

## Beekeeper Newsletter

**3 February 2026**

What is blooming in December? You think not much! I am watching for my native Witch Hazel. It is supposed to bloom yellow feathery blossoms late November or December. It has not bloomed yet. If you read the last couple of years of "Chronicles" you will notice it bloomed early November. Now we may be back to *NORMAL*. Or will it bloom in January? I am watching the catkins swell on the Pussy Willows, which should bloom mid-January. Also, the Alders will bloom (catkins) late January or February. They produce tan pollen very early in the new year to start the bees foraging.

8 January Warm weather triggers the Henbit and Red Maple to bloom. I have seen Henbit and Thrift just starting to bloom in protected areas. These should not be blooming until late February. Watch the red twigs on the end of the maple branches turn more red as they prepare to bloom. Then the blossoms pop out.

Bees bringing in tan pollen will indicate the Alders are blooming down by the creeks. This is a catkin blossom with no nectar. Expect it after 15 February.

I will be looking for the next warm days coming up to inspect the colonies. Looking at food stores (Honey and bee bread) and brood patterns. Hope to see a brood pattern approaching cantaloupe size.

Flowering quince, is showing red on the flower buds.

Anticipate bees to stop collecting pollen substitute at the field feeder about 15 Feb. They will switch to flower pollen as soon as something starts blooming.

Must monitor syrup intake to ensure enough "honey" is available to feed new larvae.

Cold snaps with colony re-clustering are not a terrible situation. The queen may lay a brood pattern larger than the cluster. The center of a winter cluster is about

72°. The temperature of the brooding area needs to be kept at about 90°. If there are not enough bees to generate the 90 degrees some or all the brood may die. The good news is you have a good productive queen and she ramping up her daily number of eggs. So, the next warm day she will start laying again. Capped brood can withstand much cooler temperatures so may continue to develop at 72° and survive. These survivors will give you an early net gain to the colony population. This will accelerate colony expansion in March.

As the colony expands stored food consumption can go up faster than you realize. This can cause a non-monitored colony to starve to death in early March when we are still having week long cold snaps.

Keep feeding 1:1 syrup to support the expansion and to provide enough for drawing comb. Use your surviving colonies to draw out frames that you can move to an expanding nuc or package.

Start preparing frames and hive bodies to accept your new colonies when they are available in March.

Be prepared to move honey frames from an over wintered super colony to a weak or new expanding colony. The advantage given to the weaker colony will be enough to make it a very productive colony when the nectar flow starts in May (here in the Mountains).