

FROM THE BEEHOUSE – SPRING 2015

The last couple of months have been quiet in the bee yard – but not in the beehouse. The weather has been OK for the bees- not too cold and not too wet. Actually some good rain would really get the clover going. Most of the hives are quite busy and surprisingly strong. A couple will need new queens to get them into full strength. I have been making up lots of frames and supers – some for our needs and some for customers short on time. I make up the frames the very old fashioned way – I use eyelets, glue all corners, nail from the top and bottom and sides and use Stainless Steel wire and thick foundation. It does take a bit longer but done this way the frames seem to last.

With supers I use nails and glue to assemble them (using a quality glue and 8 galvanised nails in each corner) and give them another two coats of good quality paint all round and on the inside too. I did purchase one Radiata Pine super as a trial. Radiata is considerably cheaper than Hoop Pine but as a very fast grown timber it is not likely to last as long as a Hoop box. Hoop also is much nicer to work with and hold nails very tight. Time will tell. *(Photo below left: hoop pine supers)*



My nuc boxes are ready. I hope for some swarm calls and will do some splits. All bee equipment will keep going up in price. There are a few reasons for this. First – most of the tools are imported from the US and China. With the Australian Dollar dropping as much as it has the exchange rate works against us for imports. Second – Hoop Pine (generally the timber used for supers and frames) keeps going up. (Only a few companies are now controlling Hoop Pine stocks) Also – the new Flow Hives have hit the market and this has driven up the price of nuc's. In part this is a "supply/demand" scenario but nuc's have been too cheap for too long. Queens also will be more expensive as fewer beekeepers are offering queens for sale.

There is also an up-side – there is a honey shortage worldwide and the cost of honey too is likely to go up. Expect a busy time ahead. Hope for some rain and a warm spring with lots of flowers.

And...enjoy your bees!

Max and Trudi, Crystal Waters

Need some tools, supers, frames, protective clothing?

Check out our website for equipment!

http://ecologicalsolutions.com.au/bees/?page_id=8

Bee plants

With Spring around the corner, I decided to make some suggestions for plants we know are attracting bees. Not just Honey Bees but also Native Bees and birds and other pollinators. Some of the plants may not that easy to source (let me know if you find a good source) and some maybe weedy in your location. Wait for some good rain before you start planting or your efforts may well be wasted.

This list is a “work in Progress” and would not have been possible without the input from Robyn Bowman – a Horticulturist with a passion for bee plants. Many thanks.

Below I generally give the common name of the plant and a link. If you click on the link you will generally get a picture and a description on the plant. Often putting “bees” behind the plant name will find you a lot more. Please send me the names of your favourite bee plants and I will add these to the list.

Ceanothus “Concha” (below left)

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/Plants/97563/i-Ceanothus-i-Concha/Details?returnurl=%2Fplants%2Fsearch-results%3Fform-mode%3Dfalse%26query%3Dceanothus%26aliaspath%3D%252Fplants%252Fsearch-results>

Ceanothus “Blue Cushion” (below right) <http://lambley.com.au/plant/ceanothus-blue-cushion>



Ceanothus “Blue Sapphire” <http://www.gardenexpress.com.au/product/ceanothus-blue-sapphire/>

Cuphea mexina <http://antzplants.com.au/shop/cuphea-mexicana-compacta-mauve/>

Russian Sage <http://www.garden.org/plantguide/?q=show&id=3350>

Agastache <http://lambley.com.au/plant/agastache-sweet-lili>

Pongamia pinnata https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millettia_pinnata



Lemon Balm (above left) <http://www.care2.com/greenliving/lemon-balm-a-friend-for-the-bees.html>

Phacelia (above right)

<http://www.bountifulgardens.org/Bees-Friend-Phacelia-tanacetifolia/productinfo/CPH-7060/>

Echium vulgare <http://www.seedaholic.com/echium-vulgare-vipers-bugloss.html>

Borage <http://davesbees.com/blog/2012/11/26/borage-for-bees/>

Coriander <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q33NuXn3H4o>

Mint <http://www.herbsociety.org.uk/schools/factsheets/mint.htm>

Sunflowers <http://www.almanac.com/plant/sunflowers>

Mock Orange <http://www.garden.org/plantguide/?q=show&id=3400>

Jabuticaba (below left) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jabuticaba>



Brazilian Cherry <http://www.daleysfruit.com.au/fruit%20pages/brazcherry.htm>

Buddleia <http://butterflywebsite.com/articles/buddleia-butterfly-bush.cfm>

Peppermint <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peppermint>

Garlic Chives https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allium_tuberosum

Korean evodia <http://davesgarden.com/guides/pf/go/73015/>

Prostanthera philicifolia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prostanthera_phylicifolia

Leptospermum spp <http://www.anbg.gov.au/leptospermum/>

Melaleuca spp <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melaleuca>

Callistemon spp <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Callistemon>

Plum Myrtle (above right) <http://www.brushturkey.com.au/plum-myrtle/>

Lemon Myrtle https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Backhousia_citriodora

Interested in a bee keeping workshop?

Email max@ecologicalsolutions.com.au for the next date

Early Spring Inspection

I have already done my late winter/Early Spring inspection. Pick a warm day. Anything above about 20 C is great if it sunny and there is no strong wind blowing.

What to look for:

Check flight activity at the entrance. A busy landing board is a good sign. Slow movements maybe a sign for trouble but don't worry too much yet. I open the hives without smoke this time of the year but with a smoker going close by. Just in case. Bees are slower now and are less likely to be aggressive.

Check for condensation. With outside temperatures low in the early mornings some condensation is to be expected. Make sure that the vents (if you use migratory lids) are not blocked. I generally have a cover over my hives to keep heavy rain off the entrance. This time of the year such a cover can be removed. Condensation – I believe – is also likely as the population of young bees (the ones which will maintain moisture control in the hive) is low this time of the year.



Small Hive Beetles. You may find some hives without a single beetle. Great! This may only be part due to good managements. In my experience SHB seem to be attracted to strong hives more than weak hives and to hives with a lot of brood. Dry weather (and thus dry soil conditions) I find reduces the incidence of SHB. Maintain SHB control measures. *(Photo left: a nice brood)*

Check for honey. This is less about being able to take honey off and more about ensuring that the bees have sufficient food. A smell of honey late in the afternoon around hives is a pretty good indicator that the bees are bringing in nectar.

The smell test. Put your nose close above the super. A hive with American Foul Brood would smell off. A healthy hive should smell pleasant.

A late winter/early Spring inspection is not the best time to check for diseases. Don't keep the hives open too long or quiet bees may well get cranky.

Spring inspection (generally after the first honey has been harvested):

If we are a little lucky and Clover, the Red Gums (*E. tereticornis*) and a good number of other plants have flowered, we should be able to take the first harvest off. This is a great time to do a proper inspection of all hives.

Lift the honey super (or supers) which now should not be very heavy. Check all brood frames for AFB. For more information go here:

<https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/animal-industries/bees/diseases-and-pests/american-foulbrood>

The rope test suggested is an easy way to check. You may also send brood samples to Bio Security (free). Generally, if your bees are affected by AFB you will smell that something is wrong. Follow the requirements to the dot. There are no short cuts. Hopefully your bees are healthy. This is also the time to see how the queen is performing. A vigorous queen should be laying an even brood pattern and there should about 50% of the brood frames covered in brood at different stages by the middle of Spring. A poor pattern is a strong indication that your queen is old and passed her use-by date and you may need to replace her. Also check for queen cells.

Bees may decide to create more queens for a number of reasons:

- They are realising that the old queen needs replacement
- The hive is running out of space and is preparing to swarm
- The hive is queenless

In each case you will need to take some action.

The behaviour of a queenless hive is different from a queen-right hive. Generally the bees will appear restless and may well be quite aggressive.

Try and see if you can find a queen or eggs (often easier) If there is no sign of a queen – let them be

and they are obviously on the way of replacing the queen. If you find a queen but the brood pattern is poor and you find a number of queen cells too it is probably also the best action to do nothing. If on the other hand you find a number of queen cells in a hive with plenty of bees and many frames of brood you maybe in luck. *(Below bee eggs)*



This is the time when you can take some of the frames with queen cells (and some without) and make a split – e.g. you move say 3 brood frames (including at least one queen cell) plus one frame of honey and one with new foundation into a 5 frame nuc box. Move this nuc away from the original hive to avoid drift (bees returning to the old hive). If you have a very strong hive

you maybe be able to make two such splits. Make absolutely sure that the original hive still has the original queen. Naturally, all the frames you have taken out will need to be replaced with frames with new foundation. Generally, by giving the hive all this extra space, the hive will not swarm. Basically, by making the splits, you have created an artificial swarm.

At this Spring inspection I also move some of the older brood frames (up to 3) into the honey super and move empty honey frames in good condition down into the brood chamber. Make sure that you are not moving the queen above the queen excluder!!

This manipulation will mean that the queen has more space to lay eggs and the hive is less likely to swarm. No guarantees here but an easy and quick way to reduce the chance of swarms and at the same time an opportunity to keep the brood nest in good order.



What are those coloured tags for? (see left)

I use small, coloured markers on some of my hives and on all my nuc boxes. I find this an easy and cheap way to minimise drift. "Drift" is when bees from one hive "drift" across to a close neighbouring hive. It is most like happening when hives are very close together – like our hives are due to space restriction. In Europe, where hives are often close together – it is common to paint entrances with different colours. While bees don't see colour the way we do, they seem to be able to differentiate between shades.

Also here:

https://www.google.com.au/search?q=european+bee+hives&newwindow=1&biw=1099&bih=520&site=webhp&tbm=isch&imgil=sNkkpPfcNnN-ZM%253A%253BJUeE-9W-vrPLsM%253Bhttp%25253A%25252F%25252Fwww.permaculture.co.uk%25252Freaders-solutions%25252Ftraditional-beekeeping-bee-hotels-switzerland-and-germany&source=iu&pf=m&fir=sNkkpPfcNnN-ZM%253A%252CJUeE-9W-vrPLsM%252C_&usg=__nhj2tv4-I7Nkk0HeSzzvDPDSqqI%3D&ved=0CCgQyjdqFOoTCJ-XnomEnccCFYcapgodiloAPQ&ei=ztHHVZ_4J4e1mAWKtYHoAw#imgrc=sNkkpPfcNnN-ZM%3A&usg=__nhj2tv4-I7Nkk0HeSzzvDPDSqqI%3D

• REQUEST FOR DONATIONS •

BEE

OPEN DAY

ALL DAY EVENT

SATURDAY
12
SEPT
2015



NATIVE STINGLESS BEES + **NATIVE SOLITARY BEES** + **HONEYBEES**

Valley Bees is hosting the popular Bee Community Open Day at Imbil in September

Based on the fantastic success of the bee-events of the last 2 years, we have chosen again to run it as a Fund Raiser. We will have colourful and educational displays, presentations and talks, scheduled speakers and invited experts in the varied bee fields, equipment and hives for sale, and great coffee, food and honey!

This year, all profits from our Bee Community Open Day will be directed towards local Mary Valley and Gympie community groups and initiatives.

Our main fund-raising effort will be the multi-prize raffles to be held throughout the day.

Donations of prizes would be appreciated to give our patrons an appealing choice.

Prizes can be of any type **and don't need to be bee-related.**

Thank you in anticipation.

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Valley Bees is auspiced by MRCCC - Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee

ALL
welcome

Valley
Bees