and gospel music performances at night, ending with a southern country/rock band on Saturday night.



Decorations are a big part of our festival. There is a contest for the best business and best residential decoration each year!



Floats are a big part of the Honeyfest parade. Ribbons are awarded to 1st, 2nd & 3rd prize winners in several different categories.



Honeybees come in all sizes!

In 2006, enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the Clarkson Honeyfest was named and designated as Kentucky's Official State Honey Festival.

The dates for this year's Clarkson Honeyfest were September 21-24.

The weather was perfect and there were record crowds for the events. Quite an accomplishment for a small town with a population of less than 1,000! 🍯

More photos on the next page! >>





Local beekeepers sold honey. On Saturday alone, local beekeeper Terry Peterson (left) had sales of over \$1,300.00 from his own honey crop!



No, you are not seeing double! These two sisters and pugs tied for third place in the Pet Show's Best Costume contest.



# FAQs

**Q:** What do I do with partially capped frames of honey supers this time of year? Here in the Midwest we still have some decent days, but there isn't enough out there for them to "finish them up." And, I don't like to just put them out for any feral bees and the yellow jackets and wasps. Can I safely store them until next spring? If so, how? Better ideas? (Tony, Illinois)

A: Reader Stan answered part of Tony's questions, sharing "I have had good success moving the super with the uncapped frames above the inner cover. This allows the bees to "rob" their own honey, while protecting it from intruders and reducing the chance of creating a robbing frenzy (I use a bottom entrance). Be sure to scratch any capped cells on the frames, as the bees seem reluctant to cut the tops off of once-sealed honey."

Of course, ask two beekeepers, and you'll get two different opinions. Having witnessed a robbing frenzy, I'm a little hesitant to suggest that. Thus, we turned to wise beekeeper Cleo Hogan, of Kentucky. His reply "I never store partially filled supers. I normally put them 100 yards from my hives and let the others—including bumblebees, wasps, yellow jackets, butterflies etc.—totally clean them before storing them.

They will mold if put away wet. If they are not totally clean, make sure you use Para-Moth or wax moths (eventually waxworms) will lay in them and totally destroy them.

I have never had any luck placing a wet super above the inner cover. My experience is, they either ignore it totally or they start filling it with nectar to make honey and it just complicates the process. Not to say that it might not work, just hasn't worked for me. If I were going to place one above the inner cover, I would definitely open any capped cells. Otherwise, I believe they would ignore it as winter stores.

I would get them cleaned out, then store them using Para-Moth.

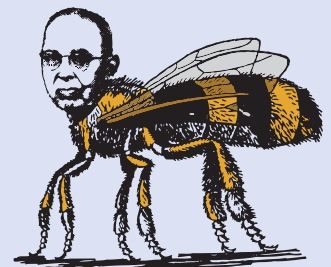
I don't think it is a good idea to put away partially filled supers. If push comes to shove, take them three miles away and let others rob them and clean them."

**Q:** Do bees defend their queen, or their hive? In other words, if the queen is not in the hive (maybe out on a mating flight) will they still be as defensive? If I'm capturing a wild hive and the queen eludes me, will any bees I capture be fairly docile? (MB, Michigan)

A: The simple answer is: bees will defend what they have worked for and you should always protect yourself accordingly. The only time you will maybe find bees to be more docile is just after a swarm has settled as they have nothing to defend. Bees have stingers for a reason and they will use them if they sense a threat, whether it is perceived or provoked.

In beekeeping, there are plenty of funny things, and plenty of times when you just have to laugh at yourself.

We're collecting funnies—bee jokes, bee puns, and the bee-related things you've done (and possibly wished you hadn't!) to share in future issues. Please drop me an email if you have some we can share. Thanks! KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com





**Q:** For about a month now, one of my hives hasn't had much activity. I got into it over the weekend and found no queen and no brood. Is mid-September too late to requeen in Michigan?

A: Kelley's CEO Jane Burgess shared that it likely is, but it could be tried with about a 50-50 chance of success.

Jane advises if you requeen, feed heavily and hope for the best. A better option may be combining the hive with another strong hive, if possible.



Photo courtesy of Jane Burgess.

As a side note, watching your hive(s) is a great way to detect problems. If it were possible, you should've checked that hive as soon as you noticed something amiss. August was a robust month for bees in much of the Midwest; detecting that problem and requeening then may have given you better chances of success. But, we understand that life doesn't always allow for us to work our bees as much as we'd all like to do.

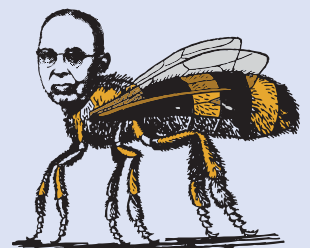
**Q:** Can I feed with brown sugar? It's healthier for humans, seems like it'd also be better for bees. (TatorBee, via the internet)

A: No, you cannot. Nor can you use molasses, or chocolate candy bars. (The latter should be sent to the editor of this newsletter, along with cookies and pies.) Brown sugar and molasses contain impurities that may harm the bees or make it difficult for them to be digested.

**Q:** Do I need to check bees during the winter? If so, what am I looking for?

Kelley's beekeeper Sean Burgess fielded this one for us: "Really all of your preparations for winter need to be done prior to the temperature dropping below 50° F. Consolidating the brood nest, placing frames full of stores around the bees and above the area where they will cluster. Brief inspections can be done when the mercury rises above 50° F. Candy boards and or the Mountain Camp Method (see page 4) can be done at this time but I like to get mine in place prior to freeze up. You do not want to disturb the winter cluster or chill any brood when it's cold." 🍯

In a few weeks, there will be ghosts, goblins and honeybees trick-or-treating. Please share those pictures with us by sending them to [KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com](mailto:KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com). Thank you!





# Recipes

## Fruit Salad with Honey Lime Dressing

1/2 cup honey  
1/2 cup lime juice  
pinch of cinnamon and nutmeg  
4 cups fresh fruit: berries, apples, melons,  
peaches, plums, kiwi, grapes etc.

In a blender combine the honey, lime juice and spices until light and frothy.  
Pour over the washed and cut up fruits, toss.  
Chill until ready to serve.  
Jean Rectenwald

## Broccoli and Bacon Salad

1 bunch broccoli  
1/2 head cauliflower  
1 small red onion, chopped fine  
1 lb. bacon  
1 (8-oz.) pkg. mozzarella cheese, shredded  
1 cup mayonnaise  
1/4 cup honey  
2 tablespoons white vinegar

Cook bacon in a skillet.  
Remove from skillet, drain, cool and crumble.  
Clean vegetables and cut into small bite-size pieces.  
Mix vegetables, bacon and cheese together.  
Cover and refrigerate until later.  
Combine mayonnaise, honey and vinegar.  
About 1/2 hour before serving, pour dressing mixture over the vegetable mixture and toss to coat all pieces.  
Store in fridge until ready to serve.  
Jean Rectenwald

Thanks for sharing your wonderful honey recipes. We try to publish a couple each issue, depending upon space and submissions. Please send your favorite recipes to [KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com](mailto:KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com).



## Good thing we have trailers.

If you are attending the Wisconsin Honey Producers Fall Convention,

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# Sweet as Honey

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I have enjoyed reading The Walter Kelley newsletters; they are very informative. In fact, while managing my four hives it is interesting how similar all of the beekeepers ready their hives for the honey flow and for winter. Thank you and your company employees, for all of your help with the keeping of my bees.

Sincerely,

J. Strozier, AL

Brass Hawg Bee Farm

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This [September] issue was great – really appreciate the technical information (Brandenburg's article) as well as the readable tone of everything, and the information on a variety of bee topics. LOVE this publication.

GS, FL

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I just wanted to thank you for the wonderful newsletter you all send out! As developing beekeepers, my husband and I learn so much from each newsletter. Please keep them coming.

E. Hollenberg

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Editor's Note: We will! And, please share them with members of your bee club, or anyone else interested. They can sign up for this free publication on the homepage of our website.

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Our own Stacy Hill and her daughter, Addison, enjoy the Honeyfest after the parade.

I do want to tell you how great the people down there are. You have some of the best people to deal with, and as a business owner myself, I really appreciate the excellent service from the front office to the folks in the warehouse. My uncle dealt with Kelley for many years, he had around 500 colonies in IL which is how I became a customer.

Thanks!

Mark

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Editor's Note: We DO have wonderful employees, and most of them are active beekeepers, thus able to provide tried-and-true insights and advice. I often receive compliments on their friendliness and their knowledge.

The potential downside of that though is that it isn't always easy to get through to us on the phone. We've recently overhauled our website, and we believe we've made ordering via the internet easier.

To encourage you to try it, we've started a monthly special, exclusive to internet customers. What we're offering might be of interest to commercial beekeepers one month, the next month—something ideal for someone just getting started. You'll want to check it out each month, which is easy:

1. Go to [www.kelleybees.com](http://www.kelleybees.com)
2. Click the 'Products' tab.
3. Select "Specials / New Products" from the left. This is where you'll find information on what will be randomly discounted / awarded to someone who places an order via the internet that month, and how to apply if you're interested. What we're offering each month will vary, so be sure to check back each month.
4. Follow the directions to be entered in the specials.

As always, thanks for being Kelley's customers. - Jane Burgess 🍯



Some of our friendly sales folks! L to R: Dana, Mary, Jennifer, Stacy



# Featured Products

This month we're featuring some of the products you may need to help prepare for the upcoming colder months, whether you're a bee or a beekeeper!



The White Hive Top Feeder, a customer favorite.



The Quad requires a deep to surround it, and the feeder is placed over the hole in the inner cover.



Our Mountain Camp rim allows for easy implementation of this popular method.

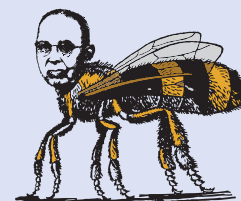


This bee-themed afghan is ideal for snuggling under, especially with your honey, or with some of these insightful books.



We also offer a complete line of candle-making supplies.

Your fellow beekeepers LOVE the photos we share via this newsletter. And, your photo could appear in our 2012 catalog! Please send anything interesting, helpful, fun or just awesome, 300dpi or higher, to [KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com](mailto:KelleyBeesEditor@gmail.com).



# Dronings from a Queen Bee

## Things that Sting

By Charlotte Hubbard

As I gaze about my buzzing bee yard through one and a third eyes, I can't help but smile.

Sure, I have to prop open my right eye with a hive tool because of the sting I took the day before, and I spent the night in a Benadryl slumber, my face smeared into an ice pack. But watching my hives, with more take-offs and landings than the Atlanta airport, makes me smile. Luckily, this time I was only stung near the eye, not also near the mouth. When that happens I think I'm smiling but my face continues to droop.

Why is there this large smile on my great-pumpkin-sized swollen face?

It's because I love my bees.

People who don't routinely have itchy, swollen, distended parts on their body as I do, ask why I love my bees.

It isn't for the honey. I don't generally consume honey except when I'm bottling and accidentally spill a bit. Because I have the grace of an adolescent ox, licking up what I spill means I consume a LOT of honey.

I don't love my bees because I'm trying to save the world. Bees and clean water and trees and kittens and all of those things are critical; I save them as I can. But, that's not my primary motivation for investing most of my disposable income and time in insects. I think I love my bees primarily because, when I'm working with them, it makes me forget everything. Things like my chronically aching shoulder, my beekeeping husband's death, the fall property tax bill that's higher than the power hive's stack of supers, that my car needs new tires.

And quite often, working my bees also makes me forget that they are stinging insects. Oopsie.

I love my bees; I hate that they sting.

I've been working bees for four seasons now, and find no matter how careful I am, how well I think I'm dressed, how calm they are—stings are inevitable. Most of the time, getting stung is totally my fault, like when I squish a bee as I inspect a frame, or don't realize how dark the evening has become (because of a brewing thunderstorm) and I open my power hive. In retrospect, if someone pulled the roof off of my home on a dark, stormy night and started rooting through my life's work, I'd be a bit defensive also. You know those protective suits Kelley sells? Just like the disclaimer says, they're not guaranteed sting-proof. I've field-tested this.

The 26 stings from that mistake (most of them around an unprotected ankle) meant I won my apiary's coveted "Most Stings" award 2010—my third year in a row. I wish it came with a giant trophy, or at least a giant bottle of Benadryl.

I haven't cornered the hive on beekeeping "stupid." This summer, a seasoned beekeeping buddy agreed to help me determine if a hive was queenless. We'd put the task off all week because of rain, but finally had a bit of an opening when the showers backed off to an early evening drizzle, and decided to seize it. Knowing the bees might be a bit antsy, we made sure there weren't any gaps or openings in our suits. (Did I mention the sting-session from when I neglected to zip my hood?)

The warm rain was coming down a bit harder when we got to the hives, so I held a giant umbrella over us (and them). We pulled out each frame, carefully scrutinizing it in the fading light for that beautiful long-bodied royal insect. The bees buzzing about were trapped under the umbrella, which didn't please them (or us).

Suddenly, my buddy swore sharply, saying he'd gotten stung. It happens; we continued our careful scrutiny.

By the time we closed up the hive and walked away from the apiary, he already had a fat lip. "She got me right here," he gestured with his hive tool. Pointing to a facial area with your hive tool? Not a smart idea. I know; I've field-tested this.

Lips, being a highly vascular area, do tend to swell up quickly and more robustly than say, the back of the thigh. I've done the field trials on this also.

I thought he was pouting over his sting, but instead it was his already-swollen lip dropping to his collarbone. "You got nailed that badly through your veil?!" I asked, astounded.

"Oh no," he answered carefully, trying not to bite his incredibly plump lip. "I'd pulled my veil off to see better."

It's late in the season, but doggone it—if he continues this "leave your cares (and your brain) behind when you work your hives" mentality, he could steal the annual award from me.

That might sting a little, but I'll be fine with it. 🍯

## 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:

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