



Wincanton
RACECOURSE

**Showcase
& Awards
2024**

The Final Bend Busy Bee Apiary

RACING FOUNDATION GREEN AWARD



Proudly partnered by



RACING POST



Objectives

In the spring of 2024, the team at Wincanton collaborated with a dedicated group of local beekeepers to establish a bee-friendly garden within the grounds of the racecourse. This initiative not only brought an important element of sustainability to the racecourse but also had a far-reaching goal of incorporating the garden's produce into our race day menus. The garden serves as a vital sanctuary for bees and other pollinators, providing them with much needed food sources and safe habitats to thrive.

Through this project, we were able to foster meaningful engagement with the local community, encouraging awareness and involvement in environmental conservation efforts. The decline in the global bee population in recent years has raised significant concerns. As stewards of the land, we recognized the importance of contributing to our local environment by creating a bee-friendly space. Bees play an essential role in pollination, which is critical for the production of fruits, vegetables, and flowers that sustain both wildlife and human populations.

By cultivating a bee-friendly garden, we are actively supporting these vital pollinators while enhancing the overall health and biodiversity of our environment. We carefully selected plants that attract and nourish bees and adopted sustainable practices that protect their habitats. In doing so, we have created a thriving sanctuary for bees, helping to reverse the alarming trend of their declining populations while promoting a healthy and resilient ecosystem for future generations.



Delivery

Racecourse Catering Manager Matthew Morton reached out to a local beekeeping association to gather essential details and requirements for creating a bee-friendly garden. During these conversations, it became clear that there was a significant demand for space within the local community where beekeepers could safely house their bees. These discussions soon shifted to identifying a suitable area on the racecourse grounds that would provide safety for the bees while ensuring they were kept away from both the race track and the bustling golf course.

Once the location for the bee-friendly garden was finalized, work began swiftly. The following steps were taken:

Badger Prevention: A 4-foot wired fence was installed to prevent badger intrusion and protect the hives.

Water Access: A local spring was cleared to provide a reliable and accessible drinking water source for the bees.

Stable Hive Foundation: A 28m² area was leveled and paved with a combination of pavement slabs and gravel to ensure a stable foundation for the hives.

Bee-Friendly Plants: A variety of bee-friendly plants were strategically planted around the garden to create an inviting and nourishing environment for the bees.

Hive Installation: In close collaboration with the local beekeeping community, eight bee hives and eight swarms were successfully integrated into their new home.

The entire bee-friendly garden project was completed over a period of four weeks.

Throughout the process, special care was taken to ensure minimal disruption to the bees and their hives, prioritizing their well-being and smooth transition into the new environment.



Results



Since the completion of the bee-friendly garden, the bees have flourished in their new environment, producing a substantial amount of honey. This honey will be incorporated into the produce and featured on our menus at Wincanton for the upcoming 2024/2025 season, showcasing the benefits of sustainable, local food sources. Wincanton Racecourse, nestled in the heart of the Somerset countryside, is surrounded by a strong farming community. The creation of this bee garden is expected to contribute significantly to improved crop yields in the area. The bees' pollination services will enhance both the quality and quantity of local fruits and vegetables, directly benefiting nearby farms and promoting agricultural productivity. Our commitment to biodiversity is reflected in this project. By attracting bees to our gardens, we support a complex web of pollinators, including butterflies, beetles, birds, and other insects. The bee-friendly garden not only provides a safe and nurturing habitat for bees but also fosters a welcoming environment for other beneficial wildlife. This rich biodiversity is crucial for maintaining a balanced ecosystem, where each species plays a vital role in sustaining the health of the environment. Bees are essential for cross-pollination, a process that promotes plant genetic diversity. This diversity leads to stronger, healthier plant populations that are more resistant to diseases, pests, and environmental stressors. In turn, healthier plants create a vibrant and resilient garden ecosystem that can thrive year after year. Additionally, bees play a crucial role in seed production for many flowering plants. Their pollination efforts facilitate natural seed dispersal, which is vital for the survival and regeneration of various plant species. By enhancing seed propagation, bees contribute to the long-term sustainability of the ecosystem, ensuring that plant populations can continue to grow and evolve. Beyond their ecological importance, bees also add to the aesthetic beauty of our gardens. Drawn to vibrant and fragrant flowers, their buzzing presence and graceful movements bring an enchanting and lively energy to outdoor spaces. A garden buzzing with bees is not only a visual delight but also a sensory experience that highlights the wonders of nature in full bloom.

Supporting Information

Gail Stevens, the lead beekeeper at Wincanton Racecourse and a member of the Southeast Somerset Beekeepers' Association, recently visited the team at Wincanton to discuss the progress of the bees since their relocation.

"The bees at Wincanton have settled in remarkably well," Gail noted. "When I observe them, their legs are consistently loaded with pollen from a weed known as Himalayan balsam. Despite their ability to travel up to three miles, I suspect they've sourced this pollen from the roughs of the Wincanton golf course. Their activity is weather dependent, typically commencing around February and concluding in November, which conveniently aligns with the racing season at Wincanton. Initially, I was concerned about the site's exposure to the wind, but the bees have proven to be incredibly resilient. The racecourse has strategically positioned their apiary to maximise sunlight, which has been beneficial. My own colony is still relatively young, but I am hopeful that by next summer, they will produce a substantial amount of honey for use on site."

To further enhance the environment for the bees and boost honey production, Wincanton Racecourse plans to plant apple and pear trees. This initiative will not only support the bees but also allow Wincanton's customers to enjoy the fruits of the collective efforts of the bees, the beekeepers, and the Wincanton team.

Wincanton
RACECOURSE

**SOMERSET BEEKEEPERS
ASSOCIATION**


THE JOCKEY CLUB
CATERING