RAPPAHANNOCK ARBOREAL HONEY FACT SHEET

What do you mean by "pure honey"? Our honey is the product of honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) gathering the nectar of flowers. It contains no added sugar, coloring, or flavoring. Our honey is what the bees made, extracted from honeycomb, strained for wax and debris, and nothing added. We do not purchase honey from others to resell.

What do you mean by "raw" honey? Our honey is neither heated nor filtered. Although we strain it to remove visible debris (mostly wax & bee parts), it is not forced through a microscopic filter at high temperature. Honey that is heated and filtered is a very clear honey with few (or no) pollen grains.

Why is the honey light/dark in color? The color of honey is influenced by several factors, the first being nectar source. For example, buckwheat and chestnut yield naturally dark honeys, but neither of those plants provide significant nectar for our bees during spring. Much of our nectar comes from Tulip Poplar (dark honey), but the next biggest sources are Black Locust, Basswood, wild berry blossoms and clover which produce light colored honeys. Another factor is the age of the honeycomb where the bees store the honey. Honeycomb, the six-sided wax cells, gets darker with age, and honey stored the dark comb picks up a dark color. Our basswood and clover honey, harvested in late June, is very light as it comes from light nectar in new comb.

Where are the hives located? Our colonies are located in Rappahannock County on land surrounded by pastures and woods, including Shenandoah National Park. Bees typically forage in a 2-mile radius. Within that range grow the following trees which are the major nectar sources for our honey production: tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipiflora*), basswood (American linden, i.e. *Tilia americana*), black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia),* & sumac *(Rhus glabra)*. Also wild brambles (blackberries & wineberries), maples, willows, autumn olive, wild cherries, hawthorns, catalpa, red, white & yellow clover, fireweed, mountain mint, (and more) provide pollen and nectar.

How are the colonies managed? We use labor-intensive, low-tech and non-intrusive techniques to promote the health and wellbeing of the colonies without persistent chemicals or antibiotics. Tenets of our operations include:

- No travel or pollination servicing
- We do not use herbicides, insecticides or fungicides in our gardens.
- Screened ventilation of the hives to minimize condensation, overheating, pests and fungi
- Mechanical traps and essential oils for hive beetles
- Essential oils for tracheal mites
- Varroa mite control through selective breeding with as needed treatments of organic acids or thymol

What is Crystallization? Honey naturally contains pollen and very small sugar particles around which crystals form. Commodity honey (like found in supermarkets) is heated and pressure filtered to remove or melt these particles. This processing results in 'shelf-stable' liquid honey. There is nothing wrong with crystallized honey; 'creamed' honey is processed honey with superfine crystals added under controlled conditions. All honey eventually crystallizes, sometimes, depending on the flower, in months. Should honey crystallize and you want it to return to liquid, just loosen the lid and set the jar in warm (not hot) water for an hour and it will return to a liquid state. Do not microwave honey.

Do not feed honey to infants less than 1 year old. Honey can contain bacteria to which infants are not yet immune.

For more information: Contact us at beekeeper@laughingDuckGardens.com. Our web site is http://www.laughingduckgardens.com and Facebook "Laughing Duck Gardens & Cookery.