

# COUNTRY BIRD & GARDEN



LOCAL HONEY

November 2014

## The OCD Beekeeper

As an obsessive-compulsive activity, Beekeeping is unparalleled.

Reacting to a genuine infatuation with honey bees and beekeeping in general, you start your first two hives. You do all the right things. You attend the state university beginner beekeeping course. You read every book you can on beekeeping, some good, some downright ridiculous, but you cannot help yourself; you are now on a mission.

You buy your first two packages of bees, and feed them all summer to make them strong for the winter. In the process you spend so much money on sugar that your spouse calculates you could have bought a lifetime supply of honey instead.

You go to beekeeping meetings, where every beekeeper

seems to have a different opinion on the best way to manage your hives. Each one claims unparalleled success, so you listen and choose from the alternatives, trying out the practices that seem to make sense. You even invent a few practices of your own. One of your hives survives your first year despite your good intentions. You are reminded to stick to the basics they taught you in beginner beekeeping class until you have some experience under your belt.

Undaunted, you buy more bees, saying you'll do better next time. And you do! You still make some mistakes, but the bees survive! That wasn't so bad, so you do some splits to create more hives, and you order a few more packages in the winter for next year.

13 is an unlucky number so



you decide to have 14 hives, or better 16, just in case one or two hives go south. 16 was good, but you met a farmer who wants hives on his property, and you wanted to oblige...besides, the hives are in the same general area where some of your other hives are located, so there is really no extra work, right? (Wrong!) Then another person hears about the farmer, and they want to do the same thing, and you are already hooked, so you know you will do it because the OCD is in full gear.

Give in to your OCD! Embrace it! Become a beekeeper and improve our earth at the same time!

## Results of Late Varroa Mite Treatment

Your bee calendar is telling you that you should have treated for mites in late August or early September. But, the road to hell is paved with good intentions, and so it sometimes goes with timely mite treatment. Or, perhaps you did treat for mites, but in checking your hives again later, you found that one treatment was apparently not enough, and you find yourself with over threshold

mite levels. It happened to me last year, and I promised to reveal what I did and how I fared treating "too late". Well...I fared ok...not ideal, but ok, which I suppose is better than certain hive death by spring in the few hives affected.

In cold weather, the fumigant type mite treatments do not work because the air is too cold to create "fumes" to kill

the mites. But a contact miticide, like Apivar, is spread by the bees making contact with the product and distributing it around the hive. Of course, in cool weather the bees are in cluster, so you are dependent on those warm fall and winter days to have the product distributed. Not great conditions, but better than nothing.

As with all products, organic or synthetic, read and follow the label instructions.

### Special points of interest:

- O.C.D. AND BEES
- VARROA MITES AND (OOOPS!) LATE TREATMENT !
- WINTER HIVE PREP & CHECKLIST

### November's Checklist:

- After the first killing frost, move any honey supers stored above your hive to a moth-free environment.
- Regularly check that mouse guards are in place and did not come loose.
- Heft the back end of the hive to make sure it is "heavy" with winter stores of honey. If they feel light, do not feed liquid sugar water; instead use fondant or "bee candy". (The recipe is readily available on the internet.)
- Very important—place 1/2 inch or so wooden blocks between the outer and inner cover, one at the back left corner and one at the right back corner atop the back edge of the inner cover. This will provide good air flow so condensation does not build up within the hive and create moisture that will drip on the bees and freeze them.

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