



1. Danai Beach Resort & Villas; www.danairesort.com.
2. Beeswax dinner candles, €12; www.brookfield.farm.
3. Bee cufflinks, Deakin & Francis, €360, at Weir & Sons.
4. Tinted lip balm, €8, Burts Bees, at Marks & Spencer.
5. Yellow Gold Paradise Colours Bracelet, Thomas Sabo, €149, at Arnotts, 35 Grafton Street and branches.
7. Bee notelets, €35; www.smythson.com.

Buzzed UP!

From bee bling to apitourism, have you joined the bee-list?

Unless you are a quiz pro or one of the growing number of backyard apiarists, it would be hard to find a common denominator between actress Scarlett Johansson, poet Sylvia Plath and mountaineer Sir Edmund Hillary. Johansson was given a hive as a wedding present by Samuel L Jackson on her marriage to Ryan Reynolds. For a similar idea Brookfield Farm in Co Tipperary offers hiveshare gifts ranging from “bee friends” to “bee champions” (from €85 - €320). Plath’s father, Otto, was a noted expert on bumble bees, hence her poem *The Beekeeper’s Daughter*. I recommend reading The County Dublin Beekeeper’s Association website for more interesting details on Plath’s interest and inspiration from bees. Hillary, who was a commercial honey farmer for over 30 years, credits beekeeping for conditioning him mentally and physically for mountain climbs.

Interest in beekeeping has risen dramatically in the last few years, though it’s nothing new. In his fascinating book *Buzz* Thor Hanson points out that people kept bees long before they tamed horses or other farmyard animals. It is often said that bees provide every third bite of food in the human diet; we owe a huge debt to their pollination activities. Reason enough not to swat them out of the way or call the local exterminator.

In Celtic mythology, honeybees were regarded as messengers between this world and the spirit realm and were associated with wisdom. In fact they are highly intuitive (much like elephants). Hanson relates movingly how when a young beekeeper died of cancer, her family found her hive in turmoil. The bees swarmed for hours, later massing on the front door. Perhaps it’s why the ancient practice of “telling the bees” of family news, weddings and funerals carried on across Europe and America - the conversations as therapeutic to the owner as the recipients.

Officially spotting a hairy-footed flower bee heralds the arrival of spring, while the ivy bee, which flies in September, is the equivalent of the last of the summer

wine. I’d be surprised if I could spot either or discern the difference between a social and solitary bee; there are 97 different species in Ireland - 21 of which are bumble bees and 75 solitary bees. However, I have a finely-tuned radar for queen bees. Research psychologist Peggy Drexler points out the term “queen bee syndrome” was coined in 1970s, and despite many more women in powerful positions, “Studies have shown that women who work for women are reporting with greater frequency incidents of bullying, verbal abuse and job sabotage.” So much for the sisterhood.

In fashion terms, it was female worker bees, supporting the queen bee, which inspired Sarah Burton’s iconic SS13 Alexander McQueen collection, with its honey-coloured palette, wasp waists and modern beekeeper veils. Alessandro Michele also loves bees and these creatures are a frequent accessories trope, while minimalist make-up and bee-stung lips were features of SS19 catwalks. Bees have always inspired the great and the not-so-good. Aside from Beyoncé’s “BeyHive”, Warren Beatty’s pet name for his former fiancée Joan Collins was “Busy Bee” and he gifted her several charms. “Debo” Devonshire liked to collect bug and bee brooches and display the bling on the sleeves of her gowns.

While it is increasingly infrequent, summer wouldn’t be the same without “the bee-loud glade” to which WB Yeats referred in *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*. One place you can be sure to hear and see bees is in the village of Nikiti on the Sithonia peninsula in Greece, (close to the lush Danai Beach Resort & Villas). It’s Europe’s first beekeeping village where residents have been breeding bees and harvesting honey for over 500 years. Closer to home, there are plenty of courses for amateurs and professionals to learn more this summer. I’m currently sourcing a bee hotel for my garden and adding some D4 honey to my granola mix, the latter a project initiated by Kieran Harnett of The Dublin Honey Project which now produces postcode honey. Bee warned ... ■ PMcC



BALMAIN

“And now I wander in the woods, when summer gluts the **GOLDEN BEES** ...”

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS



1. Designer Hillary Thomas and her hive. 2. D4 Honey; www.dublinhoneyproject.com.
3. Bee door knocker, €27, at Marks & Spencer.
4. Honeycomb and bees.
5. Pink bee sweatshirt, €16, at Marks & Spencer.

Bee informed

Amateur courses to attend

MAY 11 - 2 & JULY 6-7
AIRFIELD ESTATE
Beekeeping Weekend

MAY 18
DUNMORE
COUNTRY SCHOOL
Warre Natural
Beekeeping Course

JUNE 6
BALLYMALOE
Cookery Course
Beekeeping Course

JUNE 9
BÍ URBAN
Building for Bees by Paul Spain
and Kaethe Burt O’Dea

AUGUST 11 - 16
GORMANSTON COLLEGE,
CO MEATH
Beekeeping Summer School



The Bumblebee Flies Anyway: A Memoir of Loss, Love and Muddy Hands, Kate Bradbury, Bloomsbury, £9.99; *Buzz: The Nature and Necessity of Bees*, Thor Hanson, Icon, £9.99.

