

# Beekeepers Gazette

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## Is Spring Really in January?

December is here and soon your bees will be in high gear working the Maple Blossoms.

December is the month for preparation in the bee world.

In Northeast Florida, the Maple will begin to bloom around the last week of December or the first week of January. This is our spring season. If you miss this opportunity, you have to wait an entire year to get another. Believe me when I say this is the case for all nectar flows. It's do it now or wait a year.

Now is the time to scrape and clean all of your equipment. You need to paint anything that needs painting, get your frames ready for your honey supers and generally get everything in working, usable order.

The Winter Solstice begins December 22<sup>nd</sup>. As soon as the days begin to get longer, the bees will go to work.

You need to be feeding the bees and possibly equalizing your hives. By equalizing your hives, we are talking about moving brood and bees between the hives. Don't move brood if the hives aren't strong enough.

If the hive is extremely weak, you are better off to combine it into another hive and make a split later, whenever it is strong enough.

You can also, consider moving a weak hive into a Nuc box to protect it from additional problems.

The moral of the story is to not have to worry about weak hives.

During the colder months it is better to have five strong hives than fifteen weak hives. A strong hive will explode in the spring and can be split very quickly, whereas a weak hive will need a lot of attention before it begins to strengthen.

The maple blooms do not have excessive nectar. This means the bees are going to use the Maple for growth; i.e. pollen and nectar.

We suggest you keep feeding your bees even though there is a strong maple bloom. The extra sugar / carbohydrates will stimulate the bee's wax glands so they can begin to make comb.

December is about getting ready. January is about growth.

Next month, we'll talk about that growth.

*To submit your articles for consideration, please e-mail us at*

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## Beekeeping Dog

### Beekeeping dog in 'astronaut' suit detects infected hives by smell

[Michael Graham Richard](#)

#### **Bzzz bzzz woof woof**

Bees are *extremely* important. We've been writing about for years about the various [threats](#) that they face (Margaret has a [great timeline](#) of bee articles between 2005 and 2013), and about various ways to protect them. But this story from Australia might be the most original yet, or at the very least the cutest.

On the photo above is Bazz, a black labrador that beekeeper Josh Kennett has trained to detect by smell a serious bee disease called [American foulbrood](#). The *Paenibacillus* larvae caused by the infection are usually only visible under high-magnification microscope, but thanks to Bazz, that's not necessary.

Microscope analysis might not be needed thanks to Bazz's nose, but the dog still had to be protected from bee attack to get close enough to sniff out the hives. That's why Kennett built this protective suit that makes Bazz look a big like a canine astronaut.

It's particularly important to detect American foulbrood infections early because there is no cure (yet), so the only thing that can be done is quarantining the infected colonies to keep the disease from spreading.



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This article was found at  
<http://www.treehugger.com/natural-sciences/beekeeping-dog-astronaut-suit-finds-infected-hives-smell.html>

## Ask and Ye Might Receive' Question and Answers

**Q:** Do I need to cover my screen bottom boards whenever the temperatures get really cold?

**A:** If you look at it from a hive's perspective, the deciding factor will be if the hive is strong or weak. Honeybees will attempt to maintain a temperature of around 95 degrees year round. In the winter, this temperature is of the cluster, not the hive. When it's cold, the hive will cluster together and flex their wing muscles to generate heat. The bees on the inside of the cluster will work their way to the outside, thereby moving the rest towards the center. They will continue this action causing the cluster to stay warm. So if you have a strong hive, the answer to your question is no, you do not need to cover the screen bottom board.

But, we all know that wintertime can mean hives that are not so strong. I've seen people do all sorts of creative things. I've seen them put plywood or cardboard under the hive as well as sliding it into the front opening to cover the screen.

Let's think about this in simplistic terms. What if, on those very, very cold nights you simply sit the hive on the ground in front of the hive stand? In Florida, the ground rarely gets below 60 degrees, so you have a nature made insulator. Rarely is it extremely cold more than one or two days, so you simply put the hive back on the stand and there has been zero work involved.

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**Q:** What are the best ways to combat ants, specifically carpenter ants, for both spot treating an attacking ant hive, and general anti-ant mitigation practices near the bee yard that won't be a danger to the bees too.

**A:** The quickest way to control carpenter ants is to move your hive into a sunny area. Most of the time, carpenter ants are found where there is decaying wood or decomposing vegetation. This rarely occurs in a sunny area.

As far as treatments, a highly recommended treatment to control ants is Diatomaceous Earth. Diatomaceous Earth consists of fossilized remains of Diatoms, a hard shelled algae. This finely ground powder rapidly absorbs lipids, breaking down the exoskeletons of insects such as ants.

**Q:** Do you prefer community feeders or hive feeders

**A:** A feeder at the hive is the preferable method for a couple of reasons. First and foremost, if a hive is weak, using a community feeder never gives the hive a chance to get stronger because the bees continue to compete for food. If you feed a weak hive at the hive, you can control how much nutrition the bees get. Another thing to consider whenever using a community hive is the chance to spread diseases with the other bees using the feeder. They may not always be your bees.

That being said, there are times whenever both can be considered.

*To submit your questions to be answered, please e-mail us at*

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## You've Made Me Proud

### Comments from the Editor

I've said it before, and I will continue to say, you've made me proud.

I want to thank all of you for the love and kindness you've shown me and Debbie during our time of sadness.

There is no substitute for love.

Now, let's discuss a happier subject.

The acceptance of this newsletter has been overwhelming. What started out as a simple idea has grown to be read by three clubs in Northeast Florida and now we have subscribers in the North Central Florida area.

As I said in the previous issue, my intent is for this to be a community newsletter.

If you or your clubs are doing something newsworthy, please submit it for consideration to be published.

I/we are interested in everything going on in our area.

This issue is somewhat a Special Edition in as much as we are reporting on the candidates for Officers and Board of Directors in the upcoming JaxBees election.

Our intent is to stay neutral on who is best for the job and who isn't.

However,

The Jacksonville Beekeepers Association is going through hard times.

If change was ever needed, it is now.

I want to leave you with something to think about.

The officials we have in office are who you have voted for.

If the President and other officers are doing what he or she or they campaigned to do and what you expect, then you have made a good choice. If not, change is needed.

If the Board members are living up to your expectations, then you have made a good choice. If not, change is needed.

You have to decide what you want this club to be.

Beware; I am not sure everyone has your best interest in mind. They may merely want to keep control.

Is a change needed? Vote wisely.

*Ray*

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It has been said many times that most problems and ailments in a beehive can be cured by re-queening and breaking the brood cycle.

The same may be true of our club.

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