

Bee Chronicles

4 November 2025

October is the driest month of the year in the southern Appalachian Mountains.

The last week-ten days of September until today (19 Oct) there has been no rain. Today 2/10th of an inch. It will be interesting to see how much precipitation comes later in the month. Did the dry period move 2 weeks earlier. It is terrible to wish a hurricane on someone else, but that is where our October/November rains come from.

26-27-28 October, It has rained. Very lightly then steady all 27th then lightly half of 28th. Maybe about 2 1/2" with very little run off. This does nothing for the current flowers. It does a lot for fall root growth for next spring.

The last flowers are hanging on. Fall asters of several varieties. Rabbit tobacco, but I don't see honeybees going to it.

11 Oct. Temperature hit 39° last night. First cool night of the fall.

Beech nuts are falling, looks like a nice crop for the turkeys. Also, an excellent acorn crop. The deer and bear will fatten up and have more twins. Not exactly what beekeepers need. More hungry bears.

My thoughts on Norroa mite treatment: If it sterilizes the female varroa mites so they do not lay viable eggs to parasitize the bee larvae, when should we start using this more expensive treatment. Next Spring! The current bee larvae are already infected with what ever virus the mites are carrying. Treat for varroa with your already planned method. That will knock the mite population down somewhat. The brood area is getting smaller for the winter. If you Norroa treat your bees now: yes, you will sterilize your female varroa, but your newly hatching bees will already be infected and may not make it through the winter causing your colony to go ahead and collapse. Treat your surviving colonies early in the spring just as the queen restarts laying eggs. That could be 2nd week of February. The surviving varroa mites will get treated and sterilized. Your spring expansion bee hatchlings will be attached by non-viable varroa mites. This will clean your hives

out during the big population expansion saving you the cost of one (this fall's) Norroa treatment. The gamble is "Will your colony die with or without the treatment in the fall".

If you treat with Norroa now you will have some of your new bee populations inoculated. This could help your colony survive but it is a long shot.

Inspect hives for stored honey, keep feeding until Thanksgiving. Some Decembers and Januaries have been warm enough for brooding queens. This puts a big drain on stored honey and pollen (bee bread).

Be prepared to inspect your hives in the winter. Any day above 50° with little breeze is good for popping the top to look. If it gets up to 60° with no breeze and the bees are flying you can break the hive down and inspect the brood pattern and maybe find the queen. I have lucked out before and done this on January 1 and February 1 of the same year. This does not happen too frequently. However, some times in early January and again in February is normal

Then there is always cold weather the last couple of weeks of January and again mid-late February. This is almost always followed by a freezing week toward the end of March. By managing and feeding you can stimulate the queen early and some of her brood will reach enough age to survive the cool periods. This gives you a big head start on population growth making your colonies big enough to collect adequate honey with the first blooms of spring.

If you wait for the queen to lay eggs without stimulation, the small bee population with the first blooms will not collect enough food for the colony to expand and be ready for the "honey" bloom in April. First honey flower is the Black Locust tree, then black wild raspberry, black berry, and then tulip poplar. They come earlier now by three weeks, and some times not in the correct order.

Some flowers bloom by length of day (amount of Ultraviolet light) and some bloom by temperature increase. Some blossoms form the year before they bloom right after the fruit matures (most woody shrubs and trees). This exposes this year's bloom to last year's draught and heavy winter freezing, long before we expect it.