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EXTENSION DIVISION

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**HOW EVERY FARMER CAN KEEP A FEW BEES AND HAVE  
HONEY AT VERY LITTLE COST**

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In the past twenty years honey conditions in Oklahoma have changed greatly. With the increased acreage of alfalfa and cotton the sowing of sweet clover, and the setting out of locust trees, we have now an assured source of honey.

One farmer beekeeper near Stillwater increased his average annual honey yield from thirty-five to sixty pounds per colony by sowing his fence rows to sweet clover. (For sweet clover culture see Extension Circular No. 11.)

A great many people fear the stings of bees, but it is just as the western country was years ago when there were large herds of cattle. Very little butter was made because the cows were so wild and kicked so much that only one or two per family were milked. Now, however, with the improved breeds, nearly every farmer has butter and cream the year round, and often receives a nice income from the sale of these products.

The same applies to bees. The stinging Black and Hybrid bees have given place to gentle Italians. I often handle my bees throughout a year without being stung.

The following plan is one outlined by one of the most experienced, practical and up-to-date beekeepers in Oklahoma. It is one which any farmer or town resident can use with a very small outlay of money or time, and have all the honey he wants for his family throughout the year.

In the first place, don't fool with Black bees any more than you would attempt to milk Texas cows. Get pure Italians. In the second place, don't monkey with boxes or gums to keep them in, but get modern fixtures.

The hives of bees should be placed near the house where stock will not bother—in the shade of a peach tree if handy, though this is not absolutely necessary. As the covers are now made, they can set right out in the sun. By being close to the house they will be noticed when they swarm and can be saved. Bees do best in hives placed from four to six inches above the ground. To do this, place four bricks with short pieces of 2x4's on top.

The hives should face the east or south, be level crossways, and about an inch lower in front than behind.

Some time in May or the first part of June, generally during the forenoon, new swarms should be looked for. Don't get excited when they swarm and beat on the dishpan or ring the bell, but watch until they settle in a cluster, probably on the very peach tree they are under. They will stay there an hour or more, giving you all the time you need to hive them.

After the bees have clustered, move the hive they came from some ten feet or more away. Place one of the new hives exactly where the old one was; slope a short board from the ground to the entrance; cut off the limb with the cluster (have your veil on), being careful not to jar the bees off; carry them to the hive and lay them gently on the sloping board. If on a limb that you do not wish to cut off, get the dishpan and with some kind of a brush, brush them into the pan. When you have as many as the pan will hold, carry them to the hive, pour them on the board, and with a small stick gently drum on the hive. Sometimes you will have to make two or more trips, but if a few are left, pay no attention to them. They will come to the hive.

The whole family will be interested, and if you do not give the bees a sudden jar they will be very quiet and the family can gather around and watch them march into their new home. A brick or stone should be placed on the cover to keep the wind from blowing it off.

In about three weeks smoke the bees a little, raise the cover and look. If there is sealed honey, raise the cover and put a super under it. As soon as the super contains sealed honey, place another beneath it. When the honey is entirely sealed over in a frame it is ready to eat.

Whenever you want it, take a frame from a super and cut the comb so that about half an inch is left along the top bar for a starter.

Some nice evening during the last of October, about an hour before sundown, smoke two of the colonies, remove the cover of one, raise the other from the bottom board, and set it on top of the uncovered one. Do this with both sets of hives. Remove all of the supers at the same time and place in a dry storeroom or upstairs—never in the cellar.

The first of the following March, or as soon as your bees commence to gather pollen, remove the lower half of each double hive and place in the storeroom. Later use these as hives for new swarms. These hives are the best of all for this purpose as the combs are already made.

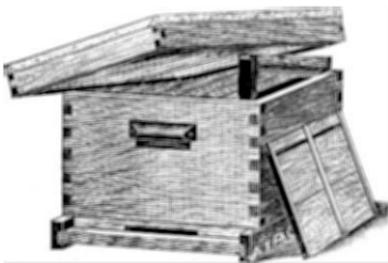


Figure 1.—Empty hive ready for a swarm of bees

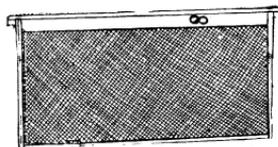


Figure 2.—Frame with full sheet of foundation

Now, just a word of caution. Don't try to produce comb honey in pound boxes, because Oklahoma is not adapted to such production. An expert beekeeper is required to make it a success anywhere. Don't imagine that you can get rich at the business just because you take off, say, two to three hundred pounds of honey some years, but follow the plan I have outlined and read your bee book. It will answer every question that may come up.

### How to Obtain a Start in Bees and Bee Supplies

If you can buy from a neighbor more cheaply than from a dealer, do so; but bear in mind that when you sell a cow, you don't always sell your best one, but more likely one with a peculiarity that you don't like. Likewise with bees, for which reason it is often better to buy from a dealer. He will be inclined to sell you something good because he has a reputation to sustain.

Two colonies of Italian bees in a complete one and one-half-story hive will cost about \$20.00. Two empty hives (ready to put new swarms in), supplied with full sheets of foundation in the brood chamber, and starters in the upper stories or supers, will cost \$9.60. See Figures 1, 2 and 3.

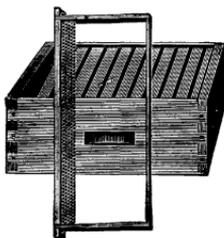


Figure 3.—Super with starters in the frame

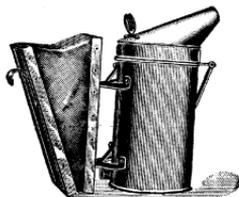


Figure 4.—Bee smoker



Figure 5.—Bee veil



Figure 6.—Bee book.—The A, B, C, and X, Y, Z of Bee Culture. Tells everything

A standard smoker, which is one of the necessities in handling bees, will cost 85 cents. See Figure 4. A bee veil made mostly of cotton, but having a small square of silk tulle on one side for looking through, and known as No. 2 bee veil, will cost 60 cents. See Figure 5. A book containing general information concerning bees—how to transfer from soap boxes and nail kegs to hives—and, in fact, all that a beekeeper needs to know, will cost \$1.00. See Figure 6.

A total of just about \$35.00 will cover the cost in starting with bees. There need be no further expense. As a result, an average of 100 pounds of fine honey can be harvested each year with the outfit described.