Honey is made from nectar, a sweet fluid secreted by blossoms. Using her long tongue, the bee sucks up the nectar and carries it back to the hive, where it is deposited in one of the honeycomb cells. It takes 30,000 visits to accumulate one pound of honey. While the nectar is being collected, other bees in various parts of the hive fan their wings, creating a current of air which evaporates much of the moisture from the nectar. As each cell is filled, the bees cover it with a wax cap to keep the honey clean and pure. During a heavy honey flow, the worker bee wears her wings out in about six to eight weeks.

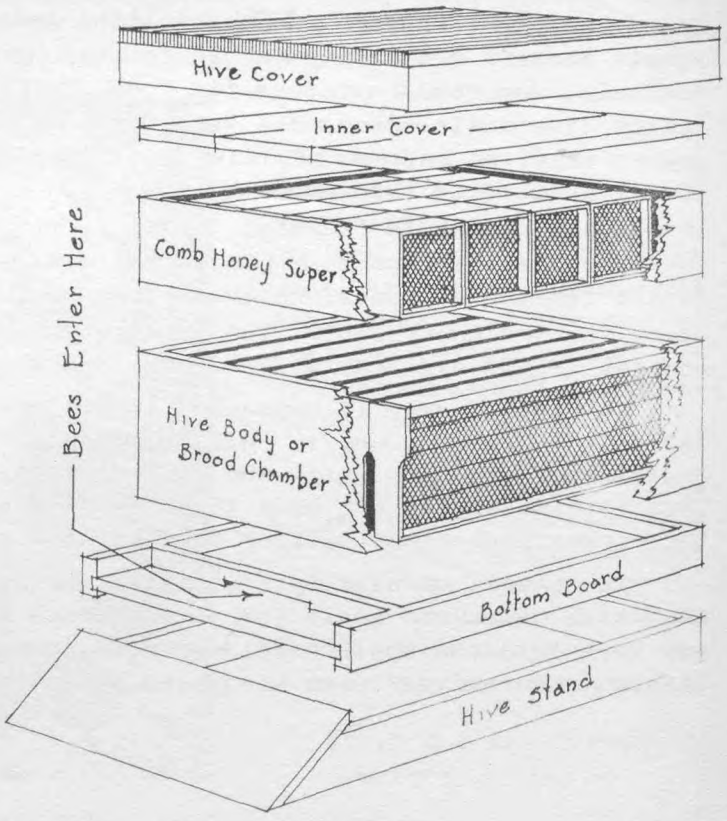
About the middle of February, pussy willow, witch hazel and spicewood provide enough pollen so that the queen can begin to lay eggs. The maple buds, elms, dogwood and dandelion are the next to open. Fruit trees follow soon after, and wild flowers provide a continuous supply of nectar until October, when the goldenrod and aster bloom.

Formerly, to remove the honey, beekeepers killed whole colonies with sulphur fumes; now, by using smoke of burning wood, the bees are forced into the lower part of the hive, and the combs can be removed from the upper sections without danger either to the beekeepers or their bees.

To extract honey from the combs, the white wax cappings which seal the individual cells are cut away. The frames containing the combs are whirled rapidly about, and the honey flies out. They are then used again in the hive. The extracted honey is drawn off in bottles or cans for market.

Scientists have shown that the honey production of bees varies according to the type. The black German bee, brought to America in 1685 by the Spaniards, ran far behind in the honey production race; Carniolans, Cyprians and Caucasian bees each had periods of popularity. But these one-time favorites have now been discarded, and the Italians have achieved the top position. It may well be that these will be superseded by a type recently developed by Henry Brown of Cape May. Brown succeeded in producing what others have long sought: a "stingless" bee.

There is no known method for relieving the pain of a bee sting. The stinger, a tiny barbed prong through which a poisonous irritant is injected, is ripped from the bee's body and remains imbedded in the skin. The poison sacs, although they do not penetrate the skin, remain attached to the barb, and squeezing the affected part will only squirt more poison into the wound. The stinger is best removed by scraping it out with the fingernail or a knife.



Beehive, Showing Component Parts