

## Combining Hives

### General notes:

- Don't combine two weak hives to make a larger weak hive. There's likely a reason they're both weak. If you have the option, add the weaker hive to a strong hive.
- I like to, when possible, put the weak atop the strong hive. Fewer bees to figure out where they are now that they've been relocated.
- The beekeeping sages say it is better to combine two hives in the winter so it has a better chance of survival and split into two come spring. I don't like playing God, but we do tend to combine about a third of ours going into winter.
- Bees love to mock us. I've had weak hives that I never thought would survive until December come out in the spring, and strong hives that didn't overwinter.

1. Make sure your strong hive is queenright!!
2. Remove the queen from the weak hive. If you leave her they will likely fight to the death, and you don't want the "wrong" queen to win.
3. Reduce the weak hive to as few boxes as possible. For example, if it has only about 8 frames of brood and stores spread across two boxes, get it all in one box, resources in the middle.
4. Take a couple sheets of newspaper and lay across the strong hive. Spritz with sugar solution, and cut 3-4 2-inch slits in the paper. Or 4-6 1-inch slits. No precision needed here, you just want to allow the queen scent to waft through as they begin to chew their way toward each other.
5. Put the weak hive on the top. True, they can't get out until they chew through the newspaper, but hopefully they have some stores in their box for the day or two it'll take to get to the lower boxes.
6. In about a week (assuming it isn't chilly) the newspaper will magically be gone. It is amazing. Open up to check that it is gone, and remove any remnants so it doesn't wick in moisture. Hopefully you'll find all the bees happily working together, with a larger cluster now to help get through winter.

