

NOTES FROM THE APIARY

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER

Robert Crouse

Not much going here at Dogwood Apiary. I have managed to requeen several hives with daughter queens from Nucs I sold last year. So now I am rebuilding my genetic stock. I went from no bees this spring to 12 Hives with 6 packages purchased and 5 swarms collected. I should have Nucs for sale next spring also.

As I had lots of frames of stores left over from last year that I placed on to the new hives I do not have to feed the bees now. Those of you that started with packages and placed your bees on foundation may need to continue to feed 1:1 syrup until you get all of the frames you need drawn out. Sometimes it is hard to get the bees to work foundation in the summer heat. I have propped open all of the tops of my hives to help with ventilation in the heat we have had. This is OK just watch out for robbing if you have several hives close together.

Sometimes beekeepers get careless in August as they have harvested their honey, drawn comb, requeened their hives and are busy doing Fair activities and Bar-B-Qs. But this month is actually the beginning of the Beekeeping Year. From now on you are working to get ready for what happens next year.

If your queen is in her second year and has been a good layer for two seasons now would be a good time to purchase a replacement queen. A good new queen will be primed to lay lots of good bees to get through the winter and will be eager to lay again in the spring. What you do not want is an older queen that slows down in March and April when you need her performance the most. If you raise your own queens you had to start by the first of July so that you had laying queens by August.

The next thing you need to do is get ready to feed 2:1 syrup. I like to use hive top feeders for this to prevent robbing. I usually start in September and feed through early November depending on need and weather. You want to have close to 60 pounds of stores in each hive. Be careful though and leave room for the queen to lay brood for winter bees. This means you will have to get into the hive to monitor the brood pattern and pollen stores. Ideally you should have stores above and on each side of the brood comb. You may have to move brood frames from upper boxes down to achieve this. I also like to leave burr comb on the bottom of the upper frames. This will help the bees to move up during the cold months.

Keep your hive tool sharp and enjoy your bees.