



# Things to do and see

Author Andy Willis - June 2009

Things should start to settle down in the apiary now. The first full flush of swarming should be complete. New queens should be mated and laying now, and if so can be marked with green marking paint (this year's colour). Early shook swarms done in April or early May could supersede their old queens this month. They also sometimes go for swarming along with early caught swarms in April giving us a second round of swarms. Doing an artificial swarm or making up a Nuc with the old queen can be done to stop this, followed by selecting a good queen cell leaving only one in the original stock. Surplus queen cells from a good quality stock shouldn't be wasted and can be used to replace queens in less good stocks. Note: when introducing a frame with a queen cell on, carefully brush off all the bees using a handful of long grass or a goose wing/large feather. The bee brushes, sold at all the bee suppliers, I have found tend to upset the bees and make them bad tempered (and the grass and large feathers can be collected for free!) Remember to keep an eye open for disease. The June gap tends to stress the colony when there are many mouths to feed and a stressed colony is more likely to show up any diseases.

Weak or small colonies should still be fed with weak syrup (1 lb sugar in 1 pint of water) to get them through the June gap which should normally end in our area around the middle of June when the lime trees start to flower. If the weather is hot in early June (25°C and above) then in the urban areas a honey flow can come in earlier in the first week or two of June. This would be from the Robinia pseudo-acacia. This is a pale honey with a good flavour and density and has won me several prizes at shows in the past. It doesn't yield every year and requires high temperatures and high humidity to be at its best. Currently the branches are festooned with flower buds and look set to start flowering in the first week of June.

Blackberries are also flowering early this year and I have already seen a hive with the characteristic slate grey pollen filling many cells. For the blackberry to yield honey we require dry, sunny weather, as the flowers point skywards they are quickly spoiled by any rain.

The lime trees which should start to flower around the middle of the month have flowers that point down with petals that act like umbrellas. These yield the most nectar in warm humid, thundery weather and require moisture at the roots too. We are lucky here in Southampton as the limes usually yield most years. In Lincolnshire where I started beekeeping, 19 years ago, the soils and air were usually too dry for the limes to yield and a beekeeper of 60 years told me that the local lime trees yielded only once in all of that time!

The importance of not allowing your bees to run out of room cannot be stressed too much. If bees are occupying ½ or more of the top super then another one should go on. If you have wax on the crown board then a super should have been put on last week!

My strongest hives in a good week of weather during a honey flow regularly fill a super a week. If you don't have enough supers on a hive then you risk losing a swarm as the brood nest will get congested and may trigger swarming. A swarm lost now will mean no more honey this year.

Drone brood removal should continue. If you can't remove the wild drone comb under a shallow frame in the brood box every two weeks then you will be propagating varroa along with your drones. If you know you will be away then replace the shallow frame with a normal deep one. Doing this will curb the amount of drone brood that the hive produces, reducing the propagation of varroa.

Don't waste the wax in this drone brood. My solar wax extractor is filled several times each week with all the removed wild comb and hive scrapings. Last year I harvested over 12 lb of wax from my hives by doing this.

In line with the CSL recommendation the varroa Levels for June are:

Level and Control Required	Average Mite Drop per Day	Percentage of Infested Drone Pupea
Low No Action	1 or less	Less than 3% (3 in 100)
Medium Plan Action	Between 2 and 7	Between 3% and 7%
High Take Action	More than 7	More than 7% (7 in 100)

Permits for going to the Heather in the new Forest are now available from Jim Stuart, contact him on 01264 323185 or email [pearity@lemonia.org](mailto:pearity@lemonia.org). The closing date is early next month but its better to get this sorted out now than be disappointed and having to rush at the last minute.

There appears to be a very high population of aphids or greenfly at the moment. There also seems to be very few ladybirds. Judging by the amount of honeydew on my car from the hazel tree in my front garden, we could possibly get a crop of dark honeydew honey this year. This doesn't normally come in until later in the year when the flowers start to get scarce or during a long dry spell of weather.

Plants in flower this month and visited by our bees include:

Plant	Pollen Colour	Pollen	Nectar	Comments
Blackberries	Grey	vv	vv	Possible Honey Crop; Grey pollen
Buddleis Globosa			v	Only Buddleia worked by our honeybees
Cistus		vv		Mornings only as petals drop after lunchtime
Cotoneaster		v	vv	
Field Beans / Broadbeans	Grey	vv	vv	Possible Honey Crop
Hebes		v	vv	
Horse Chestnut - Indian	Red	vv	v	
Lime Tree			vv	Requires humid thundery weather
Oil Seed Rape		v	vv	Possible Honey Crop
Poppies	Black	vv		Black pollen from field poppies
Privet			vv	Bitter tasting honey
Robinia pseudoacacia			vv	Needs a high temperature
Snowberries			vv	
Sweet Chestnuts		vv	vv	End of month if hot and dry
White Clover		v	vv	Honeycrop - Best after rain/heavy dew

Key

V: Good  
VV: Very good