

It's all about the bees

What should you plant to help pollinators? What is the future of bumblebees in the UK? How do you get started as a beekeeper? As Sophie Butcher reveals, all these questions and more are being addressed by specialist speakers – just some of the attractions at the Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day this month.

BOB SMITH, one of the UK's leading bee experts, will be exploring flower families from the bees' point of view, with an emphasis on what they look for from plants in your garden.

Richard Rickitt, a Melksham beekeeper and co-editor of *Bee Craft* magazine, will outline some of the issues to consider when keeping bees, such as where you might site your hive, what kit you need to get started, how to keep your bees healthy and strong, and highlights of the beekeeper's year.

The event is sponsored by Marlborough-based Eden Renewables. Dr Guy Parker of Wychwood Biodiversity, who oversees the ecological management plans at all their solar farms, including creating pollinator-friendly wildflower meadows, will explain the threats bumblebees are facing and show what can be done at the garden and field scale to help them.

Activities for children

Talks make up only a small part of the day. There will be candle rolling and crafts for the children to make on the day, and Eden Renewables will be bringing a range of solar toys for them to experiment with while you

enjoy a coffee and a biscuit. In addition, there is a wide array of exhibitors offering bee-related gifts and products including lots of honey from beekeepers all over Wiltshire, Candle Cavern, Karen Elliott's fabulous paintings and cards, Pam Shellard Ceramics and Bee Happy Glass Designs.

The event incorporates the prestigious Wiltshire Honey Show with competitors from around the county exhibiting their honey, mead, candles and wax flowers; the Mayor of Devizes will be awarding cups in the afternoon.

What is more, Devizes-based Wadworth Brewery is brewing a delicious honey beer exclusively for the event.

From flowers to hand creams

Two other exhibitors on the day include Meadow in my Garden and Hive Originals.

Back in 2011, wildflower expert Paul Jupp from Devizes started Meadow in my Garden, a not-for-profit community interest company. He has been helping people, councils, and community groups to create wildlife friendly planting schemes across the UK ever since. His meadow seed mixes are designed for biodiversity and for maximum

wildlife benefit, attracting birds, butterflies and bees as well as providing a beautiful display over a long flowering season. October and November are perfect times to sow many types of wildflower meadow. You will find some excellent videos on his website if you want to have a go, and you can ask specific questions of him direct on the day.

Meanwhile beekeeper Claire Barker, also of Devizes, kept bees as a hobby after doing a beekeeping course. When she was made redundant from her job as a retail director, she decided to make bees her business. Starting out in her own kitchen, she used her retailing skills to develop a gorgeous range of skincare products. 'Raw honey is well known for its healing, moisturising and protective qualities,' she says. 'We blend our raw honey and beeswax with the finest organic vegetable and essential oils to bring people the best that nature has to offer in terms of skin care.' WL

Event information

A great day out, the Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day, takes place at the Corn Exchange in Devizes on Saturday October 8 from 10am to 4pm. Free entry. <https://bit.ly/wiltsbees>



Bees seal honey with wax - it's now ready harvest.



National honey judges assess the produce.



Mead made from honey on display.