

Questions for my Bees.

I had to have a wander around the garden to get some inspiration for this little chat.

Today is cool, of course, but mostly sunny with a 10-20 kph wind blowing from the WNW which, for our bees, is a little discouraging as it whips down an east/west gully which crosses our land. Nevertheless there are some bees out and about.

As the bees enter the hives I see no pollen on their legs and surmise that they are bringing back nectar. I see very few bees on the meagre flowers on offer in my garden and a lot more than expected coming and going from the hives on flight paths which are taking them up, up and away from here.

A lot of the flowers in my garden have bees visiting but in very, very small numbers. I can only count 3 or 4 or 5. Surprisingly there are no bees on the newly opened borago flowers but there are bees on the white nerines. I've never seen them on the nerines before.

This activity raises a question or two for me: Why are there only a few bees on my plants? If there is something to forage on then why aren't there more bees on these flowers close to the hives?

I'm warning you now that I simply don't have an answer to these questions BUT, never one to skulk away from a bit of analysis I find myself asking these bees many more questions.

- Why do you not let your sisters know about these closer flowers? Some have been flowering for months and you still visit but in such small numbers.
- Are you the bees who are the few left over from the Autumn foraging force and as such have a memory of the older flowers in this garden?
- Are you not conveying the whereabouts of these flowers to your sisters in the hive as efficiently as you could?
- Are the bees in the hives not receptive? If not, why not?
- If you are older bees, are you opting for the closer flowers to save energy?
- Maybe these closer flowers are not as desirable as the ones further afield and if so why are you foraging on them at all?
- Is it simply that the bees travelling further afield have access to more flowers so there are more bees foraging and therefore greater numbers are coming back to the hives with directions and instructions?

The walk has highlighted just how little there is around our house for bees to forage on at this time of year. Seasonal forage cover in our garden is something that I have been rather obsessed about ever since we got our bees. It concerns me that our bees have to travel far away from these hives to get adequate tucker. The further they have to go the more energy is expended and the more their stores are depleted to compensate. There is also more wear and tear on the bees which may prematurely deplete hive numbers going into winter.

I have made a pledge to my bees to plant more winter forage. I'm going to start with some Tagasaste which flowers from May to August and do some further investigation into high yielding forage plants specific to May and June.

I'll keep you posted.

Bron

