

# STAHLMAN BEEKEEPING

## NOTES FOR 2023

Issue # 39 October 14, 2023

Fall is here!



Honeybees are gathering goldenrod honey.

For many years my family moved bees from northern Ohio to beeyards along the Ohio River before moving them south for winter. The food they found would help carry them through the winter in Georgia.

On a trip to western North Carolina I saw some wild purple

aster in bloom and bees in those areas are finding food for winter stores. But by and large, the major honey producing plant in fall is goldenrod.

This is a very common plant seen along roadside patches and unmanaged plots such as along rivers, and electric lines. There are over 100 types of goldenrod growing in North America. It is important for its pollen and nectar.



Aster is another common fall blooming plant that provides nectar and pollen.

This picture was taken along the Blue Ridge Parkway not long ago. Aster blooms can be purple to white.

Some sources report that fall honey is not suitable for table use but I do not agree. A beekeeper smelling an odor coming from bee hives may think that something is wrong with the honey. Goldenrod honey is well known for smelling somewhat rank

### IMPORTANT POINTS

I received the reply below to my article about first class beekeeping from Roger Weisner. In fact, I received many ideas to write about from many of you. Thanks for getting my brain back into what is really important!

This does not include introductory comments.

Roger writes:

The real shocker was decline in beekeepers due to disappearing agricultural land, city ordinances preventing beehives in city limits, urbanization, dwindling water supply, and this years high temperatures.

My takes always are I feel best to live in a state that promotes beekeeping. We need to be vigilant about the African stock, educate people, stop importing mated queens from possible infected or unknown sources, and mate queens from our own apiaries. In a perfect world we should create a closed system, but it would be extremely hard. In a way, I am trying to do that in my apiary as best as possible knowing that you can't control all those factors. **There's an old saying an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure seems to apply in this situation.** I am at the point rather than buying new queens, I would rather take my losses and rebuild with what I have. Roger

when stored. Beekeepers often smelling hives at this time of year will remark about the smell in the bee yard. Some jumping to the conclusion that the bees have American foulbrood. However after extracted -- it is quite good and lacks the objective smell associated with it. Most fall honey granulates quickly. The honey produced is amber to dark amber. I have heard some beekeepers say something like: Fall honey is not good for honey stores! My experience over many years is they don't know what they are talking about.

At seventy plus cents a pound to feed sugar to bees -- placing hives in goldenrod/aster areas is worthwhile even if hives must be moved to get them near it. I have seen a hive of bees fill a full medium super with honey from goldenrod in Ohio and still have honey stores to make it thru the winter. It doesn't happen every year [due to weather conditions] but I depended on the fall honey flow.

There are some problems associated with honey fermentation and granulation.

Any beekeeper with a few years experience knows that nearly all honeys will granulate in time. Some quicker than others. I received a suggestion to sharing my thoughts about granulated honey in comb.

Hi Dana,

Ian here from Kamloops, BC, Canada.

The latest newsletter said you were looking for ideas. Have you ever done a newsletter on what to do with granulated honey from last year that is still in the comb and how to deal with it rather than a solar melter? I also use a bar fridge with a light bulb for a pail warmer and thanks to your recent article I will try and add a thermostat. Up till now I change the bulbs by season; 40 watts in the summer and 100 watts in the winter.

How about a letter on "telling the bees" when the beekeeper dies. I have had the sad honor of telling the bees and it still brings tears to my eyes. I think the tradition started in the UK but I could be wrong.

I hope you and your family are well.

Ian

Thanks Ian.

Honey granulating in comb is a good topic that fits well this week.

### **Granulated honey in comb:**

Commercial beekeepers usually solve this problem with a hot room attached to the honey extracting operation.

Because honey is stored in comb, one cannot raise the temperature too quickly to turn the granulated honey to a liquid. Caution on heating comb --it requires a uniform heat that will soften and melt the honey but not the wax in the comb. Granulated honey in old brood comb is easier to remove than honey in new drawn foundation.

The temperature of any heat source must be controlled and set to go no higher than **105°F**. Wax in comb gets soft and if it is full of honey, it doesn't take much heat to cause the soft wax to begin to lose its ability to keep the cell shape and thus, the comb will be slumped in the frame. Wax will absorb heat much quicker than the honey held in cells.

I see three ways granulated honey can be used:

- Use it to feed bees. Frames of honey placed in a hive is much better than any type of sugar feeding. Frames of honey placed above the brood cluster in winter warms as heat - from the cluster - rises. Bees naturally move up rather than out from the winter cluster.
- One could take an empty deep super, install a low voltage light bulb that would be clear of the sides and any box placed above it. This box should also contain a fan to distribute the heat from the bulb. In time the heat will liquidify the honey. This is the hobby beekeeper's hot room.
- An old refrigerator will serve the same purpose. If frames can be placed in it, a heat source will provide the necessary heat to liquidify the honey and not melt the wax if the temperature can be controlled.

**All methods used take time. I don't recommend this but it is a way to separate honey from wax.** If one would choose to cut the comb from the frame, the honey and wax can be melted together – [Big problem] heat levels would have to reach 148°F for the wax to melt. **Honey processed this way will absorb contaminates from the wax and I would caution anyone wanting pure honey not to use this method.**

**Second fall topic associated with winter stores: Fermentation of uncapped or capped honey in cells is a problem for overwintering hives and could result in disaster for a colony of honeybees.**

Fermented honey has a greater moisture content due to the fact that the nectar has been gathered too late for the honey to be ripened. It is generally accepted that honey with a moisture content of 19 % or more will likely ferment. Humidity in the hive and cold weather are factors that contribute to failing hives of bees. If extracted, honey that is in the process of fermentation will show these signs:

- Honey will have bubbles in it.
- Honey will have foam on the top.
- If fermented honey is bottled, when the cap is unscrewed, the honey will usually ooze out due to the gas formed by yeasts and enzymes in the fermentation process. Buckets of honey may leak honey.
- Honey will smell and develop a bitter taste.

**Bees eating fermented honey show signs:**

- **Bees will have distension of the abdomen due to overloading of the intestines. Keep in mind that bees must hold feces while confined to the hive during cold weather.**
- **A sure sign is diarrhea. Some may confuse this with Nosema.**
- **Excess moisture can also be observed in the hive. Bees may show sluggish movement.**

**This is one reason beekeepers use less water in sugar as fall approaches. Dry feeding is recommended during winter.**

**It looks like beekeepers located in areas with blooming goldenrod and aster will find that their bees will be well supplied with enough food for winter and the possibility is that some beekeepers will harvest a fall crop of goldenrod honey this year.**