

NHBKA October 2014 Newsletter

Our first indoor meeting of the winter season was opened by our Chairman, Gary Hammond, who welcomed all to the meeting.

Gary mentioned several opportunities available next year where we will need volunteers; Bee World at the Herts County Show in May, and a Bee Disease Day at Knebworth. North Herts will be running both events on behalf of the county and I'm sure that after Gary's enthusiastic rallying call for support, we will be turning volunteers away. And of course, we would like you to volunteer to host an apiary visit during the summer season next year.

Helen gave us a brief resumé of our attempts at queen rearing at Novotel which unfortunately came to nought after we discovered sacbrood in our Association colony. After replacing several queens, the remaining two colonies are now in good order, and the sacbrood has gone. One positive outcome is that all the people involved can now identify sacbrood at a glance.

Gary reiterated the need to put forward your name if you want to be included on the BBKA swam collectors' list for next year; this lead into an entertaining section from John Murphy about his steep learning curve as our new swarm coordinator. If you caught John early in his role, he would have visited for a bumblebee nest, whereas towards the end of the season, only an anatomically correct complete description of a honey bee would convince him that you had a swarm in your garden/chimney/loft/cavity wall, and even then you might not get a visit. His first call was at the end of April and the last call at the end of September. 80 or more of the calls concerned bumblebees, and that represented about 95% of all the calls he received; anyone receiving swarm calls has had similar experiences. He mentioned that the details available on the Bumblebee Conservation Trust web site were very useful and allowed callers to identify their bumblebees and allay fears about their behaviour (that's the behaviour of the bumblebees, not the callers').

Gary provided a few images for our logo competition. There was a clear favourite on the night and we hope to provide some details about how the logo will be used at our next meeting.

Chris Mercer, rapidly becoming a regular contributor to our indoor meetings, regaled us with some cautionary thoughts about winter preparations. His hope was for a cold winter which would be good for the bees.

- Start winter preparations after the honey harvest, usually mid-end August
- Better to over winter a colony with a young queen
- Specifically check for diseases once in the spring and once in the autumn as a minimum
- Check for signs of pests
- Know your notifiable pests and diseases
- As winter bees are developing in late August, it is important that virus infections associated with varroa are not transmitted to them
- Make sure colonies have enough stores, 18 – 22kg of honey, to get through winter
- Make sure hives are in sound condition, waterproof and well ventilated – damp rather than cold, kills bees
- Protect from vermin, particularly mice and woodpeckers
- Monitor hives through the winter
- Heft¹ the hives through the winter and feed fondant if necessary, and remember 'Candy for Christmas'
- Open hives every other week if the temperature permits (not if sub-zero) and switch empty frames next to the cluster with ones of food from the same hive
- Apply oxalic acid between late December and early January when colonies are broodless

¹ British Dictionary definitions for **heft** /heft/ verb (transitive), 1. to assess the weight of (something) by lifting, 2. to lift

Gary followed Chris with a discussion of planting for winter forage. It is good policy to ensure your overwintering bees have access to good quality pollen crops at the end of the season and the start of next season. Colonies require ample pollen to overwinter successfully, especially to rear brood into the new season. The forage patterns are determined by the calendar. In the summer, workers may travel up to 3 miles for nectar and pollen, trading distance flown against the amount and quality of nectar. A third of the weight of a returning worker may be nectar. In the winter, the workers stay in and around the garden or the hive location, trading off energy outlay against the amount of nectar.

Gary recently attended a BBKA conference hosted by Andy Willis, where the importance of planting for pollinators, bumblebees, hoverflies, and other insects was highlighted. For honey bees, this means having a good nectar source close to the hive. Gary took us through the winter calendar, from October through to March identifying trees, shrubs, perennials, and bulbs that we should concentrate on as sources of pollen and nectar. For the current month, for example, we should be considering winter-flowering clematis, fatsia japonica, winter-flowering cherry, mahonia japonica, winter-flowering honeysuckle and winter heather, for December, hellebores, viburnum, cyclamen, and primrose, and for January, hazel catkins for pollen, witch hazel, aconites, snowdrops (avoiding doubles that are no good for bees and other insects), sweet box and crocuses. If you need a little inspiration - the Guinness World Record for the number of people simultaneously planting bulbs in one place was held by Hitchin in 2010 when almost 650 people planted crocus bulbs in Butts Close in an event organised by Hitchin Tilehouse Rotary. For February, Gary recommended Hertfordshire's county flower, the beautiful and increasingly rare pasqueflower, *Pulsatilla vulgaris*, formerly known as *Anemone pulsatilla*.

Gary provided a planting list and plant suppliers list for the meeting and these have been added to the end of this newsletter.

Frank Everest, a man not easily confused, was intrigued by his discovery of capped queen cells containing fully developed larvae on the weekend before the meeting, the end of the second week in October. We can only guess what the bees were thinking – all in all it's been a funny old year. Frank uses 14 * 12 frames and suggested that you cut holes through the frames to assist the mobility of the bees during the winter when they are looking for stores.

We were reminded of a few dates for our calendars for next year, the BBKA Spring Convention (17th to 19th April, Newport, Shropshire), and the Beekeeping Tradex Show (Saturday, 7th March, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire).

As the light from the jack-o'-lantern pumpkins splutters out after All Hallows' Eve and the sight and the sound of the fireworks celebrating Diwali and the untimely demise of Guido ("the last man to enter Parliament with honest intentions") Fawkes fades, we should take pause and make plans for our winter beekeeping tasks. Perhaps it's time to reread your Ted Hooper, or perhaps the new text acquired during the year, stock up on those bits of kit you ran out of in the summer, or clean up and revitalise the boxes and frames piled up in the shed, or make up new ones from all those parts you bought from the Thorne sale last year. Come on, there's time to do all of them.

Our next indoor meeting is on Tuesday, 18th November at Howgills and starts at 7:30pm. It will include some essential practical information for beekeepers; how to deal with sensitivity to bee stings and anaphylactic shock.

Planting suggestions

	Common Name	Latin Name	Habitat	Characteristics	Flowers	Suppliers
1	Loquat	Eriobotrya Japonica	Full sun, well drained	Large Leaf evergreen shrub	Oct/Nov	1, 10
2	Winter Cherry & Autumn Cherry	Prunus x Subhirtella 'Autumnalis'	Full sun, part shade	Specimen tree	Nov - Apr	9
3	Mahonia	Mahonia Japonica	Full sun, part shade	Upright evergreen shrub	Nov - Mar	3, 9
4	Winter Flowering Shrubby Honeysuckle	Lonicera Fragrantissima	Full sun, part shade	Small shrub, semi evergreen	Nov - May	9
5		Lonicera x Purpusii	Full sun, part shade	Small shrub, semi evergreen	Nov - May	9
6	Fatsia / False Caster Oil Plant	Fatsia Japonica	Summer shade	Large Leaf evergreen shrub	Nov - Dec	9
7		Viburnum Tinus	Full sun, part shade	Evergreen shrub	Jan - May	9
8	Rosemary	Rosmarinus Officinalis	Full sun	Evergreen scented herb	Dec - Apr	9
9	Winter Heliotrope	Petasites Fragans	Full sun, part shade	Semi Evergreen herbaceous with creeping rhizomes	Nov - Mar	10, 11
10	Winter/Spring Heather	Erica Carneia	Full sun, part shade	Small densely branched bushy shrub	Jan - Apr	9
11	Scented European Tree Heather	Erica Lusitanica	Sun, acid soil, well drained	Evergreen shrub	Dec - May	10
12	Christmas Box	Sarcococca	Full sun, part shade	Evergreen low growing shrub	Jan - Mar	9
13	Snowdrop	Galanthus Nivalis	Woodland. Sun/part shade, moist soil	Early bulb	Jan - Mar	4
14	Ornamental Japanese Quince	Chaenomeles Cathayensis, Chaenomeles 'Crimson Gold'	Shade/sun	Deciduous shrub	Dec - May	3, 9
15	Hellebores/Lenten Rose	Hellebores - Any but not Niger	Full sun, part shade	Herbaceous mostly evergreen	Jan - May	2,9
16	Winter Aconites	Eranthis Hyemalis	Full sun, part shade	Herbaceous corms	Jan - Mar	4
17	Lung Wort	Pulmonaria - Any but not Longifolia	Full sun, part shade	Herbaceous semi evergreen, spotted leaves	Jan - May	9
18	Creeping Comfrey	Symphytum Grandiflorum	Full sun, part shade	evergreen herbaceous	Jan - May	9
19	Mimosa, Cootamundra Wattle	Acacia Baileyana 'Purpurea'	Sun/sheltered from wind	Evergreen tree	Feb - Apr	6, 9, 10
20	Wild Crocus Species : Winter Crocus	Crocus Chrysanthus, Siberi, Speciosus	Full sun, part shade	Earlier & more dainty than large flowered hybrids	Feb - Mar	5, 9
21	Cherry Plum	Prunus Cerasifera, Pissardii & Nigra	Full sun, part shade	Small deciduous tree	Feb - Mar	1, 3
22	Flower Currant	Ribes Sanguineum	Full sun, part shade	Deciduous, early flowering shrub	Mar - Apr	9
23	Almonds & Apricots	Prunus Dulcis & Prunus Armeniaca	Full sun	Small deciduous tree	Mar - Apr	1, 3, 7, 8
24	Darwins Barberry	Berberis Darwinii	Full sun, part shade	Evergreen shrub	Mar - Apr	3, 9
25	Mimosa, Ovens Wattle	Acacia Pravissima	Full sun, well drained	Weeping Evergreen	Mar - Apr	6, 10
26	Evergreen Clematis	Clematis Armandii 'Apple Blossom'	Shelter full sun	Evergreen vigorous climber	Mar - Apr	9
27	Red & White Currants & Gooseberries	Ribes Rubrum, Ribes Uva-crispa	Full sun, part shade	Well known soft fruit bushes	Mar - Apr	1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9
28	Hyacinth	Hyacinthus Orientalis	Full sun, part shade	Well known spring bulbs	Mar - Apr	5, 9
29	Corylopsis	Colyopsis Pauciflora	Full sun, part shade shelter from wind	Small densely branched deciduous shrub	Mar - Apr	9
30	Cherries & Plums	Prunus Avium & Prunus Domestica	Full sun, part shade	Small-medium sized deciduous tree	Mar - Apr	1, 3, 7, 8, 9

Plant Suppliers References

	Suppliers	Address		Town	County	Postcode	Telephone	Website/email
1	Deacons Nursery	Moorview		Godshill	IOW	PO38 3HW	01983 840750	www.deaconnurseryfruits.co.uk
2	Ashwood Nursery	Ashwood Lane	Ashwood	Kings Wandford	West Midlands	DY6 0AE	01384 401996	ashwood@btconnect.com
3	Agroforestry Research Trust	46 Hunter Moon	Dartington	Totnes	Devon	TQ6 6JT	01803 840776	www.agroforestry.co.uk
4	Eurobulbs	Rose Villa	314 Smeeth Road	Marshland St James	Cambridgeshire	PE14 8EP	01945 430009	www.eurobulbs.co.uk
5	Parkers Wholesale Catalogue	452 Chester Road		Manchester		M16 9HL	0161 848 1124	www.dutchbulbs.co.uk
6	Chiltern Seeds	Bortree Stile		Ulverston	Cumbria	LA12 7PB	01229 581137	www.chilternseeds.co.uk
7	Thompson and Morgan UK Ltd	Poplar Lane		Ipswich	Suffolk	IP8 3BU	01473 695225	www.thompson-morgan.com
8	SE Marshalls & Co. Ltd	Alconbury Hill		Huntingdon	Cambridgeshire	PE28 4HY	01480 443390	www.marshalls-seeds.co.uk
9	Available in most good garden centres							
10	Look in RHS Plant Finder	For nearest suppliers/specialist nurseries						www.dk.com
11	Garden Escapees	Can be found on roadside verges and waste ground. Lift a few leafy shoots with roots in early spring from outside edge of clumps						