

Dr Buddy's Beekeeping Calendar for the NC Piedmont

January - Egg laying (brood rearing) resumes / undertaking

On a warm day after the 12th,

- o check hive weights again, and (particularly if it has been a warm Winter),
- o feed light hives 1:1 or dilute 1:2 sugar syrup directly over the cluster inside an empty hive body with a jar, and/or
- o quickly scratch 2 frames of capped honey and place them right next to the cluster edges without breaking the cluster
- o check stored supers for wax moth damage

Blossoming: Ironwood or Coma

February - Tracheal mite peak / drone rearing and brood nest expansion

First sunny high > 55° with little wind (mid-day),

- o very quickly check for brood and assess honey and pollen stores – *once only*
- o move weak hives into a small nuc or place their single brood chamber above a double screen board on top of a strong colony for warmth
- o feed light hives dilute 1:2 syrup directly over the cluster inside an empty hive body with a jar, and/or
- o quickly scratch 2 frames of capped honey and place them right next to the cluster edges
- o apply ¼ irradiated pollen patty if there is little pollen collection or stores
- o optional Varroa mite check (IPM bottom board)
- o order Fall queens

Blossoming: Red and Silver Maple (green pollen), 2/1 – 4/2; Willow (yellow pollen)

March - Brood nest expansion vs. swarm preps / swarms (last 2 weeks)

First week (> 60° mid-day),

- o remove empty hive bodies and jar feeders from tops of hives if present
- o quickly check brood, queen, and pollen stores
- o exchange 2 – 4 central upper brood chamber honey-laden frames for empty comb to prevent overcrowding swarms from “honey bound” hives
- o equalize (1 – 2 frames of) brood to boost very weak colonies
- o clean bottom screen
- o feed dilute 1:2 syrup via top feeder to stimulate brood rearing as necessary
- o set bait hives to capture swarms and check frequently

During last 3 weeks (> 60° days),

- o check brood and queen *two or three times* (once a week) for swarm preps
- o check for reproductive swarm preps: brood nest reduction, nectar congestion (at the top of the nest), poor foraging and/or poor wax production, queen cell royal jelly / eggs / larvae, particularly in hives with an early Spring buildup, and if present, either
- o cage and remove the captive queen, 3 frames of emerging brood, 1 empty and 1 nectar/pollen frame to a 5 frame nuc for 7 – 9 days, cut all queen cells out of the parent hive and then return the captive queen and frames, or
- o make splits or nucs from those strong colonies with queen cells
- o checkerboard by moving empty (*not* honey-laden) peripheral frames in from the outside to expand the broodnest, *and*
- o reverse brood chambers every 10 – 14 days
- o add a super to strong colonies *in preparation of* the early nectar flow (Ornamental) without a queen excluder (initially), then
- o put a queen excluder between the brood chambers and the super *a week after* the bees have put *something* in the super and are up there (making sure you don't trap the queen up there if there are eggs!)
- o enlarge the entrance or remove the entrance reducer completely

Blossoming: Maples to 4/2; Ornamentals and Fruit Trees, 3/13 - ; Dandelions (orange pollen), 3/18 - ; Redbud 3/30

April - Reproductive swarms / brood nest reduction for nectar

First 3 weeks,

- o enlarge the entrance if not done in March
- o check brood and queen *twice* for swarm preps (see late March)
- o continue to reverse hive bodies every 10 - 14 days, until the...

Third week (just before major - white wax - honey flow starts, ~ 4/20),

- o check broodnest again
- o super *in anticipation of* major nectar flow storage needs

Blossoming: Black Locust, variable; Blackberry (light tan / gray pollen), 4/20 - 5/22; Clover, 4/14 - ; Holly 4/14 - ; Tulip Poplar (powder yellow pollen), 4/20 - 5/26; Black Gum, 4/26 - 5/10; hardwood leafout, 4/1 - 4/24

May - Brood nest reduction / honey production

Every 10 days,

- o check and add supers as necessary, move less full peripheral super frames into the middle of the existing super
- o only check the broodnest / queen once, and only if a problem is suspected with the honey flow!

Later (about 5/22),

- o put bee escapes on the day before, and / or use fume board or leaf blower to
- o harvest capped frames of Spring Wildflower (amber) honey; leave uncapped Tulip Poplar (dark) honey supers on hive

Piedmont blossoming dates: Poison Ivy (orange pollen) to 5/23; Tulip Poplar to 5/26; American Holly, 5/1 - 5/16; Raspberry, 5/12 - 6/2; Persimmon, 5/20 - 6/2; Sumac, 5/23 - 6/10

Mountain blossoming dates: American Holly, 5/8 - 5/23; Black Locust, 5/15 - 5/28; Tulip Poplar, 5/25 - 6/18; Sourwood, 6/25 - 7/25

June - Honey production

Mid (after the major honey flow is over and the bees return to Clover),

- o check the broodnest / queen once in all hives
- o put bee escapes on the day before, and / or use fume board or leaf blower to
- o harvest dark Tulip Poplar honey and extract it
- o process the wax cappings from both extractions

Late (about 6/21),

- o ensure hives for Sourwood have broodnests completely full of honey and fortify them with extra bees as necessary
- o move those strong hives to the Mountains (1100 - 2200 ft) for the Sourwood honey flow
- o super each hive with 9 frames of drawn comb

Piedmont blossoming dates: Sumac to 6/12; Vitex about 6/10 - ; Clover

Mountain blossoming dates: Sumac to 6/26; Sourwood, 6/20 - 7/25

July - Sourwood honey production

Every 10 days or so,

- o check supers, move less full peripheral super frames in, and add an additional super if necessary (when existing super is over 2/3 full and has some caps)

At end of Sourwood honey flow (after 7/20 - last week),

- o harvest Sourwood supers, bring home, dry, and extract

- return hives from Mountains at dusk
- markedly entrance reduce weak hives to prevent robbing
- check broodnest / queen once (at end of flow)
- feed wet combs back to bees, and then
- store dry supers
- begin August feeding now!

Blossoming: Sourwood to 7/25; Clover to 7/25; Coreopsis, 7/25 – 10/8

August - Brood nest expansion / overwinter broodnest location decision / nectar and pollen dearth !!! / SHB peak / wax moth peak

First week,

- feed every single colony 1:1 sugar syrup
- consider feeding each a pollen patty, ¼ to ½ a patty at a time (only what the colony can consume in 5 days) depending on pollen stores / collection
- find and remove old queens from hives to be requeened
- the next day, requeen (see "Foolproof Requeening")
- Varroa mite check (IPM bottom board; possible sugar shake test), and if the treatment threshold is met (> 100 mites/24 hours), consider:

Third week,

- apply Mite-Away II formic acid inside a 1 ½" spacer on top of the broodnest to hives that are above the treatment threshold for 3 weeks, or
- apply 4 pieces of an ApiLife VAR tablet to the top of the broodnest edges every 7 – 9 days 3 times
- continue to feed heavy 2:1 or 1:1 sugar syrup to all colonies

Blossoming: Goldenrod, 8/1 – 10/15; Snowpeas before 8/14; Stickweed after 8/14

September - Varroa mite peak / drone termination / brood nest expansion / weed nectar

Early (~ 9/1),

- check for Fall swarm preps (see late March), and if found, cut out all queen cells, and cage the queen for about a week and then re-release her
- recheck requeened hives
- Varroa mite check (IPM bottom board *and* sugar shake test) equivocal hives from August and treat colonies that are above the treatment threshold as in August
- reduce the entrance to the small hole

Later (~ 9/15),

- remove formic acid pad if placed in August (after 3 weeks)
- ensure the last ApiLife VAR tablets are gone or remove them after 12 days
- ensure that the broodnest is in the bottom chamber (reverse if necessary)
- Varroa mite check (IPM bottom board) all previously treated hives
- check hive weights (goal is 35 to 40 lbs of honey by October 31), and
- continue feeding all light colonies 1:1 or heavy 2:1 sugar syrup

Blossoming: Goldenrod 8/1 – 10/15; Coreopsis; Asters, 9/20 – 10/30

October - Overwinter nest preparation (*variable* aster nectar!!!)

First week (on a warm day),

- remove formic acid pads or remaining ApiLife VAR tablets if placed in September
- Varroa mite check (IPM bottom board) all hives that were treated in September
- ensure good hive ventilation (use blocks or screens)
- continue checking hive weights (goal is 35 to 40 lbs of honey *plus* 45 to 50 lbs of woodenware and bees for total hive weight of *at least* 85 lbs)
- combine weak hives (< 5 frames of bees): remove the weakest queen and place two sheets of newspaper between the colonies 24 hours later with the remaining strong queen on the top at her original location!
- feed at least 2 gallons sugar syrup via top feeder for each colony unless the aster flow is good

Later (about third week, also on a warm day),

- ensure 2 – 3 upper chamber frames in the center are open drawn comb for Spring broodnest expansion / clustering, and
- ensure that there is a lot of honey and pollen in the bottom brood chamber and that there is little or no capped brood or empty cells within the cluster (which should be located in the bottom brood chamber); if these conditions are not met, then
- feed these colonies more sugar syrup via a top feeder
- ensure ventilation with blocks under the back of the inner cover
- reduce all entrances to the smallest hole (mouse deterrent)

Blossoming: Asters 9/20 - 10/30; Coreopsis to 10/8; Goldenrod to 10/15

November - Fattening up with pollen / egg laying stops / cluster formation

On warm (> 60°) days (once or twice),

- do not check for brood; the cluster defines the broodnest location
- read about beekeeping, and
- make your Christmas list

December - Clustering / cleansing flights

On warm (> 60°) day,

- identify the cluster as in November
- check hive weights, but there is no point in feeding until late next January
- order queens for splits for next April

Don't forget to come to all the FCBA meetings at the Ag Building, and most of all...

HAVE FUN!