

Locating Your Bee Hives and Feeding Your Bees in Spring

The best time to start a beehive is in the spring. This is when bees are just starting to get busy. You want to start them up as soon as the weather warms up so that they will have plenty of time to build up a strong hive. You will want to locate your hive where they have an open flight path. There will literally be thousands of bees coming and going out of the hive. A high fence will raise their flight path for neighbors. For yourself, just make sure they have 15 feet or so of space around them.

Your bees will need water as well. We didn't actually think about this until a neighbor told us about all of the bees that were gathering at her birdbath. You can set up a bird bath, shallow or with some rocks or upside down egg cartons for the bees to stand on.

Bees follow gravity and build their comb perpendicular to the ground. If your hive is on a slope, the comb will be equally sloped. Make sure you either place the hive on level ground, or place garden tiles, rocks or scrap wood under the hive to make it as level as possible. This also makes it easier for you to access the hive without fumbling up and down a hill. You will want to shim the back of the hive to give a slight tilt forward to keep any water out of the hive with gravity.

Bees need warmth to fly. They gain this heat from the sun, or generate it themselves by vibrating their flight muscles rapidly. If there is more sun, the amount of energy spent warming up their flight muscles is minimized. Placing your hive with south or southeastern morning sun exposure expedites this process, and will get the hive active earlier in the day. This provides your bees with more time to gather resources. Natural shade in the afternoon around 3 o'clock from trees or bushes is a good idea to keep the bees cool in the hot summer afternoon sun.

Ideally the hive will be placed in a location that is protected from harsh winds billowing into the hive entrances during the winter. Any obstruction blocking wind from the hive is good for temperature regulation, and can prevent hives from tipping in heavy storms. Often a couple of bricks, on the lid, is enough to avoid any wind casualties.

How to Prepare Sugar Water for Feeding Bees

You must feed your package bees as soon as you place them in the hive. You will need to have this ready before April 8, 2017, which is the date that you will be picking up your bees.

To make sugar feed you will be preparing what is called a 1 to 1 sugar to water solution, it also will be written like this, 1:1. This is fed in the Spring when the bees are making wax and building comb. (A 2:1 sugar to water solution is typically fed in the Fall as needed.)

If you are just starting a new hive, feed the bees the first year to build your combs. Generally, as long as either you feed **or** nectar is available the bees will continue to make comb.

Let's get started on making **bee sugar syrup**. First you need to understand that when doing ratios of a solid to a liquid they are expressed in terms of **WEIGHT not volume**.

What makes it confusing is that sugar (dry, white) has almost the same weight as water in the same size container. That is why you get so many, almost the same, formulas for feeding bees.

So with this knowledge you can now make the syrup correctly. Add 8 pounds of table sugar to a gallon of water. (In the Fall for a 2:1 syrup add 16 pounds of sugar to a gallon).

In a large soup pot place 8 pounds of sugar in the pot and then add 1 gallon of water. Heat the sugar and water stirring constantly, until the sugar is totally absorbed and the liquid is clear. **DO NOT** boil. Let this cool and then pour the bee food into a gallon jug or 4 quart containers.

You may want to add Honey Bee Healthy to your bee food. You simply add 1 teaspoon to one quart of 1:1 sugar water, or 4 teaspoons to your gallon mixture. You can purchase some at a beekeeping supply store or make your own. There are recipes on-line. Honey Bee Healthy is a feeding stimulant with essential Oils, (Lemongrass and Spearmint Oil Concentrate).

