



Wealden Apiarist

Newsletter of the High Weald Division of the
Sussex Beekeeping Association

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March - April 2016

Features



Feeding and pre-season maintenance

High Weald Beekeepers Events Diary 2016

Date	Event	Address
Thursday 10 th March	Preparing for the Season	Rose & Crown Mayfield
23 rd March	Products from the Bee Hive	Five Ashes Memorial Hall
Tuesday 29 th March	Bee Banter	Crow & Gate Crowborough
Thursday 14 th April	Swarming	Rose & Crown Mayfield
Tuesday 26 th April	Bee Banter	Rose & Crown Mayfield
	Any further events will be confirmed by email or posted on the website	

EDITORS BUZZ....

Spring is just around the corner, or so I'm told, so what better time to be

considering what you can grow in your gardens that will attract insects of all kinds. There's a wide range of flowering shrubs and bulbs available that, once established, give seasonal and year round interest. It was marvellous to see some bees visiting snowdrops a week ago when the temperature crept over 10 degrees. Garden centres offer a range of 'bee friendly' options, but don't forget that it's not only the honeybees to be catered for, but a vast range of other insects that often have very particular tastes. Now this will upset the meticulous gardener, but weeds are wonderful food sources, from clover, to knapweed and teasel. Teasel, particularly will end the season attracting flocks of goldfinches, picking out the seeds. So, basically, everyone's garden is a nature reserve.

John Lyte

Wildflower planting

Words and pictures by John Lyte



Following on from the Editors Buzz, if you feel inspired to go down the wildflower route, the following links might be useful. But bear in mind that gardening programmes have a tendency to suggest that all you have to do is some rudimentary soil preparation, throw a bit of seed around and hey presto, you have a wildflower meadow. I've found that wild plants are very picky; they need particular conditions and soil types. I've introduced species that seemed fine, then disappeared, only to reappear where they wanted to be. Their judgement being rather better than mine. But, it's really worth trying. Even one variety that wasn't there before is wonderful to see when it appears – and the wildlife will be appreciative too.

<http://www.mr-fothergills.co.uk>

www.bostonseeds.com

www.shop.meadowmania.co.uk

www.unwins.co.uk

www.wildflower.org.uk

www.naturescape.co.uk

www.heritage-seeds.co.uk

Feeding and pre-season maintenance

Words and picture by Malcolm Wilkie, additional pictures by John Lyte



I roll out my pattie like pastry with a rolling pin and icing sugar and then lay the thin layer directly on top of the brood frames. Your bees will thank you and it will help them at what is a difficult time of year for our charges.



Before



After



If the fondant is tight up against a crown board, celutex insulation, or the roof, it's advisable to cover with a piece of baking parchment to avoid sticking.

February, however, should not be a month when you as a beekeeper put up your feet. Any brood boxes used last year should be sterilised. Wooden boxes should be torched and poly hives sterilised by washing with a strong solution of bleach. Torch the floors, crown boards and roofs. Winter is also a time when you can start preparing for the swarming season. Sort out the equipment you have and make

sure that for every hive you have a spare floor, brood box, crown board and roof. Or at least a nucleus box! Beginners beware. Bees are programmed to swarm and over the last seven years all my hives have always done so, sometimes twice. So don't be complacent and think that your bees won't swarm. They will! And you need to prepare NOW.

Part of that preparation for swarming should be the construction of new frames. I build them but don't add the foundation until later. Helen adds the foundation but before using them will freshen the wax up by briefly passing the heat from a hair dryer over the wax.

There are two sessions for members on preparing for the coming season and dealing with swarming. Come along and make sure you have clear in your own mind what you are going to do once the bees build up to a pitch where they want to swarm. Keith and I will cover, once again, artificial swarm control but I will also talk about the method Helen uses : she removes the Queen into a nucleus at a time of her own choosing. Great if you want to go away on holiday! And you will avoid the disappointment of returning to find the bees have swarmed and sent out cast after cast after cast.

Disease should always be on your mind. Brood frames should be renewed every two years. Bee inspectors bang on about this and rightly so as so many beekeepers don't change them often enough. Helen writes onto every frame the year in indelible pen so that she can be sure how long the frame has been in the hive. It only takes a second to do so. In the session on preparing for the season we will presumably talk about shook swarming and also a Bailey comb change. The latter can be done in two different ways depending on whether you are dealing with a weak or a strong colony. Come and find out.

I'm still looking for one, or two willing hands to take on the editorship of the Apiarist. I'm sure that there are members out there who would like to take up the mantle. Please contact me via jlyte@btinternet.com if you're interested and I'll explain the process (very easy).

ARTICLES FOR THE NEWSLETTER ARE ALWAYS WELCOMED WITH OPEN ARMS!
Please send them to the Editor jlyte@btinternet.com
Next newsletter out at the end of June