

Celebrating 135 years
1881-2016

What: Native bee hive split
Where: Marrickville West Community Garden
When: Sunday 30th October, 2016

Beekeeper and native bee expert Gavin Smith “split” the native bee hive at Marrickville West Community Garden. Splitting involves separating an established hive into two parts, so that a new hive can be established independently from the first.

On this occasion, the new hive created from the split was donated to St Peters Public School!

Gavin gave a fascinating talk about native bees, and we learnt about their habits, life-cycle and more. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to view the unique spiral formation of the hive and taste some of their unique honey.

There are over 1,500 species of Australian native bees, some are solitary and some are social (meaning that they live co-operatively in hives). The particular species of our new hive is *Tetragonula carbonaria* (or ‘TC’) – a small, sting-less, social bee.

We are very lucky to host a hive at our school and our new kitchen garden will benefit from these tiny pollinators. The hive is situated next to the new raised beds and we are looking forward to all the fantastic learning opportunities that the native bees and the garden have to offer our students.

Thank you to Inner West Council and the Inner West Sustainable Schools Network for facilitating this donation. Much gratitude goes to Marrickville West Community Garden for their generosity in passing the new hive to St Peters Public School.

Sincerely,



Kate Hafey, President, St Peters Public School P&C Association
stpeterspandc@gmail.com / 0421 33 7170.



Beekeeper and native bee expert Gavin Smith preparing the new hive sections.



Each section has a perspex panel to give a platform for the bees to build on. Holes in the panels allow movement between the sections.

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Two box sections for the new hive are joined together with tape.

The spare box section will be added to the existing / old hive after the split.

Gavin opening the existing hive. These bees are stingless – the hood he wears simply stops the bees obscuring his vision and irritating him while he is trying to work.

The existing hive comprises of 3 boxes stacked on top of one another – Gavin has removed the top tier, exposing the interior of the hive.

These honey, called 'Sugarbag', is stored in resin pots.

A tool that looks like a bed of nails is used to puncture the resin pots and release the honey. Care is taken not to destroy the hive, so that the bees can repair the resin pots.

The honey is poured through a strainer twice, then decanted into small jars.

This honey has a high water content and a subtle taste.

Gavin now separates the second tier of the existing hive.

The bees have sealed everything up water-tight with a very strong resin, so a paint scraper is required to winkle the boxes apart.

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The spiral structure of the hive can now be seen.

An established hive can sometimes consist of several spirals stacked together.

This formation is reminiscent of a waratah flower.



The tiers are now re-assembled to make two hives.

The old hive has a new, empty tier for the bees to populate. The new hive has two empty tiers and one from the old hive, containing bees that will eventually spread into the empty tiers.



Our new hive has been installed at St Peters Public School.

The hive has a foam cap and is wrapped with shade cloth to keep it insulated.

It sits inside a wire frame, the frame is attached to a shady tree.



The hive is situated next to our new kitchen garden.

We are looking forward to all the fantastic learning opportunities that the native bees and the kitchen garden have to offer.