

# The Northeast Texas Beekeeper's Forage Guide

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A Bloom Calendar, Season Guide  
& Five-Year Personal Tracking Journal

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Compiled with love by Magee Meadow Apiary  
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# Welcome, Neighbor.

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Out here at Magee Meadow, we have spent years watching the land and learning its rhythms. Northeast Texas is an extraordinarily generous place for bees — but only if you know when to expect the gifts it offers and when to prepare for the lean times in between.

This guide was born from that knowledge. It is our way of sharing what years of observation, note-taking, and yes — a few hard lessons — have taught us about the forage year in our corner of the world.

Whether you are just starting out or have been keeping bees for years, we hope this becomes a resource you reach for every season. Use the calendar to plan ahead. Use the tracker to build your own personal record of your land and your bees. And use the seasonal guides to understand not just what is blooming, but what your colony is experiencing inside the hive at every point in the year.

The bees know. This guide will help you keep up with them.

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*With warmth from the bee yard,  
Magee Meadow Apiary — Northeast Texas*

# How to Use This Guide

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1

**Start with the Visual Calendar (Pages 7–8).**

This two-page spread is the heart of the guide. It shows the full Northeast Texas forage year at a glance — every major bloom with start, peak, and end dates. Use it to orient yourself before reading the seasonal pages.

2

**Read the seasonal sections that matter most right now.**

Each page covers what's blooming, how significant the flow is, and what your bees are doing inside the hive. You don't need to read cover to cover — jump straight to whatever season is coming up next.

3

**Use the Quick Reference Chart on Page 17**

as your fast field lookup when you need a quick answer about what should be blooming right now. All 21 forage plants, bloom dates, and ratings in one compact table.

4

**Fill in your Annual Tracker (Pages 19–23) every season.**

Note first bloom, peak bloom, and end dates for each plant near your hives. Over five years this becomes an irreplaceable personal record of your land's unique forage rhythm.

Note: Bloom dates reflect typical patterns for Wood County and surrounding Northeast Texas counties. Your specific microclimate will vary — that is exactly why the tracker exists.

# Understanding Forage & Flow

## What Is Forage?

Any plant that provides nectar, pollen, or both. Not all forage is equal — some plants deliver major nectar flows, some provide mostly pollen for brood rearing, and some deliver smaller amounts that still matter.

## What Is a Nectar Flow?

A period when major plants bloom so abundantly that bees collect more than the colony needs daily, storing the surplus as honey. NE Texas has one dominant major flow (tallow) plus several minor ones.

## Why Does Timing Matter?

Bees need 6–8 weeks to build population before a major flow. A strong hive at tallow time can fill supers in days. A weak hive may barely break even. The forage calendar lets you manage proactively.

### FLOW RATING KEY

- MAJOR FLOW — Strong surplus production possible
- MODERATE FLOW — Supports colony growth
- MINOR FLOW — Maintenance; important pollen/brood support
- DEARTH — Little to no forage; colonies may lose weight

## The Northeast Texas Forage Year — Overview

Northeast Texas is blessed with one of the most generous bee forage landscapes in the country. The year begins quietly in late January with henbit and dandelion, builds through a spectacular spring progression of native trees and wildflowers, reaches its peak with the Chinese Tallow flow in May and June, endures the summer dearth of July and August, and closes with the golden reward of goldenrod and asters in fall. Understanding this rhythm is the foundation of successful beekeeping in our region.

# The Lean Times: Understanding Dearth

Northeast Texas has two primary dearth periods: the summer dearth of July and August, and a smaller winter dearth of December through January. Understanding these periods is just as important as understanding the flows — a colony that runs out of food during dearth can collapse in days.

During dearth, bees become defensive and robbing behavior increases dramatically. Strong colonies attempt to steal honey from weaker ones. This is nature being efficient — but it can devastate a vulnerable hive quickly.

## DEARTH WARNING SIGNS

- Increased aggressive behavior at the hive entrance
- Fighting and balling at the entrance — robbing in progress
- Noticeably reduced forager traffic mid-day
- Bees festooning on the outside of the hive (too hot inside)
- Rapid weight loss if you monitor with a hive scale

## How to Prepare for and Manage Dearth

### Before Dearth (late June)

- Reduce entrance to limit robbing
- Ensure water source within 100 ft of hives
- Leave adequate stores — do not over-harvest
- Minimize hive inspections during heat

### During Dearth (July-Aug)

- Monitor hive weight if possible
- Supplement feed only if stores are critically low
- Keep grass mowed around hives
- Do not add supers during dearth

### Coming Out of Dearth

- Watch for goldenrod blooms in September
- Resume normal inspections in early fall
- Plan your Varroa treatments now
- Assess stores before winter sets in

# The Northeast Texas Forage Year

Typical bloom windows for Wood County and surrounding NE Texas counties



# Forage Year continued – July through December



■ Trees & Shrubs    
 ■ Wildflowers    
 ■ Vines & Brambles    
 ■ Invasive\*    
 ■ Fall Bloomers

\* Privet and Chinese Tallow are invasive but significant forage sources in NE Texas.

**WINTER***January & February*

The lean days of winter. Bees are clustered and living off their honey stores. Yet even now the land offers small gifts.

**What's Blooming**

- Henbit (late Jan — minor pollen)
- Dandelion (late Feb — minor)
- Red Maple (Feb — pollen)
- Elm (Feb — pollen only)

**Hive Status**

*Colony clustered around the queen. Population at its lowest. Queen begins laying in February as days lengthen. Most vulnerable period.*

**Beekeeper Actions This Season**

Heft test monthly — light hive = danger

No inspections below 50°F

Order packages or nucs if needed

## EARLY SPRING

## March – The World Wakes Up

March transforms the landscape. Redbud, wild cherry, and wild plum burst into bloom and bees begin flying in earnest on warm afternoons.

**What's Blooming**

- Redbud (moderate nectar & pollen)
- Wild Cherry (moderate)
- Wild Plum (moderate)
- Chickweed (minor)
- Dandelion continues

**Hive Status**

*Population building rapidly. Queen ramping up laying. Colony is hungry and working hard. Stores may be running low – watch closely.*

**Beekeeper Actions This Season**

- First full inspection of the season
- Check queen presence and brood pattern
- Watch stores – March starvation is real

**SPRING SURGE**

## April – The Spring Surge

The nectar flow picks up noticeably. You can hear the difference – that steady roar of thousands of foragers coming and going.

**What's Blooming**

- Yaupon Holly (moderate – the unsung April hero)
- Dewberry (moderate-high)
- Blueberry (moderate)
- Hawthorn (moderate)
- Clover begins

**Hive Status**

*Swarm season is here. Population exploding. Strong hives look for more space. Bees bringing in significant pollen and nectar daily.*

**Beekeeper Actions This Season**

- Add a super before you think you need it
- Inspect for swarm cells weekly
- Consider splitting strong colonies

**BRIDGE BLOOM***Late April – May: The Bridge Bloom*

As Yaupon Holly winds down, nature hands the baton to privet and blackberry – bridging the gap perfectly to the Big Flow.

**What's Blooming**

- Blackberry (moderate-high nectar & pollen)
- Privet – invasive (moderate-high)
- Hairy Vetch continues
- Clover in full swing
- Sweet Clover begins

**Hive Status**

*Hives at or near peak population. Foragers working long days. First early honey possible in strong hives.*

**Beekeeper Actions This Season**

- Keep supers coming – never run out of space
- Reduce swarm checks to every 10 days
- Harvest early spring honey if cells are capped

**THE BIG FLOW***Mid-May to June — The Big Flow*

Everything builds to this. The Chinese Tallow Tree is the most significant nectar flow in Northeast Texas — and one of the best in the country.

**What's Blooming**

- Chinese Tallow Tree — MAJOR FLOW
- Clover continues
- Sweet Clover peaks
- Privet tailing off

**Hive Status**

*Foragers at absolute maximum capacity. Strong hives fill supers in days at peak tallow. The hum of a full-flow hive is unforgettable.*

**Beekeeper Actions This Season**

- Add supers aggressively — congested hives swarm
- Harvest regularly to make room for more
- Do not disturb hives during peak flow

**SUMMER DEARTH***July & August – Summer Dearth*

The tallow flow ends. The heat settles in hard. This is the most challenging and potentially dangerous period of the year for your hives.

**What's Blooming**

- Bitterweed (minor in rainy years)
- Very limited forage available
- Water is now as critical as food

**Hive Status**

*Bees defensive and stressed. Robbing peaks. Population declining as queen reduces laying in heat. Hive weight dropping daily.*

**Beekeeper Actions This Season**

- Reduce entrance to minimum to stop robbing
- Ensure clean water within 100 ft of hives
- Minimize hive inspections – every opening causes stress

## FALL REWARD

*September – October: Fall Reward*

Just when summer seems endless, the mornings cool and a golden signal appears along the roadsides: Goldenrod has arrived.

**What's Blooming**

- Goldenrod (major fall flow — late September on)
- Asters (moderate — blooms alongside goldenrod)
- Both provide nectar & pollen for winter bees

**Hive Status**

*Bees eagerly top off winter stores. Colony builds fat winter bees that will survive until spring. Drone eviction begins in earnest.*

**Beekeeper Actions This Season**

Resume normal inspections

Complete Varroa treatments before winter bees hatch

Target 60+ lbs of stores going into winter

**WINTER RETURNS**

## November – December: The Quiet

The wheel turns. The bees cluster once more and the beekeeper waits. But now you know – the cycle is simply resting.

**What's Blooming**

- Minimal forage available
- Occasional warm days allow brief flight
- Bees remain clustered below 50°F

**Hive Status**

*Bees in winter cluster. Conserving warmth and energy. Queen has mostly stopped laying. Most vulnerable period of the year.*

**Beekeeper Actions This Season**

- Monthly heft test – a light hive is a dying hive
- Do not open unless absolutely necessary
- Ensure upper ventilation for moisture control

# At-a-Glance Forage Reference

Plant	Typical Bloom (NE Texas)	Wks	Nectar	Pollen	Rating
Henbit	Late Jan – Early Mar	6	Low	Med	● Minor
Red Maple	Early – Late Feb	3	Low	High	● Minor
Dandelion	Late Feb – Mid Mar	3	Low	High	● Minor
Elm	Feb	2	None	High	● Minor (pollen)
Redbud	Early – Late Mar	3	Med	Med	● Moderate
Wild Cherry	Mid Mar – Early Apr	3	Med	Med	● Moderate
Wild Plum	Mid Mar – Early Apr	3	Med	Med	● Moderate
Chickweed	Late Feb – Mid Apr	6	Low	Med	● Minor
Dewberry	Late Mar – Mid Apr	3	Med-High	Med	● Moderate
Blueberry	Late Mar – Mid Apr	3	Med	High	● Moderate
Hairy Vetch	Late Mar – Early May	5	Med	Med	● Moderate
Hawthorn	Early – Late Apr	3	Med	Med	● Moderate
Yaupon Holly	Early – Late Apr	3	Med-High	Med	● Moderate
Clover (Dutch/Red)	Apr – Jun	8	Med	Med	● Moderate
Blackberry	Mid Apr – Mid May	4	Med-High	High	● Moderate
Privet	Late Apr – Mid May	3	Med-High	Low	● Moderate
Tallow Tree	Mid May – Late Jun	6	Very High	Med	● MAJOR
Sweet Clover	May – Jul	8	Med	Med	● Moderate
Bitterweed	Jul – Sep	8	Low	Low	● Minor
Goldenrod	Late Sep – Early Nov	5	Med-High	High	● Major
Asters	Sep – Nov	8	Med	High	● Moderate

Privet and Chinese Tallow Tree are invasive. Both are significant forage sources. Be aware of local management regulations.

# Your Personal Forage Record

No forage guide can tell you exactly what will bloom on your specific land. The trees in your pasture, the wildflowers along your fence line, the shrubs along your creek – your bees are responding to the land immediately around your hives, not to a regional average.

The five tracker pages that follow are yours to fill in year by year. Over time, they become something genuinely irreplaceable: a personal record of your forage season, in your location, reflecting your specific microclimate and land.

## How to Fill In Each Column

**1. First Bloom** Date bees are first observed actively foraging on this plant.

**2. Peak Bloom** Date forager traffic on this plant is at its highest.

**3. End Date** Date bees have mostly stopped visiting. Nectar has declined.

**4. Rating (1-4)** 1=very poor 2=below average 3=average 4=exceptional

**5. Notes** Weather, drought, late freeze, new groves discovered, etc.

### Pro Tip:

*Print tracker pages at the start of each year and keep a clipboard in the bee yard. Thirty seconds to jot a date is far easier than reconstructing bloom windows from memory years later.*

# Annual Bloom Tracker

Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Location / Apiary Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Forage Plant	First Bloom	Peak Bloom	End Date	Rating (1-4)	Notes
Henbit	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Red Maple	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Elm	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Dandelion	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Redbud	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Wild Cherry	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Wild Plum	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Chickweed	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Dewberry	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Blueberry	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Hairy Vetch	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Hawthorn	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Yaupon Holly	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Clover	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Blackberry	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Privet	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
<b>Tallow Tree KEY FLOW</b>	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Sweet Clover	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Bitterweed	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Goldenrod	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Asters	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Other: _____	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Other: _____	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		

Overall Tallow Flow Strength: \_\_\_\_\_ Honey Harvest (lbs): \_\_\_\_\_

Notable Weather Events: \_\_\_\_\_

General Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Location / Apiary Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Elm	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Dandelion	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
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Chickweed	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Dewberry	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Blueberry	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Hairy Vetch	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Hawthorn	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Yaupon Holly	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
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Bitterweed	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Goldenrod	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Asters	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Other: _____	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Other: _____	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		

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Red Maple	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Elm	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Dandelion	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Redbud	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Wild Cherry	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Wild Plum	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Chickweed	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Dewberry	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Blueberry	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
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Bitterweed	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Goldenrod	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Asters	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Other: _____	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
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Blueberry	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
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Sweet Clover	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Bitterweed	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Goldenrod	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Asters	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
Other: _____	__ / __	__ / __	__ / __		
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Notable Weather Events: \_\_\_\_\_

General Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

# Magee Meadow Apiary

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Northeast Texas · Raw Local Honey · Handmade Products

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We hope this guide serves you and your bees well for many seasons to come.

*Share it freely with any beekeeper who might find it useful.*

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