

Clippings

News, views and all that's hot in gardening this month



Sweet success

Britain is leading the world in restricting insecticides that affect bees and their honey, says Dr Ben Woodcock of the UK's Centre for Ecology & Hydrology. The UK has gone further than the rest of Europe in banning neonicotinoids for use on flowering crops such as oilseed rape, since the EU-wide temporary moratorium from spring 2014. "We are ahead of the curve," he adds.

But Woodcock warns that farmers depend on insecticides to grow vital

crops to feed us, and their needs have to be taken into account, which is one reason why neonicotinoids are still used on crops such as winter wheat.

"If we take out all neonicotinoids, other products will be needed, so it's not a simple situation. It requires on-going assessment," says Dr Woodcock, who points out that bees were in decline before neonicotinoids were introduced to farming in 2002. "There is overwhelming evidence

that neonicotinoids have a negative affect, not just on honey bees but all wild pollinators as well."

The partial EU ban on neonicotinoids has led to residues in the soil in the UK falling by about 30 per cent.

"We are trying to start a long-term monitoring scheme," reveals Dr Woodcock, "and it will be interesting to see if those residues continue to drop. But the results of the study are very promising."



More trees please...

A new forest?

Plans for a Northern Forest along the M62 corridor, spanning Manchester, Leeds and Bradford, are being led by the Woodland Trust.

Austin Brady, the Trust's Director of Conservation and External Affairs, had previously criticised the Government's tree-planting record. "Government is systematically falling short of its targets," he said after the Forestry Commission revealed a planting target set in 2013 was missed. But he's now hopeful about a more forested future: "Leaving the EU means we can dismantle the complex rules that have become a barrier to those that would like to support more planting," he explains. The Government has pledged £5.7 million to the scheme, which will see 50 million trees planted over 25 years.



What's hot?

Discover the latest trends in great garden design from the winners of this year's Society of Garden Designers Awards – Sue Townsend's design (pictured) was a winner in the Garden Jewel category. See sgd.org.uk for more.

A stylish solution to a narrow, north-facing plot