

The Juniper Hill Plan for Comb Honey Production, Improved Two-queen System

The "Juniper Hill" Plan for full season comb honey production Spectacular results may be expected when using the basic Juniper Hill Plan. Four or five supers of honey in the Halfcomb may be expected in most regions on strong hives and much more in prime regions, weather permitting. Comb honey production by the Juniper Hill Plan together with Halfcomb cassettes is no longer tedious, labor intensive or swarm prone -- comparable to extracted honey production. Further by this plan, comb honey production does not require that beekeepers be specialists with knowledge of honeybee biology and behavior. The bees are induced and/or enabled by procedural design to perform the necessary steps in the right order. Published as Plan B in the American Bee Journal (Feb. 2005), this procedure is the shortest possible comb honey method as well as the least labor intensive.

Procedure



The plan is started in the spring after the threat of brood chilling cold is past and before swarm cell construction begins.

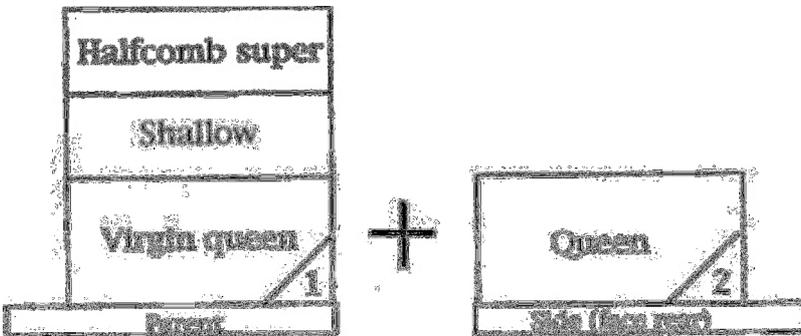
1. Choose a strong hive with double brood chamber (#1, #2).
2. Divide a double brood chamber in accordance with the photo shown below:



3. The queen of a double brood chamber hive is confined for 16 days in one of the brood chambers (#2) placed at the top over the excluder. A notch in the rim for a wood/metal bound excluder is needed to allow the drones to exit above the excluder. Because almost all modern plastic or metal queen excluders are flat, only 1/8" thick and without rims, there is no room for drone exit. In this situation you have to drill a small auger hole in a hive body. An empty Halfcomb super, a shallow food or extracting super, and the other brood chamber (#1) with brood in all stages, follow in that order, as illustrated.

Polen in the Halfcomb super is prevented by a buffer of extracting frames.

The queen is confined in the top chamber at a distance from some of her brood in the bottom chamber. The bees build supersedure queen cells in the bottom queenless brood chamber (#1) from which a virgin queen is produced, already in place for comb honey production. The first virgin to hatch destroys all sister cells for you before the end of the 16-day confinement.



4. On day 16, before the virgin below is ready to mate, the top queenright brood chamber (#2) is set down to the side on its own bottom board, facing rear. The excluder is removed. The field bees return to the parent stand. There has been an interruption in the continuity of brood rearing in #1, which continues until egg laying is resumed. This is the most reliable swarm prevention measure known.



My own setup

The field bees return and are crowded into the parent stand after the set-down split. When the virgin on the parent honey producing stand (#1) mates and begins to lay, honey stockpiled in vacated brood cells is rushed up into the comb honey super(s) to make room for the queen to lay - an artificial flow which is a sign of successful mating. Be prepared to add another super or two promptly. Also, the side hive will likely need a super before the splits are reunited. With only young bees and brood, the side hive is in the best possible condition to accept a new queen if replacement for stock improvement is elected.

5. After the new queen is known to have brood in all stages (approximately 5 weeks) the two queenright brood chambers are reunited. With all supers on top, comb honey production is continued over a powerful two-queen colony, or the bees of two queens since only one queen will survive eventually. The reunion restores the now depleted forager population on the parent stand cause by the interruption in brood rearing at the outset.

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