BASIC BEEKEEPER VOCABULARY

By Melinda Pfeiffer

Define your beekeeping experience and gain a basic beekeeper vocabulary with this list:

HIVE & EQUIPMENT

- **Hive** – Structure where honey bees live and raise brood.
- **Langstroth Hive** – The most common hive style in the U.S., made of stackable boxes with removable frames.
- **Brood Box** – A deep hive box where the queen lays eggs and brood is raised.
- **Super (Honey Super)** – A box placed above the brood area for honey storage.
- **Frames** – Removable wooden or plastic structures inside hive boxes where bees build comb.
- **Foundation** – A sheet placed in frames to guide bees in comb building.
- **Inner Cover** – A cover beneath the outer lid that helps with ventilation and access.
- **Entrance Reducer** – A device used to narrow the hive entrance for temperature control and defense.

BEES & COLONY ROLES

- **Queen** – The reproductive female responsible for laying eggs and maintaining colony cohesion.
- **Worker Bees** – Female bees that perform all hive duties except reproduction.
- **Drones** – Male bees whose primary role is to mate with queens.
- **Brood** – Eggs, larvae, and pupae developing into adult bees.
- **Winter Bees** – Long-lived worker bees raised in fall to survive through winter.

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COLONY BEHAVIOR

- **Swarming** – Natural colony reproduction where the old queen leaves with part of the colony.
- **Robbing** – When bees steal honey from weak colonies, often during nectar dearths.
- **Nectar Flow** – A period when flowers produce abundant nectar.
- **Dearth** – A time of little to no nectar availability.
- **Bearding** – Bees clustering outside the hive in hot weather to regulate temperature.

HIVE HEALTH & PESTS

- **Varroa Mites** – Parasitic mites that weaken bees and spread disease.
- **Mite Monitoring** – Testing mite levels using methods like sugar roll or alcohol wash.
- **Small Hive Beetle (SHB)** – A pest that damages comb and honey, especially in warm climates.
- **Threshold** – The mite level at which treatment is recommended.
- **Treatment Window** – A time when treatments are effective and safe to apply.

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FEEDING & NUTRITION

- **Sugar Syrup (1:1)** – Light syrup used to stimulate brood rearing in spring.
- **Sugar Syrup (2:1)** – Heavy syrup used to build food stores in fall.
- **Fondant / Sugar Bricks** – Solid sugar feed used in winter.
- **Pollen Patties** – Supplemental protein feed to support brood rearing.

SEASONAL MANAGEMENT

- **Reversing Boxes** – Swapping brood boxes in early spring to reduce congestion.
- **Splits** – Dividing a colony to prevent swarming or create new hives.
- **Requeening** – Replacing a queen to improve colony health or productivity.
- **Ventilation** – Managing airflow to reduce moisture and heat stress.
- **Winter Stores** – Honey reserves needed for colony survival through winter.