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## What your mentor forgot to tell you!

(Marking Queens - Removing Supers)

The conventional wisdom about beekeeping is that there are no pat answers. Whatever works for you is the right way for you to do something. Of course, most beekeepers are never satisfied and are sure there is always a better way of accomplishing a task or solving a problem. Consequently, if you ask five beekeepers the best way to accomplish something you get seven or more answers. None are wrong just different. It is what works for that beekeeper at that time. Here is a collection of hints that may help you in your beekeeping endeavor.

**Note:** See the previous issue of “Bee Culture” for hints from “Air Conditioning - Installing Bee Packages”.

**Note:** See the next issue of “Bee Culture” for hints from “Selling Honey – Weight of Boxes”.

**Marking Queens** – They tend to fly away.

Bees will fly to the light. When marking a queen, use this trait. First convince your spouse that queens don’t sting. Then hint that the bathroom is an excellent work area. Next ensure her/him that if she escapes you can find her before the next shower.

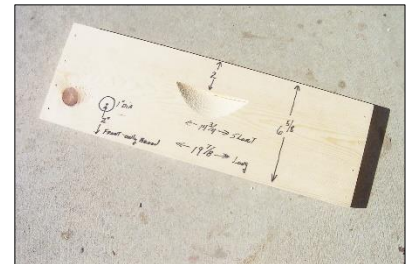
Close the bathroom door, remove the curtains from the window and turn off all the lights. Then use the windowsill as a workstation for the queen marking.

**Note:** Unless you are concerned about the date/year of the queen, yellow or white are easy colors to find. Red or green on a bee colored background is very difficult for a person that is red/green color blind to see.

**Note:** Be sure to allow the marking to dry before placing the queen in the hive.

**Measurements** – Keep them handy.

Keep a “Story Board” in your work room with all the measurement you need to build your equipment. Here is the one I have for super measurements. It hangs directly above my saw.



**Mouse Excluder** – Keep them out.

When you winterize your hives and you are unable to find any ¼ inch hardware cloth to use as a mouse excluder. Cut up plastic queen excluder. Unfortunately, it will also stop drones from leaving the hive. So, when the workers drive the drones out, they will be unable to exit the hive.



### **Mowing Grass** – The bees really get upset.

It only takes one time of mowing the grass in front of the hives to convince you to not do that again. Unfortunately, your spouse (notice the gender non-specific reference) requires the grass to be mowed. Old shingles to the rescue - Placing an old but serviceable tar paper shingle in front of the hive will at least keep you from bumping the hive when mowing. A normal shingle will normally suffice. If more depth is needed, then really go overboard and use a second shingle. You will still have to mow the grass, but you won't have to get as close to the hives and possibly bump them with the mower.

A package of unmatched shingles is cheap at the local building supply store.



### **Nosema Dead Out** – Bees can't wait to go.

In the spring and you found a hive that has a severe case of Nosema, clean it out the best you can, and it should be safe to use it. Then treat the hive with Fumagillin®-B. Hopefully that will stop it from recurring.

**Note:** If the comb is over four or five years old then it is best to replace it.



### **Nuc Creation** – The easy way.

You now want to expand your apiary by creating nucs, but you don't have time to or you can't find an elusive queen. Select the brood, pollen and honey frames you need and place them into a new hive body after brushing all the bees back into the hive. Put a queen excluder back on the hive followed by the newly created box. Then close the hive and wait an hour or two. The bees will move up to cover the brood and bee-less frames. The queen will not be able to get to the selected frames. Now you can move them to the nuc box.

### **Paper Towels** – Indispensable!

Cheap bulk paper towels that can be tossed away can save you an unbelievable amount of time compared to cleaning out cloth rags.

### **Pails 1** – Food safe pails.

A good place to get free food safe pails is your local bakery or food store that has a cake department. Icing is used by the gallons. You may have to clean them but that is a minor inconvenience.



### **Pails 2** – Sticking together

Pails made by different manufactures can have a slightly different diameter. When a pail with a larger diameter is nested inside a pail with a smaller diameter, they can be extremely difficult to separate. Nesting clean pails from the same manufacturer usually causes no problem.



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**Paint** – Free for the taking.

Free exterior latex paint is available at your local recycling center. Five-gallon pails are usually a mixture of all the half-gallons or less that were turned in. Occasionally full or almost full gallons of one color are available. The bees don't care what color their hive is and a pink or yellow hive body adds pizzazz to your apiary.

**Painting 1** – Extend the life of your woodenware.

When painting a group of woodenware, use a paint roller to apply the paint. Then if needed, smooth it out and work it in with a brush. The time saved in not dipping the brush can be significant.

**Painting 2** – Cheap rollers.

Watch for sales on the cheap rollers. Buy the cheapest you can get and keep them handy for when you need them. It's easier to toss them in the trash than it is to clean them. A little fuzz on the hive does not stop the bees from using the hive.



**Painting 3** – Bag your brushes and roller.

When painting multiple coats of paint, you may wait days between the applications. Place the roller and/or brushes in plastic bags. They won't dry out!

**Note:** Recycled bread bags work just fine.

**Painting 4** – Clean the roller pans

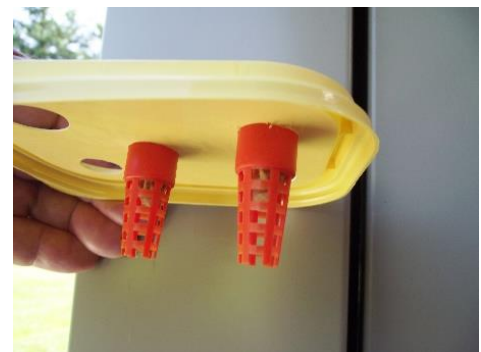
To eliminate some labor and mess when cleaning the paint roller pans, put the pan inside a plastic bag. Tape it on so it won't work it's was loose. When you are done painting, return the excess paint to the pail and throw the plastic bag away.

**Pasture Gates** – They are there for a purpose.

If you have your hives on a farmer's property, pay attention to the gate positions when going to the hives. If there are animals in the field, be sure to close the gates. If not, then make sure the gate is in the same position when you leave as it was when you got there. A loose animal will lose you your apiary privileges with that farmer and all his friends.

**Queen Cell Distribution** – Use a butter tub.

Drill a hole in the top of a plastic butter tub and insert the queen cells to distribute them. Put the queen cells in plastic cell protectors and then hang the cell protectors from the lid of a recycled butter tub. Put the lid back on the tub and you have a temperature and damage proof way to distribute your queen cells.





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**Queen Cells** – Use queen cells to start a nuc.

Queen cells are a lot cheaper than mated queens. Although there is a delay before the new queen emerges and starts laying eggs, the price is worth the delay. If you are not in need of an immediate replacement for a missing queen or you want to expand your bee yard, buy queen cells.



**Reluctant Bees** – They refuse to go above the queen excluder.

When the bees refuse to cross through a queen excluder on to new frames, put an older frame with draw comb in the center of the box, between the new frames. The drawn comb seems to help the bees cross the excluder.

**Removing Supers 1** – Collapsing frames

When removing any of the hive body boxes place them with the frames in a vertical orientation. If they are placed with the frames in a horizontal position the frames may and probably will collapse on themselves.

**Removing Supers 2** – Crushing bees

When removing any of the hive body boxes place them on an upside-down cover so the edges of the box sit diagonally across the top. This minimizes the contact with the top and minimizes crushed bees.

**Removing Supers 3** – Less sticky supers.

The burr and cross comb you didn't cleanup has come back to haunt you. Even if you did keep things orderly the bees have a way of getting ahead of you. Besides it being a mess you lose honey. To help eliminate this problem, try this procedure.

The day before you remove the supers for extraction swap and reverse the supers on each hive.

Remove each super. Place them in order and all the fronts facing the same direction.

Reinstall the supers starting with the first removed. At the same time make sure the front of the next super is now above the back of the previous super. This placement maximizes the possibility that torn comb and runny honey will not be replaced back in the original position.

The bees will clean up all the loose honey by the next day and the removal should be a lot less sticky.

I hope this helps. These hints and shortcuts have been collected from experienced and neophyte beekeepers. Additional hints would be appreciated. Please send them to:

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Get a copy of Ed Simon's book *Bee Equipment Essentials* with detailed drawings, construction hints and how-to-use instructions for dozens of beekeeping tools and equipment from [www.wicwas.com](http://www.wicwas.com). Ed can be contacted through [SimonEdwin41@gmail.com](mailto:SimonEdwin41@gmail.com).