

# THE AUSTRALASIAN **Beekeeper**

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*Why Do Bees Sting?*

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*Pollen Consumption  
and Digestion*

.....  
*Hive Haven*



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# Hive Haven

Two Sunshine Coast 'hobby bee keepers' are working on a grand plan to transform native bee products from a cottage industry to a sustainable export market. Ann and Jeff Ross farm both honey bees and stingless native bees. Jeff's passion is honey bees. Ann loves her stingless native bees.

In 2011 Ann and Jeff discovered a colony of honey bees had made a home in the wall of their mechanical workshop in Beerburum. Many people might have followed the advice of friends and called in the pest control but, having come from a family of apiarists, Jeff coaxed the bees into a box and before long bees and honey filled in the weekend, which we are sure many of our readers will relate too.

Ann's new-found interest in stingless native bees and her love of their honey meant it wasn't long before there were eight thriving native bee colonies in the backyard. Ann started researching the health benefits of native honey and cerumen, and was interested in its antibacterial and micro bacterial properties. What happened next launched *Hive Haven* in a new direction, towards saving stingless native bee. The heat waves of 2013 in south-east Queensland devastated both honey bee and stingless native bee colonies throughout Queensland. Beerburum was no exception. Ann lost her 8 native bees, which was devastating.

Ann and Jeff realised that if they wanted to become commercial native honey producers, they would have to design a native bee box that would cope with the very hot weather conditions at Beerburum. They started experimenting with different building materials and hive shapes. A hexagonal shape was trialled because it provided a similar habitat to a bee log or tree stump. They chose a low density polyethylene for durability and disease control. Plastic is a huge industry shift away from traditional timber.

The surface of their hive is impervious to spore-based disease. It can be washed and sterilized. In Australia when a timber hive is infected it is usually burnt, which is costly to the bee keeper. Plastic however can be cleaned and re-used. Overall this hive requires little to no maintenance and provides the bee keeper with a higher return on their time and investment.

The Hive Haven insulation cavity is a huge industry shift... they designed the native bee hive with a 70mm hollow insulation cavity that can be filled with a liquid or a soft solid insulator. With Australia's temperature ranges the insulation cavity enables them to not only farm native bees in extremely hot areas, but to now look at colder regions as well. They are currently testing different heat exchangers with the ability to heat or cool the insulation material, thus giving a greater area of placement.

At Hive Haven they set out to find a solution to our native bee overheating problem. Today, however, they are excited to say their hive enables people to farm native bees in any climate zone of Australia. They can adapt the insulation to suit either hot or cold climates.

Continued over...



▲ Hive Haven V9 Native Hive Assembly

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**Ann Ross with the Hive Haven V.**  
IMAGE BY STEVE FLAVEL

Ann says 'we could not have developed the hive without the generous support from scientists, engineers from the University of the Sunshine Coast USC and the Queensland University of Technology QUT who volunteered their time and industry knowledge.' In September 2017 Hive Haven secured a Queensland Government Ignite Grant Round 2 to manufacture the Hive Haven V9 native bee hive and stabilise the shelf life of stingless native bee honey for export.

Native bees have a lot to offer. For thousands of years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have collected stingless native honey as both a food and medicine source. Native bees shared this planet with the dinosaurs; today however they face serious threat from overheating, disease and loss of natural habitat. Now with the European Honey Bee in rapid decline, native stingless bees are increasingly seen as the possible future of food crop pollination.

Native bee farming is a growing agri-business that lends itself to both rural and urban settings throughout many regions of Australia. On a global scale, governments and turning their focus to native pollinators.



**Native bee on Jelly bush flower.**  
IMAGE BY STEVE FLAVEL

On average a native bee hive only produces 1kg of honey a year. Native honey has a distinctive eucalyptus and tangy lemon flavour and tastes amazing drizzled on vanilla ice-cream. Ann is keen to see native honey on the menu of the finest menus not only here in Australia but throughout Asia. The industry has the potential to upscale if the right markets can be identified. Ann and Jeff are keen to connect with native bee keepers who have native honey for sale.



**Native bee in home veggie garden.**  
IMAGE BY STEVE FLAVEL

In early February, Ann and Jeff were invited to the Abu-Dhabi GFIA Global Forum for Innovative Agriculture as guests of the Abu-Dhabi Food Authority to showcase their work, following the recent launch of their innovative stingless native beehive.

Ann said, "It was a huge boost knowing what we are achieving in Australia has been noticed overseas. The forum focuses on innovative agriculture. Hive Haven has been identified as a 'company shaping the future of farming' and Hive Haven will present to investors, scientists and industry leaders."



Ann says it's been a gruelling 3 years to get to this point and attributes much of Hive Haven's success to being a member of 'Food & Agricultural Network' (FAN) and the Innovation Centre Sunshine Coast.

Hive Haven is working hard to bring a range of stingless native bee products to the table. Australia has 1 million plus inbound tourists yearly, and Hive Haven is working on engaging with this target audience, with the major focus being the corporate gift sector.

Ann and Jeff now sell the Hive Haven V9 native beehive assembly after 3 years of intensive trials. Hive Haven thanks their trial sites including Maleny Dairies, Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital, Glasshouse Views Retirement Village, Innovation Centre Sunshine Coast, Caboolture Montessori School and QUT Gardens Point.

For more information contact Ann via the Hive Haven website at [www.hivehaven.com.au](http://www.hivehaven.com.au)