

# COUNTRY BIRD & GARDEN



LOCAL HONEY

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## Winter Now, But Spring is Near



Early Winter

Honey bees do not die in the winter; they huddle inside clustering in a ball around the queen to keep her warm. On a sunny day, even though it is cold outside, some may venture outside for a brief breath of fresh air or to throw out debris that has collected in the hive. Good hygiene is important to the hive's health. By December, the queen has stopped lay-

ing eggs, but will start up again in February. There is not too much for the beekeeper to do at this point, but prepare for spring. That includes scraping and painting woodenware that will be put into use in a few months, ordering new frames, and checking inventory levels of equipment and supplies. When the honey flow begins in the spring, I want to be ready, because bees are bees, and they have their own schedule. Ready or not, here they come.

Since heat rises, the bees tend to congregate near the top of the hive in the winter where their winter stores of honey are usually located. They need to have enough honey in there to sustain them through the winter.

Come spring, when plants begin to bloom, the bees can collect more nectar and pollen, but in the winter, they depend on the honey they have saved.

This spring my goal is to have fewer swarms. Most beekeepers complained of excess swarming activity last spring due to a mild winter and early spring. Swarming takes a lot out of the hive since about half the bees take off with the old queen. That leaves the other half at home trying to raise a new queen, who has to hatch and then mate within 5 days so they can survive. This year I plan to "bee" on time, making splits and keeping them happy at home instead of seeing them take off for parts unknown. We'll see!

### Special points of interest:

- WHAT DO BEEKEEPERS DO IN WINTER?
- PLAN FOR SPRING
- WINTER-SPRING BEE CALENDAR



Spring Swarm  
I managed to catch this bunch since they landed on the ground instead of 40 feet up a tree!

## Bee Checklist for Winter into Spring

My bee calendar hangs on the wall of my office right in front of my nose so I can keep an eye on what I am supposed to be doing.

This time of year the beekeeper can kick back and relax, but not too much. Like most projects, the real work lies in preparation, and

pretty soon there will be no spare time.

Most beekeepers have taken, or will take, a beekeeping course. Sure to be part of that curriculum is a Bee Calendar, but most need to be adjusted for global warming (if you have bees, you know it's real). Since the

first killing frost is long past, it's time to focus on what's next:

Jan - Feb:

- Check colonies for food.
- Check entrance guards.

Feb - Mar:

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- Check entrance guards.

- Check for brood rearing -depending on nectar flow.
- Spring medication-according to temperature.

If you must feed in winter, use fondant or food intended for winter. Do not use liquid sugar water.

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[CountryBirdAndGarden.com](http://CountryBirdAndGarden.com)

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