



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Agriculture and Natural Resources

UC Cooperative Extension



UC DAVIS

E.L. Niño Bee Lab

Apiculture

Backyard Beekeeping Timeline for Southern California

First Year Beekeeper

JANUARY-FEBRUARY

Read & take classes; talk to other beekeepers; select a mentor; order packages/nucs and equipment; prepare hive; determine feeding and IPM protocols; if weather permits, inspect hives, do not break cluster; study apiary safety; practice lighting smoker

MARCH (swarm season)

Install packages/nucs; ensure presence of egg-laying queen; ensure comb is being drawn properly; feed syrup to packages/nucs; add drone frame if desired & check every 3 weeks; remove robbing screens and enlarge entrances; watch for early blooming flowers; study IPM

APRIL (swarm season)

Inspect colonies regularly; become more comfortable in the hive; ensure queen and/or all stages of brood are present; consider splitting strong colonies and/or if multiple queen cells are found; stop feeding when bees no longer take syrup; look for pollen on returning foragers

MAY-JUNE (swarm season)

Assess mite thresholds & treat if needed; inspect for queen cells, laying pattern, all stages of brood, and remaining cells for egg-laying; split colonies or add deep box/super to avoid "honey-bound" hives; watch for swarms; monitor for pests & diseases

JULY

Assess mite thresholds & treat if needed; IPM; monitor for space and back filling; "super" hives as needed; too late in season to split hives; feed as needed to prepare for limited nectar sources

AUGUST

Nectar flow is generally minimal; consider honey extraction; prior to winter bee production (September), assess mite thresholds & treat if needed; limited inspections; reduce, equalize, and combine colonies as needed; monitor adequate space and queen laying pattern; consider requeening with mated queen; add entrance reducers or robbing screens to deter robbing

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER

Feed if needed to increase stores; nectar dearth is occurring; limit inspections to deter robbing; winter bee production starts; assess mite thresholds & treat if needed; based on temps, bees may cluster in late October

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER

Equalize/combine colonies; determine colony losses; clear dead-out equipment; deter robbing; feed 2:1 syrup to build up winter stores winter as needed. Limit inspections do not break cluster; add wind breaks in apiary; provide ventilation holes to release moisture; insulate lids & restrict entrances. Bees become quiet, but undergo hygienic flights when temps permit

Beekeeper w/Previous Hives

JANUARY

Check colony survival and strength; order packages or nucs; clean dead-out equipment; determine feeding and IMP protocols; limit inspections; do not break the cluster; plan IPM for the year

FEBRUARY

Check colony survival and strength; feed syrup and pollen as needed; assess mite thresholds in larger colonies; treat as needed; watch for pollen on returning foragers; study weak areas of your skills

MARCH

Provide space/supers for expanding colonies; evaluate queen laying pattern; assess mite thresholds & treat if needed; add drone frame if desired & cull every 3 weeks; when weather stabilizes remove entrance reducers and robbing screens; order replacement packages/supplies; ready equipment

APRIL

Provide space/supers for expanding colonies; evaluate queen laying pattern; split strong colonies; consider rearing or replacing poor/failing queens; install packages/nucs and feed; monitor for queen cells and/or swarm preparations; assess mite thresholds & treat if needed; monitor for pests and diseases

MAY-JUNE

Monitor space; super as needed; watch for and capture swarms; split strong colonies by early June; Feed if needed; assess mite thresholds & treat if needed; monitor for pests and diseases

JULY

Provide space/supers for expanding colonies to prevent being "honey bound"; remove drone frames; consider honey extraction; prior to winter bee production, assess mite thresholds & treat if needed (Proceed to August on the left)

More information at: cambp.ucdavis.edu
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