


THE BUZZ



The official newsletter of the Gold Coast Amateur Beekeepers Society Inc. Est. 1979
 Website: gcabs.net.au  [Gold Coast Amateur Beekeeping Society](https://www.facebook.com/GoldCoastAmateurBeekeepingSociety)



Memories of Autumn and the promise of Spring's floral abundance. See page 6 for tips on preparing our bees for winter

DATE SAVERS

The Gold Coast Amateur Beekeeper's Society inc. welcomes new members, existing members and visitors to attend our meetings. Non-members attending will be asked to make a gold coin donation.

MEMBER MEETINGS

- **Sun 21st May 10am-noon** GCABS Clubhouse Topic: Let's talk Pest and Disease Detection and Management with Biosecurity Qld Officer, Dave Schlipalius. If time, we will also talk about presenting honey jars for shows – not only to compete but also as an opportunity to showcase the wonderful variety and quality of our home-grown honey.
- **Sun 18th June 10am-noon** GCABS Clubhouse Topic: Wax processing – from Hive to Clean & Ready to use! Also Making showcase quality Creamed Honey.
- **Sun 16 July 10-12 noon** GCABS Clubhouse Topic: Swarm prevention and spring preparation. NPQ speaker– Native Plants Queensland
- **Sun 20 Aug 10am** Field trip to 'Mariefields', Tyalgum - Dr John Quayle: Alcohol wash for Varroa defense; Splitting hives using divider boards.

UPCOMING SHOWS

- **Sat/Sun 24-25 June** – Mudgeeraba Show, Mudgeeraba Showgrounds
- **Sat/Sun 5-6 Aug** – Botanical Bazaar, Nerang Country Paradise Parklands
- **Fri/Sat/Sun 1st - 3rd Sep** – Gold Coast Show, Broadwater Parklands, Marine Parade, Southport

OTHER EVENTS

- TAFE QLD at Robina offers a bundle of beekeeping classes with the next round beginning May 20th and running 6 weeks on Saturdays. Classes can be taken individually or as a package. Info here: <https://tafeqld.edu.au/course/19/19122/complete-beekeeping-bundle>
- TAFE QLD Stand alone course on Native bees: <https://tafeqld.edu.au/course/19/19125/introduction-to-australian-native-bees>
- **BEGINNER CLASSES:** new dates have been scheduled! 22-23 July, 30-1 Oct, 2-3 Dec. Details to come!!
- **Sat 20th May WORLD BEE DAY** See history on next page.
- **Sat/Sun 27th & 28th May** Australian Bush Food Conference. Location: 4808-4822 Mount Lindsay Highway North Maclean Qld. For more information email: bushfoods@atac.qld.edu.au
- **June 18th 9am – 3 pm.** Gold Coast Native Plants Market @ Nerang Country Paradise Parklands
- **COMMITTEE MEETINGS.** All welcome to attend our online Committee meetings. Email the secretary and ask for the link. Gcabs.secretary@beekeepers.asn.au

From GCABS President



I'm of a generation whose parents were too young for conscription and so having lived in relative peace times, I find that around Anzac Day the patriotic thing to do is celebrate our freedoms by mowing the grass on this little piece of Australia I call home, attending the local RSL branch public march and service, and packing down my bees.

The winds are now quite cool, bringing typical Easter rains to QLD. I'm glad for the public holiday affording me time to cut back tree branches overhanging my apiary to allow maximum sunlight on the colonies. I'm also grateful for an extra day off to clear workspace in my garden shed and take stock of the spare boxes and frames I'll need to prepare for the coming productive season (which begins June 21).

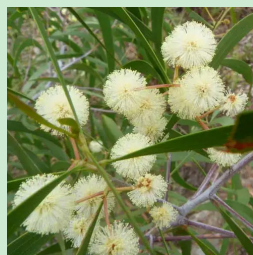
Packing bees down is not hard to do so if you want some tips have a look at the ABA newsletter in which Bruce White has a good practical guide. As rule of thumb: I'd leave one full box of honey on every colony but harvest any more than that around Anzac Day. And while we may have some more spare time between now and the end of June, there's much to do; prep honey entries for shows, clean down old wax, prep spare boxes and frames, extract excess honey, brew another batch of mead, get that alcohol wash done & reported, and register to lend a hand for the upcoming beginner classes and other fun activities that GCABS will be hosting.

*See you there --
Kathy*

May Honey Flora - S.E. Queensland

Submitted by Jim O'Regan

Banksia, Black Sheoak. Broad-leaved Banksia. Flooded Gum. Glycine. Golden Candlesticks. Hickory Wattle. Honeysuckle Oak. Mountain Coolibah. Paper-barked Tea-tree. River Sheoak. Rose Sheoak. Tumble-down Ironbark. White Box. Gordonia



Hickory Wattle



Golden Candlesticks



WE NEED VOLUNTEERS!!

Please consider helping your club by volunteering some of your time. You have a hardworking committee – some of us have been on it for over 5 years. Though we are happy to do what we can to keep our wonderful GCABS functioning effectively, we do get tired and would love some HELP from you – the members.

In particular, with three big shows coming up (see above for dates) we are planning to run stalls to inform the public about the world of beekeeping and to share our passion. Even if you are a beginner beekeeper or don't feel you are as well-informed as you'd like to be, you can still be a valuable participant. Members who have volunteered in the past, without exception, get something out of it and say they enjoy chatting to people who stop at our stalls. It really helps you to feel part of a worthwhile cause, and get to know your fellow beekeepers, while contributing to the community.

So please consider giving of your time to helping our stalls be a great success. Whether it's 1 hour or all day, your contribution will be greatly appreciated, and you will go home happy!!

Please send a message to Ann or Leonie (our mobile numbers are on the last page) if you can to contribute your time to any or all of these shows. Or you can seek us out at one of our member meetings.

World Bee Day – A short history

Celebrated on May 20 each year as a day for the global public to acknowledge the vital role of bees for the ecosystem, due to social distancing requirements this year, the usual World Bee Day events have had to be altered and are encouraged to be online or virtual.

Why was 20 May chosen?

Slovenia first proposed that 20 May be proclaimed World Bee Day and the UN member states approved their proposal in December 2017. There were a couple of reasons why this day in May was chosen. In May, the northern hemisphere sees bees and nature develop profusely, while the southern hemisphere enters autumn, when hive products are harvested and the season of honey and honey-based products begins. In addition, 20 May is the birth date of Anton Janša (1734–1773), a Slovenian



beekeeper, the pioneer of modern beekeeping and one of the greatest authorities on the subject of bees. The Austrian Empress Maria Theresa appointed him to the post of permanent teacher of apiculture at the new School of Beekeeping in Vienna. He became well known even before his death in 1773. After 1775, all state beekeeping teachers had to teach the subject in accordance with his teachings and methods. You can watch a short video about his life here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMSnhh8qQGQ>

April Meeting Review

Leonie led a very successful and enjoyable Mead tasting session last Sunday at our clubhouse. There was a good turn-out and much merriment as homemade mead was shared. A big thanks to the mead providers - Tim, Mandy, Elise, Syd, Kathy & Leonie.



There were three different types of mead aka 'honey alcohol/ honey wine' for members to sample:

1. Pure mead (honey/water/yeast only)
2. Mead flavoured with fruits/spices/herbs added to the honey/water/yeast.
3. Fortified mead (Distilled cane sugar alcohol flavoured with honey, fruits, spices)



Flavours included: Honey only, orange/raisin, pomegranate, Davidson plum, guava, tarragon, ginger, lemon, grape. Sweetness varied from quite dry to sweet. Something to suit every palate.

Tim & Mandy offered **fortified mead**. What does that mean?

Fortified alcohol is wine with distilled spirit added to raise the alcohol level & help preserve the wines longer. Common examples of fortified alcohols are sherry & port. Examples of distilled spirits are vodka, gin, brandy, whisky. All have high alcohol content.

The spirit used in Tim & Mandy's tasting samples at our meeting was distilled from cane sugar. Typically, this spirit is clear & tasteless. So, to give it flavour, Mandy added honey & pomegranate juice, while Tim added honey & spices. Thus they offered a blended alcoholic drink with honey as a major component, so we can label it a "fortified mead" The results were delicious: Mandy's fruity & Tim's like a fine brandy.

You'll find a recipe for Orange Raisin mead at the end of the newsletter which you may enjoy trying.



Flower of the Month for Your Home Garden

Submitted by Esther Bligh

Gordonia axillaris (fried egg tree) is a beautiful small tree that originates from China. It grows to 5-6m tall and wide with a beautiful, dome-shaped canopy, but can be pruned into a large bush. Its attractive large white flowers with bright yellow centres are a magnet for both native and honey bees. *Gordonia* trees flower in autumn which makes them very valuable for bees.



A very special Mother- the Queen Bee

With Mothers Day coming up, why not spare a thought for a very special mother - the Queen Bee? She is pivotal to everything that happens in a healthy beehive. She's at the heart of her colony and the mother of all other members, which can number up to 60,000 at any one time. Her life is one of servitude.

Many assume that given her central role, and the fact that she is the largest bee in the colony (around 20mm), she calls the shots. This is not the case. Despite her royal title, she is more like a central puppet figure, controlled by the worker bees in her colony. She leaves the hive only once in her lifetime to mate with up to 30 drones and then returns to the hive never to mate again nor to leave the hiveunless she has to.



Basically a docile creature, even though she does have a stinger, she rarely stings beekeepers, even though she can sting multiple times and survive. She mainly uses her stinger during the process of laying eggs, positioning eggs and to fight other queens.

While she dutifully fulfils her role of laying eggs- around 2000 per day – about one every 40 seconds, she is totally dependent on her workers to survive. She cannot even digest her own food as the workers digest it for her and then feed it to her, cleaning up her waste afterwards. Her main diet is Royal Jelly, a combination of proteins and sugars secreted in the hypopharynx of nurse bees.

One thing she can control however, is the sex of the eggs she lays. She lays either a fertilized (female) or unfertilized (male) egg according to the width of the cell. The queen fertilizes the egg by selectively releasing sperm from her spermatheca as the egg passes through her oviduct.

All in all, the colony decides her fate. They can choose to raise a new queen or kill an existing one whenever they wish. The queen gives off a pheromone which sends a message to the workers about her health and productivity, so when workers can no longer smell the pheromone at a sufficient "per bee" concentration they know it is time to raise a new queen to replace her.

So let's appreciate our Queens especially at this time of year. As beekeepers, it is important to understand her role and her interaction with workers and drones as this will help you assess the health of your hives and be aware of any issues that may arise.

<https://www.ecrotek.co.nz/learn/articles/>

<https://www.perfectbee.com/learn-about-bees/the-life-of-bees/role-queen-bee>

5 tips to help get your bees through winter on the Gold Coast

By Keith Barton, Biosecurity Officer for GCABS

While winter is often short and mild on the Gold Coast, we still need to ensure our hives are adequately prepared for the colder months and shorter days. Often, there are fewer floral sources available to bees, so hives need enough surplus honey and pollen to get them through.

Here are 5 tips on preparing hives for the winter on the Gold Coast.

Tip #1 - Food stores

This one seems obvious, but often beekeepers take a little too much honey during the season and are caught out by a late dearth going into winter.

Leave more honey on the hive than you think they may need. A general rule of thumb is at least half a box of honey per box of bees, and a full box won't hurt.

Any surplus can be harvested as the next season warms up.

Don't forget about pollen stores either. Bees require pollen for protein, and here in SE QLD hives brood throughout the year, so pollen is a necessity. Fortunately we have some decent winter pollen sources such as acacia, that keep the hives going, even if it's "not the best" pollen.

Tip #2 - Space

Make sure to "right size" each hive to ensure they do not have excess space. Remove empty or partially filled supers (surplus to their food requirements), and generally try to condense hives down to smaller volumes so that they don't have to keep too much space warm.

Brood mats can help retain warmth in the brood box and reduce the amount of food consumed by the hive. Canvas is affordable and makes an effective mat, or I've seen old vinyl flooring and builder's plastic used also.

Tip #3 - Final checks

Before the winter kicks in, make sure to do final hive inspections including varroa checks. Ensure the hive has a laying queen, and that there are no other obvious diseases or issues.

Close up or tape over any upper vents, and reduce the entrance down to a smaller, more manageable size for the colony.

Tip #4 - ANZAC day

ANZAC day (April 25th) is considered by most experienced Gold Coast beekeepers the date by which all winter preparations should be done.

By this date, all hives should have been inspected, repaired, and packed down ready for winter. After ANZAC day, usually, no further honey is removed.



Tip #5 - Be prepared

Have emergency feeding plans in place - know what you need to do before you need to do it:

- Sugar syrup is a great emergency feed for bees. Use a 2:1 (by weight) ratio of sugar to water for winter feeding.
- Pollen patties can help but small hive beetle absolutely thrive on pollen patties too. Never add more pollen pattie than the bees can fully consume within a couple of days or you'll risk a slime out.
- Fondant is another excellent supplement and is often easier to apply than syrup.

Remember that **next season starts NOW**. Getting your hives through winter is just the beginning of next season. Our winter is very short, swarms can start in mid-July, so start planning and preparing now!

With a little thought and planning, you can easily get your hives through winter on the Gold Coast, and be prepared for a strong start to the next honey season. Good luck and happy beekeeping!

JOBS in Your Bee Yard this Month

Thanks to Paul Fullwood of Greenwood Bees for this info

Drone Eviction – With the cooler weather, you may begin to see drones being evicted from your hives. This is normal behaviour. Autumn is the time to prep for winter. Follow 5 key points:

1. NUTRITION – ensure your bees have PLENTY of honey. In hinterland regions where winters are colder & longer, allow a full box of honey for a large colony. In coastal regions, allow $\frac{3}{4}$ box.
2. COLONY STRENGTH – a weak hive will grow weaker & may not survive winter. If the colony is disease free, combine with a strong colony using the 'newspaper' method if you have more than one hive. Note – You will have to remove the queen from the weaker colony before combining.
3. BEE SPACE - Put the maximum numbers of bees into the minimum space. Remove excess supers. Take out, freeze for 24 hours, then store empty frames in a well sealed container & freeze extra honey frames to feed back if needed.
4. LOCATION – Ideally, bees do best with full winter sun. Make minor adjustments to maximise sun exposure & minimise wind exposure eg trim branches, turn entry away from a prevailing wind.
5. MINIMISE INSPECTIONS - Learn to READ THE HIVE without lifting the lid. The aim as the weather cools is to not cause chill by opening unnecessarily. So watch the activity level at the entrance – Does the population look busy enough for the number of boxes? Is there plenty of pollen coming in? Is the sound calm? Is the smell sweet/good or sour/concerning? If you heft the back of the super is it heavy with stores or light & need feeding?

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Orange Raisin MEAD This recipe is designed for beginners

For a 5 litre demijohn

- 1.6 kg honey for dry mead up to 1.9kg for a sweeter result. (Provides flavour & food for the yeast)
- ½ cup strong black tea (Provides tannin, which helps blend all the components)
- 1 large orange (Cut into eight pieces – rind and all) (Provides flavour & acid)
- 1 small handful of raisins (about 25) (Provides nutrient for the yeast)
- 1 stick of cinnamon
- 1-2 whole cloves
- Optional - a pinch of nutmeg and allspice
- 1 teaspoon of bread yeast. Note – You can use a different yeast like Mangrove Jack Mead brand but common bakers' yeast is fine. (Causes fermentation)
- Water to bring batch out to 3.8 litres (did you know, there are 3.785411 litres per US gallon).
- More water later to top up.



PROCEDURE

1. Sterilise a clean demijohn. With a texta mark a line at 3.8ltr level on outside of demijohn. Dissolve honey in some warm water and put into demijohn.
2. Wash orange well, slice into eighths then push pieces through the demijohn's opening.
3. Put in raisins, clove, cinnamon stick, any optional ingredients and fill demijohn to the 3.8 litre level with cold water (You can top up to the neck base with more water after the first few days foaming).
4. Close lid & shake vigorously for at least 4 minutes. This is your sophisticated oxygenation process.
5. When liquid is at room temperature, put in 1 teaspoon of bread yeast (You don't have to rehydrate it first – the ancients did not even have that word in their vocabulary – just put it in and give a swirl or not). The yeast will take care of itself.
6. Install water airlock. Put in a dark place. It will start working within an hour or so.
7. After major foaming stops in a few days, you can add some more water. Don't shake it! Don't mess with them yeastes!
8. Fermenting & clearing times are dependent upon the yeast and temperature conditions.
9. After as little as 2 weeks (ie with beer yeast) OR as long as 2 months (Bread yeast, wine yeast or mead yeast), the bubbling will slow down to a stop and the liquid will clear. Be patient. If you wait long enough, the oranges will sink to the bottom. If it is clear it's ready.
10. When fermentation stops, put a syphon tube in with a small cloth filter on the end & syphon off the golden nectar into sterilised bottles.

Result

The recipe is all about “BALANCE”. You want the astringency of the orange peel and the sweetness of the honey to balance perfectly with the alcohol level. However, different yeasts have different alcohol tolerances, which will affect the dryness or sweetness of your finished MEAD.

So, if your mead finished too dry, make a 2nd batch starting with a greater amount of honey, then blend the dry mead with the sweet until you achieve the dry/sweet level that suits your palate. Or, add some extra honey to make your dry mead sweeter. This is known as ‘back sweetening’.

If you leave it to age then the mead just keeps tasting better. But that's as long as you liked the initial flavour. Good mead ages well. Mead that tastes like rocket fuel, will taste just as ghastly 2 years later!