

Landscape and Honey Production

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In the fall months when flowering plants are limited, bees struggle to find an adequate food/pollen source. This is apparent at the station in the fruit crops, especially grapes. After a heavy rain, depending on the level of maturity and variety, the grape skins will split. The bees feed on the sugar released from the grapes and can be aggressive during harvest. To provide a better fall food source for the bees, the station is working to develop a landscape that provides food/pollen with forage crops from early spring through late fall in support of honey production.

Oats and clover. The station normally grows bulk crops on land not used for research projects. This is typically 25-30 acres of a corn/soybean rotation. In 2020, the farm moved away from corn and soybean and instead planted oats as a nurse crop for clover. The oats and straw were harvested and sold to support farm research, and the clover was

allowed to bloom into the fall providing a pollen/food source for bees.

Unused land. The Horticulture Research Station has 90 acres of land that is unused or idle year-to-year. This is grass-covered sloping land surrounding the lake and extends up to the fence to the west boundary. To enhance honey production, clover was no-till drilled into 10 acres of idle land in spring 2020. The clover will provide the bees with forage (food) throughout the season. Plans also include drilling clover in other areas including the strips between the orchard and vineyard rows and unused certified organic land. Other long-term plans include the addition of prairie in some of these areas.

Clover varieties. The following is a list of clover varieties used for honey production in 2020.

- Medium Red Clover 10 lb/acre
- Crimson Clover 12 lb/acre
- Balansa Clover 12 lb/acre
- New Zealand White Clover 12 lb/acre



Figure 1. 2020 oat harvest at the Horticulture Research Station.



Figure 2. Fall blooming clover field for late-season honeybee foraging at the Horticulture Research Station.