



STAHLMAN BEEKEEPING

NOTES FOR 2025

Published by Dana Stahlman Raleigh, North Carolina
Published free as a public service to anyone interested in honeybees. Email me to be added to my mailing list. stahlmanapiaries@aol.com

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A Honey Flow

The period of April thru mid-summer is usually the time of honey flows. Late honey flows are often used to build up bees for winter. Early flows help bees build bee population.

Hopefully, you will have everything ready for nectar collection –

- Honey supers in place.
- Plenty of space to house the large bee population.
- Maybe a queen excluder.

There is an old saying in beekeeping that goes like this: “What you do with your bees in the fall is your insurance toward a good honey crop next summer.”

Experienced beekeepers usually have developed a system they like for their bees to collect honey. To me the most valuable part of the honey collection process is the availability of good forage possibilities. Most likely beekeepers are sizing up colonies with queens that have brought in or are bringing in good honey crops. I am often reminded that it is unfair to compare queens/hives in poor honey locations with queens/hive in a good honey location.

The amount of honey collected by a colony of bees is controlled by many factors including the methods used to manage a hive of bees. Weather is a factor and more important is the location of the apiary site. For many beekeepers, the option to move bees to better locations does not exist. Thus, backyard bees are limited to a forage area going out from the hive of two to three miles.

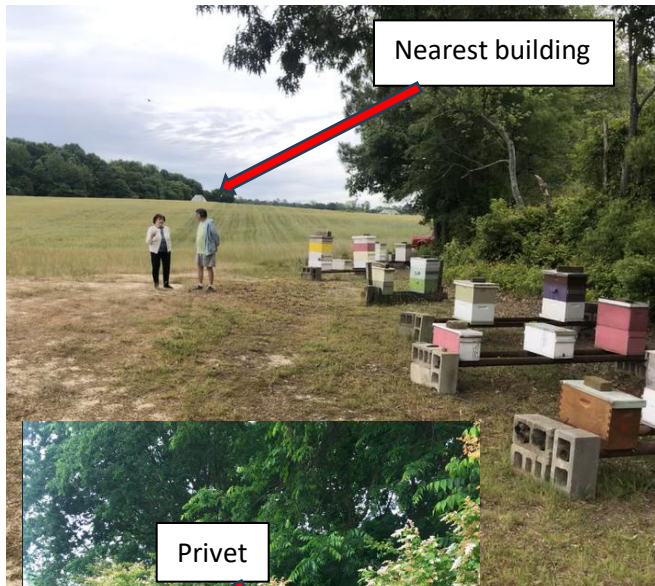
The amount of nectar collected depends on:

- Daylight hours
- Weather conditions
- Amounts of rain
- Hive manipulations
- The number of bee hives within a specific area
- Bee foraging populations in your hives
- **Nectar Producing Plants**

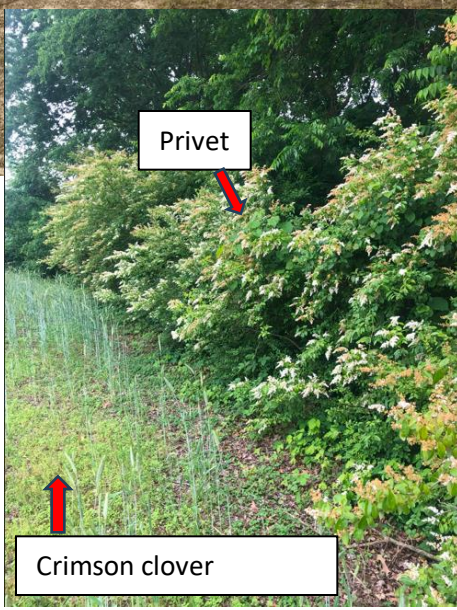
Everyone of these items contribute to a colony’s ability to gather a honey crop.

The difference of just a few miles can make or break the dreams of bees producing a honey crop. For some beekeepers it makes no difference if the bees produce surplus honey or not. Others expect some reward in honey for the cost, time, and effort to keep bees.

To bring this into focus, let me share some personal examples of what the difference is between a bad location and a good location.



This is a good bee yard location. It is located close to a pond with a good road into the area where the bees were placed well out of sight of the road. But most importantly, that field in the background is red crimson clover about to bloom. This farm has “fence rows.” Unlike many farmed areas, fence rows separate fields and property lines allowing wild plants to grow and serve as cover for rabbits and pheasants. On my visit to this bee yard, Privet was in bloom and the buzz of bees searching for nectar drew me immediately to it. There are many plants considered weeds that produce nectar.



Note the red sweet clover growing among the rye that was planted to hold the soil. When this field comes into bloom within a month, the bees in this bee yard will have over 120 acres of crimson clover to work.



Crimson clover (*Trifolium incarnatum*) is native to the Mediterranean region. Also called incarnate clover because of their blood red blooms, crimson clover has been used as a cover crop in the United States since the mid 1800s. Today, it is the most common [legume cover crop](#) and forage plant for livestock in the U.S. Although it is not a native species, crimson clover has also become an important source of nectar for [honeybees](#) and [other pollinators](#) in the U.S. Crimson clover plants are grown as an annual cover crop and, like other members of the legume family, they [fix nitrogen in the soil](#). What sets crimson clover apart from other clover cover crops is their quick establishment and maturation, their cool weather preference, and their ability to grow in poor, dry, sandy soils where perennial clovers do not establish well. Crimson clover prefers sandy loam but will grow in any well-draining soil. However, it cannot tolerate heavy clay or waterlogged areas.

[Crimson Clover Information: Learn How To Grow Crimson Clover In The Garden | Gardening Know How](#)

A good strong colony of bees with foraging plants producing nectar from fence rows and 120 acres of sweet clover or any other nectar plant will make honey. A lot of honey – maybe 4 or 5 supers full of honey over the summer period.



And if moved in the fall to a field like this, another crop of goldenrod honey and enough to supply the bees with food to overwinter.

The world record for honey production from one hive is 404 pounds. There are reports that it has been broken but not officially listed in World Records.



If you see this in the area where you keep bees, don't blame the bees for not bringing in honey to the hive. Unfortunately, this is the modern trend when new housing goes

up. This is happening in northern Wake County and near by counties in North Carolina. If one has bees with the goal of getting honey from them to earn a little money, they will get exactly that "little money" in an area like the photos above show land being developed.

Hobby beekeepers living in an urban setting often can harvest a super or two of honey at the cost of feeding their bees to survive the winter. There is nothing wrong with that! However, one has to accept the fact that more hives and less land with fewer nectar producing plants is causing a problem with bees being able to survive.



A little bee yard located in an open area of nectar producing plants can be increased to establishing more hives at that location. This is an important consideration when it comes to starting beekeeping. The question often becomes "How many hives can I place in my backyard?" Even if honey crops are not the top priority, there is a limit to the number of hives an area can support.

New beekeepers are often advised to start with 2 colonies but if those hives survive, two becomes 4 and then 4 becomes 8. That is when decisions must be made about site selection and the amount of time required to keep bees responsibly.

Let me leave you with this one thought. Many individuals start beekeeping with good intentions, when things like not getting honey from the bees or the bees die, they blame themselves. It is time to consider what could be causing problems – not to blame yourself.