



September 2026 Newsletter

Next Meeting

Date: Wednesday 2 September 2026

Where: [Johnsonville Community Centre](#)

(Entrance next to the Johnsonville Library)

Beginners Class | 6:45 PM – 7:30 PM | Upstairs in the Trust Room

Gear up for spring with **Janine Davie**! This month, she'll break down **varroa treatment strategies** and **swarm control** to keep your colonies strong and healthy heading into the new season.

Our monthly Beginners Class features an experienced club member breaking down a core topic: from basic equipment and swarm control to pests, diseases, and legal requirements. Free for all members, and everyone is welcome. Bring your questions!

Main Meeting | 7:30 PM | Main Hall (adjacent to the Trust Room)

Following the beginners session, join us for our main club meeting featuring guest speaker **Maxine Scheckter who will talk with us about baking with honey**. Maxine is a French-trained pastry chef who honed her craft in top international kitchens, including Paris's Gâteaux Thaumieux and London's Michelin-starred The Fat Duck. She is the founder of **Sugar Flour Pastry School** in Wellington, where she teaches modern pâtisserie techniques and accessible baking to home cooks and aspiring chefs alike. Maxine will bring honey chocolate bonbon's for the members to try - yummo!

In this month's update:

- Bee Aware Month 🐝
- Bees in the City – Public Arts Trail 🌸
- Organic Basic Principles 🌱
- Exclusive Sugar Flour pastry cooking class 🍪
- Beginners Basic Beekeeping course 📝



From the President

I hope everyone is ready for spring. You've had your rest over winter and now the busy time of year approaches. I only have one hive now but I don't think they've stopped at all. For once I am looking forward to the spring buildup so I can take a split and have the insurance of two hives. I think there will be many in a similar situation, anecdotally there have been a lot of hive losses this year probably caused by the unseasonably warm weather in autumn and early winter resulting in no brood break, bees churning through their resources and high varroa loads.

I'm feeding honey cappings to my bees. I didn't want to encourage robbing at the end of summer so I've had these cappings in the fridge for months. They probably don't need it as there are lots of sources of protein and nectar around me - I even saw a Pohutukawa tree starting to flower yesterday. I'm going to make an extra effort to keep on top of the varroa this season. I am inspired by Viv Harris to try and manage varroa without resorting to synthetic treatments so to that effect I have purchased some of the Swedish cloths infused with oxalic acid. These are recommended/preferred by Randy Oliver (Scientific Beekeeping). I think he likes them because with the number of hives he has it is much quicker to just separate the boxes, place the cloths in then close up the hives with no need to feed the strips between the frames like you do with the strips. I like the idea of these because they sit on top of the frames between the brood boxes. I have noticed that the bees avoid the oxalic acid strips so you end up with quite large gaps in the brood frames - we'll see how it works and hope the exercise is better than my disaster with the formic acid.

We had intended to hold a box and frame assembly workshop recently but most of the people who expressed an interest didn't have the boxes or frames to assemble which defeated the purpose really. We might cover this in an upcoming Beginner's Session prior to the main meeting instead.

A friend of mine is moving to the South Island and giving up beekeeping. I have her beekeeping suit which she wishes to sell. It is from Ecrotek, women's size 12, in very good/excellent condition. I'd keep it myself but there is no way I am ever going to fit that size. Contact me at j.davie@orcon.net.nz or see me at the meeting if you are interested.

Janine



Bee Aware Month

In New Zealand, **Bee Aware Month** is celebrated every September.

Organised annually by Apiculture New Zealand, this national campaign raises public awareness about the crucial role bees play in the ecosystem, food production, and biodiversity, while encouraging Kiwis to take simple actions to support bee health.

Key Focus Areas & How to Get Involved

- **Plant Bee-Friendly Gardens:** Plant pollen- and nectar-rich flowers that bloom across different seasons (e.g., lavender, borage, clover, rosemary, and native plants like mānuka or kōwhai).
- **Provide Fresh Water:** Leave shallow dishes of water with pebbles or twigs inside so bees can land safely to drink without drowning.
- **Minimise Pesticide Use:** Avoid spraying garden chemicals, especially when plants are in flower or during daylight hours when bees are foraging.
- **Support Local Beekeepers:** Buy locally produced New Zealand honey and hive products.
- **Community Events:** Schools, libraries, and council groups often host workshops, educational talks, and tree-planting days throughout September.

2026/2027 Annual Subscriptions are Over Due

A friendly reminder from our Membership Secretary, John Burnet: if you haven't already settled your annual subscription, please transfer the **\$25** fee to the Wellington Beekeepers Club bank account **03-1534-0009311-00**.

Please note: members who joined the Club and paid their subscription after 1 Jan 2026 are exempt from paying again until the next financial year starting 1 June 2027.

For those who have already processed their payment, thank you very much for staying connected to our community!



Basic Organic Principles for Beekeeping and Hive Management

Viv Harris presented last month these organic principles she uses at her property in Ohairu Valley. Applying organic principles to beekeeping requires a holistic approach focusing on nutrition, location, active management, and low-toxicity practices to build strong, resilient colonies. Below is a breakdown of key organic strategies for managing your apiary, alongside an opportunity for hands-on organic gardening.

1. Nutrition: The Foundation of Hive Health

Nutrition is the most vital element of organic beekeeping. Diverse forage supports a healthy microbiome, directly strengthening bee immunity and colony health.

- **Maximise Forage Diversity:** Pollen and nectar diversity ensures bees get all essential nutrients to maintain a robust gut microbiome.
- **Year-Round Availability:** Plant for every season. Use options like Tree Lucerne, green crops in winter, and winter-blooming flowers such as Calendula and Camellias.
- **Reduce Neighboring Forage Risks:** Plant a wide variety of rich flowers on your property. Bees naturally forage within a 3+ km radius; providing abundant food at home reduces their likelihood of visiting sprayed neighboring areas.
- **Promote Wild Forage:** Sow wildflower mixes, allow vegetables and garden plants (like hedges) to go to flower, and leave designated lawn areas unmowed.

2. Strategic Location and Housing

Minimising environmental stressors allows bees to direct energy toward brood rearing and honey production rather than climate control.

- **Site Selection:** Place hives as far as possible from roads, polluted water sources, and chemical sprays. If distance isn't fully achievable, provide clean water and abundant unsprayed flowers right at home.
- **Sun and Shelter:** Position hives in full sun all day—cold and damp conditions harm hive vitality. Ensure shelter from cold gales; secure hives with warratahs during storms.
- **Hive Design & Warmth:** Polystyrene (poly) hives—while not strictly traditional organic material—offer high welfare benefits by keeping colonies warm and dry year-round. This saves colony energy, lowers food consumption, and allows bees to

start flying earlier in the day. Wrap poly hives in winter to cut cold winds and protect entrances, and place a brick in front of the entrance as a landing pad.

3. Integrated Varroa Management

Varroa mite management must be continuous. Constant monitoring and low-impact treatments keep mite loads down while protecting hive health.

- **Continuous Observation:** Watch for key indicators of high mite loads, such as low energy at the hive entrance, deformed wings, an unusual number of dead bees, or visible mites on bees.
- **Monitoring Tools:** Use sticky bottom boards to assess mite drop, especially after applying treatments. Poly hives maintain warmth in winter and may keep brood year-round, requiring year-round observation—particularly during late winter, spring build-ups, and autumn.

A Layered Organic Action Plan

Organic mite control requires active labor and careful monitoring to keep hive products clean:

1. **Thymol (ApiLife Var):** Treat almost every time the hive is opened, checking bottom boards a few days post-application to track mite drop.
2. **Oxalic Acid Strips:** Maintain continuous use during colder months or periods of low activity.
3. **Vaporised Oxalic Acid:** If bottom board counts spike, apply 4 doses every 5 days (covering the 21-day brood cycle), particularly in late winter or autumn.
4. **Emergency Intervention:** If mite levels become dangerously high, prioritizing animal welfare comes first (e.g., using Bayvarol if necessary). Isolate these hives/frames and do not rear queens from them to avoid propagation of poor genetic resistance.

Genetics and Swarm Prevention

- **Resilient Genetics:** Raise new nucleus colonies only from hives demonstrating strong Varroa-coping behaviors. Consider West Coast queens, known for hygienic cleaning behavior and shorter brood cycles that disrupt the mite lifecycle.
- **Essential Oils:** Use White Thyme essential oil in carrier oil on bottom boards to identify dropped mites.
- **Swarm Control:** Prevent swarms through active management starting in July. A swarm leaves wild hives prone to Varroa buildup, creating robbing hazards in autumn that re-infect managed hives.
- **Spring Space Management:** Provide adequate brood space and conduct fast, regular checks in early spring (keeping checks brief to prevent chilling the hive).

4. Other Organic Best Practices

- **Winter Feeding:** Feed honey over winter rather than sugar syrup whenever possible. Leave at least 1.5 full boxes of honey per hive in autumn, keeping spare frames for late winter. Honey provides key natural micronutrients absent in refined sugar.
- **Gentle Extraction:** Avoid heating honey above 37°C during extraction to preserve natural enzymes and beneficial properties.
- **Natural Hive Manipulation:** Spray a mild lavender essential oil and water mix to obscure hive scents when combining colonies or managing robbing, avoiding toxic chemical sprays.

Optional: Organic Vege Growing Classes

For those interested in extending organic principles into the garden, Viv has an upcoming 3-session workshop series covering growing healthy produce from the ground up.

- **Format:** 3 sessions (3 hours each), held every second Sunday.
- **Session 1:** Designing and planning your vegetable garden from scratch.
- **Session 2:** Growing extraordinary organic soil.
- **Session 3:** Growing vegetables from seed to harvest, with a focus on microbiome health.

Movie recommendation: The Rivals of Amziah King

A new movie about a beekeeper - The Rivals of Amziah King starring Matthew McConaughey.

Amaziah King is the unofficial mayor of his rural Oklahoma community. Southern charm personified, he works as an apiarist but spends his spare time jamming out bluegrass tunes with his ragtag group of buddies and hosting potluck lunches. When his former foster daughter, Kateri, suddenly reappears in his life, Amaziah seizes the opportunity to reconnect; but his plans to teach her his trade hit a roadblock when his beekeeping rivals put the family business at risk.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Rivals_of_Amziah_King

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt27706593/>

Thanks John!

🍯 Exclusive WBA Member Event: Honey Baking Class at Sugar Flour!

Calling all Wellington Beekeepers! We've teamed up with the talented **Maxine Scheckter** at **Sugar Flour Pastry School** (our guest speaker this month) for a hands-on baking evening designed exclusively for our members and their families and friends.

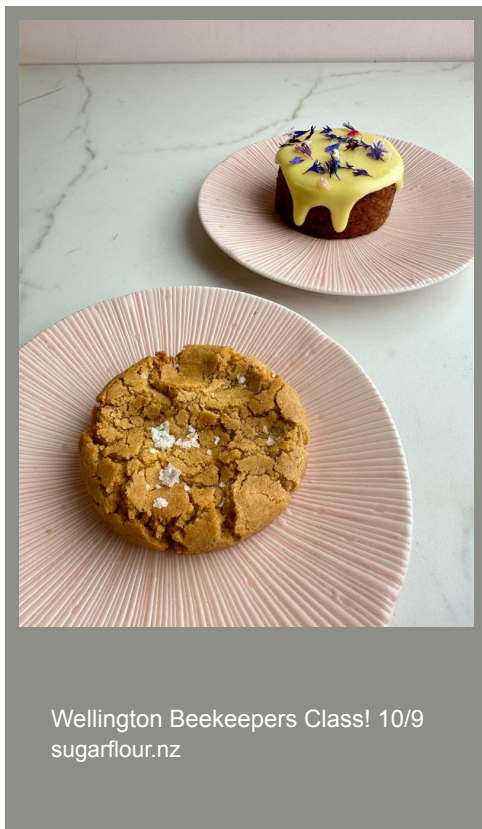
Come put your favourite ingredient front and centre, connect with fellow beekeeping enthusiasts, and learn delicious new recipes and techniques in a fun, social atmosphere.

What You'll Bake:

- **6 Mini Spiced Honey Cakes** with a vibrant passionfruit glaze
- **6 Brown Butter Salted Honey Cookies**

Event Details:

- **When:** Thursday, 10 September
- **Time:** 6:30 PM – 8:30/9:00 PM
- **Where:** Sugar Flour Cooking School, 7A Stewart Drive, Newlands
- **Price:** \$145 per person
- **Capacity:** Strictly limited to 16 spots - there are a few places left!



👉 [Click Here to Register](#) (or use the link below the image)

Wellington Beekeepers Class! 10/9
sugarflour.nz

Bees in the City – Public Arts Trail

A giant public art trail, buzzing with creativity and community.

For eight weeks in Spring 2026, 14 September to 8 November, ***Mills Albert Bee in the City*** will transform Wellington into a vibrant outdoor art gallery.

- 30+ giant bee sculptures – each brought to life by Kiwi artists
- 20+ community bees – decorated by schools and local groups
- A colourful city-wide trail – free, fun, and family-friendly

At the end of the trail on 26th November, each giant sculpture will be auctioned to raise vital funds for **Life Flight Trust** – the charity that operates Wellington’s Westpac Chopper and Air Ambulance Planes, providing time-critical care to more than 1,700 New Zealanders every year.

<https://beeinthecity.org.nz/>





Apiscope at Wellington's Botanic Garden

Several years ago club member Anne Noble arranged for a couple of apiscope (large observation hives) to be imported from France for deployment to a couple of Wellington schools. Each apiscope was basically a large wired frame (about one metre square) mounted inside a wooden rectangular box. Two sides of the box consisted of large plate glass windows. The wired frame between the glass panels held a single sheet of beeswax which, being of overseas origin, had to be immediately destroyed as NZ law prohibits the importation of overseas wax because of the possibility it contained disease spores. So NZ made beeswax sheets were substituted. Bees accessed the apiscope via a short tube connected to the outside wall of the Discovery Pavilion building in which the apiscope was installed. The apiscope was secured to a solid table height cabinet mounted on heavy duty castors so that it could be moved around easily if required.

Apparently little thought was given by the French manufacturer as to how the colony of bees would be safely and easily introduced to the apiscope. When Martin Toland and I attempted this exercise i.e. trying to persuade a swarm to march down the tube from the outside of the building or directly into the apiscope when located outside, it took hours trying to locate and persuade the queen to enter first and therefore entice the other bees to follow. We decided it would have been so much simpler to take several conventional Langstroth frames of bees from a conventional hive, remove one of the two glass panes and hang the frames with bees directly inside the apiscope. So the apiscope needed modification. A racking system for bee frames needed to be added and a slit cut in one end of the apiscope so that one glass window could be easily slid out and back in again after any frames were added or removed..

Club member PK Tan, a DIY expert and handyman offered his services. A slot for the glass pane was cut at one end of the apiscope and a racking system made and installed inside the apiscope cavity to hang eight conventional frames so that both sides of every frame could be seen from outside the glass. Bees cannot hide from sight in this apiscope ! Eight frames of bees from one of my established colonies nearby were transferred into the apiscope (while it was positioned outside the building as there were bees everywhere during the loading process). With the queen successfully marked for easy identification later) and transferred, most of the disturbed bees in the air followed. The glass window was slid closed, the apiscope wheeled back into its permanent position in the Discovery Pavilion and the access tube reconnected. It took only a few minutes for the trapped bees to work out their new exit/entry point and the queen resumed laying.

I should add that this apiscope includes: ventilation mesh at the bottom and the sides, a sugar syrup feeder and two slots at the top from which to lower inorganic varroa strips. If organic strips are used you end up with lots of chewed cardboard cluttering the bottom of the apiscope which is impossible to remove without dismantling. The modification now enables any of the eight frames to be easily replaced if fresh comb or honey stores need to be added or old damaged comb removed. Because of the heat loss from the glass sides, staff use close-fitting 50mm thick foam pads to help the bees maintain their usual hive temperature and exclude unnecessary light. These insulation pads are usually fitted on the apiscope at all times except when the bees are being viewed by school classes.



Photo: Natasha Evans

Club members are welcome to view the apiscope in the Discovery Pavilion which is just 100m from the Tree House Visitor Centre at the Botanic Garden however public access is not possible when educational classes are in session or the Pavilion is not staffed. Check with the Tree House Reception Desk. Further information available at <https://wellingtongardens.nz/education>

John Burnet



Beginner's Basic Beekeeping Course

The Club will again this spring be running a five week basic beekeeping course for beginners:

- Five consecutive Thursday evenings for two hours commencing 7pm
- First session: Thurs 3 Sept - last session: Thurs 1 Oct - total of ten hours
- Venue: Trust Room - upstairs next to the Johnsonville Community Centre Main Hall - entrance off Moorefield Road (next to Johnsonville Library)
- Includes Field day at Club's Chartwell apiary (Sat or Sun) in Oct subject to suitable weather
- Tutor: Frank Lindsay
- Attendees: limited to maximum of ten beekeepers
- Cost: \$250 per beekeeper (includes full colour workbook)
- Registration: to www.beehive.org.nz / beginners course
- Payment to: Wellington Beekeepers Association - Account 031534-0009311-00

Course topics will include: Getting started with bees, hive equipment, protective clothing, honey bee biology, how to handle bees, colony management, swarms and swarm prevention, queen bees, parasites, diseases and pests, harvesting honey, laws affecting beekeeping. (*Ed - I've done this course and I highly recommend it!*)

Any enquiries to Frank Lindsay 027-4034-559 or John Burnet 027-4379-062

Southern North Island Beekeeping Group - Field Day 13 September

All Wellington Beekeeping Assoc members are invited to join SNIBG's Field Day at 10am on Sun 13 Sept at Crofton Downs Primary School Hall, [21 Chartwell Drive, Crofton Downs, Wellington](#)

Registration from 9am:

Non Members \$35, SNI Members \$25, No Family concessions

Lunch \$10 or bring your own.

Programme:

10.00am - Recommendations from the Colony Loss Survey - Pike Stahlmann-Brown.

10.30am - Research findings from the Canterbury RNA Varroa trial.

Up-dated research from the Yellow Legged Hornet incursion.

11.00am - SNIBG Members recommendations of varroa treatments. How and what and when to use.

11.30 A look at Nosema.

12.00 Lunch

1.00pm

- Managing colonies through Spring.
- Methods of requeening hives
- Making splits - Question and answer from the floor.

Followed by the Wellington Beekeepers Club apiary opening hives. Spare bee suits will be available for those interested in seeing inside a hive.

Wet weather programme:

2.00pm

- AFB Another Look
- WBC use of the Foster Method - Frank Lindsay

2.30pm onwards, still to be advised.

Any questions should be directed to Frank Lindsay President SNIBG 0274934559



WBA WhatsApp Group for advice and Information

Designed for members to connect, the WBA WhatsApp forum allows you to seek guidance from senior club members, ask experienced keepers questions, and share general insights about beekeeping. The platform is fully operational, and Sarah welcomes new participants to sign up.

To become a part of the group and find answers to your complex questions, please reach out to Sarah Dye at sarah.c.dye@gmail.com.

What's Coming Up?

- October/November | Varroa Planning
- December | Xmas Quiz and Food Truck

Who can I connect with?

- **Janine Davie** | President president@beehive.org.nz
- **Eva Durrant** | Treasurer treasurer@beehive.org.nz
- **Michelle Cole** | Secretary & Newsletter Editor secretary@beehive.org.nz
- **John Burnet** | Membership info@beehive.org.nz | 0274 379 062
- **Tatjana Manabe** | Librarian committee@beehive.org.nz
- **Kevin Campbell** | Webmaster webmaster@beehive.org.nz
- **Barbara Parkinson** | Supper Coordinator
- **Jim Hepburn** | Swarm WhatsApp Admin 021 926 823

We welcome your stories, articles, recipes, podcast links, and photos! If you have any content you would like to share in the newsletter, please email it to secretary@beehive.org.nz.

