



## Rural Action

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## Pomeroy Woollen Woods Event – Crafters Newsletter 2 – Honey Bees & Bee-Keeping

Dear Woollen Woods Crafter,

Thank you for your interest and participation in producing artwork for the Woollen Woods event. We have now determined a date to hold the Woollen Woods event which is scheduled for Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2020 (subject to Covid -19 restrictions).

Continuing with our theme of Bees, Butterflies and Blooms, we look at the honey bee and bee-keeping in this newsletter. Honey bees make honey from pollen and nectar collected from flowers and are very important pollinators. Famous for being kept in domestic hives to make honey, in the wild, they live in hollow trees. As with other colony-living insects, the hive is split into a queen who lays eggs, the workers who look after the young and the drones who are reproductive males. The hive is made of wax



'honeycombs' each divided into several hexagonal cells that are used to rear young or store food such as pollen and honey (which is actually regurgitated nectar). Queens live for several years, but summer born workers live for only a few weeks. Those maturing later in the year usually survive the winter by huddling together, with the queen and eating stored foods. Drones are turned out of the hive in autumn and left to die. Honey bees have large hairy eyes, a furry chest or thorax and distinctive bent antennae.

In Pomeroy, we have several people involved in bee-keeping, including Boyd Willis, who has been keeping bees for 20 years and has at present 8 hives. Boyd enjoys bee keeping and says the best part about keeping his bees is making the honey and harvesting the beeswax. He finds it very therapeutic watching the bees on a perfect summer's day returning to the hive loaded with pollen, buzzing with contentment, and then heading out again to collect more.



Beekeepers keep honey bees in boxes or hives. Bees produce not only honey, but pollen, royal jelly, and beeswax. A beekeeper needs to maintain healthy bees, prepare colonies for production, inspect colonies for any sign of disease and replace the queen bee when necessary. Beekeepers also need to follow food safety guidelines when harvesting and processing

the honey. Springtime is when the beekeeper must get the bees ready for the coming honey-producing months, whether it's working with existing colonies, or with new bees that will be going into empty hives. It is during this period that the beekeeper will medicate the bees in order to ensure that they are free of parasites and that the queen is healthy and capable of producing eggs.

It is the beekeeper's responsibility to remove the honey as it becomes ready during the summer months, and to add additional boxes that contain combs if the bees need more space to produce.

It's important for honey production that the bees have enough space within their hives, in order for them to function at an optimum level. As the honey production accelerates, the beekeeper must be aware of when to provide that space. When harvesting honey, a beekeeper needs to wear a protective suit, gloves, and veil, to prevent from getting stung. A smoker (a device that releases light puffs of smoke) is sometimes used to calm bees that are agitated. After the combs have been removed from the hive, the wax coverings on the combs are removed and the honey is extracted. The beekeeper can do this by hand or with the help of a mechanical extractor. The honey is then purified by straining it and skimming any impurities away. At that point, the honey is ready to be jarred and sold.

If you would be interested in bee keeping or require further information contact the local bee keeping group - Mid Ulster Beekeepers Association, who normally meet once a month in Loughry Campus (not at present due to Covid-19). For further information please visit their Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/MUBKA/>

I have included some further knitting and crocheting dishcloth / squares patterns associated with bees, which can be made into bunting.

Finally, thanks to Pomeroy Resource Centre (Phyllis) and The Rowan Tree Centre (Caroline) for distributing the craft packs in the area. I would love to be able to see and share some of the wonderful items that you all have been crafting and I would hope to feature these in our next Newsletter, so please get in touch. Also, please feel free to contact me if you require any additional materials – wool, felt etc. or indeed require any further help or support.

All the best and happy crafting!

*Rosemary Hunter*

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