



Brook Road Bees

January 2010

With the blessing of the allotment committee, I am about to start keeping a few bees on our allotments (Plot 76) at Brook Road.

For information I'll keep this small journal month by month on our web site. As we go through the year I'll explain how the bee keeping process works, what major problems there are and how we may be able to produce a few jars of honey by September (yummy).

I visit my allotment plot fairly often, so if you have an interest in this venture just ask and I'll be pleased to show you how we go about it, and I'll provide some bee protection if necessary,

To start I have placed a small rectangular box on a few concrete blocks, with its bee entrance (a slot across the bottom of the box) facing approximately east so it catches the morning sun.

This box, called a HIVE brood box, consists, of a cedar wood shell, a floor, and a roof (the brick on the top adds a bit of weight to keep the roof on in the event of windy conditions or collision with passing foxes or dogs).

Other items, including bees, and honey collecting boxes called supers will be added to the hive later in the year, and I'll explain about those as the year goes by.

Soon I will be adding a second HIVE called a bait hive near to the first hive to try to 'catch' a swarm later in the spring.

I will surround the hives with a 'fence' at 6ft away from the hive, about 5 to 6ft high, which will be planted up with Raspberry and other soft fruits, the effect of this fence is to ensure, when the bees are homed in the hive, they fly from the hive up to this height before they make a bee-line for, wherever the best foraging is for the bees.

If you get near the hive just keep outside the 'fence' area so that you don't impede the flight path of the foraging bees, and you can see the bees take off and land quite easily. Oh! And please don't try to open the hives.

The down side is that these little social insects have only one drawback THEY will sometimes STING..... The female bee does not use this irritating defence mechanism

lightly or often. For a start, whilst it may be just an irritation for a couple of days for most of us, for the bee its use brings about the death of the bee.

If you do get stung, not from our bees of course, you must scrape off the sting, do not pinch the sting or try to pull it out. This pinching effect will only inject more venom and prolong the effects of the sting.

Having commented on the sting, and the fact that we will be having bees at Brook Road Allotments it is very unlikely that you will notice any difference in the bee population on your plot. I have kept 3 hives in my small back garden for 4 years and have had no complaints from any neighbours concerning my bees. (I suppose it also helps in September when the neighbours each get a jar of honey)

If you want to assist our bees, by growing plants with good nectar etc, from your own allotment. Be aware that Honey Bee happiness is:- any fruit blossom.... Raspberry Blackberry etc..... Cat Mint, Thyme, Wallflowers Lavender, Buddleia and Borage (Borage is also good with Pimms!) plus loads more plants, which I will list through the year.

Our Local Bee Club is Bournemouth & Dorset South Beekeepers Association www.badsbka.org.uk and you may be interested to know that the club will be running a beekeeping course for Wannabe Beekeepers on 24th April and 5th May, Please contact Mr Paul Mann, bee expert, on 01202 773844 email bpmann@ntlworld.com if you are interested. Price is about £20 for the day.

One other point, if in the spring, you come across a bee swarm, in your garden or anywhere else locally, you can contact me on 01202 572722 and I will try to arrange capture of the swarm and set up a temporary hive for it on plot 76.

Bee folk lore:-

**A swarm of bees in May
Is worth a load of hay;
A swarm of bees in June
Is worth a silver spoon;
A swarm of bees in July
Is not worth a fly.**

Best wishes

Brian
Plot 76