



The Managed Mentoring Program on getting started in beekeeping.

# Managed Mentoring



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Preparing for the fall nectar flow

Lesson | Preparing for Fall Nectar



# What is Covered in this Module

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Fall Nectar Sources

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Assessing Fall Objectives

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Honey Collection and Harvest

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Extraneous Nectar Collection

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Big Picture Assessment

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# Fall Nectar Flows

## □ Goldenrod, Asters, Hyssop, Sunflower, Sedum

- *These are just some of the fall plants that provide nectar for bees*
  - The fall nectar flow provides necessary food for colony production of bees as well as resources for overwinter storage.
- *Every location is unique in what is provided*
  - Most locations in the mid-Atlantic region have adequate access to resources for a light nectar flow. Many have moderate, and some have abundance.
  - What you have is very region – and can be hyper-local.



# Honey Harvesting

## □ If you were fortunate

- *You may have had some honey boxes to harvest*
  - This is as noted in previous lessons dependent upon your colony
  - Some colonies do well to build honey to harvest in the first year
    - Much of this is dependent upon the year's nectar flow.
- *If you have drawn comb honey supers to place on hives...*
  - It is plausible to consider returning them to the hives for a fall flow
- *If you did not get that far, we will cover instructions for you too*



# First things First

## □ The order of objectives in fall depends upon:

- *Did the colony finish the brood boxes?*
- *Is the colony healthy, and does it have a good population to go into winter and adequate resources?*
- *If they finished the brood boxes – and are flush with resources, did they draw comb in honey supers for you?*
- *If they drew comb in honey supers, are you in an area with a fall flow*

*What you do in fall is an 'it depends' situation*



# Job #1 – Healthy Colony and Resources

- **Brood box full of bees, and resources**
  - *Whatever happens in fall is irrelevant if the basics are not in place*
    - If the colony suffered a setback, then you need to feed them through summer and fall to get them to the best overwinter state you can
      - Feed the bees to finish building any honeycomb so there are 20 well-developed frames
    - Keep the population to a reasonable size as more bees means a larger workforce to keep the super-organism warm in winter
    - 60-80 pounds of honey in the two brood boxes
      - This is the recommended number of resources for the Mid-Atlantic Region



# Good Brood Area > Honey Supers

- One to two honey supers ready to go
  - *Ideally if your brood box situation is good, then the next milestone is to get at least one fully drawn honey super on top of the box for the beginning of the season*
    - One to two boxes over the brood nest is customary
  - *If drawn comb for honey supers are not available...*
    - Then you can place a honey super on the box and see if they will do anything to draw it out for you – removing it later
    - Any advancement of comb being drawn is in your favor for the future





# Summer Varroa Treatments & Feeding

## □ Allow for Treatments to run their course

- *Read the labels for your treatments and abide by the instructions*
  - Be sure to remove your treatments prior to placing fall honey supers
  - Follow any buffer windows that are required post treatment
    - Leave time for chemicals to dissipate so they do not end up in your honey

## □ Cease Feeding

- *Do not feed while trying to collect honey – you will end up with funny honey (sugar solutions stored in honey supers*



# Drawn Supers > Nectar Collection

- If you supers are good to go for collection
  - *Place them over the colony and let the bees have at it*
  - *Ideally, they will fill the box(es) with nectar, ripen it, and then get it capped before cold winter sets in. It doesn't always happen this way.*
    - If they ripen it by drawing out the moisture, and cap it – Mission accomplished
    - If they do not, and it turns to cold weather, then you have 'wet' frames with nectar that you will have to address. It does happen
      - If they do not look like they are going to finish the job, we often tell beekeepers to clear the boxes of bees and set the frames out somewhere to be robbed out.



# Fall Harvest

## □ Consider your harvest methods

- *Plan your strategy for removing finished honey supers*
- *Ensure your extracting operation is prepared*
  - You will want to harvest your honey while temperatures are conducive to do so
  - Harvesting in winter is complicated when the honey is cold and it does not spin out of the comb when placed in an extractor
- *Plan for what you are going to do with your 'wet' supers after you harvest.*
  - You do not want to leave them wet as something will likely get into them



# Wet Supers

## □ Using the bees to clean out the supers

- *Some beekeepers look for a window late in the season,*
  - Before cold sets in you place the supers over an inner cover. The bees will clean them up and draw any excess down into the brood area as overwinter food
  - This has to be done in time for the bees to collect it, ripen it, and cap it
- *Open Feed and let the bees clean them out?*
  - Alternatively, one can place them in the open and let the bees discover and clean them out
  - Review the information presented in the lesson on robbing when considering this tactic



# Purposeful Robbing

## □ Giving un-ripened nectar back to the bees

- *If bees partially draw the frames, and honey supers contain wet nectar when cold weather sets in – what do you do?*
  - We do not want these on the hives going into winter. Wet nectar is not good for consumption overwinter; it can make the bees sick
- *Our end state would be to clear the nectar and not leave it over the colony.*
  - Wet, un-ripened, nectar can make bees sick in some instances and as beekeepers we try to limit its presence as winter approaches



# Box Placement

## □ Place it far from the colonies

- *Ideally you would place these boxes 100s of yards away*
  - The premise is that it is far enough away from the bees that they can develop a waggle dance to describe it away from the colonies
    - If you place it close, the bees might look to the hives in the apiary – after following waggle instructions
  - If it is far away, and preferably with some obstacles in the way, they will see it as just another nectar source. Odd that it is *not a flower*, but they will not pass it up.



# Shake it Out

- If purposeful robbing seems too risky
  - *If you do not want to risk inciting robbing, or you have a property that does not allow for the placement away from the apiary...*
    - You can simply shake out the collected nectar. Hold the faces of the comb down and shake out all of the excess liquid to the best of your ability
    - Then set the frames somewhere where the bees cannot get to them and let them dry out. You can help the evaporation with a fan blowing
  - *It is a sad thing to consider given the labor involved by the bees, but sometimes it is the right choice*



# Coming back: Adequate Stores & Feeding

- ❑ Ideally you are one of the lucky ones
  - *Some beekeepers will simply monitor their hives and find that:*
    - Not only will the brood area be flush with resources; they can add drawn comb honey supers and make a fall harvest.
- ❑ Some have some work to do..
  - *Others are still working through some summer fall objectives*
    - Some beekeepers might still have to feed to get fully drawn comb in two boxes. Especially those who had some setback along the way
    - Some may need to feed to sustain a large colony and flush out the brood chamber with food and storage for winter.





# Plan the Work, Work the Plan

## □ Fall Harvests Require a Plan

- *This lesson is to say - If you are planning on taking a fall harvest, consider what you must do from start to finish*
  - Focus first on the big objectives of a large colony of bees with plenty of stores.
  - If your focus is on getting the colony to 60-80 pounds, then maybe your focus would be on feeding or letting the bees fill the brood nest with the fall nectar flow
  - If your brood nest is flush, and you are going to go for a fall harvest, think the whole operation through and have a plan that puts you in a good place to close the hives down for overwintering



# Closing Comments

- **Customary Close**
  - Where we stand, where we are going...
    - *This lesson covered preparing and strategies for a potential Fall Nectar Flow*
    - *Our next round of lessons:*
      - Summer Queen Assessments
      - Robbing Events
      - Looking out for Mite Infestations in the Fall
      - And Propping Up Weak Hives



# Q&A

- **What Questions did we not anticipate?**
  - If you have feedback, you can leave a constructive comment; but be nice.
  - You could also send an email to [comments@managedmentoring.com](mailto:comments@managedmentoring.com)
    - *Please refer to this video in the subject so we know what the reference is.*

