

Who Knows What Pollination Is?

Bees fly from flower to flower to collect nectar, which the flowers give as a reward to the bees for carrying pollen between flowers.

Bees are very clever, loyally delivering pollen to the correct address. They only work one variety of flowers, until that nectar supply runs out. In the almond orchard, most of the bees in the hive work the almond flowers; others work other flowers to give some variety to their diet.

While collecting the nectar the bees are covered in pollen dust, so before they fly they groom themselves, collecting all the pollen and adding a tiny bit of honey to pack the pollen into the baskets on their hind legs. Pollen is protein food for the bees, like our meat and eggs and the nectar is their carbohydrate, like our bread and honey.

If the flowers are not properly pollinated then the fruit is deformed and misshaped and does not contain the correct number of seeds (e.g. apples)

The flowers are also clever, they have their stigma (female) above the stamen (male) parts of the flower so they do not pollinate themselves, or they have male flowers on one tree and female flowers on another tree. They can also reject unwanted pollen. When a flower is pollinated, it will drop its petals, so the bees are no longer attracted to it, or the flowers collapse and shrivel up. Different plants produce nectar at different times so sometimes you will hear a big buzzing when many bees are working a tree because they know it will soon be turned off.

Some flowers are easily pollinated by many different insects: wasps, beetles, ants and butterflies. Some plants have specific insects, like our native bees, to pollinate them.

80% of all our food, from pumpkins to apricots to meat, depends wholly on the bees, to produce what we have on our plates for dinner.

For more information, please visit www.freibeshoney.com.au

