



LBKA NEWS

LBKA AGM

Turnout for the AGM this year was significantly lower than last, with 48 current and previous members attending Roots and Shoots on the evening of 13 November.

The formalities included the Chair's report, delivered by Karin Courtman and circulated previously by email, the Treasurer's report, delivered by Jon Harris and showing LBKA to be in very good financial health, and the election of Chair for the 2013-14 year, (other executive committee posts having been uncontested, as members had previously been advised). The result of the election, by secret ballot, was that Karin Courtman was elected LBKA Chair. The most enjoyable of the formalities was the awarding of BBKA certificates. Congratulations once again to all those who received their BBKA Basic badges.

Members voted to make a donation to **Bees for Development**, they send us this thank you:

'Thank you so much for the cheque for £1,364. We are all so grateful for the support the London Beekeeping Association has given us over the years. Please could you pass on our thanks to all involved. The money you raised will go directly to fund our work supporting simple, sustainable beekeeping for biodiversity and livelihoods in developing countries.'

The highlight of the evening was a very informative talk delivered by plant biologist and author, Ken Thompson, entitled "No Nettles Required". Also the title of one of his books, the talk centred on work undertaken in suburban gardens in Sheffield.

Thank you to Ken Thompson for an entertaining and thought-provoking talk.

Before the meeting broke up for a glass of wine, **Abby Taubin introduced proposals for amendments to the LBKA constitution.** Work on the proposed amendments continues, and it is expected that a new constitution will be consulted on early in the New Year, prior to being proposed for adoption at an EGM in the spring.

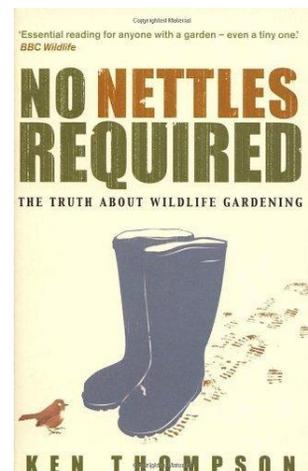
Declaration of Interests for Committee Members 2012/13:

At the January 2013 committee meeting Angela Woods, Emily Abbott, Howard Nichols, Richard Glassborow, Jon Harris all declared they had no interest to declare. Karin Courtman said that she maintains two hives at a recycling plant in London for a fee. In the committee meeting of February 2013 David Hankins declared he had no interest.

Declarations for 2013/14 will be published shortly after the next committee meeting.



Bees for Development





Bulb Planting Bonanza at Archbishop's Park

What do you do with 4,000 bulbs, a gallon of tomato soup, 8 loaves of bread, 15 LBKA members, various children and 1 passer-by with a Yorkshire Terrier? Well make the most of a beautiful autumnal Sunday by feeding everyone up, handing them a tool of choice and getting them to plant. If I'd been really clever, I would have noted the Latin names of the bulbs and impressed everyone with a dash of horticultural knowledge, but I was listening to Mark who was carefully advising us on how to carry a spade without inflicting any bodily harm on our neighbours or ourselves.

I've been Chair of the Friends for almost ten years and when anyone suggests volunteering I get rather excited. A lot of what we have achieved has been thanks to people offering their time and skills so when the LBKA asked me to support their forage programme, I suggested planting in our educational area . This has a long strip of shady ground with an ephemeral pond and wildflower meadow, but few flowers appear in early Spring. There are hives all around the park so Mark suggested an edging of crocus to make the most of the light, leaving the narcissi to be planted in clumps amongst the trees and tulips where there were pockets of light. Well we completed what seemed a mammoth task in a couple of hours and all I can say again is a big thank you to everyone who helped. Another achievement to support our bees, but please come back.....you know you want to!

Helen Lees



Many thanks to Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson , Tristram Sutton and Philip Clarkson for all their contributions this month



DECEMBER IN THE APIARY

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

December is a quiet time for beekeepers but an eye must still be kept on the apiary. Most items detailed in the November newsletter still apply but are not repeated here.

Varroa treatment with either oxalic acid or lactic acid is the main task. Oxalic acid is easier to administer and so this note is limited to this chemical only. Oxalic acid only deals with mites on the adult bees and so must be applied when the colony is broodless or virtually broodless. Late December or early January is the usual time for treatment. Although it is referred to as a "soft varroacide" this is a little misleading. It is a strong chemical and manufacturer's instructions should be followed. Misapplication can be harmful to the bees and / or beekeeper. Please carefully dispose of unused contents after use.

Woodpeckers may be a problem. It is the green woodpecker, *Picus viridis*, which is the main culprit. As the ground becomes harder due to the cold they find it more difficult to dig for insects and can turn their attention to a beehive. There are at least 3 options available to the beekeeper if the woodpecker becomes a pest:

1. Surround the hive with chicken wire, making sure that the bird cannot get a grip on the wood of the hive through the wire. Recommended option.
2. Cover the hive with a large bin liner, polythene bag or sacking but ensuring the bees can come and go. This may interfere with colony ventilation.
3. Keep the hive in the type of cage that fruit growers use on allotments, ensuring the holes in the netting are sufficient for the bees to easily pass through. This is a rather excessive approach but the apiary surround is occasionally altered this way.

Check behind the mouseguards for a build up of dead bees, etc.

Ensure there is a water supply close to the colony. Bees become immobilised and die when the body temperature falls to or below 7C. They will make quick flights at outside temperatures below 7C for toilet purposes or to bring in water. They do this by warming their bodies up beforehand then making a dash for it and returning to the hive before they cool down. The nearer the water supply the better.

Moving the colony. If it is essential to move the colony less than 3 miles then winter is the preferred time. It is better to do this when the weather is forecast to remain cold for at least a week.

Education. Winter is a good time to read your bee books. Even better is to download the Basic syllabus from the BBKA website with a view to taking the exam next summer. Winter reading is a useful beekeeping bridge between seasons.

Keep an eye on the apiary. Check that nothing is amiss, roofs in tact.

Review the year. What have I got right? What mistakes have I made? How will I approach my beekeeping next spring in the light of this review?



DECEMBER IN THE FORAGE PATCH

Since our last newsletter the air has turned decidedly cold and the first frosts of winter have hit us. What were lovely nasturtiums, Dahlias and Cosmos just a fortnight ago have now turned to mush and the only plants still flowering in my garden right now are a few die hard calendulas, wall flower Bowles mauve and the odd aster and sage clinging on to their flowers for dear life.

My 20 sq m patch of LBKA pollinator mix sown in April has finally just about given up last week; all the wonderful flowers which filled the patch with colour and hum of insects for the last 7 months have now gone. I've begun to chop the dying plants down and turn over the soil in preparation to sow again next spring. As I cleared the patch I've collected the last few calendula flowers which I use to make calendula cream. You could leave your dying back annual mixes until the early spring to clear which would provide winter seeds for birds to eat, but I've chosen to clear mine now and turn over the soil. I've done this to prevent perennial weeds establishing which will out compete the seedlings in spring, and to remove self sown grasses from the patch of soil. I'll cover with a tarpaulin or old carpet over winter to prevent weeds emerging and protect the soil.

The only real substantial forage for most of our bees for the next month or so will be mahonia and Viburnum shrubs. Both are widely planted throughout the city but bear in mind even on mild winter days it's still quite cold for our bees so they won't be able to travel far to forage.

At this time of year there is little to do in the garden but one task we could all do is make solitary bee hotels to attract wild bees to nest in our gardens come spring. I've created a simple how to sheet which can be found on our Facebook page. All you need is a block of wood and drill lots of different sized holes in it 3-30mm across and about 100mm deep. These are the sort of bee nesting habitat our recent speaker Ken mentioned in his 'No Nettles Needed' talk at the AGM. Hang up on a sheltered south facing fence, tree or wall and wait for signs of occupancy next spring/summer.

Another task I like to do over the winter is plan my planting for next year. Don't wait until spring to rush out and buy seeds last minute, do it now, take time and look through plant catalogues and websites to put together a gorgeous display that's both good for you and your bees next year.

Mark Patterson



My pollinator mix in June



My pollinator mix in November



Last week of November, clearing it away for winter.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Tuesday, 3rd December: Film Night: "More than Honey"

19:30 at Kent House Road Leisure Gardens (opposite Woodbastwick Road) [91a Kent House Road, Sydenham, Kent SE26 5LJ](#).

We have been kindly invited by Bromley and Orpington BKA to this film night. This incredible film came out earlier year, with amazing close-ups of bees in the hive and on the wing, including a virgin queen being mated.

December Monthly Meeting: Sunday 8th December

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

Christmas starts here!

Join the fun, with a Q & A session on over-wintering, mince pies and a quiz