

A YEAR IN THE BEEHIVE - CENTRAL MAINE STYLE

Month	Activity	Comments
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assemble and repair beekeeping equipment Read beekeeping texts, periodicals and beekeeping magazines Consider ordering bees now. 	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 medium size supers or even 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 Late February: reposition stores, feed dry sugar, or candy if needed being careful not to disturb the cluster. 	Register for Bee School
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 Register for the Maine State Beekeepers Meeting 	Candy is the preferred food. It is concentrated and has its own water supply. Make it by bringing a pint of water and five pounds of sugar to 240° F and pour in greased cookie sheet. After cooling, break into 4 pieces. A piece 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). 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 of the Apistan strips that come with package bees. 	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"> At dandelion bloom, reverse brood chambers and inspect brood pattern for disease and parasites Manage colonies for population buildup and swarm prevention At fruit bloom, divide and re-queen colonies via multiple frame splits or colony divides Manipulate package bee colonies to aid in comb construction and inspect for health and a properly laying queen. 	When you reverse hives, it places the cluster of bees (with queen) on the bottom with the empty hive body on top giving them room to build and move up Remember that the more you manipulate the hives, the longer it takes for the bees to build up stores.
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early June, remove any medications prior to the addition of honey supers Add second brood chamber to package colonies Add honey supers to colonies as needed 	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, formed into a hamburger patty, and placed between brood boxes.
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. The key reason is that the bees fill the deep supers 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. Sometimes you can get at least one and more often two supers of fall honey per hive.

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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. The super you add will be over the inner cover. • Unite weak hives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extract in early August if you did not do so in late July. • May need to apply mite treatments at this time if inspection shows mites
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove honey supers around September 10th and extract • 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 medicated syrup (Fumidil B) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply mite treatments at the same time the supers are removed. You usually need to get two brood cycles after you apply the treatments, 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 treatments will be much less effective
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish feeding medicated syrup (Fumidil B) • Remove mite treatments 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/homesote, Styrofoam, super with insulation, etc. • Wrap colonies with tar paper or commercial wrap by Thanksgiving at the latest. Remove mite treatments from colonies prior to wrapping. • Use hive products to make mead, candles or beeswax hand cream • Sell honey and hive products at craft fairs, etc. • Read periodicals, journals, and beekeeping books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An insulated inner cover (fiberboard/homesote) 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. • Remember to place the inner cover with the opening facing up (at the front of the hive) with the insulated cover on top with its opening facing down (line it up with the inner cover). This allows the bees an upper entrance when the snowdrifts cover the bottom entrance and allows them a way to ventilate the hive.
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sell honey and hive products at craft fairs, etc. • Hope for a January thaw so the bees have a cleansing flight 	Leave the bees alone!

*Provided as a courtesy by Knox-Lincoln County Beekeepers, a chapter of the Maine State Beekeepers Association
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