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# NEWSLETTER



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# BEE QUEENS PROGRAM

## 2024-25



This year we are asking women+ 'could this bee you?' We have such a wonderful community of women beekeepers in Bee Queens- those who continue to inspire and be inspired, who take risks to learn, connect and stretch into uncomfortable spaces....and it is in this space that we all do our best learning!

Being a part of this community is so much more than any other beekeeping program, joining Bee Queens is about being with women who, not only want the best outcome for you, but will actively support you on all of your beekeeping adventures. It is also unique in that we follow the seasons of beekeeping - because beekeeping IS a 12 month activity.

The 2024/25 program has filled up quickly, but there are a couple of spaces left for those last minute Queens (like me!). The next program starts on Saturday July 27th, 9.30am - 1.30pm at the Rosny Library. All past graduates are invited back to any or all of the workshops.





# WINTER CLUSTER

The Winter cluster is a life sustaining act of a bee colony during the cooler months. It is a form of hibernation that keeps the superorganism of the colony alive, until pollen and nectar sources are again available in Spring.

Honey bees need to keep their body temperature at about 15C and the brood nest at 35C to survive Winter - and they achieve this by clustering together - the colder it is the tighter the bees will cluster. This takes a lot of energy that can only come from honey stores. There are occasional flows in Winter (Blue Gum is one that comes to mind), but generally bees rely on stores laid down at the end of Summer/Autumn.

Biologist and beekeeper, Randy Oliver notes *"In my experience, the least efficient wintering occurs at around 55-60°F (13-16°C), when it's not quite warm enough to forage, yet not quite cold enough to form a tight cluster, but warm enough to establish a brood nest. Much energy is wasted as the colony breaks cluster each day in preparation for possible (and often fruitless) foraging."*

Sound like a typical maritime Australian Winter? This is why leading into Winter we pay so much attention to making sure the colony has suitable stores, and coming out of Winter that bees have enough food for the expanding colony.



## WINTER BEE CARE

- Avoid opening the hive. This breaks the Winter cluster and puts both bees and any brood life at risk.
- Instead -observe your hives by watching bee activity at the entrance and by placing your ear against the hive to hear the cluster humming.
- Heft your hive - a heavy hive is a good sign there are plenty of stores, a light hive will need attention (feeding)
- Signs of some dead bees on the landing board or out front is normal - bees will evacuate dead bees, however a lot of dead bees indicates something else is happening, requiring further investigation.



# WINTER ZOOM

It's feels like ages since we last saw each other (well, it's only been a few weeks), but Winter can be an isolating time for beekeepers and this as is a chance to regroup virtually and have a casual chat about all things bees. Bee Queens graduates, subscribers, future participants,....basically anyone interested in bees is invited to attend. This will be an unstructured chat driven by those who want to attend the meeting. Worried about your bees? Have a burning idea you want to share? Or just keen to say hi to everyone? Drop into this session. Zoom link via email.



## STBA AGM

The Southern Tasmanian Beekeepers Association is holding its AGM on Monday July 29, 6.30pm at the Glenorchy Library. Association membership unlocks opportunity, and this time there will be at least 3 women connected to this program running for election. WE NEED YOUR VOTE! This year we proposed and influenced a decision to create a 'Women's Future Fund'. Disbursed funds of about \$5,000 have been set aside for this purpose, and this would not have happened without women in the room. Support us and we can do more

## AHBIC

The Australian Honeybee Industry Council (AHBIC) are the peak body for beekeepers in Australia. Recently, the STBA voted in strong support to apply for membership. This would give our organisation a voice at a National table at a critical juncture for beekeeping in Australia. Varroa mite is on the doorstep and we need to be at decision making tables to protect our members, bees and the beekeeping industry. Keep an eye on social media and help us to spread the news about our application - AHBIC will make a decision at their AGM on July 10.

