

2022 Stahlman Beekeeping E-mail Notes Issue #17a

It is finally looking like winter weather conditions are pretty much over here in Raleigh. I am getting my tomato and pepper plants in the garden and the bees -- well they are doing what bees do.

When I say I learn something new about beekeeping almost every day, I can point to yesterday when I was visited by my friend Keith McLaurin. We were standing in my back yard when that sound so familiar to beekeeper alerted us to a swarm. We saw it not far away moving slowly about 20 feet above ground. It seemed to be heading for a large Magnolia tree -- maybe too high to get.

Keith asked if I had any wintergreen essential oil around. I did. Keith took just a drop on his finger and painted the oil on a leaf just about head high on the tree. I watched as one bee and then another landed on that leaf. In the meantime the swarm seemed to hover well above our head. Soon more bees were gathering on the leaf. I watched Keith start examining the leaves. Quickly he said, "There she is!" Sure enough the queen brought that swarm to the wintergreen leaf. We tried picking up the queen several times but each time she flew away and each time she returned.

I always carry my queen marking equipment in a handy \$1.00 plastic tool box I bought at a dollar store. I got a queen marking tube and we placed the open end of the tube over the queen and a few bees and quickly inserted the plunger. The queen was from one of my hives and was marked, which allowed us to see her. We hived the swarm and left the queen in the marking tube.

Next day I went to the hive to release the queen. What did Keith teach me? I will have a bottle of wintergreen in my tool box. That swarm got a whiff of that oil and within minutes it was just where we could retrieve them. I had fully thought that I would be climbing that tree when Keith came to the rescue.

I also use wintergreen oil in my sugar syrup. It only takes a drop to make sugar water more attractive to the bees. Some beekeepers add a product called "Honey Bee Healthy" to sugar syrup. I feel products like this are beneficial in many ways. I am now thinking outside the box -- could I use this in a swarm trap for example?

A big thank you, Keith!