

Bee Chronicles

1 July 2025

3 June a slow entry. Chinese Chestnuts are in full bloom. Started last week. Usually completed bloom before Sourwood starts.

Reports from Elijah are sourwood bloom tassels are about 3 inches long. A little more to grow and then bloom buds start to develop. Then maybe a week – ten days before the blossom bells start to open. Blairsville is about 4 weeks behind Elijah. So maybe 4-5 weeks before our sourwood blooms. This is good, putting the bloom back to the normal end of June bloom time. This schedule will be dependent on continuing cool weather. More time for colonies to grow larger populations will increase the nectar/honey collection.

27 June Chinese chestnut blooms are past their pollination peak. Hence, no contamination with the Sourwood bloom. Sourwood is just starting. We missed my 4 weeks to start prediction. Depending on which corner, how much asphalt, and the amount of shade your tree is getting they are all in the early stages of bloom. Blossom fingers, hanging down seem white all the way to the end. The top blooms first, but buds go all the way down. Blossoms will open in turn going down the finger which creates a long drawn-out bloom period. Weather permitting! The flower bells, hang down. High wind, heavy rain, and hail shake the nectar out of the bells very easily.

Now is the time to check your hives. Is there room for the nectar flow? Drawn out brood comb can get filled up very fast. Go ahead and add a honey super. It only takes 7-10 days for a good full single brood chamber colony to draw out, fill with honey, and cap a shallow honey super. We hope that is what will happen.

Non-beekeeper home owners have been calling for the past 3 weeks with swarms moving in with them. Don't let your colonies swarm. You are losing a good queen. The swarm stimulus is "full of bees, full of brood, and full of honey". When the swarm leaves the queen and all the foragers depart. This creates a crash in honey production. No foragers bringing in nectar.

After sourwood, the next big swarm season starts. Be prepared by making splits and save that good queen in a nuc.