

POLLINATION - the Spark Plug of Agriculture

Bees gather nectar and pollen from flowers for their own use and in the process they pollinate hundreds of different kinds of plants. Some are entirely dependent upon bees for economic production such as apples, pears, blueberries, etc., squash and other vine crops; clovers and other forage crops grown for seed and seed production, such as carrots, onion, sunflower, etc. Many wild plants, which provide seed, fruit and forage for wildlife, depend upon bee pollination.

Bees have assumed the major role for pollinating the flowering plants of the world and the world would be a very different place without bees. Many wild plants would disappear, production of many important fruit crops would be impossible and seed production of many important vegetable and flower crops, would be either impossible or non-economic, and variety in our food supply would be very much restricted.

Because of the close association of bees and flowers for millions of years, it is interesting to note that bees' bodies and their behaviour have become marvellously adapted to their work. For instance, a bee's body is covered with branched hairs which pick up and hold pollen grains and the proboscis is long for sucking nectar from flowers. Bees have an internal sac for carrying nectar and hind legs fitted for packing pollen pellets, back to the hive; they can communicate the direction, distance and odor of a source of food so that thousands of bees are soon working flowering plants located by scouts.

Individual bees restrict their visits to one species of flower on one trip or a series of trips and they tend to return time and again to the same area. They tell other bees in their own hive where they have found food so bees become widely distributed and busily working an area very quickly.

It should be kept in mind that colonies which have recently come through a winter period will be weak in bees, relative to the same colonies in mid-summer. Spring is the build-up or recuperation period for over-wintered colonies.

Bees do not fly much below 50°F and weak ones do little below 60°F. Actually strong colonies do not do much pollination below 55°F. Weather being the effective key to maximum pollination, pollination can take place with surprising rapidity in warm, clear weather.

FEED: Brown sugar is not suitable as a bee feed. This is particularly true in times of inclement weather or cold weather when the bees are confined to their hives. Use of brown sugar would result in a dysentery of the honey bee and probable loss of the colony.

"The Queen Bee is a funny soul,
"She does not believe in birth control,
"And that's the reason, without a doubt,
"There's so many sons of B's about !!!