



South Tipperary Beekeepers' Association

Fact Sheet no. 2

Apiary Site – Where to locate your bees

Choosing a site for your bees should be given very serious consideration. Where you locate your bees may determine whether or not you fail in your new hobby but will definitely add to your satisfaction if the right location is picked.

Sites may be either at your own dwelling or an “out apiary” where you get permission from a farmer or forester to place your bees on their property.

Safety should be your first priority. It is of the utmost importance that your bees are not a nuisance to humans or animals. Bees can and will sting occasionally and even the buzzing sound can be enough to cause great anxiety to both human and animals. Therefore with safety in mind the following should be considered.

- Avoid site in close proximity to other dwellings, public roads or footpaths.
- Avoid all areas in frequent use by the public or animals.
- Children and others living with you should be considered.

After giving due consideration to safety the bees and the beekeeper need to be considered. The ideal site will have

- Ease of access, within a very short walking distance from car or house to hives.
- Surrounded by a high barrier e.g. trees to necessitate the rising of the bees above all human activity as they fly from the hives.
- Adequate sunlight but also the need for some shade giving the hive winter warming and summer cooling.
- Avoid frost pockets, damp areas or flooding with protection from the prevailing winds.
- The site should be stock proof to protect both bees and animals.
- Away from public view to avoid vandalism.
- Not in close proximity to another apiary. Avoid annoying another beekeeper by placing your hives in their patch.
- The site must be large enough to allow a reasonable distance between hives for manipulation and expansion purposes.

When considering the bees the following is important:

- An adequate source of forage must be available all year round. Spring flowers are very important to start the queen egg laying Crops like oil seed rape can yield an early spring flower and then the main flower from Clover and Blackberry in June/July. Both pollen and nectar should be considered. Avoid area with large amounts of cereal.
- Bees need water. An adequate source should be provided to avoid the water gatherers visiting your neighbour's ponds.
- Bees need to go on cleansing flights especially after a cold snap in winter so avoid having the bee flying around your neighbours clothes line or parked car.

Finding the ideal site is almost impossible, so a good compromise must be reached taking into consideration, safety, the needs of the beekeeper and the needs of the bees. Remember to take your time when choosing a location. What looks like the ideal dry sunny site in the middle of summer may turn out to be a wet frost pocket site in early January. If time allows find a few locations and inspect over all seasons before finally setting on your final choice.

Space in the apiary is very important for the comfort of the beekeeper and also to allow an arrangement of the hives that minimise robbing and drifting. Avoid placing all the hives in a straight line.

- Arrange the hives in groups of four having each entrance facing in a different direction and the beekeeper working in the centre.
- Form a semicircle, again the beekeeper can work in the centre having all the hives facing out.
- Randomly locate the hives all facing in different angles.

Always have space for expansion and certain manipulation needs to be carried out during the summer where extra space is needed.

The storage of equipment should also be considered and a small shed would be an immense benefit. Hive stands should be provided for all hives, the height will be determined as to what is comfortable for the beekeepers.

The apiary should be kept in a clean and tidy state, remote overhanging trees and excessive undergrowth.. Always check with the owner what is acceptable before your carry out any remedial work. Remember the use of sprays may be frowned on by certain environmentally conscious people.

Lastly appreciate your apiary and reward the owner. A financial arrangement may be necessary but most are happy with a few pots of honey.

Always keep them informed; a note at the end of the year telling them about your years work is always appreciated.