

## answers

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Question	From	Answer
Can we take notes at this meeting	Maggie McKenzie Simon Horrocks	AD produced the notes below
<b>Beginning Beekeeping</b>		
I would like to know where I can get a swarm from.	Andy Kling	Our allows people to register their interest in receiving swarms. JCA is the swarm coordinator. Swarm collectors will pass them on. Start in mid-April, but peak time is May/June. Don't rush to sign up yet, as the <a href="#">website page</a> isn't ready - watch for information in the newsletter in March
Should we be treating the inside of the new hive, ahead of getting bees in the spring? As new bee keepers what other preparation should we be doing	Lisa and George Gray	Don't treat the inside of hive with anything. See question below for preparation of outside surfaces.
I will be coming along to my first meeting since finishing Julian's beginners course recently along with my husband. My dad has enrolled in the course too, due to start in May but we are hoping to buy equipment in march / April as We all have birthdays then so it's a good time to buy it for each other! We are in a budget so I would like to know what are the basics we would need. Julian did cover this but there was a lot to take in!	Rebecca Faithfull	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suit you can trust (preferably full suit). Sheriff offer discounts to beginner course attendees; Bbwear offer discounts to branch members.</li> <li>• Smoker and fuel.</li> <li>• Hive tool (either J-shaped or scraper style).</li> <li>• Gloves - we don't recommend leather gloves as standard, washing-up or disposable surgeon gloves are better. If you are nervous, wear a couple of pairs of surgeon's gloves.</li> <li>• Washing soda to clean everything.</li> <li>• If you are starting with one hive, then you'll need one brood box, 3 supers (floor, roof and stand). It's also worth having a nuc box. Try one of the budget kits from Maisemore or Thornes for national pattern boxes.</li> </ul> <p>Whilst we recommend full suits to those starting out; jackets are OK too. Be aware of the bees' tendency to walk vertically upwards towards dark areas, so a jacket over a light "boiler suit" garment if the jacket is over-sized will provide additional reassurance. Wellington boots are used by many (beestings on ankles are particularly painful!)</p>
<b>Apiary Maintenance</b>		
How do I prepare an enticing source of water in my garden to encourage them here rather than my neighbours gardens?	Janet McDonald	Try using a "rabbit water drip bottle" for the front of the hive for winter. Grubby water, in full sun, shallow water so that it warms up easily, with plenty of damp surfaces for bees to alight on. Water should be a few metres from the hive so it isn't fouled by cleansing flights. A shallow bowl of pebbles or old carpet filled with water in full sun will attract dozens of bees in spring, and you can have good fun marking them and seeing how many times they return.
What is suitable exterior paint for a new hive? ?	Lisa and George Gray	Cedar hives don't need treating at all, although some will use natural oils to maintain colour. Water based paints tend to be easier on the environment, and less toxic in general. For softwood hives, Cuprinol shed paints (garden shades range) are fine to maintain water shedding. Make sure the hives are weathered for a few weeks after painting before you introduce bees into them, to reduce any residual smells and volatile chemicals. Thornes sell Pigrol Beutenschutz-Lack - a high weather resistant acrylic paint which has been specially formulated for hives, both wooden or polystyrene, but it's expensive and may be better suited for decoration rather than full hive treatment.
We are leaving part of the orchard un-mown, are there particular seeds that would be good to start growing for the bees to enjoy?		The orchard in question is large (4 acres), so advice may differ from that for domestic situations. Firstly, allow the natural flora to flower more freely - alternate mowing patterns, so that dandelions, white clovers etc get a good period of flowering. Treat the margins lightly - keep them wide, consider using approved wild flower seed mixes for headlands/margins - environmental stewardship schemes may subsidise. Folks suggest that yellow rattle can be used to reduce the dominance of grass, as it parasitises the grass-roots. However, it can be hard to establish. Turning to specific species - purple loosestrife, knapweeds, ox-eye daisy usually work well. Borage is very popular with bees (and self seeds easily). Green manures such as phacelia tanacetifolia and clovers, if left to flower, also are very bee-friendly, and cheap to buy. Brambles are also very attractive to bees, but not necessarily ideal from a land management perspective.
Which equipment (frames, boxes etc) are OK to reuse & what should I throw away? How do I prepare frames and boxes for reuse?	Rebecca Jackson	Boxes, once wax has been scraped off, should be sterilised with a Hot air gun or gas torch. It's hard to clean old frames, but if you have an old boiler, then frames can be boiled in washing soda (remove the wax first). Protect clean, good comb (e.g. from supers or store frames) from insect and rodent damage.
How to I store/sterilise my frames and boxes over the winter?	ALD	Glacial acetetic acid or burning Sulfur strips provides the sterilisation. Use wheelee lin liners or vacuum bags (Jan recommends those from <a href="#">Argos</a> ) to provide an insect proof environment once sterilisation has taken place. Wax moth larvae are the main enemy, although they are not particularly active in the winter months. Storing in cold environments (ideally your freezer!) kills the larvae. Certan B401 sprays can be used to protect drawn combs from wax moth damage during the warmer months
I'm buying some new boxes/wax/frames in the winter sales. Would anyone like to combine an order with me?	ALD	Use the branch's Facebook page to find people
<b>Winter Management</b>		
I've done an oxalic treatment in early december but varroa numbers still evident. Should I wait for early spring to treat again with different treatment?	Janet McDonald	It's recommended to only treat once with Oxalic acid trickles. Bees can tolerate repeated treatments of sublimed OA - three treatments at 5-7 day intervals so that Varroa are exposed as they hatch. A brand new treatment that can be used in the winter is Apivar, which is quite pricey, but available from Thornes ( <a href="http://email.thorne.co.uk/t/i-l-bldtjk-plclckli-i/">http://email.thorne.co.uk/t/i-l-bldtjk-plclckli-i/</a> ) An alternative approach is to consider culling all the (small amount) of brood to maximise varroa suppression - but do this before mid-February when brood rearing starts in earnest. Other treatments such as MAQS or Apiguard are not recommended for winter use
What should I be doing to make sure my bees make it into Spring?	Rebecca Jackson	Heft hive to check weight. Don't be frightened to open the hive on a still day to check that there is food close to the cluster, and if necessary move frames closer to cluster. IF you apply fondant, get it close to the cluster (an eke below the crownboard can help). Make sure the hives are well protected from prevailing wind/animals and have a small, unblocked entrance.
Do I need to insulate my hives? If yes, how do I do that please?	Elisabeth Tee	Shouldn't be necessary for healthy colonies in standard hive designs, but it reduces the work that the bees have to do in maintaining the cluster/brood temperatures. Apply insulation over the closed coverboard (e.g. Celotex building insulation, but a super with horsehair, bubble wrap etc would work as well). Wind cooling of wet hives can be avoided with wraps. For ultimate insulation, use polystyrene hives or exterior cowls of building sheet insulation
<b>Stock Management</b>		
We have many questions though swarm prevention is my main worry.	Alice Dovell and Kevin Moore	During strong flows, make sure your hives have plenty of space. This is particularly important in Spring if you are near oil seed rape fields. Avoid the most prolific races of bees (i.e. not Carniolan), don't wait for colonies to build Q cells, but proactively split colonies. Clip queen's wings, to give yourself a few more days to detect swarming activity. Attractant sprays to try to retain any unanticipated swarms, either in bait hives, or on convenient locations in your apiary.
We had our first hive last year. Whilst the hive was prolific with both bees and honey, we had very angry bees! My husband was stung several times and we were followed quite a distance after a hive inspection. We would like to start a second hive. If we do this by using an artificial swarm if we get queen cells, am I right in thinking that the new hive will still have cross bees as they will be descendants of our original queen? Would it be best to start with new queen from another source?	Karina Sellers	<p>You are right - if you make a new colony from queen cells produced by your existing grumpy colony, then there is a good chance that the new colony will also be grumpy. You might get lucky if there are gentle bees in your neighborhood, but don't count on it. I think you should try to produce a second colony anyway, as having a single colony is always risky, and the queens can be replaced at a different time.</p> <p>Getting some new stock from another source would be a good step. We will be discussing the queen rearing project that we plan for 2018 at our 7th February <a href="#">meeting</a>, and you could certainly sign up/participate in that exercise. It's also possible to re-queen using commercially sourced queens, although that can be a little pricey. Wherever the queens come from, they're not usually available until June, unless they are imported from warmer climates (and we don't encourage that for biosecurity reasons).</p> <p>Whichever route you go down, it's important to be able to find your existing queen - so late in March or early April, try to find her and mark her, whilst the colony is still small (and less feisty). Life becomes a lot easier when she is easy to spot!</p> <p>Remember that environmental factors - smells, branches banging on hive, disease (Varroa), perfumes - can all have an impact on bee behaviour, and gentle manipulation is something we should focus on attaining.</p>
I want to make increase this year. Should I raise queens or do splits?	Rebecca Jackson	Whichever approach you take, wait until your hives have emerged drones that are at least a week old. This will be a sign that other colonies are producing drones too. For small scale beekeepers, splits are slightly less trouble than queen rearing, and offer you the possibility to dictate the timing of the swarm urge. Take the old queen into a nuc hive (the "swarm"), and then carefully manage the development of queen cells in the donor colony. The nuc colony can be developed into a producer colony, if the queen is young, by extensive feeding.
<b>General questions</b>		
Also would be interested in finding out about drone congregation areas.	Alice Dovell and Kevin Moore	DCAs are one of the mysteries in beekeeping. Drones' mission is to track down queens and mate with them, and the drones are equipped with big eyes, and extra segments to their antennae to help them do this, but how and why the interested bees locate the DCAs is unknown. There seem to be some geographical preferences, but to be honest no-one really knows how to discover them, other than by trial-and-error.
What exactly is the legal position about using organic acids, (I mean lactic and oxalic acid,) as a varroa control?  Before I appear to incriminate myself, I hasten to say that although late doing a winter treatment I am about to acquire some Api-bioxal. Having earlier this year mentioned lactic acid to Kay, she told me she had not heard me! I note that lactic acid is mentioned in the "Managing Varroa" publication on the Beebase website as " <b>Not in the UK</b> ". Oxalic is not mentioned at all. Several years ago, at a Lenham lecture, I remember	Rowena Pearce	<p>Api-Bioxal is the only licensed product containing oxalic acid, and therefore is the only OA treatment that is guaranteed to be legal, if correctly applied. It was licensed in UK on 8 Sep 2015, and before that the legality of using OA (or indeed lactic acid) was questionable, unless you had a prescription from a veterinarian. Bees are considered to be food-producing stock, hence these requirements. We are required to keep records for 5 years of all the medications that are administered to food-producing bees (by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate).</p> <p>Whilst your comments about lactic acid are common-sensical, until such time as a medicines producer goes to the cost, time and trouble of licensing a product based on lactic acid, you may find that its use on a colony would attract adverse reaction from the National Bee Unit.</p> <p>The current version of the NBU's "Managing Varroa" handbook (revised April 2017) includes a section on authorised and unauthorised treatments that directly</p>

the speaker saying that as a matter of legality, we must not use either oxalic or lactic acid. I have observed that oxalic is being used, or talked about openly, by more than one beekeeping association. As I have always understood that lactic acid is a more benign substance for both bees and humans than oxalic, I am perplexed that it is indicated that lactic acid should not be used in the U.K. but the situation with oxalic is left unclear		addresses your questions <a href="http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/downloadDocument.cfm?id=16">http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/downloadDocument.cfm?id=16</a>
How concerned should we be about local reports of EFB, and not-so local reports of Asian Hornet?	Rebecca Jackson	<p>We are concerned about EFB in East Kent, and to that end we have invited Kay Wreford, our SBI, to talk about EFB at our 7th March <a href="#">meeting</a>. A key vector of EFB is the beekeeper, and we should be very circumspect in moving hives, or even frames from apiary to apiary. Good hygiene practices are the starting point, and getting confident in routine use of shook swarm for disease control, is something we can all do. I am sure that Kay will cover all of these husbandry techniques, and more besides.</p> <p>Asian Hornet (<i>Vespa velutina</i>) is one of a number of exotic pests that threaten to make beekeeping more challenging (the other real stinker is small hive beetle). For the moment, the key action for us all is to be able to recognise the Asian hornet (it's yellow legs distinguish it from the brown-legged European hornet). Some folks advocate trapping, but these can be non-selective. Download the free app so you can remind yourself of what an Asian hornet looks like, and learn about its nesting and bee-hawking behaviours. Available to download from the <a href="#">Apple</a> and <a href="#">Android</a> app stores.</p>

