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BUSY BEES

Bees worldwide are succumbing to introduced insects, but Sydney rooftop honey couldn't be more delicious. Simply strained and bottled, the honey produced by The Urban Beehive from backyard hives and community gardens has earned the business a place as a finalist in the City of Sydney Business Awards. **PAGE 4**

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TAKES THE
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GOOD BEEHIVIOUR

AIMEE SCOTT

DARLINGHURST'S Doug Purdie had no interest in beekeeping until he looked around one day and realised how few bees there were.

"I started reading about what was going on overseas, where bee populations are being decimated by varroa mites and colony collapse disorder," Mr Purdie said.

"Australia is in the lucky position of being the only country in the world that doesn't have these problems."

Twelve months later, Mr Purdie is vice-president of the NSW Amateur Beekeepers Association and his business, The Urban Beehive, is a finalist in the environment category of the Sydney Business Awards. He keeps hives in back yards, rooftops and community gardens across Sydney and sells the honey he col-

lects.

"Honey is a rare thing in that it doesn't actually go off, so it doesn't have a use-by date. I extract it from the honeycomb and bottle it – that's all the processing it gets," he said. "Commercial honey is pasteurised and filtered, so a lot of the flavours evaporate. Raw honey has a range of flavours – there are as many different nectars out there as flowers."

But Mr Purdie doesn't just keep bees for the honey they produce – these pollinators, which are under threat around the world from disease and habitat loss, are an essential part of the ecosystem.

"We need bees to help our back yards produce flowers, fruit and vegetables. I set up a hive in a community garden recently, and people said their passionfruit vines produced fruit for the first time in years." Mr Purdie is so passionate about bees,

he's even stopped wearing gloves when extracting honey.

"I get stung but it's a lot gentler on the bees if you don't (wear gloves) because you can feel what you're doing."

But Mr Purdie said it had been an upward haul to get people to accept hives on their roofs or in gardens because they were concerned about being stung.

"But bees aren't overly aggressive, they won't attack you for no reason," he said.

"A man died from a bee sting in Tempe a few years back, and the coroner found that you've got more chance of being struck by lightning."



If you'd like to have a hive on your restaurant roof or in your community garden, email doug@theurbanbeehive.com.au.





Doug Purdie at home with his bees and (below), extracting honey.

Pictures: MELVYN KNIPE