



## Southampton & District Beekeepers Association

[www.southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk](http://www.southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk)

### Things to do and see

Author Andy Willis - August/September 2009

After the bad weather in July cut short the honey flow our honey crops will not be record breaking but is better than the last 2 years. Most colonies have been able to make a surplus with the best yielding over 100lb of honey. New or divided colonies have filled 1-2 supers and undivided established stocks doing the best, with 4-6 supers full of honey. Frames are mostly well capped and nicely plump with my best show frame already winning two first prizes at local shows.

Honey should be extracted now. Honey that is not capped can be gently shaken over the hive. If it drips its not ripe and should be left on otherwise extract it or leave it for the bees.

Stores in the brood box are getting low so if you remove all the honey supers you must check that there is at least two full frames of honey in the brood box (not just pollen). If there is little or no honey in the brood box then you must feed (2lb sugar to 1 pint of water) or your bees could starve. About a gallon (8 pints/5litres) is what is needed.

Check your varroa count levels. I would recommend using Apiguard on hives with average mite drops of 3 or above a day. Use an 'Eke' or an empty super and don't forget to close the holes in the crown board and leave the tray in or temporarily replace the open mesh floor with a solid one. Apiguard works by a fumigation process, so ventilation should be kept to a minimum. It also requires the bees to be well spread out on the combs so a day time temperature above 15°C is required for the whole of the 4 week treatment period. This is best achieved in August / September and early October. The later it gets the less efficient it is and the more varroa survive.

The bees that are made now are the most important of the year as they are the winter bees and get the colony through to the spring. These winter bees will therefore have to be healthy and strong to do this. By getting varroa levels as low as you can now will go a long way towards achieving strong healthy winter bees.

The main time for feeding bees for winter is in October in our area and some years (like last year) the ivy helps in this respect.

If you feed too early a lot of this food will be used in brood rearing and if a late honey flow should occur it will be contaminated with your sugar syrup. Some years I've had a black honey made in late August and September - this I believe to be honeydew honey. It has a wonderful strong liquorice / cough medicine mixture flavour and has won many prizes at shows. If you have a small colony and you want it to expand and get stronger, by all means feed it but use the stimulative weak syrup of 1lb sugar to 1 pint of water and feed little and often.

Inspections can be reduced to once every 2-3 weeks now as swarming season is over, Queen cells produced now will usually be supercedure cells and should be left.

Late August, September and early October are good months for the beekeeper to have a holiday as things generally quieten down in the Apiary. October is the start of the beekeeping year when you ready your hives for winter so there are a few things to do then.

Spun supers still sticky/wet from extraction should be put back onto the hives for the bees to lick dry - do this in the evening as the bees tend to get a bit excited with this sudden influx of food.

Bees on the heather are now bringing in a surplus which already looks better than last year. With the first supers nearly full by the 24<sup>th</sup> August. The warm humid still weather is helping. The soil out on the heath is very dry this year so again I expect the honey flow to be short (normally at its peak for just 2 weeks).

Any rain may help freshen the flower up but too much will stop the bees working. Dry air also can stop the nectar production in the flowers so a cool north or easterly wind will stop the honey production out on the heaths.

Bees in the city and near waterways will also benefit from late flowers which bloom now. Some years there are enough for a small honey flow.

Plants that our bees will be visiting this month:

Plant	Pollen Colour	Pollen	Nectar	Comments
Asters - Single		VVV	V	
Caryopteris		V	VVV	
Dahlias - Single		VVV	V	
Fleabane	Orange	VVV	V	
Fuchsia		V	VV	
Golden Rod		VVV	V	
Gorse - Dwarf		VVV	V	
Heather - Bell		V	VVV	
Heather - Ling	Biscuity	V	VVV	
Hebe		V	VV	
Helenium		VVV	V	
Himalayan Balsam	White	V	VV	White stripes down the back of the bees
Honeydew (Aphids)			VVV	Dark Honey
Japanese Knot weed			VVV	
Lavatera		VVV	V	
Lavender		V	VV	Requires hot sunny, dry conditions
Magnolia Grandiflora		VVV	V	
Marjoram		V	VV	
Michaelmas Daisies		VVV	V	
Mint		V	VV	
Perovskia		VV	VV	
Polygonum		V	VV	
Purple Loosestrife		VV	VV	Waterside/damp ditch plant
Russian Vine (Mile-a-minute)		V	VV	
Sedum - Ice plant		V	VVV	
Snowberries		V	VVV	
Sunflowers		VV	VV	
White Clover		V	VVV	Honeycrop - Best after rain/heavy dew

Key

V: Okay  
 VV: Good  
 VVV: Very Good

Wasps have had a good year and there numbers will be peaking now. Reduce entrances down to help prevent robbing.