



## Southampton & District Beekeepers Association

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

### Things to do and see

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Spring proper is late in coming this year (by about 2-3 weeks from normal). We have become accustomed to early springs in recent years which means that this year things are 4-6 weeks behind where we might have expected them to be.

In some respects this lateness is a good thing as it gives time for our colonies to build up strength and size before the spring honey flow start. In other respects it makes things more difficult as the continued poor weather hampers spring inspections and stores continue to be used up at an ever increasing rate as there is very little being brought into the hives. Unchecked strong colonies can run short of space for the growing population of bees and induce early swarming as soon as the weather warms up. You have been warned!

With the huge increase in numbers of new beekeepers and people wanting to start beekeeping, suppliers are having difficulties in keeping up with demand. There is a wax shortage at the moment and hives and frames are being sold faster than they can be made. So this year, more than any, like all good boy scouts, you will have to be prepared. When I say 'prepared' I mean that you have in stock everything that you will need this season well before you need it. As you may find that when you really need that extra super or box/hive for that unexpected swarm, you may have to go on a waiting list for a few weeks, which is no good when the hive has already run out of room or the swarm is hanging from a tree in the neighbours garden. If you wish to stock up on equipment then there is no better place to do this than at the BBKA Spring Convention at Stoneleigh. This is being held this month on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> April. Goods can only be bought on the 17<sup>th</sup> but there is a huge selection of lectures and workshops going on some starting at 10am, on the Friday. The main workshops and lectures start at 12.30pm and all day Saturday with others continuing on the Sunday.

This year will be busier than ever at Stoneleigh and the queue to get in on the Saturday for the sales day for the 9am start will be longer than ever. So get there early on the 17<sup>th</sup> and wait patiently in line. (Photo of the queue in 2009) Be prepared for a rush to the Thornes sales area but don't be disappointed if some of the best bargains have all gone before you get in the door. Other suppliers will be there enabling you to compare qualities along with price.



## To do list

- Stock up with frames and foundation and other equipment.
- Clean and scorch all used equipment. Make up frames and fit foundation.
- Do inspections when weather permits. Your aim is to inspect every hive once a week by the end of the month.
- Some hives may run out of room and induce swarming towards end of month, fit supers in good time.
- Feed colonies short of food or small colonies that need building up with dilute feed (1lb sugar in 1 pint of water).
- Unite small stocks if they are otherwise healthy.
- Start or continue the Bailey brood comb change process.
- Start to do shook swarms when colonies are strong enough (brood box full of bees, 6 or more frames of brood) if you don't require more colonies delay doing a shook swarm until queen cups are produced – this may prevent swarming altogether
- Start drone brood removal/culling to control varroa – put a shallow frame in to the brood box to enable this to be done easily every 2 weeks.
- Make up early nucs from strong stocks.
- Get ready for the spring honey flow which could start at the end of April this year or early in May. The later it starts the better the potential for a honey crop. (longer days, more bees, better weather)
- Still time to put out masonry bee nest boxes (but only just). (Photo of a bee nest box positioned on a piece of trellis)



## Look out for

- Single queen cell – spring supercedure is happening more frequently than it used to.
- Multiple queen cells – swarming season normally starts towards the end of April, but could be delayed until May.
- Varroa populations expanding as drones are produced.
- Unmarked queens – these are easier to find in April than later on when there are more bees, mark with last year's colour, green.
- A spectacular display of flowers on trees and shrubs – most will be having an extra good display this year.
- Ensure water is available to the bees – bees need to dilute stores to move or use them.

- Bargains at the sales day (April 17<sup>th</sup>) at the BBKA spring convention at Stoneleigh.
- Signs of disease in stressed colonies, inspect brood carefully on a mild day when bees flying well (14°C and above)
- Large quantities of pollen coming into hives, this is a good sign.
- Colonies running short of room, add supers
- Dirty, mouldy, mouse damaged or soiled brood combs, replace with new foundation, if you are not doing a bailey brood comb change or a shook swarm later.
- Use easy steam or a solar wax extractor to recover wax from old combs – exchange recovered wax for foundation at your local bee suppliers or take to Stoneleigh for exchanging there.
- If you miss out at Stoneleigh, second hand bargains can be found at the Meon Valley Bee auction on 1<sup>st</sup> May, but don't get carried away on the day and pay too much. Last year nucs were being sold for £200 and colonies of bees sold for £270 - £350. The price could be higher this year. (Photo of the lots for sale in 2009)



## Plants our bees could visit this month

<b>Plant</b>	<b>Pollen Colour</b>	<b>Pollen</b>	<b>Nectar</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Acers and Maples		VVV	VV	
Almonds and Apricots		VV	VV	
Apple		VVV	VV	
Berberis		VV	VV	
Bluebell Spanish	Pale Blue/ Pale Green	VVV	VV	
Butterbur	White/Cream	VVV	VV	Early in month
Ceanothus	Blue	V	V	
Cherry ornamental but not double		VVV	VVV	
Cherry Laurel		VVV	VV	
Cherry Plum and Blackthorn		VV	VV	Early in Month
Dandelion	Orange	VVV	VVV	Pollen on undersides of bees
Flowering Currant		VV	VV	
Forget-Me-Not		V	VV	
Gooseberries		VV	VV	
Gorse	Rich golden yellow	V	V	
Horse Chestnut	Brick Red	VV	VV	End of the month
Oil Seed Rape		VV	VVV	Possible Honey Crop
Pear		VVV	V	
Plum and Cherry		VVV	VVV	
Red and White Currants		VV	VV	
Rosemary		VV	VVV	
Tulip	Purple / Black	VV		End of Month
Wallflowers		VV	VV	
Willow	Yellow	VVV	VVV	Pollen all over the bees

### Key

V: Okay

VV: Good

VVV: Very Good