

Gardners Have Honeyed Lifestyle

By Woody Greenberg
Staff Writer

TYE RIVER — Carl and Esther Gardner will harvest more than 3,000 pounds of honey this year from 67 hives located on four different properties.

"This may be the only field of agriculture where you can use other people's property," said Mr. Gardner, a former technical writer and author from Washington, D.C., who has a book on former U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young to his credit.

Mrs. Gardner, who was a procurement inventory manager for the Navy Dept. until her move to Nelson last year, said this year's honey is lighter than last year's, with a more delicate taste.

The Gardners sell their honey in bulk and retail it in jars and are in the

middle of turning out 160 eight-ounce jars for a friend who sells computers and is going to give it to customers as free samples.

But so far, most of it has been snapped up locally.

Their goal, said Mr. Gardner, is 300 hives and he will begin work shortly on a honey house, enabling him to move the operation out of a wing of their home, which he began building in 1977.

Last week, the Gardners could be found scraping the wax off the frames from their hives with a heated knife and placing the frames in an extractor, which works on the principle of centrifugal force.

They save the wax, which they take for processing to a honey operation in Lynchburg. It will be used to begin new combs for next year's harvest.

The Gardners will not sell all their honey this year. A significant portion will be saved to create new hives. They hope to have 100 by next year.

Darker honey is generally from the tulip poplar flowers that bloom in the spring, while the lighter honey comes from forest flowers. Hence, the Gardners call their two types "Tulip Poplar" and "Forest Flower," and sell it under the label "Oakstream Apiaries."

The Gardners, whose son Coltrane is a student at Nelson Junior High School, say they don't miss Washington very much, despite the better paying jobs they held.

"It's definitely better here," said Mrs. Gardner.

The Gardners live on Rt. 654, about two miles from where it cuts off Rt. 739 at St. Stephen's Church.



CARL AND ESTHER GARDNER prepare some of the 3,000 pounds of honey they'll harvest this year at their Oakstream Apiaries. The Gardners hope to have 300 hives

some day and have traded a Washington, D.C. lifestyle for Nelson because they say "it's better here."