



# Shelby County Beekeepers Association-SCBA

## 12-Month Beekeepers Check List

*The 12-month Beekeepers Check List is a **suggestion only** plan for keeping honey bees in our area. Updated 1/11/13*

### January-

- Feed Bees to keep them alive during the cold winter month.
- Remember to clean and store your equipment if you haven't done so already.
- You can order spring time package bees, nucs and queens on sites now.

**The Bees.** The queen is surrounded by thousand of her workers. She is in the midst of their winter cluster. There is little activity except on a warm day (about 45-50 degrees) when the workers will take the opportunity to make cleansing flights. There are no drones in the hive, but some worker brood will begin to appear in the hive. The bees will consume about 25 pounds of stored honey this month.

**The Beekeeper.** Little work is required from you at the hives. In case of snow, make certain the entrance to the hive is cleared to allow for proper ventilation. Be sure to provide supplemental, emergency food for the bees such as fondant (on the top bars) or granulated sugar or sugar syrup (in the inner cover of an empty super). This is a great time to catch up on your reading about bees, attend bee club meetings, and build and repair equipment for next season. Order package bees (if needed) from a reputable supplier. **Note:** Our nectar flow usually starts in March, so do not medicate within 6 weeks of nectar flow. January 15 would be the last day to add medication.

**Time Spent.** Estimate less than an hour.

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### February-

- Feed Bees to keep them alive during the cold winter month.
- Early Spring splits must be considered.
- You can order spring time package bees, nucs and queens on sites now.

**The Bees.** The queen, still cozy in the cluster, will begin to lay a few more eggs each day. It is still "females only" in the hive. Workers will take cleansing flights on mild days. The bees will consume about 25 pounds of honey this month.

**The Beekeeper.** There is not too much to do this month. Attend bee club meetings, and get your equipment ready for spring.

**Time Spent.** Estimate less than one hour.

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### March-

- Spring splits and installation of nucs begin to be an option for late month.
- You can order spring time package bees, nucs and queens on sites now.
- You can install early ordered package bees this month.

**The Bees.** This is the month when colonies can die of starvation. However, if you fed them plenty of sugar syrup in the late autumn /winter, this should not happen. With the days growing longer, the queen steadily increases her rate of egg laying. More brood means more food consumed. The drones begin to appear. The bees will continue to consume honey stores.

**The Beekeeper.** Early in the month, on a nice mild day, and when there is no wind and bees are flying, you can have a quick peek inside your hive. It's best not to remove the frames. Just have a look-see under the cover. If you do not see any sealed honey in the top frames, you may need to provide some emergency food (fondant or granulated sugar if cold temps prevail, syrup if the weather is mild). But remember, once you start, you should not stop until they are bringing in their own food supplies.

**Time Spent.** Estimate 2 hours this month.



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### April-

\_\_You can order spring time package bees, nucs and queens on sites now but many will have already completed their orders.

**The Bees.** The weather begins to improve, and the early blossoms begin to appear. The bees begin to bring pollen into the hive. The queen is busily laying eggs, and the population is growing fast. The drones will begin to appear.

**The Beekeeper.** On a warm and still day do your first comprehensive inspection. Can you find evidence of the queen? Are there plenty of eggs and brood? Is there a nice pattern to her egg laying? Later in the month, on a very mild and windless day, you should consider reversing the hive bodies. This will allow for a better distribution of brood, and stimulate the growth of the colony.

**Time Spent.** Estimate 3 hours.

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### May-

*Bees are growing rapidly getting ready for the nectar flow.*

\_\_Be prepared to add additional hive bodies if necessary when 80% frames are capped.

**The Bees.** Now the activity really starts hopping. The nectar and pollen should begin to come into the hive thick and fast. The queen will be reaching her greatest rate of egg laying. The hive should be bursting with activity.

**The Beekeeper.** If you use a queen excluder now would be the time to do that, and place honey supers on top of the top deep. Watch out for swarming. Inspect the hive weekly. Attend bee club meetings and workshops.

**Time Spent.** Estimate 4-5 hours this month.

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### June-

*Bees continue the height of the spring nectar flow.*

\_\_Keep check if need to add hive body when 80% capped.

**The Bees.** Unswarmed colonies will be boiling with bees. The queen's rate of egg laying may drop a bit this month. The main honey flow should happen this month.

**The Beekeeper.** Inspect the hive weekly to make certain the hive is healthy and the queen is present. Add honey supers as needed. Keep up swarm inspections. Attend bee club meetings and workshops.

**Time Spent.** Estimate 4-5 hours.

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### July-

*July 4th appears to be an end-time in which honey bees slow greatly in making wax and completing the spring nectar flow so get prepared for honey extracting. Remember, the comb cells should be 90% capped and the remaining uncapped honey should not be able to run out of the cells for it to be completely ripe for extraction.*

\_\_Extract ripened honey.

**The Bees.** If the weather is good, the nectar flow may continue this month.

**The Beekeeper.** Continue inspections to assure the health of your colony. Add more honey supers if needed. Keep your fingers crossed in anticipation of a great honey harvest.

**Time Spent.** Estimate 2-3 hours.

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### August-

Extract ripened honey.

Keep check on the Summer dearth, where a transition from Summer to Fall flowers begin and little to no nectar is available.

**The Bees.** The colony's growth is diminishing. Drones are still around, but outside activity begins to slow down as the nectar flow slows.

**The Beekeeper.** No more chance of swarming. Watch for honey robbing by wasps or other bees. There is not too much for you to do this month. Have a little holiday.

**Time Spent.** Estimate about an hour or two.

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### September-

Consider reducing hive bodies down to 2 boxes unless you are participating in Fall nectar flow, then you will wait.

Keep a monthly check. Fall nectar flow is short yet intense and begins with the sour smelling Goldenrod flower.

**The Bees.** The drones may begin to disappear this month. The hive population is dropping. The queen's her egg laying is dramatically reduced.

**The Beekeeper.** Harvest your honey crop. Remember to leave the colony with at least 40 pounds of honey for winter. Check for the queen's presence. Attend bee club meetings.

**Time Spent.** Estimate 2-3 hours.

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### October-

Reduce Hives bodies down to 2 boxes if necessary; the key is to not let your hives get too low on honey that goes through the winter with your bees.

Keep a monthly check. Fall nectar flow continues with the Goldenrod flower.

Feed and medicate towards the end of the month . Apply Varroa or Tracheal mite treatment when daytime temps are consistently below 85 degrees.

**The Bees.** Not much activity from the bees.

**The Beekeeper.** Watch out for robbing. Configure the hive for winter, with attention to ventilation and moisture control. Install mouse guard at entrance of hive. Setup a wind break if necessary. Consider medicating the hive if necessary. Attend bee club meetings.

**Time Spent.** Estimate 2 hours.

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### November—

Reduce Hives bodies down to 2 boxes; the key is to not let your hives get too low on honey that goes through the winter with your bees. Consider medicating the hive if necessary.

Keep a monthly check.

You can order spring time package bees, nucs and queens on sites now for spring delivery.

**The Bees.** Even less activity this month. The cold weather will send them into a cluster.

**The Beekeeper.** Store your equipment away for the winter. Attend bee club meetings.

**Time Spent.** About one hour this month.

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## December—

\_\_ Last month to reduce hive bodies down to 2 boxes if you haven't done it already, it's time. Consider using an entrance reducer to keep mice out. Remove the queen excluder until next season.

\_\_ Set-up for your method of feeding for the long winter days ahead if you haven't already. *Various methods of feeding, Front feeders: Sugar/Water 1:1 or Top feeders: Sugar/Water 1:1 or inside Mountain Camp method of raw sugar in freezer bags with slits cut on top of bags, place inside empty super body under main top cover.*

\_\_ You can order spring time package bees, nucs and queens on sites now for spring delivery.

**The Bees.** The bees are in a tight cluster. No peeking.

**The Beekeeper.** There's nothing you can do with the bees. Read a good book on beekeeping, and enjoy the holidays!

**Note:** Our nectar flow usually starts in March, so do not medicate within 6 weeks of nectar flow. January 15 would be the last day to add medication.

**Time Spent.** 1 hour.

## Notes

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