



LBKA NEWS

COMMITTEE UPDATE

- 22 people are going to be taking the BBKA Basic this summer .. that is three times more than last year when we had a 100% pass rate thanks to the expert tuition and revision support from Howard.
- Swarm season is on the horizon and we are keen to teach people how to collect swarms. Please let Angela know if you'd like to learn. (admin@lbka.org.uk)
- The nuc list is going to be open soon. Constant care of last year's swarms means for the first time we should have a number of over-wintered colonies. Preference is given to those who suffer winter losses and recipients of these discounted nucs will probably have had bees for at least a year .. they need good homes. (nucs@lbka.org.uk)
- We get many enquiries from schools wanting to keep bees and a new guidance page will shortly be put up on our site
- Sharon Bassey has been invited by the BBKA to help them publicise their Adopt a Beehive scheme.
- Member discounts are being negotiated and will be advertised soon





THE LBKA MEMBERS' SURVEY

Thank you to all 116 who took the time to complete our first members' survey. We are yet to discuss the detail as a Committee, but I wanted to share the main findings with you now. I will keep you posted of actions that we take as a result of all your feedback as they happen. So first of all – **what does the membership look like?**

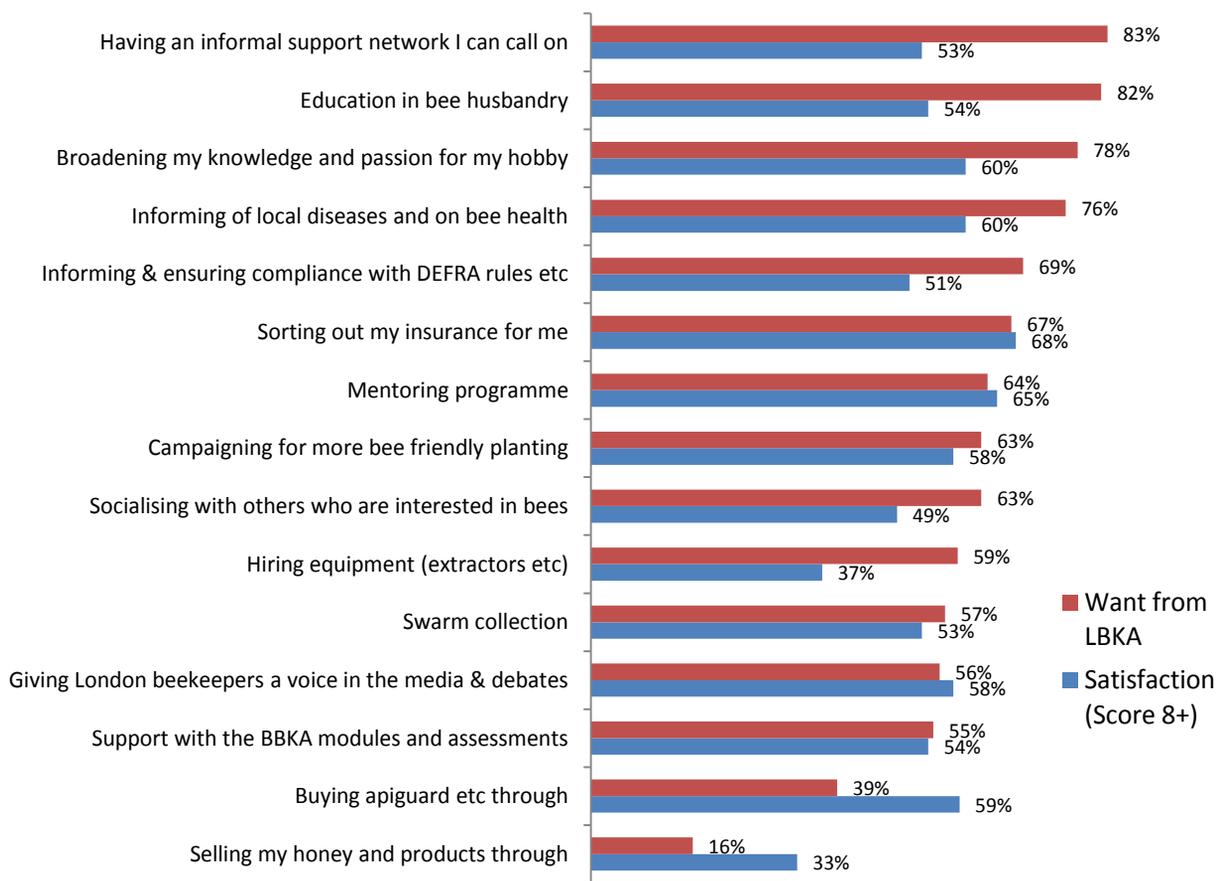
- Most of us have been an LBKA member for 1-2 years (38%) or 3-4 years (27%).
- Not all of us have bees at the moment (18%)
- For those with bees, 80% have up to 3 hives.

Satisfaction with the LBKA

The average score for overall satisfaction with their LBKA membership was 7 out of 10.

What do members want from their LBKA membership?

The chart below shows what members want from their membership (red bar). The blue bar shows the proportion who are very satisfied with the LBKA on each measure, by giving a score of 8+ for satisfaction.



Demand for both education and support networks is high so thank you to the 7 members who said they'd meet up in a pub for 'bees and chat's; the 12 of you who are happy to be watched when you're doing something interesting with your hive; and the 19 who are happy to help with our beginner courses. We need you all if we are to share knowledge and our beekeeping passion and support across the whole membership!



LBKA SEED MIX

Our new seed mix is flying off the shelves. Quite a few requests from schools, community projects and allotment groups so do your bit for the LBKA and see if anyone wants to plant meadows for this summer.

It is important to ensure that our pollinating insects have sufficient flowers for vital supplies of pollen and nectar. We are at the forefront of promoting this pro-forage message and are delighted to **offer this new pollinator friendly seed mix.**

http://www.lbka.org.uk/seed_shop.html

Specially formulated, and trialled by LBKA beekeeping members, this unique mix of over 40 species including Native Poppy, Californian Poppy, corn flower, field marigold (native), corn cockle (native), corn marigold (native), *Echium sp.*, *Vicia sp.*, *Linaria sp.* (some native), *Coreopsis sp.*, *Hesperis sp.*, *Phacelia*, *Nemophila*, *Limnanthes*, *Cosmos*, *Calendula*, *Iberis* and *Linum*. As well as being good for bees, they look magnificent.

We do not know of any other mix that has such variety and such a long flowering season.

A 5g pack covers about a square metre so whether you have a pot on a roof terrace or a patch in your garden all things that buzz will appreciate these flowers. Some say that for each jar of honey bees must make 4 million trips to flowers and it has never been more important to plant for our pollinators.

For every pack sold the supplier kindly donates £1 to the LBKA, an organisation run by volunteers, to help further our aims of training beekeepers and educating the public about the importance of pollinators and planting for them. We are all beekeepers whether we keep them or not.

Each packet contains 5g of seed (enough for 1m²) and costs **£3.50**. 60p P&P applies per order. Buy through the website here

For bulk purchases, please contact admin@lbka.org.uk.

The screenshot shows the website header with the LBKA logo and navigation links: Home, Bees, Beekeeping, Flowers for bees, Membership, Courses, Events, Links, Contact us. Below the header, there are two main sections: 'Flowers for bees' and 'Seed shop'. The 'Flowers for bees' section includes text about forage and a link to a 'specially formulated seed mix'. The 'Seed shop' section features a photograph of a vibrant flower bed and text describing the seed mix as a 'pro-forage message' and listing the 40 species included.





MARCH IN THE APIARY

Where should we be with our colonies at this time of year?

March is a time of increasing activity within the hive but it all depends upon the weather. For the beekeeper it is also a month of increasing anticipation. Assuming the weather improves then the colony at the end of March should be substantially different from the one at the beginning. The intervening days can include warm, sunny days, which encourage plants to flower early, and bees to forage. The weather can just as easily revert back to cold. The former causes the bees to produce more brood and the latter to retreat back to a cluster.

The main job of the beekeeper is still to keep an eye on stores. Old "winter" bees are starting to die off and new bees are being born. Food reserves are decreasing but demand for food is substantially increasing. The bees will be using energy flying on warmer days but only bringing in pollen, not nectar. They also need to keep the brood at a higher temperature (about 35C) which also uses more energy. Stores can quickly be depleted in March and early April.



The first warm day from the start of March is an opportunity to have a quick look inside the hive. If so, then this will constitute the 1st inspection of the new season. The new colony card should be made up and inspection details recorded. Minimum temperature should be 10C for a quick look but without taking out brood frames.. If there is an exceptionally warm day with the temperature 18C or more then a more detailed colony inspection may be made. Otherwise, leave this until April.

If an inspection is not possible, then observing the colony entrance will provide invaluable information. If the bees are bringing in pollen, purposefully entering and leaving (flying a beeline) then these are always good signs. If the bees are aimless, listless or without purpose on a warm day then, prima facie, all may not be well.

- **Monitoring varroa mites.** This is a good time to monitor the mite drop. Leave the inserts in for a week and count the mite drop. If > 2 mites per day then some action will be needed in Spring. If > 7 mites per day then action is immediately required. Fera produces an excellent booklet "Managing Varroa" which is available for free download. There is also comprehensive information about varroa on the Fera website, including an on line varroa count calculator. www.nationalbeeunit.com
- **Siting your bees.** Those who were on the LBKA mentoring schemes last year and have not yet acquired bees (but will do so) should prepare the hive and site. If acquiring bees by means of the purchase of a nucleus from a supplier then the order should have been placed by now. Demand often exceeds supply.
- **Mentoring.** Those who will not keep bees this year but want to have mentoring with a more experienced beekeeper should make suitable arrangements.

Finally, on a sad note, if you find your bees are dead then it is imperative to close the entrance to prevent robbing. Make a note of what you observe then remove and destroy dead bees and frames. Sterilise the hive parts. It is essential to try to find out why the bees have died. For the last 4 years, winter and early spring colony losses have averaged 20% to 30% so you are not alone. It does not always mean that it is the beekeeper's fault but it is essential to analyse and learn. Examples of reasons include, but are not limited to, the varroa mite (the number 1 offender), lack of stores, damp / inadequate hive ventilation, site situated in a frost pocket, failing queen, poorly mated queen.

Howard Nichols (education@lbka.org.uk)



MARCH IN THE FORAGE PATCH

These are easy and cheap to make and are ideal for those tight spaces where you have little room for pots or traditional planters. They are great for growing strawberries and trailing tomatoes. Herbs and many flowers will also grow happily in them.

Materials needed:

- Old wooden pallet
- Wood preservative or paint
- High gauge horticultural polythene (available at garden centres and DIY stores)
- Fabric for backing (geotextile liner, old carpet or hessian is fine)
- Compost and plants
- Staple gun and staples.



Method

Give your pallet a lick of paint. You can paint with any wood-stain or preservative, which come in a variety of colours. Here we have used red cedar.

Line the inside of the pallet with the polythene, stapling it down across the slats and on the sides. Fit another piece of polythene on the inside back of the pallet to create a deep planting pouch inside the pallet body.

Staple the fabric onto the back of the pallet and sides - this will re-enforce the planting pouch so it is less likely to tear the polythene and spill the compost.

Stand the planter upright and fill with compost from the top. Push the compost right down inside the planter body to remove any air pockets and empty spaces.

Stand your pallet against the wall or vertical surface you wish to hide or just where you want to place the pallet planter. You can fix to a wall using small brackets if you wish but they are usually heavy enough not to move and fall over.

Using a gardening knife or pair of scissors make some slits in the polythene big enough to push your plant plugs inside. You may find that making a horizontal slit followed by an upward vertical slit midway creates a better shape for you to fit your plant plugs into.

Push your plant plugs into the planting slits. You can also plant the top which you have left open. You can push seeds into the top section as well. These planters are ideal for planting with trailing tom thumb tomatoes, strawberries, nasturtiums, trailing petunias, herbs, alpines, ferns and grasses.

Mark Patterson, LBKA Forage Officer

http://www.lbka.org.uk/make_vertical_planter.html



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

LBKA Monthly Meeting: Sunday 10th March

Microscopy

Alan Kyme will show us how to detect Nosema and Acarine in bees using a microscope. We will have microscopes, but please bring one if you can. Due to limited space, this session is only open to **LBKA members who have brought a sample of about 35 bees** to test ([collect](#) the day before by holding a polythene bag in front the hive entrance to collect returning bees then put them in the fridge overnight to kill them).

11am at [Fairley House Junior School](#), 220 Lambeth Rd, London SE1 7JY

The BBKA Spring Convention, 12-14th April

There will be lectures and sale of beekeeping equipment. Tickets now available from the BBKA website. http://www.bbka.org.uk/news_and_events/spring_convention.php

Harper Adams University, Newport, Shropshire, TF10 8NB

Friday 12 April - Members' Day

Saturday 13 April - Public Day & Trade Show

Sunday 14 April - Education Day.

NB the planned March Winter lecture has been cancelled as we couldn't secure any of the speakers we were keen to hear.