

## Calendar of Apiary Tasks April

A beekeeper's calendar is dependent on location and season. Our area in southwestern Virginia is considered a microclimate due to our altitude and geographical characteristics. Although there are many variables to consider, this calendar was specifically designed to help you prepare for changes in temperature and shifts in the local weather. Weather averages provided by WeatherWX.com

Avg temps: HI 62°F to Lo 34°

Avg Precipitation days: 9

Avg Snow days: 0

Temperatures should begin to modulate, allowing the bees to leave the hive for cleansing flights and foraging more frequently. Large amounts of pollen entering the hive suggests brood rearing and colony build up. Watch for orientation flights. Swarming in our area begins in early April, so it's too late to institute any swarm control measures. Pinching queen cells will delay swarming, but will not prevent it. The earliest swarm I've had in the last 8 years was April 13th.

- Assess varroa thresholds – the goal is a threshold that's tolerable for your bees  $\leq 3$ , not zero. See honey Bee Health Coalition for their interactive varroa management tool. Treat if necessary. Treating to get to a zero count or when unnecessary can lead to varroa that are resistant to some treatments.

<https://honeybeehealthcoalition.org/varroatool/>

- Consider adding 1 shorter frame into a deep box for varroa abatement. The bees will build drone cells on the bottom of the frame, which you can cut off after they're capped, freeze and discard. See picture below. Varroa have a preference for drone cells due to the longer gestation period. Pg 49 of textbook.

- Continue general inspections at least every two weeks. The concept is to catch a queenless situation early and without frequent disturbance to the colony. The queen takes 16 days from egg to emergence, so if you're inspecting every two weeks, you'll see a queen cell and can discern why it was produced.
- During colony inspections:
  - Evaluate your queen's laying pattern. Replace if necessary. Mark your queen. Email me for an article on this at [waysidegardenbees@gmail.com](mailto:waysidegardenbees@gmail.com)
  - Consider reversing the bottom boxes. If you open your hive and the bees are bubbling out of the top frames, don't run for the equipment to make a split just yet. The bees have been following the thermal column up into the top of the hive. Check the bottom box. Chances are, it's empty and ALL the bees are in the top box. If reversing is indicated, NEVER split the cluster.
  - Check stores vs nectar and brood vs worker bees. You may need to supplemental feed. If so, use sugar syrup. 1 worker nurse bee can service (feed and keep warm) 3 larvae. If push comes to shove, the nurse bees will favor older larvae and cannibalize the younger ones.
  - Watch for swarm cells. Can be removed as a temporary fix but won't stop the swarming urge. Make sure you have a laying queen before destroying any queen cells. Extras can be removed and placed in a queenless hive or a new split .
  - Make sure you have plenty of space for the incoming nectar. Remember nectar is up to 80% water. 3 cells of nectar will ultimately make one cell of honey. Nectar stored in the brood nest is a sign of congestion. Add additional space (boxes) for the queen to lay in.
- Prepare extra equipment to make splits, catch swarms, or set swarm traps. 1 frame of old used (disease free) comb in the trap will entice a swarm to move in. One frame of brood or honey placed in the box after the swarm is caught will entice them to stay.
- Cut down weeds near the hives. They can act as highways for an ant invasion.

This list is not exhaustive. Please send any suggestion for consideration to the above email.

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