

# Stahlman Beekeeping Notes for 2022

“The Party is ov’ar”

End of summer



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What does a beekeeper do when the bees are put away for the winter? I would guess some of us still have a little worry about the bees but if one has done everything to ready the bees for winter, not too much more bee work will be needed. Many beekeepers prepare for the worst and hope for the best – I am one of them! And yes, there are some that just don't bother with – “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” and let what will be, BE!



I will look back to what was and look forward to staying busy. For all of us, there is so much to this hobby of keeping bees. If your honey has been harvested, it is time to decide what you are going to do with it! Some will surely decide to sell the honey harvest – some like me will make up Christmas gifts using some fancy bottles to make the gifts more attractive. And others will try their hand at making Meade. But there is so much more!

Bee books are great gifts for Christmas and now is the time to think Christmas – only 55 days away.



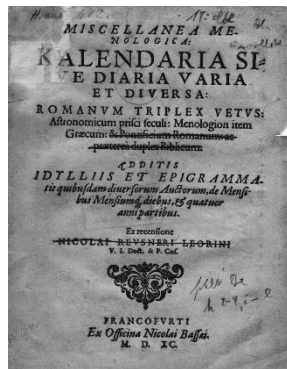
Hives owned by Carv Oranze

There are still some beekeeping tasks that will continue until the new bee season begins.

One needs to check often for wind damage – make sure top covers are well secured. I have lost a few really good hives because I neglected to make sure the top cover would not come off. The hives in my home bee yard can be checked easily but any out-yard that one visits only occasionally requires more than a brick.

I love to visit the bee yards of beekeepers I mentor. This picture is of two hives moved to the country. As I mentioned last week in my introductory notes, the bottom deep brood box on both hives had no brood or honey stored in them. The winter prep task was to remove those bottom boxes from the hives. They really serve no useful purpose. The

deep box with brood on each hive and some honey was moved down to the bottom board and the medium supers above the brood nest were checked for honey stores. Both of these hives were treated with Formic Pro for mites, have a good supply of winter stores, good laying queens, and a large population of bees. In my opinion, they are ready for winter. The front of the hives face the winter sun which will provide heat to give the bees an opportunity for winter flights on warm winter days. And yes, the bottom boards slope to let moisture leave the hive and hive entrance reduces will keep the mice out!



As I have indicated in the past, I like to read. The oldest book in my personal beekeeping library is a book called Kalendaria Sive Diaria Varia et Diversa published in 1540. It requires some knowledge of Latin and Old English to read. It has a chapter on beekeeping.

CHAP. X.

### *Of the fruit and profit of Bees.*

Wherein is shewed first the *Pindemiation* or taking of Combes: secondly, the trying of the *Wax* and *Honis*, with the making of *Meth* or *Hydromel*: and thirdly, the singular vertues of them, for the vie and comfort of man.

*The first part of this Chapter sheweth the taking of the Combes.*

It is interesting to me that a topic such as beekeeping begins with the Fruit and Profit of Bees in many old books.

**“Quoted passages” are taken directly from the book. When you see the words, remember the spelling of the English language has undergone some changes over the years. For example, Honey is spelled both as Honi and Honie.**

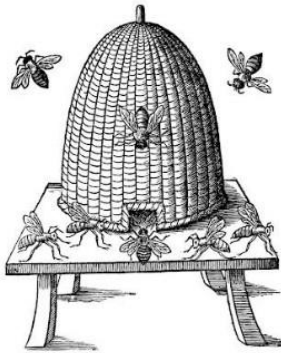
Maybe our bee classes should start with introducing beekeepers to bees by sharing the subject fruit and profit of bees. I am usually asked a question early on about how much honey a hive will make? It is one reason many start beekeeping. Another interest is in saving the bees! Signs of the zodiac were used to determine times to harvest. *Every year, between September 19 to 25, the sun moves out of Virgo and into the zodiac sign of Libra.* In this 1540 book the following is given: “the natural and seasonable time is the latter part of Virgo, from the Dog-Days into Libra: because the combs of (brood) which deceive the Honi men, making the Hive heavier and Honie worse because the young bees as well as the comb corrupt the same. The weather waxeth colder, not so fit the running and working of the Honie.” **(It is best to take the honey after the hive reduces the amount of brood)**

The beekeepers of that time also had to make decisions: “At this time of the year therefore consider with your selfe what Stalls you will kill. The most usuall and generally most usefull manner of taking the combs is by killing the Bees.” **Skeps were referred to as stalls.** “Yeerlings and two yeerlings that are proof, keepe for store.” **(Thus, the beekeeper was**

being advised to keep those with honey stores and young queens while harvesting from the rest.)

The message was: hives of a greater age, hive unworthy to be fed, the ones that over swarmed, and the one's with drones – “It is therefore better to take them now while they are good, than in a vaine hope of increase, to keepe them till they perish.” (It is clear that weak hives with honey were expected to die anyway.)

It is obvious to me that beekeepers in the 1500's were concerned with bees dying. They were also concerned with bees surviving so increases could be made the following year. They



definitely considered wax an important product of the bee hive! Candles provided light to see by in a world yet to discover the light bulb!

There were many styles of skeps which were essentially upturned straw baskets with an entrance.

Instructions were given how and when the hive was to be killed. The object was to take the skep into the kitchen after the killing without the bother of dealing with live bees.

The following routine was followed: “Some two or three hours before the sun set, dig a hole in the ground near the stoole. The hole should be as wide as the hive skirts.” The goal was to: “smoke the bees with brimstone not enough to make the honie smell of the smoke but enough to kill the bees within 15 minutes.” A second method was mentioned -- drowne them in a tub of water. A third included cutting a part of the nest out of the skep leaving some comb for bees to survive.

Honey was often used directly from the comb, but much was salvaged by crushing. Beekeepers of that time did not like “corrupted honi”. Evidently a lot of “honi” was corrupted by old comb and brood. Again, from the book: “Honi – men do make but one worke of all; with a thin light shovel pounding and compounding the Honie, and wax, and bees, and schadons (brood) all together. And then putting this confused stuffe into a strong hairen bag, do with a press or wringe out all that will runne.” “This done, the pulse remaining in the bagge they slice with a shredding knife into a trough or other vessel, all to wash it and mash it in faire water for Mede: which, when the sweetnesse is all washed out, being crushed dry, the balls they try for wax.” They used everything! (Honey, Meade, & wax were products of the hive)

Well so much for sharing beekeeping tips from 1540!

Fall is an interesting time and honey does runith slow as temperatures fall. I would like to share with you the set up for warming my extracted honey. I no longer own a bottling tank or heated honey tank. Getting granulated honey out of a 5 gal. bucket is work – sometimes pretty messy. Those of you that bottle honey (only to have it granulate) find buyers thinking

something is wrong with your honey unless they know that pure honey does granulate and is still good.



I love shopping at thrift shops/used book stores and anything resembling bargain hunting. I have used an old washing machine like the one shown here to mix my sugar syrup and wash my work clothes. My late wife had a thing about bringing bee stuff into the house! But back to that honey!

Another great find was a refrigerator that did not work -- free! It was an apartment size that I could fit a 5 gal. bucket into as well as quite a few pint jars of granulated honey. I did experiment on using a standard electric light bulb to heat it. A 100 watt bulb would heat the refrigerator to 150° F. I had to get a temperature to approximately 105°F which some would say is too hot but it works well with a digital Temperature Controller I bought for about \$35.00.



It is easy to fill a 5 gal. bucket with honey. If that 5 gal. bucket has a honey gate, filling bottles is easy but some times messy. I bought a 5 gal. bucket with a plastic honey gate last year for around \$25.00. I checked for a new one this year and the price had increased by about \$15.00. I was never satisfied with the bargain plastic gates that are sold with them. I was able to buy a 5 gal. food-grade bucket for \$6.00 and a stainless steel honey gate for \$25.00. That stainless steel honey gate works wonderfully. It stops the honey flow from the bucket immediately. Almost no dripping honey or over filled bottles.

I am going to leave you with a poem verse by Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) *The Long Trail*

*There's a whisper down the field where the year has  
Shot her yield,  
And the ricks stand grey to the sun,  
Singing:  
'Over then, come over, for the bee has quit the clover,  
And your English summer's done.'*