

I am recovering from a week-long trip to Ohio and Indiana traveling I -77 I saw a lot of black locust in bloom and thought back to the days when my bees had some good weather to get it. I was also looking for Sourwood in bloom but I was too early -- again both of these crops are exceptional, and if you live in a location where they bloom, how lucky you are.

The Tulip poplar tree did not give me a honey crop this year as expected. Too much rain and cool weather. Weather conditions have a lot to do with honey flows.

I wrote the Issue # 21 article pretty much on the fly. I am often asked what one can do to make money with bees. The hobby beekeeper can usually charge much more for honey produced locally, and often run out of honey before the next seasons honey crop is in. I have seen the side of the commercial beekeeper who must manage a large number of hives, move bees to good nectar gathering locations, and be offered by honey packers a couple of dollars a pound for honey. In fact, I can remember when packers offered no more than they could buy imported honey for -- 40 cents a pound. It's not much better today when inflation is figured into the price paid for honey.

Bee magazines report the price paid to commercial beekeepers in 55 gal. drums. Light honey, Amber, and dark honeys all sell for different prices. Special varieties such as sourwood, tupelo, Locust, and others sell for more because demand is greater. Local honey sales vary considerably. Here in North Carolina, hobby beekeepers can sell a pound of honey for 15.00. Retail stores sell it for far less.

Commercial beekeepers often end up with a storage building full of 55 gal. drums of honey. There are a few who bottle and sell their own honey. So many ways to make money with bees. The prices listed in the bee journals may give you a bottom line price -- the price packers are paying to commercial beekeepers and for imported honey.

From the American Bee Journal in 2021: Price paid for volumes of 10,000 pounds or greater [Price range -- \$1.05 to 2.59 a pound]

From Bee Culture Magazine: May 2023 55 Gal. drums [Price range \$2.00 to 4.00 a pound]

One might make more money selling honey (local and non-local). One can buy 5 gallon buckets or 55 gallon drums of raw unheated honey if one has a contact with a commercial beekeeper.

There is value in selling local honey thru a certified program such as honey produced in North Carolina. Other states also have similar programs. That is called value added -- and customers know they are getting locally produced honey. There is a big difference between raw unprocessed honey and the processed honey sold in most retail outlets.