


**Moray Beekeepers Association**  
**Introduction to Beekeeping**  
**Choosing an Apiary Site**



Moray Beekeepers' Association SCIO no. SC050177

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**Bees Choice?**

- Bees choose their nest using criteria developed over millions of years.
- Including volume of cavity and size and orientation of the entrance.
- They don't choose it because of the bee neighbours, shape and colour of the dwelling,
- Also they prefer cavities 3 metres off the ground, not at a height convenient for their slave the beekeeper



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**Is this the perfect apiary?**





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## Where



1. Home
2. Out Apiary
  - Away from home, eg a field, orchard or other suitable space.
  - Stock and other animal proof – fence
  - Access by car for moving hives
  - "Rent" usually some honey
  - Where will swarms go?
  - If going to out apiary alone take mobile phone in case of allergic reaction



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## Apiary Requirements



- Food
- Water
- Shelter from wind
- Shelter from sun
- Orientation and arrangement of hives
- Access
- Public Safety



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## Ideal site







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## Food



- Bees will gather food from anywhere up to 3miles (5km) from the hive and need a good source of nectar and pollen through the foraging year (Late-February to Late October). Particularly as a bee colony needs around 120kg Nectar and 20kg Pollen per year to survive.
- It is difficult to assess the foraging potential of a specific location but some idea of the potential can be gained by observation of the flora. This is best done by walking in the area being considered a couple of times throughout the spring, summer and autumn (Late-February to Late October).

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## Water



- Bees need water for two reasons; to regulate the hive temperature and to feed.
- To produce honey bees drive off the water from nectar until the water content falls below 20% making the sugar concentration high enough to prevent fermentation by natural yeasts. At this concentration bees cannot eat the honey; so bees need water to dilute their own honey to a 50:50 mix of sugar and water before they can eat it.
- The worker bees also use water to help regulate the temperature of the hive by releasing water inside which evaporates to cool the hive.

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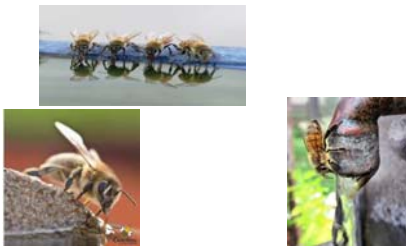
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## Easy access water



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### Shelter from Wind



- Bees can only fly under control if moving faster than the air around them, and can only land easily into the wind.
- The hive entrance therefore shouldn't be facing the prevailing wind.
- A thick hedge or other windbreak will slow the wind speed down.

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### Shelter from the Sun



- During autumn, winter and spring the sun's warmth can benefit the colony, and can make the difference between the bees remaining in a tight cluster or moving around the hive and even flying out to defaecate.
- In summer in the same position the hive could overheat. Ideal may be deciduous shade in summer, but not overhanging the hive.
- If very warm you might see bearding on front of hive – bees out to make room inside to improve ventilation.
- Too hot and swarm preparation can be triggered

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### Cooling off /fanning Bearding



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## Hive Arrangement



- Regular repetitive pattern can confuse bees and encourage drifting, so different direction, colour pattern etc
- Need space to get around hive
- Need space to put roof etc when inspecting
- Need roughly a hive width all around.
- Apiary needs to be big enough for expansion and for temporary accommodation in swarming season.
- Large circle a common arrangement, though two or three hives in a row with differing entrance direction is fine.
- Strong hive stands

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## Slide 14

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**mc7** In the act of positioning one or more beehives an apiary is created and of these there are three main types:

- Garden or Home Apiary - Usually one or two hives sited on land associated with the beekeepers home – even on a flat roof.
- Out Apiary - One or more hives set-up on land not associated with the beekeepers home
- Seasonal or Temporary Apiary - One or more hives set-up on land not associated with the beekeepers home for only part of the honey crop season

Regardless of which type of apiary that will be set up a brief assessment of sites safety, suitability and access should be undertaken before moving in the first colony or hive.

michael collins, 03/03/2021

**mc8** michael collins, 03/03/2021

## Security



- It is a useful precaution to place the hives out of sight of public roads and make them unobtrusive through screening and colour and making sure all gates are locked.
- If the apiary is to be sited on a farm where livestock may gain access at some stage, a barrier should be erected by the beekeeper (if one doesn't exist already).
- The same precaution for wild animals such as deer and badgers. Bees will sting animals, and an overturned hive can result in loss of the colony.

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## Access



- Site access will be required come rain or shine and the closer a vehicle can get the better as bee hives, and supers full of honey are heavy (30lbs or 13.5kg) and bulky so easy access to the site makes beekeeping much easier.
- You'll need to carry various spare parts with you

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## Neighbours



- Not all as fond of bees as us, so inform and explain
- Bee stains on cars and washing, especially in spring and around swarming time
- Swarm can cluster anywhere, tree, fence, wall, cavity etc
- High fence/hedge can divert bees over head height, and neighbours may forget bees are there.
- Keep gentle bees – not followers

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## My first Apiary





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## Public Safety

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- Each person is different and reacts in a different way to bees; some people like them, some indifferent, some against them and some have allergic reactions if stung.
- Ideally an apiary should be sited an appropriate distance 7-8m away from the nearest footpath or similar area with a barrier (fence, wall or hedge) between the hives and the public.
- Bees usually fly at about 5m above the ground but they can fly low (particularly on windy days) and get caught in the hair or clothing of passers-by.

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## Apiary layout

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- Bee requirements
  - Early sun & possible shade at mid day
  - Water nearby
  - Hives not in a regular pattern
- Beekeeper's requirements
  - Convenient
  - Flat ground
  - Easy access
  - Plenty of room to work on the hive
  - Safe flight path
  - Secure position

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## Slide 20

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- mc4** If there is no barrier, such as a hedge, or one cannot be install this distance should increase to 14-15m.  
michael collins, 19/02/2021
- mc5** A very high wall, such as those typically associated with walled gardens, may be enough separation for most apiaries, even with a path directly on the other side.  
michael collins, 19/02/2021