



Wildhood Tips

Honey Bees:

You do NOT need chemicals to control VARROA MITES!!! Simply adding natural creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*) to your smoker will kill the mites **WITHOUT** negatively impacting the bees (as miticides will do). *Larrea tridentata* is native to central and southern New Mexico and is easily harvested from roadside stands. When applied in a time schedule that coincides with the varroa mite life cycle, an infestation can be virtually obliterated. A few mites here and there is not a problem, that is a natural population kept in check by a balanced ecosystem (generally no more than ten easily visible mites per colony). Please see “Top Bar Beekeeping” by Les Crowder and Heather Harrell for more information.

Virtually all honeybee problems (diseases [even Chalk and Foul Brood!!!], poor laying patterns, infestations, behavioral issues, etc.) can be eliminated by simply re-queening (preferably from stock locally obtained and known to have favorable characteristics). Additionally, make sure that the comb they are using is not too old– very dark brown and black combs are **TOO OLD!** Move them to the back of the hive to be cleared-out by the bees and promptly removed by the beekeeper. Please see “Top Bar Beekeeping” by Les Crowder and Heather Harrell for more information.

Old combs can be piled in an undisturbed wild area a hundred feet or so from the hive as a form of “trap crop” for wax moths. Wax moth infestations in the hive indicate that the combs being used are too old! (“Wax” moth is a bit of a misnomer, as what the moths are really after is all of the propolis, cocoon and larval residue left in the compartments of the comb, giving the combs their dark color.)

Do NOT feed bees anything but, PURE RAW HONEY (preferably, though it does not need to be, their own honey). When placing crystallized honey or comb in the hive, first mist it with clean, pure water. Sugar water is not food. When fed this, the bees still need to make it into a form of honey before they can actually use the substance, and they do not gain any of the necessary vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients they gain from real flower nectar.

When reattaching comb that has broken off of a top bar, do not use actual sewing thread (despite the fact this activity is referred to as “sewing” or “threading” comb). Instead, use a 100% NATURAL twine (we like organically grown hemp) that has been dipped in pure beeswax. A wick, if you will. It is important that a non-synthetic material is used and dipped in nothing but beeswax, as the bees will properly re-attach the comb themselves and then they will chew away the remaining twine, once you’ve



put your makeshift top bar-attached comb in place. Please see our page on “Top Bar Beehives” listed under “Products– Handcrafted Goods” for prices on this wick and related products.

Calm Down. Adding lavender to your smoker, when working with honeybees, will have the beneficial effect of calming both the bees and beekeeper-- allowing them to work better together for a slightly longer period of time (than may otherwise occur without the lavender).

Full Sized Top Bar Bee Hive



Comb of Honey on a Top Bar



Native Bee Nests

Wild Native Bees:

DON'T MOW! In fact, refrain from tilling, plowing, raking, using tractors and mechanically harvesting crops if possible. Virtually all native bees are adversely impacted and/or killed by these activities. The majority of native bees are ground-nesters, needing open, bare, un- or minimally-disturbed soil sites. The remaining bees need standing stalks (like corn, sorghum, bramble, yucca, agave flower, etc.) left a *full year* or, like bumble bees, need old grass tussocks and abandoned



rodent dens for nesting. Incorporate undisturbed wild spaces into your farm or garden, to help both with pest management and pollination.

Beneficial Insects General:

As our gardens get going, so do the pests. Though I understand the desire for pest control and optimal pollination, there is one action (aside from the use of chemicals) that can have a very harmful impact on our local ecology, though it is seemingly benign. Ordering insects. Though this may seem like a great way to bring beneficial insects into your garden, the commercial raising, sales, and distribution of insects is the Primary cause of the spread of disease among local populations. PLEASE do NOT order insects nor have them shipped in any way. From nematodes to bumble bees, significant damage has been done to various local populations, both domestically and internationally, as a result of the commercial sale of agricultural insects.

Kitchen:

Quality **mushrooms** are generally available at both the Farmers' Market and your local supermarket most of the year. When buying mushrooms, look for caps that still have a bit of a curve (i.e. not fully opened/ flat) and have a nice elasticity and "springy-ness" to them. Store mushrooms in *paper* bags-- this will prevent them from getting soggy and slimy in the refrigerator (mushrooms continue to "breathe" for a very long time). If you do not get to them as soon as you expected, they will simply slowly dry-out in the paper bag, and can then still be used as dried mushrooms (as opposed to simply rotting in a plastic bag). Since mushrooms act like mini sponges when cooking, clean them by wiping them with a damp towel instead of running them under water and add them last when preparing dishes, as they will absorb as much sauce or oil as they can, turning them into a limp and soggy mess if added too early in the cooking process.

Birds:

Hummingbirds are a unique and wonderful bird. Unfortunately, many people inadvertently harm America's most beloved garden visitor when they are really trying to help. Here are some tips to make helping these cuties truly beneficial for them:

1. The recipe for making hummingbird feeder "nectar" is 1 part plain white sugar to 4 parts water. Do NOT use honey, alternative sweeteners, or the bright red stuff sold in stores-- it is the color and shape of the feeder (right at the point where they feed, not the whole thing) that attracts the birds, not the color of the liquid inside.
2. Only make about 1/2 cup of "nectar" at a time!!! This is the practice that most often harms hummingbirds-- people tend to fill-up their feeders and just leave them until they need to be filled again. This leads to the fermentation of the sugar inside and is a contributing factor to liver disease in hummingbirds. If you want to feed these birds, please do it responsibly! That means continually making fresh batches of nectar and washing out the feeder with warm water



before you add each new batch, approximately once every day or two (the nectar must be renewed more often in very hot weather). Larger batches of nectar can be kept in the fridge for about a week, to help streamline this process.

3. The vitamins and nutrients that are added to some store-bought "nectars" are completely unnecessary (nor are they readily digestible by the hummingbirds themselves). Hummingbirds are omnivores! Flying at roughly 80+ wing-beats per second, hummingbirds need a LOT of fuel... the sugar-rich flower nectar they love so much is really just the basic energy they need to find their more nutrient-rich food sources: small insects and pollen. To simplify the process for them, place hummingbird feeders next to hummingbird specific plantings, a shallow birdbath with rocks protruding from the bottom, as well as things like old fruit, banana peels, etc. to attract the small insects they also like to eat.