



February 2023

TROPHIC

MOUNT FAIR FARM

# Spring Apiary Report

## MANAGEMENT FOCUS

After mid-January, the queen has been laying more eggs each day, slowly increasing the population in the nest. The worker bees have been clustering together to keep the young brood a toasty 81 degrees in the center of the cluster. On warmer days, the older bees will exit the hive looking for food and water. The population is increasing quickly, making preparations to have enough workers for the nectar flow in May. Populations will be noticeably larger by April. I am keeping an eye on their honey and pollen resources. The greatest threat to a hive at this time of the year is starvation, but each colony still has residual honey from last year to sustain them.

Spring nectar flow equipment has been placed in storage for use and some have already been installed on the colonies.

## BEES FIRST

The sweet spot for your apiary is to have plenty of honey for the bees first and a surplus of honey for human consumption, with just enough hives to reach this goal. We don't want too many bees for not enough forage. In this first season I will manage the colonies to resist swarming until late May so we can accurately assess hive density for this location.

Population size + quantity of nectar flow = yield  
Yield/number of hives = determines increase/decrease of colony density

## YOUR HONEY YIELD

I keep track of how successful, or how limiting, the local environment is in supplying the bees with forage. With 9 hives and a surplus harvest you can expect between 10-50 lbs. of honey per hive, assuming your bees are healthy and have not had an adverse encounter with a bear, skunk, agricultural spray/pesticide, etc.

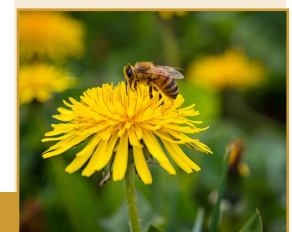
The best nectar source is the Tulip Poplar tree, which only blooms for 7-10 days in late April/early May, complemented by the early fruiting trees, blackberries and locust trees. If it rains during the bloom, the nectar is washed away. If it is very hot, the nectar dries up before the bees can fully forage on the nectar. Your honey yield is directly related to the weather during the spring, and the amount of available forage. Pollinator meadows help supply critical sources of nutrition after the major tree blooms. If the bees have a meadow, they do not have a boom/starvation model but a boom/sustenance model, and are well provisioned throughout the year, entering the nectar flows in strength.



## FORAGING MENU

February –April

- Witch Hazel
- Winter Jasmine
- Hellebores
- Maples
- Blackberry
- Dandelion



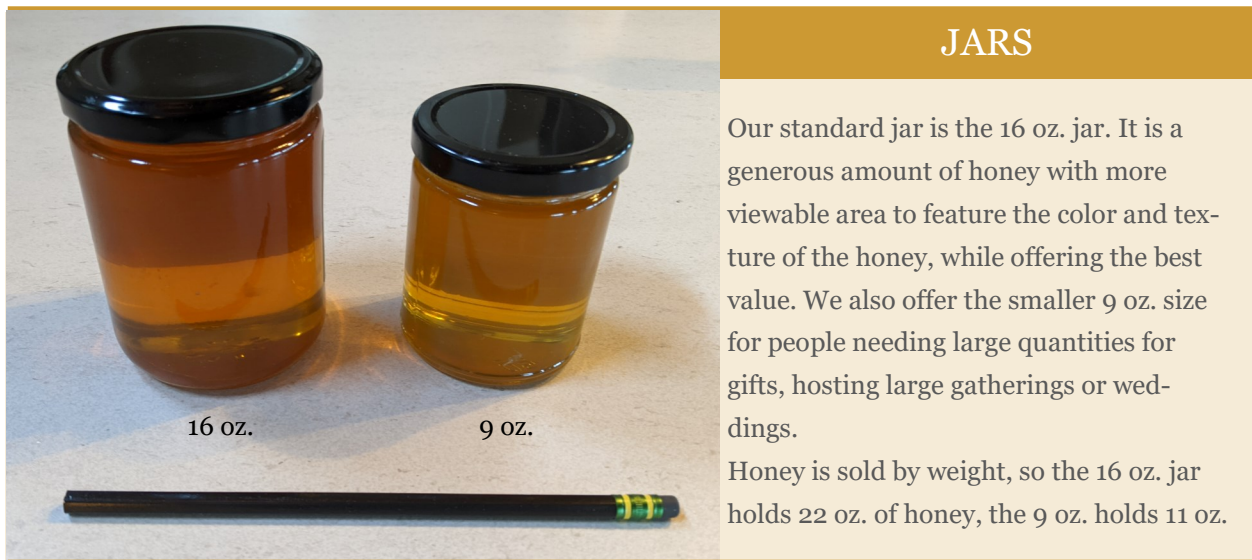
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“Bees do have a smell, you know, and if they don't they should, for their feet are dusted with spices from a million flowers.” Ray Bradbury

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## LABELS

For your apiary, I estimate we need a minimum of 500 labels for this season. I have labels. If you need to order more, please have ready by June 1st. All honey will be delivered in July.



2023 Jar Costs ~ as of 2/23

Twelve/Case of 9 oz. jars (11 oz. honey) with caps: \$18.49

Twelve/Case of 16 oz. (22 oz. honey) jars with caps: \$16.70

I will ask for your jar size preference in April so the jars can be in stock for the harvest. We recommend the standard jar as it is the most cost effective/least waste jar, it is just generous enough. We also offer half gallon (6 lbs. honey) plastic jugs for culinary use.



## CRYSTALLIZATION—AS THE BEES INTEND

For the past two years, the jarred honey from our region crystallizes FAST. Repeated cycles of de-crystallizing (heating) degrades the flavor and value. Instead of trying to mimic store honey, which is often adulterated with high fructose corn syrup to keep it liquid on the shelf, we encourage everyone to appreciate honey in its most natural state—as the bees intend.

Crystallization reveals that the bees foraged upon high sucrose content flowers, is natural and high quality. It is the hallmark of a natural product in our area. Enjoy it as is, and encourage others to as well!

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## OUTSIDE THE HIVE

### CORBICULA :

***A bee's pollen basket***  
(aka pollen pants), located  
on the outer surface of the  
hind tibia.

If you look at the bees  
entering the hive, you can  
see pollen packed into the  
foragers storage pockets as  
seen below. In this month I  
am seeing a light green and  
light yellow pollen being  
collected (maple & willow).



### TROPHIC

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## IN THE HIVES

On warm days in March, I'll begin assessing the queen's ability to produce a sizeable population for her hive. I am looking to see an even, consistent brood pattern (as in the photo) with a good population about to emerge. If I don't, I'll look to see if she was poorly mated, or is injured. Our goal is to select for strong local queens as an inferior queen can doom a hive. Thankfully spring is the easiest way to increase hives, so if needed I will pivot to creating new queens in your apiary for the best outcomes. It may take a few years, but over time the best bees for your environment will be the dominant type in your apiary.



The colonies at Mount Fair Farm were evaluated for queen quality on 2/20/2023 and looked great.

### UPCOMING VISITS:

**MARCH 15, MARCH 29, APRIL 12**

At this time of the year I visit the hives every 2 weeks, 9 am-4:30 pm.  
Mount Fair Farm visits are most often in the late morning hours.

## HEALTHY HIVES

All of your hives overwintered successfully and have started spring in strength. Maintaining healthy pollinators relies on three factors:

1. **Mite Management.** I test, monitor and treat for mites throughout the active growth season and treat when indicated. Mites vector several diseases that will cause a colony to decline.
2. **Forage.** Bees that have ample natural supplies of pollen and nectar throughout the growing season (especially blooms that appear in June-September) are better fortified to contend with the deluge of fungicides that depress their immune response.
3. **Good Queens.** Every time a colony naturally requeens itself there is a chance that the daughter will fail. I will intercede and install a new queen bred locally from Virginia Survivor Stock, the only bee that Trophic grafts from. We do not import bees from other states.