

It's time to...

Prepare for Winter

By Steven Page

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August... It's been hot and humid, and the dearth has been ongoing for months. Your colonies have been consuming honey during the dearth. October goals are easily reached by starting in August. The fall nectar flow in the Piedmont is unreliable and sporadic at best.

The Goal. By the end of October, each colony needs a minimum of 30 pounds of honey, a queen, and a large population of workers. After October, the weather gets too cold to feed syrup.

Feeding Syrup. I use 1:1 syrup all year. A gallon of 1:1 syrup weighs 10 pounds, almost as much as a gallon of honey. I use 1:1 because there is evidence of 2:1 syrup crystallizing in the comb. I use [Pro-Health](#) in my syrup mainly to prevent mold growth. [Honey-B-Healthy](#) is another essential oils product. I mix the essential oils at a much lower ratio than the recommended one; I use one fluid ounce per 5 gallons of syrup. Let the syrup cool before adding essential oils. Essential oils can encourage robbing, so I do not use them when I think robbing will be a problem. For instance, during the dearth (now), when feeding small colonies in the same beeyard as large colonies. I leave a ½ inch opening in a small colony's entrance to help prevent robbing.

Feeders. Do not use Boardman feeders; they are too small and promote robbing. Do use some type of hive top feeder. After trying many different feeders, I like the [1-gallon](#) and [2-gallon](#) inverted pail feeders offered at [Betterbee.com](#). They work well; they offer plenty of syrup, bees don't drown, and bugs can't get to the syrup. A strong colony will consume 2 gallons of syrup in 5 days. [How to use feeder pails](#). I invert the feeder pail over a 5-gallon pail, allowing the pail to drain until it stops, and save the syrup. A [Mr. Clean Magic Eraser](#) and hot, soapy water will clean mold off the inside of the pail. Clean the propolis out of the screen using a pressure washer.

The goal. Start feeding in August to encourage the queen to start laying eggs, resulting in a large worker population in October. Syrup will also be made into honey. At the end of October, the colony should cluster in a deep with one honey super above full of honey. A 10-frame shallow super holds about 25 pounds of honey, plus there is more honey in the

deep.

Expect to find brood in the honey super; that's good. Add another super, continue to feed. In October, make up a super of honey and a super of the "other" frames. Place the super of "other" frames on the bottom board, then the deep, then the super of honey on top.