



## **Mount Fair Farm Summer 2023 Apiary Report (Brooke Savage, Trophic LLC) BEES FIRST**

The bees had a good nectar flow this year. Our Beekeeper's early projection for a "regular" flow was too conservative; the combination of colder spring temps allowed the Tulip Poplar and Black Locust to have a prolonged bloom, leading to a sizeable harvest. For a full week we had high temperatures in the 40's instead of 60's. Swarming was minimal and the bees were able to fill their nests and create an ample surplus.

All of our hives have plenty of honey and pollen, which they now need. The big nectar flows are over. To maintain their food supply the bees are relying on pollinator meadows or their stores to make it to late August, when the goldenrod and wingstem bloom.

### **MANAGEMENT FOCUS**

With the conclusion of the swarm season and harvest, we turned our attention to managing pests and parasites that threaten colonies. Our hives are being tested for varroa destructor mites every month and our apiary has already been treated twice this year. This parasitic varroa mite is the primary agent for most of the losses in the United States for the past 10 years, associated to > 85% of colony deaths. 50% of managed colonies in the United States died last **year**. We expect hive losses in the 10-15% range when hives are well managed. Hives have lifespans too, and all fail at some point. We actively select for better stock, quickly merging a weak hive with a stronger one, or fold them altogether as those hives become a magnet for pests that may affect the other colonies. Our colony numbers may reduce over the winter and rebound next spring, but know we have healthy hives and we do not have the losses that plague other apiaries.

We are varying treatments, applying Integrated Pest Management protocols and diligently keeping track of the bees' health. With the high summer temperatures and humidity, and with cranky bees, it is the least pleasant part of managing hives, but the most vital time for managing mite populations. Our hives were left with at least 50lbs of honey to sustain them through the dearth and prep them for the winter. Our bees did well!

### **HONEY HARVEST DATA—TULIP POLAR AND BLACK LOCUST ARE DOMINANT FLAVORS**

**Year Hives Harvest Yield**

**2023 8 hives 334 lbs**

**2022 10 hives 265 lbs**