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A Bountiful Buzz

By [ELISABETH GOODRIDGE](#)

[Doug Mills/The New York Times](#) [Charlie Brandts](#), White House carpenter turned beekeeper

A new type of visitor came to the National Mall this year, flitting past monuments and museums in favor of trees, flowers and plants. But this wasn't just some horticultural tour; no, this was work. Each day they were abuzz, gathering and pollinating before returning home to modest quarters with tremendous security near Lafayette Park.

Meet the White House honeybee.

Numbering more than 65,000 at one point, the bees produced a bumper crop of honey this year, the first time honey has ever been made on White House grounds. The hive, located on the South Lawn, is a key part of First Lady [Michelle Obama's organic kitchen garden](#) project.

The total haul was 134 pounds of honey, or roughly 11 gallons. [Charlie Brandts](#), the White House beekeeper, couldn't be more pleased. "I figured they would make 30 or so pounds of honey," he said. "They surprised me."

That access to the National Mall is one reason. "It's just an abundance of blooms," Mr. Brandts said, noting the local flowers, plants and trees were ripe with bee-attracting nectar. "The Ellipse and monument grounds are just a great source of clover. It's like having a huge pasture."

A White House carpenter for the past 25 years, Mr. Brandts started beekeeping in the backyard of his Maryland home three years ago.

The natural honey his hives produced drew the attention of White House chefs, who introduced him to [Sam Kass](#), the Chicago chef who followed the Obamas from their hometown to the White House. Mr. Kass wondered whether beehives could be part of the White House garden.

"I said 'I think it would be very doable,'" Mr. Brandt said, recalling the conversation. "It was that simple. It just gets complicated after that."

Audio Slide Show [The Sweet Smell of Honey](#)

Basswood and cherry trees helped create a unique taste for White House honey.

[Doug Mills/The New York Times](#) Mr. Brandts secured the hive with straps one afternoon this summer.