

<p>January</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feed pollen 3rd week or first weather break if faster buildup of colonies desired. • Order package bees and queens for April & May delivery.
<p>February</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch hive entrance when warm to gauge colony strength and activity. • Attend WCBA basic beekeeping course.
<p>March</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If above 60 degrees can check hive quickly • Red Maple is first tree to bloom and provide some nectar and pollen. Early freeze often curtails this. Watch for red tint in forest and examine trees to know, or watch hive entrance and see the pollen coming in.
<p>April</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April and May are the months when colonies can starve due to short honey and pollen stores. Check stores when warm enough and feed sugar syrup 1:1 mix and pollen if necessary. • Do monthly Varroa drop test and treat if >15 • Packages ordered in Jan. arrive end of April start of May. Have new hive equipment assembled before they arrive. • This month colonies begin to increase in size as more food and warmer temps allow. On first hive visit look for food stores, then eggs and larvae to judge queen activity. • Reverse hive body and super if reversed in fall. A few days of assured warmth is needed to minimize cold challenge to broodnest now lower in hive. • Many plants begin to bloom in April. Apple, Willow, Bum Gilly Bud, Hazelnut bushes, Skunk Cabbage, and ornamental flowers all offer mostly pollen and some nectar. Early freeze can create a need to feed 1:1 syrup and pollen.
<p>May</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colonies growing quickly. Add supers to encourage expansion and discourage swarming. Split colonies to increase number of hives and discourage swarming. • Do monthly Varroa drop test and treat if >15 • Swarming can begin as early as mid May. • This is a big month for honey flows. Oak offers pollen early. Blackberry can have tremendous nectar production. Our biggest nectar producing trees, Poplar and Locust bloom for around 3 weeks starting mid to late May.
<p>June</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All honey flows end. • Rob excess honey when capped. • Prepare hives for transport to neighboring counties if wanting to collect Sourwood. • Do monthly Varroa drop test and treat if >15 • Transport hives for Sourwood 3rd week of May. Flow usually begins around July 1 and lasts 3 weeks. <p style="text-align: center;">(over)</p>

<p>July</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The doldrums, little for bees to forage, bees become grumpy and aggressive. • Do monthly Varroa drop test and treat if >15 • Sourwood blooms first 3 weeks of July off the mountain along with Mimosa and Sumac all providing large nectar sources. Basswood (Lynn) trees and Mint is present in some areas of the High Country and sometimes offer large nectar production.
<p>August</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do monthly Varroa drop test and treat if >15. This is a very important time to understand Varroa density which increases as colony population begins decline toward winter. Be on top of the varroa and treat in August when necessary. • Goldenrod and Joe Pye Weed begin to bloom in late Aug. and through Sept. In a good year the bees can harvest all their winter stores from this honey flow. A strong colony can collect excess for you. • Reverse hive bodies if desired, prior to fall honey flow.
<p>September</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do monthly Varroa drop test and treat if >15. Varroa counts can double in one month so stay on top with multiple counts if necessary and treat when needed. • In poor years there is little to no nectar in Goldenrod and Joe Pye Weed. It can get cold early in Oct. so be ready to feed 2:1 sugar syrup last week in Sept. if nature does not deliver.
<p>October</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assure food supplies and feed 2:1 syrup if necessary. Most years it is too cold for the bees to store much syrup after Nov. 1. Get it done in Sept.& Oct. • If you have not done a Varroa check yet you are a bee haver, not a beekeeper. • Consider treating with Nosivit for Nosema. Can enhance colony health significantly.
<p>November</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add insulated inner cover or newspaper with sugar for moisture control in winter. • Insulate hives with wrap if desired. Insure protection of hives from winter wind. Wind is the winter killer, not cold. • Consider closing screened bottom boards by ½ to maintain ventilation and minimize wind entry.
<p>December</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about all you have learned and plan equipment needs for next year. • Eat your honey.