



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

January, 2021

Happy New Year! Although there are a few things that don't seem so happy at the moment, let's look ahead to good things in store for us all. The committee have been looking ahead to the new year and – as you'll see – we are already making plans.

This month, Howard outlines LBKA's educational offerings (p7), Simon reports on LBKA's input to Lambeth's Pollinator Action Plan and Henry talks about his new venture making hive insulation. As usual, we have regular contributions from Richard (p1) and Howard (p6) and Mark (p9).

As ever we're looking for more contributions from more members. Do email me if you can contribute anything including articles, photos and recipes.

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A big thank you to this month's contributors: **Henry Boutflower, Richard Glassborow, Martin Hudson, Eugene McConville, Eugene Fahy, Howard Nichols, Pip O'Byrne, Mark Patterson and Simon Saville.** Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, do contact me.

Happy beekeeping.

Aidan Slingsby, Editor, services@lbka.org.uk

From our Chair

Richard Glassborow
chair@lbka.org.uk

Let me start by wishing everybody a Happy New Year for 2021.

I am fully aware that the traditional surge of energy and motivation that we are supposed to feel as we emerge from the full stop with which Christmas festivities punctuate the outgoing year may be a little harder to muster this year. That said, we beekeepers are fortunate: we have an interest in something that has its own timescale and seemingly boundless possibilities and challenges to help us keep these interesting times in perspective. Beekeeping gives us both practical diversions and opportunities to "travel" by exploring the theory.



A buff tailed bumblebee approaches a winter flowering Berberis Japonica near Alexandra Palace. Photo/caption: Eugene McConville.

Though I am always wary of comparing honey bee social organisation to our own (there is no comparison) I can't help reflecting on them as inspiring examples of the benefits of adaptation, which, of course, they have been doing for about 35 million years. From them we can learn not to hold our breath and wait for normal but to live with what we must.

Anyway, January: the days are short and cold and the bees have not been flying this week but we know the bees know the days are getting longer. Inside the box, change will be underway. I note from my hive records that last year I carried out full first inspections on the 25th February. That's only just over six weeks from now!

Of course, who knows this year? Last year the temperature on February 25 was 20°C. In March 2018, the beast from the east brought us -8°C. Are you ready?

In this column last month I mentioned we were asking ourselves what "better beekeeping" looks like. This has been given more thought and ideas as to how we might help ourselves improve our knowledge and skills are beginning to take shape. The Covid restrictions have, in no small measure, been an agent of change in this re-think. So too the unprecedented levels of Foul Brood disease in London last year, and of course the findings of our London Bee Situation report.

One thing that all these point to is that better beekeeping is not just an end in itself: the objectives include better animal welfare (health and wellbeing of honey bees), better integration with biodiverse ecosystems in London (wild bees and other pollinators and of course forage), and better social relationships within our urban environment (the impact of swarms and feral colonies but also the positive benefits from public engagement with the natural world – something Covid seems to have raised on the agenda).

It should also be very clear that better beekeeping is not just a matter for individual beekeepers: the above objectives are only achievable through a collective effort and not just by LBKA members. In this respect it is the same as some of the public health measures we are currently having to adhere to except that improving our beekeeping has immediate personal rewards.

None of this is of course compulsory so it will have to be apparent that wide adoption and collaboration will have net mutual benefits. This is ambitious, maybe even idealistic. We will find out in the next couple of months as we share our report with our neighbouring Associations, other beekeeping organisations like the BFA and local authorities.

Meanwhile internally, the gist of our strategy is to recognise the range of members' needs wherever we are on the progression from first introduction to beekeeping, through getting to grips with the basics, then REALLY getting to grips with the basics, followed by reappraisal when we realise there is so much more (or that the bees aren't reading the same books); and finally,

those members who wish to go wider and or deeper still. We hope to nurture and develop a kind of symbiotic relationship and natural exchange between member beekeepers at all these levels. There is after all considerable expertise already in the Association. This can be aligned to the wealth of information, instruction, evidence and new research that is easily accessible online but for the want of guidance on what is good and what is not. The aim is to filter all these sources without creating an orthodoxy.

Please don't expect that to happen overnight but the recently uploaded video on oxalic acid varroa treatment represents just one new example of this strategy. Please do contact me if you have beekeeping needs you would like addressed or particular skills and or knowledge you would be prepared to contribute. Finally, sadly, but for obvious reasons, we have had to postpone again a decision on whether or not to run

Introductory courses this year. They definitely will not be held in April/May but are not ruled out for later in the year.

Announcements

This is our official place for announcements. If you only read one section of the newsletter, it should be this one!

January's online Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

This month's Monthly Meeting will be on **Sunday 10th January**. Howard will review the background and history of EFB which has unfortunately become more common than we would like in London in recent years. This will be on the usual Monthly Meeting Zoom link in the [Members' Area](#) and in your email.

The **Pub Social** will be on **Tuesday 26th January** from 18:30 (Zoom link in the [Members' Area](#) and in your email).

February's Monthly Meeting will be in Sunday 14th February and we plan to have a guest speaker

BBKA Bee Basic

If you're a beekeeper and haven't yet done the BBKA Bee Basic certification, please consider doing it. We will help you prepare for it. See Howard's piece on page 7 which also outlines other aspects of LBKA's education programme.

Winter Lecture Schedule

The fourth of our Winter Lectures will be delivered via Zoom on **20th January at 18:30**. The lecture will be delivered by **Clare Densley & Martin Hahn of**



Memories of summer. Mudchute Apiary at the end of August. All that beautiful pollen, eggs & larvae at different stages. Feisty bees and great tasting honey. Photo: Pip O'Byrne.

Buckfast Abbey, entitled "What the Books Don't Tell You and Why Bees Change Their Minds".

Upcoming lectures are:

- **"Reading the Colony"** – to be delivered by Clare Densley & Martin Hahn of Buckfast Abbey on 3 March.

Apiary Demonstrations

Our first live-streamed apiary demonstration alternative oxalic acid treatment methods was held on 19th December and you can [watch the recording of it here](#). Further planned topics are:

- March: First inspection
- April: Shook swarm
- May: Health inspection
- May: Bailey change
- May: Artificial swarm / split

Other topics planned are:

- Queen rearing
- Honey harvest
- Summer/Autumn varroa treatment
- Winter preparation and feeding

The specific time will be confirmed on the WhatsApp Bee Banter page closer to the date. Please let us know your email address if you are not on Bee Banter and would like to be informed when to log on to the livestream.

We are open to suggestions if you can think of another or an alternative topic of interest. Please send



Memories of summer. Harvesting honey at our Holland Park Apiary. Photos: Eugene Fahy.

your comments/ideas to Tristram at apiaries@lbka.org.uk.

Membership renewals

Our membership year ended last month and members will have had an **email telling them how to renew their membership**, if they wish. Note that renewals are not automatic, but are **very easy** to do.

We hope that you wish to remain being part of LBKA. We rely on a large and active membership to enable us to do our work in helping promote better urban beekeeping, helping us influence policy, helping with our outreach and education work, and helping build a supportive beekeeping community. If you didn't get the email, please check your spam folder or email services@lbka.org.uk.

If you're not sure if you are a member, try logging into the **Members' Area** (you'll probably need to reset your password). If you can, you're a member.

Consider joining our "Bee Banter"

WhatsApp group

Our "Bee Banter" WhatsApp group for LBKA members has an interesting and useful mixture of questions, answer, thoughts, experiences, good practice and articles. Sometimes members do impromptu zoom beekeeping session that are announced here. Members should **consider signing up**. The join link is in the **Members' Area** and in your welcome email and **you can turn off notifications, if the traffic become too much for you**.

Contribute to the Newsletter

You'll see a few gaps in our regular contributions. If you can help with any of these (not necessarily every month) please drop me line. We'd welcome contributions from more members and would love it if you could propose a new regular feature. We usually end up with 300 or so members and the newsletters are **available to all on our website**. Do email me if you can contribute anything including articles, photos and recipes.

We're looking for members to summarise the issues discussed in a digestible way. Please contact services@lbka.org.uk if you may be able to help in some months.

Planting for Pollinators Talk

Cambridgeshire Beekeepers' Association are organising a talk by Sarah Holdsworth on "Planting for Pollinators" on 17th February. More information and tickets are available from [their EventBrite page](#).

Their description is:

Do you want to grow plants that are perfect for pollinators? Your garden can be a haven for wildlife as well as providing the ideal home for bees, butterflies and all pollinators, which are so important to us because they pollinate

crops, help plants grow and are themselves a food source for birds and mammals. The flowers you choose to plant are vital in encouraging all wildlife into your garden. With a little thought and planning, you can provide much pollen and nectar for pollinators throughout the year.

Sarah will not only explain the various plant kingdom categories and which categories are well suited to providing pollen and nectar but also offer some tips for choosing the right plants and therefore creating the best of habitats which will see your garden buzzing with wildlife. She will also explain bees foraging preferences, with particular reference to honey bees because they are not plant species specific foragers, as well as the relationship between the depths of flowers and the lengths of bee tongues.

Help with varroa treatment study

Alexandra Valentine is collecting information about whether/how beekeepers treat their bees for varroa as part of her final year project for her zoology degree at the University of Salford, supervised by Prof Stephen Martin. The survey is completely anonymous apart from asking which association you are linked to. [The survey is here](#).

Honey for sale?

Ask service@lbka.org.uk if you'd like your honey for sale to be added to [our honey page](#).

Old announcements from

December

Check our [previous newsletters](#) or contact services@lbka.org.uk for more details.

New committee. Our new committee is the same as last year, but Annie McGeoch replaces Natalie as Secretary **and** Martin as Events Coordinator. A big welcome to Annie and thanks to Natalie and Martin for the work they did whilst on the committee.

AGM. Our AGM was on 11th November. The previous AGM minutes, Annual Statement of Accounts, and the Trustees' Annual Report were presented and accepted by the meeting. A new committee was confirmed with all posts being unopposed. Finally, we presented the draft "LBKA Position on Sustainable Beekeeping in London" document that was previously circulated to members. The meeting formally expressed support for the draft document and instructed the Trustees to finalise the paper and disseminate it to all BKAs and any other interested bodies in Greater London.

Do you have any announcements?

If you've any announcements for the next issue of LBKA News, please send to Aidan at services@lbka.org.uk.

January's Committee meeting

Here, we keep you up to date with what the committee discuss at our monthly committee meetings (and what keeps us awake at night). Let us know if you can help or have any suggestions that might help.

Aidan Slingsby
services@lbka.org.uk

This month's committee meeting covers quite a lot of ground.

We discussed various ways in which we can support members' beekeeping practice and how to incorporate the extensive and diverse experience and advice from members. This includes monthly meetings whose content is reviewed by multiple members, more live-streamed sessions and, collating videos on our YouTube channel and website. We would like more members to be involved in designing and delivering such content.

We discussed whether we will run beekeeping courses this year, deciding that it is too early to decide and that we would revisit this decision, perhaps for course in summer if circumstances allow.

We agreed that we would offer the pollinator fund again this year to help fund the planting forage.

We approved the budget for the coming year. Our lack of course delivery has hit our finances and we made a small loss, but we have plenty of reserves and we expect to be able to resume normal activities later this year or next. We also discussed whether our accounts should be independently examined, even though our turnover is too low for this to be a requirement.

We discussed members' conduct on the Bee Banter group and ways we can ensure the group remains a good source of beekeeping knowledge with good natured discussion and support.

We are still preparing the London Bee Situation paper and have already circulated our draft to relevant parties. Richard and Simon reported that Lambeth council found it useful for informing some of their practices (see Simon's writeup on page 7).

We came up with a draft programme of Monthly Meeting topics for the next six months.

We discussed setting up an open and transparent framework in which members can register bee-related skills (e.g. education material, wildflower meadow design) with us so that we can offer their paid services for some of the many enquiries we get.

We have more winter lectures to come, with one this

The leaflet is titled 'Asian Hornet' and features a prominent 'Alert!' banner. It includes a 'Species Description' section with scientific details and a photograph of the hornet. A 'Key ID Features' section compares the Asian Hornet Queen with a European Hornet, highlighting differences in their abdomens and legs. The 'Similar Species' section identifies four other insects: the European hornet, Giant woodwasp, Hornet mimic hoverfly, and Median wasp, each with a list of distinguishing characteristics and a small photograph. The 'Field Signs' section describes where and when to find nests. At the bottom, there is contact information for the National Bee Unit and another 'Alert!' banner.

Asian Hornet Identification leaflet. Source: [BBKA website](http://www.bbka.org.uk).

month (20th January) and those that we have had have been well-received.

The School Food Matters Programme has stalled due to Covid-related restrictions, but we are poised to deliver this bee-, food- and environment-related material to schools when it is possible to do. Richard has done a huge amount of work developing the material and we will put out a call to members for volunteers to help deliver the content.

Finally, we discussed our various social media channels and our desire to find a member who is willing to help us develop a social media strategy.

Last month's Monthly Meeting: Christmas Quiz

What happened at our meeting last month.

Aidan Slingsby
services@lbka.org.uk

The Christmas Quiz was joint work, with Howard supplying the questions and Elliot being the quizmaster and finding a technical solution that enabled us to join using our smartphones.

It was hugely enjoyed by those present and we thank Howard and Elliot for their hard work in putting it together.

January in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

January is a quiet time for beekeepers but an eye must still be kept on the apiary. Make sure that the roof has not been blown off by winds or that woodpeckers have not taken an interest in the hive. Check behind the mouseguards for dead bees and remove if necessary.

Varroa strategy. Treatment in autumn with Apiguard

may not have been enough to deal with the mite. Treatment with ApiBioxal in late December or early January is the standard treatment for Varroa. It is quick to administer and all done in less than 1 minute if bees are clustered. You are unlikely to need a smoker but, as always, it is essential to wear a veil when opening the colony to treat. Do not take chances.

Food stores. If the colony went into the winter with 35 lbs. of stores then feeding will not be necessary, even in this exceptionally mild winter with the bees flying. If stores were light a couple of months ago then it may be an entirely different matter. We have had yet another exceptionally mild autumn and winter so far. If feeding is necessary then only candy or fondant should be used at this time of year. Sugar syrup should be avoided as it will excite the bees and so disturb the cluster. The bees are also unable to process syrup in winter and it is then liable to fermentation.

New equipment. Those who have purchased equipment during the winter sales can assemble frames, etc. It is surprising how quickly events can move when the bees get going in spring and ready assembled equipment keeps the beekeeper ahead of any eventuality. Most sales will have ended but some suppliers may have a post-Christmas sale so it is still worth checking out the websites.

Cleaning old equipment. Best time to do this is immediately after it is taken out of use in autumn. Attention to general cleanliness and maintenance of old equipment is part of apiary hygiene strategy. Please do check for evidence of wax moth and place frames in a cold place wherever possible.

Candles and honey recipes. For those who process beeswax then winter is the usual time of year for this activity. Honey foodstuffs can, of course, be prepared and eaten at any time of year.

LBKA events. Keep in touch with others through the monthly Zoom meetings and winter lectures.

Education. Education and practical experience are the 2 routes through which beekeepers develop their skills. Education may arise from a variety of routes but Beecraft is a substantial resource. If you do not currently subscribe to Beecraft then January is a good month take out an annual subscription. Those who are also registered with the BBKA will receive the monthly BBKA News by post. Also see our education offerings on page 7.

Registration with Beebase. We believe that all or virtually all of our beekeeping members are registered on Beebase. However, it is possible that a few newer members may not be. It is important that everyone is registered in case a notifiable disease or pest is found in your location. The Bee Inspectors are dependent upon them knowing the location of your hives and apiaries so that they may help you. Please do ensure you are registered as I do not envisage the high levels of EFB in London falling in 2021.

LBKA Educational Announcements

Howard looks ahead to our educational offering this year.

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

As members are aware, all of the BBKA assessments and examinations were cancelled for 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions, so as to ensure the safety of candidates, assessors and invigilators. At the time of writing the BBKA is intending to carry out assessments and examinations in 2021 subject to developments with the Covid-19 virus. I know it has been looking at ways of continuing with its 2021 education programme by devising safety policies but do not know if these have, as yet, been formulated. In tandem with the BBKA, the LBKA is continuing with its intention to provide tuition for the Basic Assessment. At the time of writing the tuition and instruction will be done on-line in April 2021.

The Winter Microscopy course will not be run in January 2021 as this can only be done by physical attendance of our members.

We did offer instruction for a BBKA modular course in the October newsletter but there has not been any take up for such a course by the membership. As with the microscopy course, this is now cancelled. This is the first time in about 10 years that there has not been any interest in this type of tuition from the lbka membership.

2021 BBKA Basic Assessment

Both the BBKA and London Beekeepers Association encourage members to take the BBKA Basic Assessment where possible. The BBKA requirement for entry is that the applicant has been keeping bees for a minimum period of 1 year. The assessment is fairly straightforward and the syllabus can be downloaded free of charge from the BBKA website. Follow the dropdown menu for "Members" then "examinations and assessments". The cost is £20 and entry forms can also be downloaded at the same time.

London Beekeepers Association will run a revision course in the spring for members wishing to take the Basic Assessment. This is likely to last for 3 evenings (2 hours per evening) in early April. The assessment is both practical and simple oral questions. It lasts about 1 hour. We cover the theory on the revision nights. Due to the Covid-19 virus we are unlikely to be able to offer a practical session at an apiary beforehand. All tuition and practical advice in dealing with the assessment will be delivered on-line.

The assessment is not difficult, is within the capabilities of anyone who has been handling bees for 12 months and who is willing to download the syllabus and undertake some background reading. We also supply free course notes in electronic format.

Any LBKA members who have been keeping bees for a minimum of 12 months and wish to take this assessment please confirm by email to education@lbka.org.uk. We will then be able to let you have some electronic course notes to read at your leisure over the winter months. The BBKA website should be sufficient to deal with any queries regarding the assessment. Alternatively, ask another LBKA member who has taken it. Preparation for the Basic is an interesting way of continuing your beekeeping activities through the winter months. Even if you have been keeping bees for several years but not previously taken the assessment then please do seriously consider taking it in 2021. It is well worth the effort.

Lambeth's Pollinator Action Plan

Member Henry Bouflower tells us about his experiments in hive insulation.

Simon Saville
development@lbka.org.uk

LBKA was given the opportunity to comment on a final draft of the above Plan before it is to be published. We are pleased to be listed as partners in delivery of the Plan.

Our view is that it is an excellent Plan, and we will share a copy when it's public. It fits well with our "Bees and Flowers Go Together" initiative.

We were pleased to note that the Plan does not focus only on honey bees, as these are not in decline. We were also pleased that the Plan covers shelter and nesting sites as well as food for pollinators (forage). These are often overlooked.

The Plan lists quite a lot of actions to support the needs of pollinators, for example:

- Ensuring that strategic plans for parks contain reference to supporting pollinators
- Reviewing options for the Local Plan and related documents to include policies and guidance to support pollinators
- Ensuring that the new Tree Strategy in 2021 makes reference to supporting pollinators through appropriate species selection
- New park management plans to include opportunities for implementing pollinator-friendly actions,



as well as linking to Lambeth’s Biodiversity Action Plan

The document notes that pesticides are not routinely used in Lambeth’s public spaces. We welcome this, especially that it goes beyond just the parks and green spaces and includes the wider realm.

The broader aims of the Plan are also to be welcomed:

- To protect and enhance the amount of pollinator habitat in Lambeth - this includes supporting the [N-Lines for London Project](#)
- To improve our knowledge of pollinators in our area
- To increase awareness of pollinators and their habitat needs among landowners
- To improve pollinator conservation on land managed by Lambeth

LBKA has also taken the opportunity to share our latest [London Bee Situation Report](#), now that it has been approved by members of the LBKA.

Innovative mushroom insulation by LocalBee for the Winter season

Member Henry Boutflower tells us about his experiments in hive insulation.

Henry Boutflower
LBKA Member

We founded LocalBee, a start-up with a goal to create more sustainable beehives by innovating with natural materials and understanding bees. LocalBee is made up of myself; an avid beekeeper for over a decade and Will, the founder, a product designer who approached me



for my advice and support on a radical idea of creating sustainable mushroom-based beehives.

I’ve always found the unpredictable British weather one of the most challenging aspects of the craft to overcome, fluctuating day by day in the winter months. Ranging from wet days that soak through even the most



Mycelium-derived panels.

maintained hives, to extremely cold spells which worry many for the bees in their care.

Last year saw the Eddie Hive come to life; our first beehive design and the first ever hive (to our knowledge) to use mycelium - which is the root structure of mushrooms. We are working with a supplier to turn this into a material with a consistency similar to polystyrene.

Mycelium has many beneficial material properties, not only is it a good breathable insulator but is also sustainable and 100% biodegradable. Maintaining the green ecologically friendly route that many, myself included, have started to venture down when it comes to our beekeeping practices. In the wings of this project is another hive made purely out of mycelium that we hope to trial out later this year.

At present the mycelium is in the form of inserts that slot into both the brood and suppers of the Eddie Hive, but can be cut down to fit Nationals. No new product however can be explored without trials and tests, therefore I open up this idea to any who are interested, have questions or would like to trial the inserts for us please do get in contact at hboutflower@gmail.com.

To find out about the wider aspect of our project please [visit our blog](#) or find us on Instagram @_local-bee.



Helenium, the best garden plant for attracting bees

Banter (In)digest(ion)

Some of the highlights from LBKA's members' WhatsApp group, with an interesting and useful mixture of questions, answer, thoughts, experiences, good practice and articles.

We're looking for members to summarise the issues discussed in a digestible way. Please contact services@lbka.org.uk if you may be able to help in some months.

Focus on Forage

Mark tells us what's in flower at this time of year. This article is reprinted from last year.

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

Bee friendly gardening New Year's resolutions

This month's forage blog takes a different direction. There's not much to write about in terms of seasonal forage for bees in the depths of winter when little is in flower and our bees are dormant so for a change my blog takes a look at what we can do to make our gardens better environments for bees all year round going forward into a new year.

Create Habitat for bees

Bees need places to forage and find pollen, nectar, water and propolis and this can be done by planting the right types of flowers for them and incorporating a small



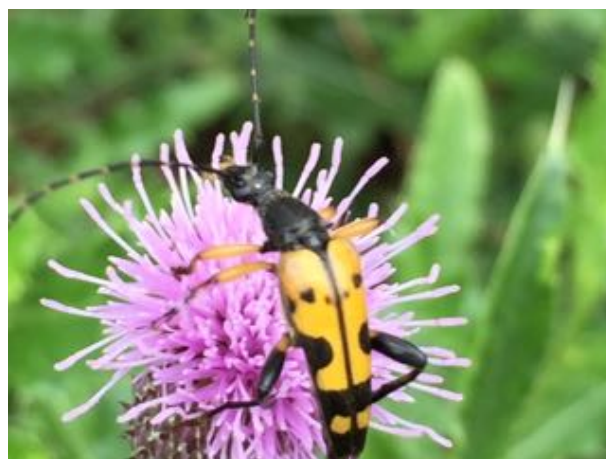
Bellflower, the sole pollen source for Bell Flower Scissor Bee and Harebell Blunthorn Bee



Knapweed, one of the highest yielding nectar plants. Its cultivated cousin Montana is equally as good and has a very long flowering period lasting all spring through to autumn.



Oregano, the best butterfly plant. The awesome bee-attracting plant also supports other common and scarce species



*Cirsium (thistles) are the highest yielding UK native nectar plants and super-important bee forage. Here one is being visited by a male longhorn beetle *Retpela maculata*.*

water feature into your garden where bees can gather water.

Another sort of habitat bees need is nesting habitat where they can raise their offspring. For Honey bees this is a hive but for other bees this can be piles of decaying logs in which they excavate a nest burrow, a patch of sandy soil or clay bank for mining bees to dig out a nest tunnel, or bundles of hollow plant stems and cardboard tubes for the likes of mason and leafcutter bees. These nesting habitats can be conveniently catered for in the form of the many pre-fabricated bee nesting boxes available from garden centres and online shops or you can make your own [see my guide how to make homes for solitary bees](#).

Other ideas you could try include making a nesting cylinder for ground nesting bees. You need to invest in a sheet of perforated metal sheeting which you bring together at the ends and fasten together with nuts and bolts to form a cylinder. This is then filled with sand or free draining soil to provide a medium which bees can burrow into. This design allows bees to nest in the top of the planter by burrowing downwards but they can potentially also excavate lateral burrows entering

through the many perforated holes in the metal sheet. Try using soft and sharp sand, cactus compost or John Innes loam based soil with added sand. You can plant drought-tolerant flowering plants in the top too to provide cover as some bees prefer some vegetation cover near their nests whilst others prefer a more open aspect.

Lastly the final habitat that bees need is over wintering habitat. For bumble bees this is often a shallow hollow excavated in dry soil beneath tufts of grass or piles of decaying vegetation, compost heaps or hollow plant stems for solitary bees. Try not cutting back all your herbaceous perennials in autumn, so leaving some stems intact for insects to hibernate inside the hollow stems. Many solitary bees over winter in their nest chambers.

Plant useful things in your garden

My gardening mantra is either the bees can eat it or we can. If a plant can't fulfil either of these two requirements then it doesn't get a look in! Of course most of the things that we can eat are also beneficial to bees and other pollinators as the majority of vegeta-



Golden rod Solidago, the only plant I've ever seen Sharp Tailed Bees frequent



Holly, the Male plants are coming into flower now and will continue through spring when the separate female trees also bloom.

bles do also flower and the fruits we eat need the bees to pollinate them.

Plant the best plants for bees

Not all flowers are equally attractive or beneficial to bees and other pollinators. Attractiveness and benefit to pollinators varies a great deal with some plants being 100 times more attractive and useful than the worst. To complicate things not all plants are equally beneficial to all insects due to the shape and morphology of the blooms which may prevent all but a few dedicated visiting bees whilst others contain toxins, the effects from which only certain bee species are immune. Great examples are the foxglove *Digitalis Purpurea*, Comfrey *Symphytum officinalis* and Everlasting Pea *Lathyrus latifolia* which are among the top 10 UK plants for sugar content in their nectar and the amount of nectar produced per hectare (kg of sugar/ha/year). These 3 plants should be a magnet for all bees having the greatest rewarding nectars among British plants. However Fox Glove and Comfrey are plants with deep tubular flowers which prevent all but the longest tongues from accessing their nectar, meanwhile Everlasting Pea has both a deep nectary and tightly lipped flowers which



Solitary bee nest planters.

require a long tongued bee with a robust body to enter.

Bulking up your gardens by planting the most attractive and beneficial plants for a broad range of insects will provide the most benefit to pollinators, whilst adding plants which are attractive or of benefit to only a small number of species helps provide food for more fussy specialists – often the species most at risk. There are many bees which are not generalist and will only feed their offspring pollen from a small number or a single species of plant. Plant a mixture of broadly attractive and specialist plants and choose plants which will offer flowers over a long season or plan a succession of flower types throughout the season. See the tables on pages 12 and 13. There are lots more planting suggestions on my [plants for pollinators](#) pages along with download guides for plants for different types of bees. There are also lots of resources on the [LBKA website](#).

Reduce your reliance on pesticides

Pesticides do have their place but only as a final resort once other means of defeating pests and disease have been exhausted. Try mulching with compost and recycling garden waste to feed plants rather than chemical feeds, try companion planting to ward off unwelcome pests and attract beneficial insect predators over chemical sprays. Pesticides find their way into pollen and nectar and accumulate in social bee colonies where they

Plant variety	Flowering period	Pollinators attracted
Helenium autumnal ^a	July to October	Honey bee, Lasioglossum bees, Hoverfly, 4 species of Butterfly
Oreganum vulgare ^b or Oreganum onites	June to October	Honey Bee, Lasioglossum bees, Andrena bees, Bumblebee, Melitta bees, Hylaeus bees, Hoverfly, 9 species of Butterfly
Agastache foeniculum ^c	July to September	Honey Bee, Bumblebees, 4 species of Butterfly, Hummingbird Hawkmoth, Hoverfly, Flower Bees
Calamint	July to August	Honey Bee, Bumble Bee, Megachile Bees
Lavender Gross Bleu	July to September	Honey Bee, Bumblebees, Lasioglossum Bees, Butterfly
Nepeta	June to September	Honey Bee, Bumblebees, Megachile Bees, Wool Carder Bee, Flower Bees, Butterfly, Mint Moth, Osmia Bees
Echium vulgare	June to September	Honey Bee, Bumblebees, Megachile Bees, Osmia Bees, Wool Carder Bee, Flower Bees, Hoplitis adunca, Lasioglossum, Pollen Beetles
Veronica spicata	June to September	Honey Bee, Bumblebee, Lasioglossum Bees, Hylaeus Bees, Hoverfly, Butterfly
Teucrium hiricanum	June to October	Honey Bee, Bumblebee, Flower Bees, Lasioglossum Bees, Hoverfly, Butterfly, Mint Moth, Swollen Thigh Beetles, Pollen Beetles, Wool Carder bees
Sedum Spectable	August to October	Honey Bee, Bumblebee, Lasioglossum Bees, Butterfly
Solidago ^d and Golden Rod	July to October	Honey Bee, Bumblebee, Xylocopa Large Carpenter Bees, Coelioxys Sharp Tailed Bees, Lasioglossum Bees, Butterfly, Beetles.
Hyssopus	June to September	Honey Bee, Bumblebee, Lasioglossum Bees
Eryngium	June to September	Honey Bee, Bumblebee, Lasioglossum Bee, Hylaeus bees, butterfly, hoverfly, pollen beetles, Solitary wasps
Echinops	June to September	Honey Bee, Bumblebee, Lasioglossum Bees, Hylaeus Bees, solitary wasps
Centaurea ^e (Napweeds and Perennial Cornflower)	May to November	Bumblebees, Lasioglossum Bees, Megachile Bees, Osmia Bees, Hoverfly, Butterfly, Pollen Beetles
Cirsium (thistles) ^f	June to September	Bumblebees, Honey Bee, Andrena Bees, Halictus Bees, Colletes Bees, Flower Bees, Long Horn Beetle, Swollen Thigh Beetle, Pollen Beetle, Butterflies, Solitary wasps

Examples of some of the best plants to attract a broad variety of pollinators. Suggestions based on several years of data collection in studies into flower attractiveness to pollinators conducted by LASI and Rosybee Plants supplemented with results from the Agriland Project along with our own observations over the years in our London Garden.

^aThe most attractive garden plant for bees in 4 years of trials By Rosybee

^bThe most attractive plant for butterflies by LASI and top 10 plants for bees by both LASI and Rosybee trials.

^cThe most attractive plant for bees in trials by LASI.

^dShown by Rosybee trials not to be very attractive to bees however in my own garden I have 3 varieties which attract large numbers of predominantly solitary bees, blue butterflies, solitary wasps, hoverflies and pollinating beetles. On regular visits to the prairie plantings in London's Burges Park and on my regular travels around North America I have witnessed Golden Rod visited by an extraordinary range of pollinators. Solidago is the only plant in my garden on which I have seen sharp tailed bees visit.

^eCentaurea nigra (black napweed) ranked 4th by Agriland project for abundance of nectar produced per Ha and Centaurea montana (perennial cornflower) consistently in top 20 most attractive plants by Rosybee – in addition Centaurea species have long flower season and prolonged usefulness to bees.

^fUK native Plant producing the most nectar according to Agriland Project.

Plant variety	Flowering period	Main benefitting pollinator
Everlasting Pea	May to August	Megachile Bees
Stachys	May to September	Wool carder bee (collects hairs from the plant to carder its nest) Fork tailed flower bee
Bell flowers	May to September	Chelostoma campanularum, Melitta haemorrhoidalis Bumblebees, Honey Bee
Achillea (Yarrow)	May to September	Colletes davisianus wool carder bee (collects hairs from the plant to carder its nest)
Alliums	April to September	Hylaeus Bees Honey Bee, Bumble Bee
Lamium maculatum	March to November	Bumblebees and Hairy Footed Flower Bee
Pulmonaria	March to May	Hairy Footed Flower Bee
Astrantia	April to August	Hylaeus Bees
Asteraceae	April to October	Hylaeus Bees, Colletes bees, Swollen Thigh beetles
Foxglove	April to July	Garden Bumble Bee
Yellow Loosestrife	June to August	Yellow loosestrife Bee Macropis europaeus
Hawksbeard	June to September	Pantaloons bee Dasypoda hirtipes, Red Tailed Bumblebee, Honey Bee, Andrena bees, Osmia Bees

Some examples of plants which are beneficial to specialist species and are a good way to provide for fussy flower visitors to your garden.



Tim Lover awarded MBE in the Queen’s New Year Honours (last year).

can exhibit a wide range of symptoms including reduced reproductive success, decreased life span of the individual insects, compromised immune response and tolerances to environmental stressors and increased mortality rates. When buying plants for your garden try and find out from the seller or the grower whether neonicotinoid pesticides have been used in the plant’s production – these pesticides are harmful to bees and long lived in

the plant and surrounding soil meaning they can have effects on wildlife for many years to come.

Stop being so tidy in the garden

Try not to be too much of a compulsive tidy upper in your gardens. Try leaving small hidden away messy areas where vegetation is not cut back and things are left a little wilder. This will act as a refuge for invertebrates which are less tolerant of disturbed areas.

Learn to plan ahead

If you want to provide for pollinators in summer then the time to plan your planting activity is now. Decide what space you have, plan what you intend to grow and start placing orders now so that come spring you can have plants delivered and planted that will flower come summer. Planning ahead is especially important for spring bulbs which are best planted when dormant in autumn, 5-6 months before they will come into flower.

Give no dig gardening a try

Spreading composts and biodegradable mulches onto your soil and allowing worms and other detritivores to take nutrients down into the soil is much more beneficial to most soils over conventional digging in. By refraining from deep digging and only adding organic material to the soil surface we replicate what occurs in nature by creating a nutrient rich, moisture retaining top layer above increasingly mineral based layers of soil. Most plants have the majority of their roots within the top 30cm of soil, even very large trees seldom have roots penetrating deeper than 2-3 feet and they are mainly for anchorage rather than water and nutritional absorption. The benefit to bees in no deep digging is that solitary species nesting in the soil don’t have their burrows disturbed and plants flower better. Digging



Frank's hive stands.

frequently disturbs the buried seed bank meaning weed species can take hold, whereas no dig gardening results in far less seed bank disturbance and therefore a reduced weed problem. In the United States it has been found that many ground nesting solitary bee populations can triple on no dig farms compared to conventionally tilled crop fields as a result of fewer nest burrows being damaged.

Members' marketplace

This section is for members offering beekeeping items or services to members or requesting items. Items could include nucs, wax and honey. Email services@lbka.org.uk to add something here.

Frank Ryan: I have Langstrough equipment for sale as I now use national hives. Brood boxes, supers and one solid floor and queen excluders. Contact Frank on 07877388933 or frankryan60@hotmail.com.

Upcoming events

Sunday 10th January: Monthly meeting

11:00-13:00 at ONLINE

Using the usual Monthly Meeting Zoom link in the Members' Area of the website and sent to your email.

Wednesday 20th January: Winter Lecture: What the Books Don't Tell You and Why Bees Change Their Minds

18:30 at ONLINE

The lecture will be given by Clare Densley and Martin Hahn of Buckfast Abbey on 20 January.

Tuesday, 26th January: Pub Social

18:30 onwards via Zoom at the usual pub social link (see members' area of website)

Our ONLINE pub social in the historical surroundings of your own home. Bring your own beer. Using the usual Pub Social Zoom link in the Members' Area of the website and sent to your email.

Sunday 14th February: Monthly meeting

11:00-13:00, via Zoom at the usual Monthly Meeting Zoom link (see members' area of website)

This month, we plan to have a guest speaker. We will use the usual Monthly Meeting Zoom link in the Members' Area of the website and sent to your email.

Committee

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of the committee if you have any questions, requests, suggestions. We are:

- **Chair:** Richard Glassborow, chair@lbka.org.uk
- **Treasurer:** David Hankins, treasurer@lbka.org.uk
- **Secretary/Events:** Annie McGeoch, admin@lbka.org.uk
- **Education:** Howard Nichols education@lbka.org.uk
- **Membership:** Aidan Slingsby, services@lbka.org.uk
- **Apiaries:** Tristram Sutton, apiaries@lbka.org.uk
- **Development:** Simon Saville, development@lbka.org.uk
- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, mentor@lbka.org.uk
- **Resources:** Will Fry, resources@lbka.org.uk

Our website is <http://www.lbka.org.uk/> and the pictures are in the same order as the names above.

