



Southampton & District Beekeepers Association

www.southamptonbeekeepers.co.uk

Things to do and see

Author Andy Willis - November 2008

- Things tend to quieten down as we are now into the 'Off-season'. But as always there are many things that can and should be done by the conscientious beekeeper.
- Supers that have been extracted and now licked dry by the bees should be stacked on a travel screen or open mesh floor under a roof in a cold spot of the garden. This is important as the air movement through the open floor helps stop mould. The mesh floor stops mice from entering (a Queen excluder between old boxes will stop free movement of a mouse if it does gain entry) and the cold will kill wax moth eggs or larva. The roof keeping out the rain. The whole pile should be bee tight to help stop robbing from being set up as well as prevent entry of a stray early swarm next April before the boxes are needed again. Queen wasps also quite like to hibernate in these boxes if they can gain entry, so keep an eye on the pile should it get knocked or moved askew in a storm.
- Do check the apiary particularly after a storm and make sure leaves don't get piled over the entrance and that hives are weather tight. Damp kills bees more than the cold, and November is the wettest month of the year in our area.
- If you have an open mesh floor on your hives then do put the monitoring tray in for a few days midmonth to get an average daily mite drop. This will give you a good idea as to how successful any Varroa treatments have been and/or indicate if you have had an invasion of Varroa from collapsing colonies late in the season. If you do have a high mite drop then you will need to treat with oxalic acid (do follow all the precautions and instructions carefully) at the end of the month or in December. Do make sure there is no brood when you use the oxalic acid in syrup treatment. This relatively new treatment was demonstrated by our Regional Bee Inspector, Ian Homer, last November and proved to be very successful. It certainly cleaned the hives up from Varroa, although if the infestation is very high it might already be too late to save it!

CSL guidelines for November average Varroa mite daily drop

Level and Control Required	Average Mite Drop per Day	Proportion of Infested Drone Pupae
Low No Action	5 or less	
Medium Plan Action		
High Take Action	More than 5	

- On mild dry days bees will still forage so long as the temperature is above 6c. The bees in urban areas are at an advantage as there are a good number of plants in flower that the bees can visit.
- Plants in flower in November that can contribute to the hive are:
 - Ivy – pale creamy yellow pollen – honey with a very strong scent and flavour that sets almost white very quickly. (see October 2008 things to see and do for processing)
 - Autumn/Winter Cherry (*Prunus x subhitella* 'Autumnalis') – Pollen and some nectar
 - Mahonia – Pollen and Nectar
 - Winter flowering shrubby honeysuckle (*Lonicera fragrantissima*, *Lonicera x purpusii*) – Pollen and Nectar
 - *Viburnum tinus* – Pollen and a little nectar

- Early Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) – Mostly Nectar
 - Fatsia (False castor oil plant) – Pollen and nectar
 - Early flowering winter heather (*Erica carnea*) – Pollen and Nectar
 - Gorse/Furze (*Ulex*) - pollen
- November is the best time to plant trees and shrubs and put in orders to the nurseries before they sell out. Bare root trees/shrubs will also be cheaper than ones grown in pots/containers. They also get established better and grow away more healthily.
 - I'm giving a talk/slide show to Romsey Beekeeping Association on 19th November on plants I would recommend for the beekeepers garden, (this will be similar to my talks I did at Stoneleigh in April this year)
 - If you are interested in coming along contact John Hanks, johnhanks@btinternet.com, before this date. The start time is 19.30.

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