

Swarms Collecting Tips.

Minimum equipment required:

- Pruning Saw or loppers, Secateurs & Bee Brush.
 - Queen clip or cage.
 - Container, preferably if it has had bees in.
 - An old dry brood comb.
 - Preferably net curtain, alternatively a sheet or old duvet cover.
 - Chord or strong string.
 - Water Spray [optional] to reduce the number of flying bees.
-



Collecting Swarms.

- The traditional method of collecting is in a skep, but any sensible lightweight bee proof container will do, such as a cardboard box, about the size of a wine box,
- Bees are especially attracted to things that have had bees in sometime before, but waxing is a good alternative.
- If a swarm is in a position to shake into your container then place a bee proof sheet on the ground underneath the swarm to collect any bees that fall outside the box. Net curtain is ideal as it is light and allows air to pass through it easily, when wrapped around the container.



- 3 sharp shakes should get the bees into the skep or box. Turn it upside down on the sheet with a branch, stone or flower pot under one edge. If you have the queen, the bees will start fanning at this entrance to attract any flying bees.

- You can leave the skep/box in the shade and collect it in the evening when all the flying bees have returned. However you can run the risk of them absconding if the scout bees feel they have found a more suitable home.

- If you spot the queen use the queen clip to contain the queen, which will stop the bees absconding.

- If they are in a difficult location, try to grab a handful of bees and put them on the old drawn comb in your container and they should fan the pheromone to attract the main swarm.

- If they are accessible but on a wall, fence or tree trunk which cannot be shaken, use a bee brush with the container underneath and gently coerce them into it. If you didn't get the queen, they may return to their original location and so you may have to repeat the whole procedure again.

- Swarms are usually free of varroa but as most colonies have nosema & acarine, they may come with these.

- They will very rarely come with AFB or EFB.

Hiving Swarms.



- Prepare the hive with foundation, not drawn comb, so the bees use all their honey they are carrying with them to convert to wax. This prevents any honey being stored with possible disease.
- Drop the bees onto a board in front of the hive, sloping upwards towards the hive and watch them run uphill.
- Or if time is short, a much quicker method is to assemble a hive with a **Queen Excluder** underneath the brood chamber with all but the outside frames removed. Throw the swarm into the central gap and the bees will soon start running up the frames of foundation & the inside walls of the brood chamber.
- Gently replace the remaining frames, put the crown board on, and cover it up quickly.
- When hiving a swarm, it is better if you have a brood chamber only, without any supers.
- Swarms have no brood to feed for several days and this will interrupt the varroa breeding cycle.
- Have the hive temporarily facing a different direction from existing colonies to prevent migration.
- The **Queen Excluder** should be removed after 3 days when the queen has started laying or if you have a virgin queen to allow her free access to go on a mating flight/s. It should then be placed above the brood box and a super can be added later when flying the bees are really active taking in pollen and nectar.
- In normal circumstances a fertile queen will start laying in a day or so and a virgin queen within 10-14 days.

Bait Hives.

- Bees prefer somewhere that bees have occupied before & somewhere they can easily defend, a Poly Nuc. is ideal.
- Position it as high as possible and with a small entrance.
- Use old equipment & don't clean it up, leaving any brace comb and propolis. Use only one or two combs.
- Swarm lures can be used, but using old equipment is a very cost effective alternative.
- Bees do not seem to like open mesh floors, presumably as they see it as being totally open & difficult to defend.
- The bait hive should be as far away from the apiary as possible.
- If a swarm does take up residence you can quickly transfer it to foundation and destroy the old comb.

Uses of Swarms.

- Put two or more swarms together and let the queens fight it out
- Add to a weak colony, providing you know why it is weak.
- Amalgamate using the newspaper method, to a queen less colony or one with laying workers.

John Farrow Feb. 2015