



Le Butineur

Pollinium, créateur de biodiversité



Newsletter of bees of DES TRESOMS

Winter 2024

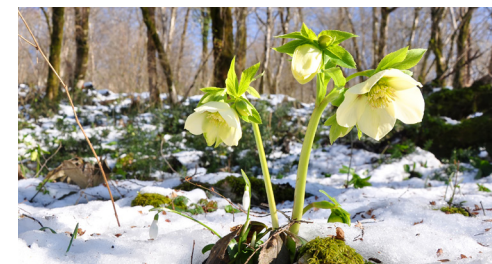
Committed to protect biodiversity, LES TRESOMS invests in sponsorship of bees. Come and get an inside peek of the incredible life of foraging bees. If you are a nature lover, you will certainly enjoy it.



46

– Beehive history –

Helleborus niger, a Christmas present for bees



© catthesun - AdobeStock

Helleborus niger, also known as the Christmas rose, is a perennial plant that flowers from December to May. Its white, pink, purple, red, green... flowers are a godsend for bees. It provides them with nectar and pollen at a time when vegetation is still dormant.

Hellebores can flower for between 30 and 75 days and release their nectar for 20 days. The plant is a real asset for beekeepers and their true ally especially in spring when they just start setting up their hives. However, what's good for bees isn't necessarily good for us. Helleborus is toxic to humans, even though it was long used medicinally to combat madness! Finally, it's worth noting that there is a wide variety of hellebores, many species of which, like stinking hellebore, thrive in undergrowth.

– Beehive history –

The secret of monoflower honeys

Are you more into acacia or chestnut honey? Or would you rather go for lavender or thyme? Or how about heather or sunflower honey? Each of these so-called monofloral honeys has its own character and properties. Acacia honey is very liquidy and sweet, chestnut honey is darker and stronger in flavour, lavender honey is very aromatic and light in colour, and so on. But in fact, how does a beekeeper go about obtaining them?

As you might expect, he can't force his bees to gather only lavender or thyme flowers, nor can he follow each insect. So, to begin with, he will bide his time to position his hives towards the coveted nectar source: neither too early nor too late but when the plant just begins



© Pollinium - ruches de Dominique Alsberghe - Saint Eustache

to distil its precious, sweet liquid. And as soon as the flowering period is over, the beekeeper will hurry up to harvest his honey in time to avoid mixing up tastes. For your reference, monofloral honey

means that 80% of its nectar comes from the same plant.





– Bees and men –

Bees for peace

The bees' remarkable ability to orient themselves in space and time and find their way back to the hive without getting lost, even after foraging for miles through flowers, is of great interest to researchers.

Even more so because bees are easy to train. Once they have discovered a place where researchers left some honey or sugar, they will systematically go back and forth to bring it all back to the hive. This "experiment" works a bit like a trap, since bees' behaviour is predictable and always identical. And now that we can track bees with infrared cameras, it's even easier to understand how this learning process takes place. It's a Pavlovian reflex: as soon as you give a bee a sweet reward, her behaviour is predictable - she will go for it.

But the researchers at INRA in France (the National Institute of Agricultural Research) decided to test bees even further by adding other odorants to the sugar. They noticed that bees can also memorise other smells and detect them again. This also works if you add in the smell of drugs or explosives to the trap.

For example, bees can sniff out TNT contained in anti-personnel mines. This is what a team of researchers at the University of Zagreb, Croatia, found out. After the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia, the ground was left infested with landmines that needs to be cleared. That's when bees can step in and contribute to peace.



©Anatolii - AdobeStock

Henry Duchemin,

apiculteur, sociologue et fondateur de Melilot Consulting.

Retrouvez ces rubriques sur : <http://melilotconsulting.com>

News from Pollinium

Marion Wierzbicki's top priority - environment!

Based in the Monts d'Ardèche, Marion Wierzbicki, 35, didn't become a beekeeper by chance. Her parents were organic market gardeners, and she grew up caring for the environment. Once she had completed her studies, it was a natural choice for her to work in agriculture. And she turned to bees, even though no one in her family was a beekeeper. "I've always loved animals and insects," she says. Now at the head of a beekeeping operation with around a hundred hives, she produces chestnut, all-flower and lavender honey, and is hoping to have around 150 hives one day. "I'm investing little by little," she explains.

Marion is also Pollinium's partner. She looks after Pollinium's apiary at the Valence TGV station and at the Apave agencies in Montélimar and Valence. What I like," she concludes," are the interactions with other partner beekeepers, but also being able to talk about bees and what we do for them. The approach also allows us to bring life and biodiversity into places that we wouldn't have thought were bee-friendly. It encourages a different view of the environment!



© Pollinium



Newsflash

A BEE AND AN ELEPHANT



This is not the title of a Fable by Jean de la Fontaine, but a strange experiment conducted in Kenya by researchers from Oxford University. To protect crops from elephant intrusion, the researchers placed a "barrier" of beehives around the plantations. They did so because elephants are scared to death of the insects. The result: bees managed to repel 86% of the pachyderms' attempts during the critical harvest time!