



Backyard Beekeeping Timeline for Northern California

First Year Beekeeper

JANUARY–MARCH

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

APRIL

Install packages and/or nucs; remove entrance reducers as weather stabilizes; ensure presence of egg-laying queen; consider requeening; ensure comb is being drawn properly; feed packages syrup; consider adding drone frame & check every 3 weeks; IPM; read about swarms and splits

MAY

Feed syrup to stimulate wax production; inspect colonies regularly; become more comfortable in the hive; ensure queen and/or all stages of brood are present; IPM

JUNE

Assess mite thresholds and treat if necessary; unlikely to extract honey from a package; add second deep or honey super to hive if needed; IPM

JULY

Assess mite thresholds and treat if necessary; unlikely to extract honey from a package; add second super to hive if needed; consider requeening if laying pattern is poor; winter bee production will begin next month

AUGUST

Nectar flow is generally minimal or over; consider honey extraction; consider winter bee production timing; assess mite thresholds and treat if necessary; reduce, equalize, and combine colonies as needed; check queen has space to lay; check brood nest for all stages of brood; decrease entrance size to deter robbing

SEPTEMBER–DECEMBER

Equalize/combine colonies; determine colony losses; clear dead-out equipment; deter robbing; assess mite thresholds and treat if necessary; feed light colonies 2:1 syrup; bees become quieter and take hygienic flights only when temps permit; limit inspections; do not break cluster

Beekeeper w/Previous Hives

JANUARY

Check colony survival and strength; order packages or nucs; clean dead-out equipment; determine feeding and IPM protocols; study about swarms and splits

FEBRUARY

Continue to check colony survival and strength; feed syrup and pollen as needed; assess mite thresholds in larger colonies; treat as needed; watch for pollen of returning foragers; IPM; prepare additional equipment for swarms/splits

MARCH

Provide space/supers for expanding colonies; evaluate queen laying pattern; assess mite thresholds; treat as needed; consider adding drone frame and cull every 3 weeks; remove entrance reducers as weather stabilizes

APRIL

Provide space/supers for expanding colonies; evaluate queen laying pattern; split strong colonies; consider queen rearing or replacement of poor/failing queens; monitor for queen cells and/or swarm preparations; assess mite thresholds and treat if necessary

MAY–JUNE

Provide space/supers as needed; watch for and capture swarms; split strong colonies by early June; continue IPM management

JULY

Provide space/supers for expanding colonies to prevent them from being “honey bound”; remove drone frames; consider honey extraction; assess mite thresholds and treat if needed
(Proceed to August on the left)

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