

Feeding bees and overwintering

Bees are known to scavenge for their own food but in situations where the environmental conditions are extreme, they need to be provided with feed to minimize their interaction with the environment.

In overwintering, we feed the bees shortly after harvesting honey before the onset of the winter. This gives the bees ample time to convert the sucrose into glucose for use by the bees during the winter season. The bees are fed on a sap that's made by mixing sugar with water in a ratio of 2:1 with 2 parts of sugar per 1 part of water. If you cannot mix in that ratio, make a sugar solution as thick as you can.

Feeding methods

One of the methods of feeding bees is using a frame feeder where the frame feeder replaces one of the frames. You can put straw or wire in the frame feeder to prevent the bees from drowning.

The other feeding method is the pail method where you need a hive inner cover with a hole in it. Fill a pail having a hole in the lid with a sugar sap and invert it over the hive ensuring that the hole in the bucket lid coincide with the hole in the hive cover. The sap sips out slowly as it is held back by a vacuum. You can put an empty box around the pail and then cover with a hive lid.

We can also use a hive top feeder. This is made up of a wooden box with a slot built in the middle to allow passage of the bees to the tanks where sap is put. You can put straw in the tanks with sap to prevent drowning of the bees.

The last method we do is the barrel method where a 45 gallon

barrel is filled with sap leaving little space on the top. Loose straw is put in that space left and the lid is lifted a little with a stick running under the lid. The space between the barrel and the cover allows the bees to access the sap while the cover prevents rain from diluting the sap making it to ferment.