

Bee Chronicles

4 March 2025

The Chronicles are back in long form because the Honey Bees are awake and the flowers are blooming.

The earliest tan pollen you observed the bees bringing in was probably Alder, which has a catkin bloom with no nectar.

Of course, the Jonquils are blooming. They started about 15 February with just the ones in bright sunshine and/or near a warm road. Now (1 Mar) all the old timey smaller jonquils are in full bloom. The fancy large blossomed ones are not even in bud around my house.

Let me clarify for new readers: My house is at about 2250 feet elevation, in the mature forest, on the north facing slope. Hence, it is very shady year around.

My crocuses are blooming. My flowering quince bush is showing red color in the buds.

The big news is my red maple started blooming 22 February. The maples down by the road started before that. So, my bees could forage out 2 miles to get red maple. I could tell they were because they stopped taking in powdered pollen substitute about the 17th of February.

The Henbit weed is starting to bloom. It should have started 10-14 days before the red maple. These are the pollen and nectar sources fire up the surviving queens to really start laying lots of eggs.

Cleveland GA and Jasper should be about 30 days ahead of me. Eljay 14 days, and Blue Ridge 10 days ahead.

The weird news is Pussy Willows should be 30 days ahead of the maple. My pussy willows are still just in the large bud stage. The pretty fuzzy catkin is the bud. When it blooms the stamens and anthers protrude through the catkin making it look raggedy.

We hope the cool weather holds in the 50° range for a month. This will give us 4 weeks of maple pollen and hold the wild black raspberry and then black berries from blooming too early.

Last year the bloom was 5 weeks early and ended 5 weeks early. The bee colonies did not have enough time to expand. Hence, very little extra honey collected for us to rob. All the foraged food went into growing the larvae. The tulip poplar bloom ended the third week of April. It should have started in June.

This early start to colony expansion is good. BUT, there is always that proverbial “but”. The brood area will expand. WE WILL have cold snaps through April. When the bees cluster up there may be some brood outside of the cluster. Capped brood might survive a short freeze. Uncapped brood will not. This is OK! The net gain is more bees in May. The beekeeper might get confuse seeing dead larvae out the front door of the hive. You can mistake this for “chalk brood”. It is not. It is just house cleaning.