

Honeybees Resent Alfalfa Kicks

Honeybees will not gather pollen from alfalfa if there are other flowers in the area in which they are working, University of Wisconsin studies by bee specialists W. J. Knee and F. E. Moeller have shown.

The general belief is that the honey bees keep away from alfalfa if they can because they don't like a unique pollinating mechanism the alfalfa plant has, the two researchers say.

When a bee crawls into an alfalfa flower, it trips a mechanism which spreads pollen to the female parts of the flower. This mechanism, when thus tripped, gives the pollinating bee a vigorous kick, which the honeybees apparently do not like.

Bumblebees, however, don't seem to mind the kick, and will pollinate alfalfa flowers. The difficulty, the university bee specialists said, is that bumble bees are unreliable because their populations vary from year to year. The scientists say that studies are under way in Utah in an attempt to develop a honeybee that will disregard the "pollination kick" and will gather pollen from alfalfa, as well as other plants.

AGRONOMY

Cherry Trees Hoard Water

Studies at the University of Wisconsin have shown that the fruit on a cherry tree acts as a water reservoir, to regulate the moisture of the tree, in drought or excess water periods.

In the studies, T. T. Kozlowski, a university forestry specialist, measured the change in diameter of the fruit on cherry trees. He found that during the growing period, from blossom to ripened fruit, the cherries get larger some days and shrink at other times, although expansion is naturally greater over the period than contraction as the cherries grow.

There also are daily changes in cherry size, Kozlowski found. The fruit expands during the night, and then shrinks as the sun climbs and the day becomes warmer. Some of the greatest water loss occurs during the middle fruit growing period, because the leaf area is then the greatest and most active. Contraction of the cherries is not as great during the final ripening period, and Kozlowski believes this may be because the ripening fruit has a high sugar content, which seems to draw water into the fruit and prevent it from leaving.

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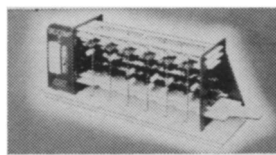
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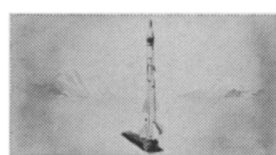
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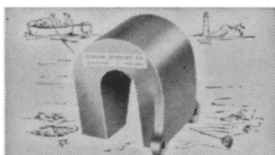
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