

NEWSLETTER – February 2014



The Presidents Tips And Tricks for the month of February



There are many ways to keep your bees. Each month I intend to give some tips and tricks to help you keep your bees thriving.

I do hope that you are all keeping an eye on food supplies - queens are now laying (you will feel the heat if you put your hand on the crownboard) and, with the fairly mild weather and perhaps above average numbers of bees, the brood area could expand quite rapidly. On the other hand winter may arrive and slow things down - who knows what will happen next?

And that is perhaps the crux of the matter. Planning is so difficult with the change in our climate that it is probably best to remember the Boy Scouts motto and 'Be Prepared'.

Other than food and hive security there is little to do (or that can be done at the moment!) in the apiaries, but there is much to do elsewhere: equipment to mend, smokers to clean, frames and hives to assemble - no time to do it when that swarm is hanging in tree!

Next Meeting

Thursday the 27th February Rhu Church Hall 7.15pm. Murray Macgregor. Commercial Beekeeping. Murray has a wealth of experience to be passed on. Not to be missed!



Candle Making

You get good honey years and bad ones but there seems always to be wax that can be extracted from old frames, cappings, or odd bits of wax foundation that you have had to trim off to make them fit the frames or foundation, which has become too old or hard. You can trade in the blocks of wax produced at Thorn's in Newburgh, which is what I do. They give you roughly half the weight in return as perfect new foundation, which saves a lot of money. Alternatively, you can

remelt the blocks and make your own foundation which is what Ben Bellamy does and also means that no 'foreign' (possibly disease carrying) material is coming into your apiary, (although I have been told told by a speaker at a SBA conference that foundation does not pose a risk). Ben also makes furniture polish.

Janet Maccallum found a better way and has been making candles. She did the one day SBA /Thorn's candle making course and is now producing producing her own high quality beeswax candles, which have a lovely smell and are also very sellable items and great for presents.

The simplest way to make wax candles is to use wax foundation and to cut the sheets to the height of candle that you want and then roll up round the wick (after gently heating the wax with a hair dryer) until you get the thickness you want.

The next method is to dip the (weighted) wick repeatedly into liquid wax. Wait a few minutes for the wax to cool and repeat about 20 times and a beautiful candle is formed. It is obviously more efficient to make a whole batch at once and perhaps 20 or so could be made in a couple of hours. A nice job on a cold night. Thorne's sells a device to hold them all in place between dips (£1000! maybe it does more than that!) Janet uses a piece of string, two nails and a couple of old chairs.

Finally Thornes sell a huge range of molds, all shapes and sizes, of silicon, glass or plastic. Treat the inside of the mold with silicon spray or some other method, thread the wick through the small hole at one end and seal with wax, hold the wick firmly in place by attaching it to a pin/nail across the bottom of the mold, which is of course at the top, when you pour the wax in. Leave to cool completely, turn out. Any depression at the bottom is filled with a little melted wax. They can be dyed any colour or perfumed.

Warning! Wax is very inflammable and should only be heated in a Bain Marie or in a small pot inside a big pot half full of very hot water. Best done with an electric or induction hub (not gas) and don't take you eye off it for a minute. The Maccallums are both firemen/women! Thornes sell books about candle making (so do plenty of others), thermometers to get the right temperature and a range of wicks. Too big a wick and it will burn too quickly and hot. The candle will turn to a pile of melted wax. Too small and it will burn a cavity in the middle, give too little light and eventually go out. Finally wax candles burn very brightly, give a wonderful smell but are also said to be hotter than paraffin wax, so a solid non inflammable base is important. PS There is another candle making day at Newburgh, Fife on Saturday the 1st March. I don't know if places are still available. Contact Enid Brown on 01592 840582. £20.

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