

## FLORIDA'S 1964 CITRUS HONEY CROP <sup>1</sup>

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The devastating damage to citrus trees caused by extremely low temperatures in December 1962 resulted in a near failure of the 1963 citrus honey crop (Robinson 1963). It has been generally believed that citrus nectar flows are adversely affected for two years following severe freeze damage to the trees, and many Florida beekeepers were quite pessimistic about the chances of making a good citrus honey crop in 1964. There was some evidence to support this belief, since the 1958 and 1959 citrus honey crops were rather poor after the trees in many areas had been damaged by freezes during the winter of 1957-58. The pessimism proved to be unjustified, and 1964 turned out to be a banner year for citrus honey production.

The average production of citrus honey for the last five years by colonies in the Experiment Station apiary located near Clermont, Fla., is shown in Fig. 1. In 1964 the 35 colonies in the apiary had an average production of 128.4 lb. per colony. This figure is almost 50% greater than the previous highest yield of 86 lb., record in 1961. Although the blooming period of the groves in the Clermont area lasted a total of 39 days, over 90% of the honey was produced during the last half of this period. Flowers opened very slowly during the first two weeks of bloom when fairly low temperatures were experienced. Later, when the weather moderated, the flowers opened very quickly, and the nectar flow was unusually heavy. This period of heavy nectar flow lasted for 21 days, during which time the colonies made gains averaging 111.4 lb. In one 48 hour period between 8:00 AM, 18 March, and 8:00 AM, 20 March, one group of colonies had an average gain of 42 lb. Most of the other colonies in the apiary made gains of 30 to 35 lb., and the least productive colony in the apiary gained over 23 lb.

The 1964 citrus nectar flow was not only exceptional in regard to the amount of nectar secreted, but the quality of the honey produced from the nectar, as measured by its color and moisture content, was the best of any citrus honey produced in the last twelve years (Table 1).

The data regarding the moisture content of citrus honey for the period of 1953-1962 was obtained from information published by Haynie (1962). The Pfund scale values were derived by converting the data published by Haynie (1962) as to the percent light transmission of citrus honey produced in the same years. Data for the year 1964 were collected by the author. This information shows that only in 1961 was the color of citrus honey nearly as light as that produced in 1964. However, the 1964 honey had almost 3% less moisture than the 1961 honey. Florida honeys are seldom light enough to be graded water white (Pfund value of 7 or less), yet 9 of 17 samples tested from the 1964 crop were in this grade. One honey sample produced by the colonies near Clermont showed a Pfund reading below zero, which is about as clear as any honey can be.

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<sup>1</sup> Florida Agricultural Experiment Stations Journal Series No. 2029.

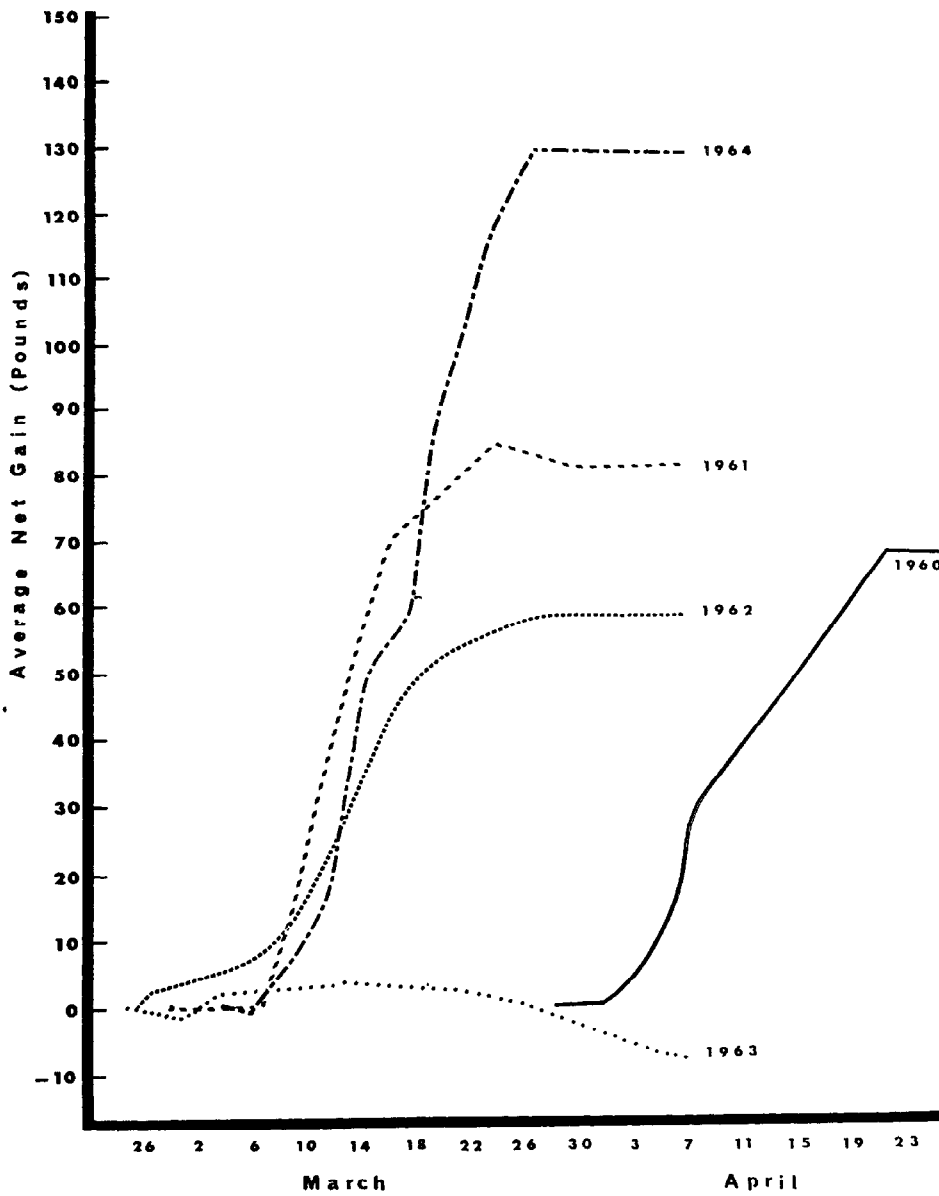


Fig. 1. Citrus honey production by colonies near Clearmont, Fla.

TABLE 1. COLOR AND MOISTURE CONTENT OF CITRUS HONEY SAMPLES (1953-1964).

Year	Pfund Reading	USDA Color Standard	Percent Moisture
1953	18.5	White	—
1954	44.5	Extra Light Amber	18.1
1955	34.5	Extra Light Amber	16.7
1956	30.5	White	18.8
1957	41.0	Extra Light Amber	18.5
1958	24.5	White	18.6
1959	35.0	Extra Light Amber	17.4
1960	19.5	White	18.1
1961	10.5	Extra White	18.4
1962	30.0	White	18.8
1963	—	—	—
1964	10.0	Extra White	15.7

LITERATURE CITED

*Haynie, J. D.* 1962. 1962 Citrus honey samples. Fla. Agr. Ext. Service Mimeo. Gainesville. 24 July 1962.

*Robinson, F. A.* 1963. The effects of the December 1962 freeze on citrus honey production in Florida. Fla. Ent. 47: 55-56.

The Florida Entomologist 48(2) 1965