

What's in a tree name?



We truly have had a false spring. The early warm days feel like distant memory now as I write this on a very windy autumnal/winter day in March, with the weather forecasters mentioning snow. I know it frequently snows at Easter, so I shouldn't be surprised I suppose, but the honey bees at the golf club might well be.

On warm days spring days honey bees are often seen on crocus and snowdrops collecting pollen. It is key in key food early in the year, providing protein that the bees need to feed the young larvae

following the winter days confined to the hive to keep warm.

The return of cold weather is of particular concern to beekeepers as the early warm weather will have stimulated the queen bee to start laying, and the hive will try to maintain the temperatures of around 32 and 35°C in the hive, and in doing so quickly consume any stores they have. Beekeepers up and down the country have a worried eye on beehives and the weather.

In other news, my tree planting activities have been curtailed due to Covid. In previous years I have been a volunteer helping the Ribble Rivers Trust to plant hundreds of trees in and around the town. This year I have planted just one solitary Lime (Linden) tree, *Tilia henryana* Henry's Lime close to the beehives at the Clitheroe Golf Club.

Henry's lime tree is a rare tree, and possibly one of only a handful in Lancashire, as the tree nursery shipped up from Devon. It is reputed to be an excellent tree for nectar, producing lots of fragrant flowers towards the end of summer.

It might be a surprise to know that honeybees forage on trees, such as sweet chestnut, Lime and sycamore, but they are an important source of food for bees and pollinators.

Lime honey is particularly nice, and characteristically has a slight green tinge. Despite there being a lot of Lime trees in Clitheroe, (there is a stand of mature trees by the Castle Health centre and on castle grounds) I have never seen any bees on them.



When I lived down south, I recall being aware of lime trees and avoiding parking anywhere near them as on hot days the car would be covered in tree sap. I've never experienced this in Costa del Clitheroe, but I suspect it as much to do with the variety of lime tree as much as the weather.

Clearly some lime trees are better than others, nectar from one variety, the silver linden, *Tilia tomentosa*, is toxic to bumblebees and attributed to bumblebee mortality.



Fingers crossed that the warm weather returns soon, Henry's lime tree survives, and its nectar doesn't kill off all my bees.

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