

Welcome to Westerham Beekeepers' BeeZeen for May 2018, a canter through local beekeeping.

It's all kicked off. Following the never ending winter of 2017/18, we now have bags of pollen and nectar coming through the hive entrances from blossoming flowers and trees. In some cases, more than can easily be handled.....



In May's BeeZeen, we look at:-

- > Back-up strategy
- > Treatment free update
- > Flowers "talk"
- > Bee Conference dates for 2018
- > Top tips
- > Training apiary re-opens

Back-up strategy

You thought beekeeping was a relaxing hobby. No, no, no, no, no, no! But it could be with a "Back-up" strategy. This month, your bees will think about swarming and produce the most marvellous Queen cells for you. Buy a nuc and pop a sealed QC in with a few frames including nurse bees, brood, honey and pollen; let nature make a mini-colony for you. A ratio of about one nuc for every two hives works well.

Benefits:-

- 1) You'll sleep better
- 2) Rarely be short of a Queen
- 3) and.....breed your own locally adapted bees from genes you like.



Treatment Free update

The Treatment Free (TF) group are up and running with Varroa Shook Swarms and also Pagden Artificial Swarm manipulations, where an increase in colonies is required. In both cases using "Bait Combs" to catch phoretic mites.

The pic below shows one of the beautifully drawn frames from Keith Master's Shook Swarm, where the bees drew out 10 out of 11 frames of foundation in 1 week, including loading them up with stores and the Queen laying eggs in the brood areas. Wow.



Shook swarmed colonies rebound vigorously, often outperforming "steady state" colonies.

The pic below shows the same colony 7 days earlier, with frames of foundation, 1 "Bait Comb" of open brood (to catch phoretic mites) & a feeder with syrup to stimulate wax glands.



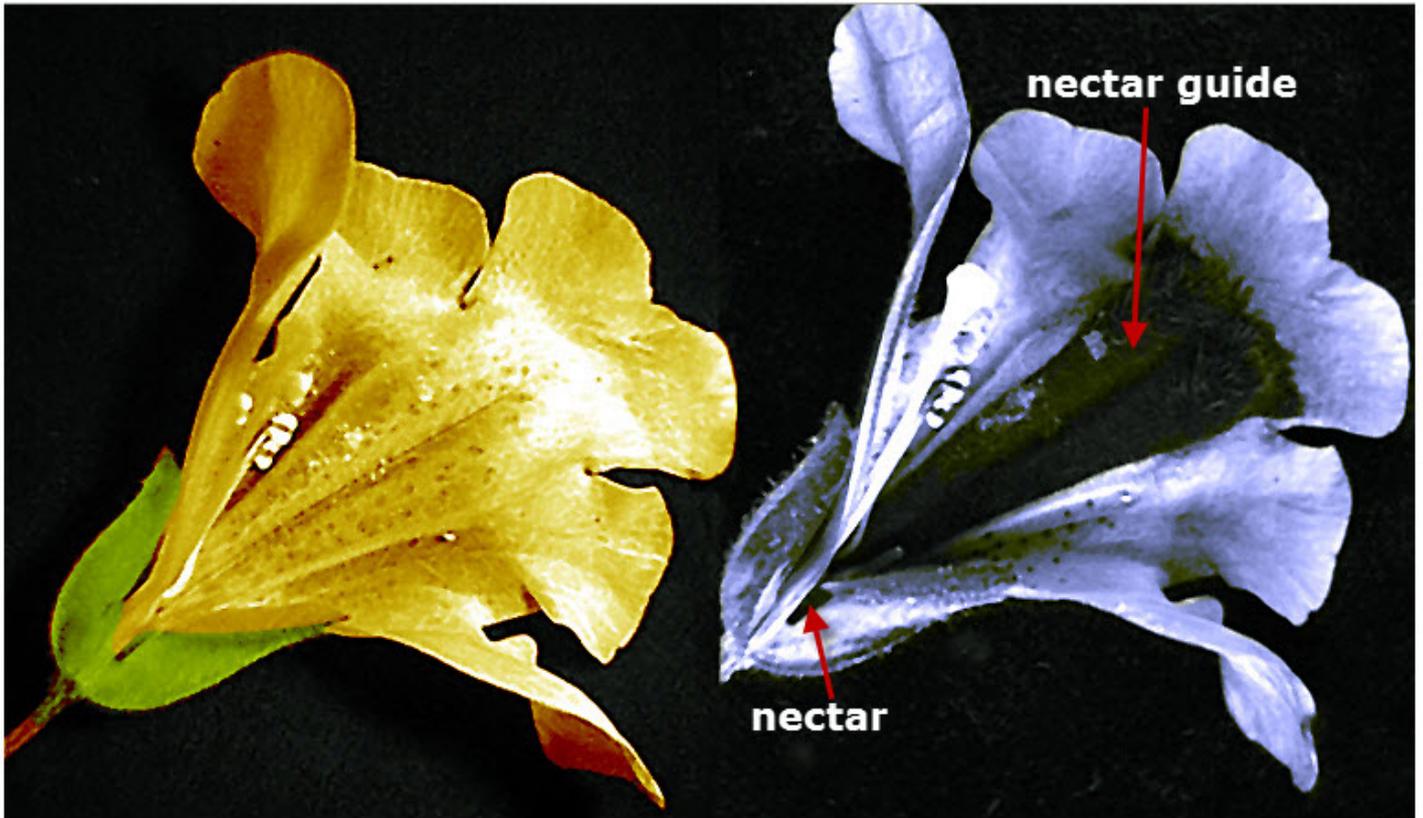
We are returning to good old fashioned orthodox beekeeping techniques. Skills that in the past were often lost to chemical treatments.

TF Info Sheets are gradually being added to the File section at our Facebook page, outlining the various techniques being used.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/688146028031698/?ref=ts&fref=ts>

Flowers "talk"

Flowers chat to bees (and other pollinators). Nectar guides are shapes on flower petals that indicate to pollinators where the nectar is produced in the hope of pollination taking place. Sometimes these nectar guides can only be seen by eyes that can interpret UV light, like the bees.



Images of a Mimulus flower in visible light (left) and ultraviolet light (right) showing a dark nectar guide
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nectar_guide

But once pollinated, the "chat" continues, with flowers indicating that no further nectar will be forthcoming, so "don't visit". The quintessentially English Forget-me-not has a creamy yellow coloured corona at its centre; but once pollinated, the corona fades to white, indicating no more nectar.



Similarly, look out for the white / yellow blossoms of Horse Chestnut, where the flowers show a reddish tinge after pollination.



Conference dates

Do try and learn from different beekeepers and bee scientists. Once you've heard enough of us rabbiting on, there's some brilliant bee conferences to attend. Here's a few dates for later in 2018 for those who like to plan ahead 🙄:-

12-17 August - Gormanston, Ireland

31 Aug-2 Sep - Learning from the Bees, Netherlands

7-9 September - BIBBA, Cirencester

25-27 Oct - National Honey Show, Esher

Top tips

Oddly, it's hard to find the right size container that is big enough to allow hive tools to lie down and disinfect in a soothing bath of soda crystal waters. And there it was at a nursery - bird fodder.



It also has a carrying handle and won't easily tip over in the car. Furthermore, the tits are delighted 😊.

Top tip too

Paint your poly nucs and apideas with outdoor masonry paint. It will extend their lives through protection from the weather, including UV damage.



Training Apiary re-opens

After losing the first session to poor weather, it was good to be able to open the hives at the Training Apiary. A mosaic of pollens could be seen on some frames collected from the many flowers and trees in blossom. As the colonies are in spring expansion mode, this pollen is crucial for the protein component of brood food.



Also, we were treated to a wonderful carrot cake from Susan; thank you star baker!



The next fortnightly session will be from 10.00-12.00 on Sunday, 6 May. Perhaps time to cover swarm prevention.

Before signing off, please wish Annie, Topsy & Keith good luck with their BBKA Assessments in early June. Master Beekeeper Celia Perry will be taking each candidate through their paces 🤪. It's the best entertainment I have in beekeeping 😊.

Best wishes with your Spring Management!

Steve Riley

Education Officer 🚔

Westerham Beekeepers

Sent from my iPad