

Allotment Beekeeping

Location of Hives

Ideally, a suitable site would be fairly open, light and airy. To avoid being a nuisance bees can be forced to fly above head height by surrounding the hives with hedging, solid fencing or simple screening such as is used for windbreaks. Bees are very precise about their flight paths in order to save their energy and do not generally go off course. It might be a good idea for all bees to be kept in one designated area, rather than spread around the site.

How many Hives?

In a normal situation there is no particular upper limit on the number that can be kept in one place, but on an allotment it is reasonable for this number to be kept at a manageable level. Each situation will be different and there should be an agreed upper limit, but be aware there are some times during the summer when it is part of normal management techniques to temporarily increase colony numbers.

Swarming

All honey bees try to swarm, although not every year. This is the only way they can reproduce and your beekeeper should be aware of how to deal with this. If and when swarming does occur, as it sometimes does despite the best efforts of the beekeeper, there is no need for other allotment holders to be concerned. Despite the 'busy-ness' of the bees, the swarm should settle down in a short time into the normal cluster and can be re-captured if it is safe to do so. Bees are NOT normally aggressive when they are swarming.

Unattended Hives

Beekeepers should not use allotments as storage space for equipment that does not contain bees. Beekeepers should not knowingly put aggressive colonies of bees onto allotments. If you suspect that this is occurring, then the beekeeper should be asked to remedy the situation immediately. All hive equipment should have some sort of identification mark placed on it by the beekeeper and that reliable contact information for the beekeeper(s) is available.

First Aid for stings

Stings may cause swelling and itching for several days, this is normal. Any sign of dizziness is more serious; consult your GP. In the case of sudden fainting/collapse (or of stings inside the nose or mouth) call an ambulance. Stings near eyes should receive prompt medical examination. If possible remove finger rings quickly if stung on the hand.

For further information please see British Bee Keepers Association (BBKA) Leaflet L002 'Bee Stings' which has a separate sheet that can be laminated and displayed in a prominent position. Children who are stung should be observed for an hour or two to make sure there are no adverse effects.

Spraying and pesticides

Honey bees are very vulnerable to the effects of insecticides. You should ensure that any applications under your control are made with due consideration for the bees and that other allotment holders are also aware of the correct procedures. This should still be the case even if there are no bees on your allotments.

Insurance

The BBKA provides third-party insurance cover to all beekeepers who are fully paid-up members. This insurance cover is in respect of their own beekeeping activities. Beekeepers are required to submit annual insurance certificate to committee.