Making Honey

What happens if

bees in a hive are overcrowded,

lack food, or

just plain feel insecure?

They swarm! That is, a

group of bees leaves the

hive to create a new

hive. Beekeepers work

hard to prevent swarming.

The more bees in the

hive, the more honey the

beekeeper will collect.

Honeybees love violets,

forget-me-nots, cornflowers,

and, surprise,

honeysuckle. A field of clover is like

heaven on earth for honeybees.

They visit these flowers and collect

nectar, which they then turn into

honey. But how do they do that?

Bees have a regular stomach

like ours. They also have a “honey

backpack” in which they store the

nectar they collect when they

make the rounds of their favorite

flowers. When her (all worker bees

are female) backpack is full, the

bee heads back to the hive.

Another worker bee is waiting to

suck the honey out of the returning

bee’s backpack. She sits around

and chews on it for a half hour or so

before she deposits it into a bunch

of holes in the hive known as a

honeycomb.Water evaporates from the

chewed-up nectar, making it pretty

thick. The bee seals off the hole in

the honeycomb with a kind of wax

to protect the honey. Then she waits

for another bee to arrive with more

nectar.

The beekeeper harvests a lot of

the honey but leaves enough for

the bees to live on during seasons

when flowers are not in bloom.