

A YEAR IN THE APIARY - CENTRAL MAINE

Month	Activity	Bill Truesdell's Comment
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assemble and repair beekeeping equipment Read beekeeping texts and periodicals 	Even though February is the normal time for ordering bees, you might want to do so now. If other areas have a bad winter, bees may be in short supply. Why not try something new- like a different bee race, or shifting to mediums or even, heaven forbid, plastic foundation.
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Order package bees for late April--early May arrival Check wintering colonies for honey reserves by hefting hive Reposition stores or feed dry sugar or candy if needed. (Late Feb.) 	
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check colony conditions, if food reserves are short, feed candy or dry sugar Colonies that consume feed should be monitored and fed as needed Protein supplements for brood production may be started 	Candy is the preferred food. It is concentrated and has it's own water supply. Make it by bringing a pint of water and five pounds of sugar to 240F and pour in greased cookie sheet. After cooling, break into four pieces, one for each hive. It can be placed on the inner cover or directly over the cluster (preferred method ~ just place on the top of the frames and flip inner cover so deepest part faces down)
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to monitor food reserves Feed medicated light sugar syrup medicated with Fumidil B (follow label directions). Begin to dust with Terramycin (follow label directions ~ mix with powdered sugar) Scrape bottom boards; do not examine the colony unless the weather permits Install package bees April 15th or later and feed light syrup medicated with Fumidil B Be sure to remove and properly dispose the Apistan strips that come with package bees. Apply Apistan (10%) strips to wintered colonies if Varroa is detected (mid-late April). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note that Terramycin is dusted and not in patties. Resistant strains of AFB have been found and seem to be related to using grease patties to distribute Terramycin The preferred method of checking for Varroa is sticky boards or ether roll. Varroa collapse can come quickly if other hives in the area are heavily infested and your strong hives rob those weak ones, so check your hives. If you see bees with K-wing or deformed, you may be heavily infested and collapse may be imminent
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reverse brood chambers and inspect brood pattern for disease and parasites at dandelion bloom Divide and re-queen colonies at fruit bloom via multiple frame splits or colony divides Complete the 3rd dusting with Terramycin in accordance with the label directions Manipulate package bee colonies to aid in comb construction and inspect for health and a properly laying queen. Apply menthol or Apistan to wintered colonies if needed according to label directions Manage colonies for population buildup and swarm prevention 	To reverse or not to reverse. I no longer reverse my hives and see no problems. You might want to try not reversing a hive and see what happens. But I do manage for swarming by splitting my hives on the stand and raising a second queen. Reversing or splitting does the same thing; they give the queen room and reduce the possibility of swarming. So if you do not reverse, you still have to do something to give the bees room.
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add honey supers to colonies as needed Add second brood chamber to package colonies Remove antibiotics and pesticides prior to the addition of honey supers (early June) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can leave grease patties on for tracheal mites all year long, even during honey flows. Grease patties are made from 2 parts sugar to one part Crisco and formed into a hamburger patty and placed between brood boxes. A scientifically untested treatment for Varroa is mineral oil. Soak a paper towel in vegetable or mineral oil and squeeze out the surplus. Put one towel in each hive and do so once every two weeks, three times. It will not prevent Varroa but reduces the number of mites. It also helps with tracheal mites. But don't throw out the Apistan. I still use it in the fall

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July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add honey supers as needed • Harvest honey at the end of July or when honey flow slows • Place an empty super on those colonies that have honey in the 2nd brood chamber or above a queen excluder (use an inner cover) for those colonies that have mostly brood in both brood chambers • Colonies, which have excessive brood and adult bee population, should be left with one super full of honey at harvest time. • Monitor Varroa mite populations. A quick treatment may be necessary prior to the addition of honey supers for the fall honey flow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of all the management techniques, harvesting at the end of July instead of waiting until September or October is the most effective. It may seem you get less honey by pulling it all off “early”, but the truth is, if you follow this method, you will consistently have more honey year after year. I believe the key reason is the bees fill the deeps with summer honey and over winter on it. • Fall honey is terrible for over-wintering bees. It causes dysentery and will weaken a hive so it is less productive the next year. By putting your extracted supers over the inner cover, the bees will take that honey down and when the fall honey starts flowing, fill the supers. I usually get at least one and more often two supers of fall honey per hive.
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extract honey. • Manipulate and inspect the colony • Set up for fall flow and position brood and honey reserves in anticipation of winter • Add one honey super during goldenrod bloom if needed. • Unite weak hives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extract in early August if you did not do so in late July. • The super you add will be over the inner cover.
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove supers around September 10th • Extract ripe honey supers • Partially filled honey supers should be fed back to the bees <u>above</u> the inner cover • Do not let bees rob • Reduce entrances, medicate and apply mite treatments after supers are removed • Feed sugar syrup if needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I save the uncapped frames for last and extract them separately. You can use this honey for mead or add it to the heated capping honey for cooking. • I put in the Apistan Strips at the same time I remove the supers. You need to get two brood cycles after you apply Apistan, so any later and you lose this. The queen will stop laying in October or November and you want to kill off the mites in the brood cycle. When she stops laying, you are too late and the Apistan will be much less effective
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish feeding medicated syrup (Fumidil B) and 3rd Terramycin dusting • Remove Apistan if colonies were treated in August. Follow label instructions 	
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide upper ventilation via one of the many methods i.e. fiberboard, Styrofoam, super with insulation, etc. • Remove Apistan from colonies prior to wrapping • Wrap colonies with tar paper or commercial wrap by Thanksgiving at the latest • Sell honey at craft fairs, etc • Read periodicals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do not wrap but my hives are painted battleship gray. And I use a fiberboard all year long. It is an excellent tool for removing excess moisture from a hive. In addition, it acts as a water source for the bees. It is essential for over-wintering bees in Maine • Another great debate- to flip the inner cover or not- seems to be coming down on the side of leaving it alone. In the spring, when you feed candy, you will have to flip it if you put the candy over the cluster, but leave it as is if you put it on the inner cover
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sell honey at fairs, etc. • Leave the bees alone! • Hope for a January thaw so the bees have a cleansing flight 	