Hives for the bees (below R) at VanDusen Botanical Garden are tended by a beekeeper (below L). Features of the VanDusen Botanical Garden Visitor Centre include (clockwise from far R) a stunning wood ceiling, Truffles Fine Foods Cafe, various informative displays and a giant skylight/solar chimney

BEE AND BEEHIVE PHOTOS COURTESY VANDUSEN BOTANICAL GARDEN. ALL OTHER PHOTOS BY K.K LAW

Bee-autiful Vancouver

BY KRISTINA URQUHART

Make a beeline for the Vancouver Convention Centre to see the city's most spectacular example of sustainable design. The platinum LEED-certified building uses a seawater heating and cooling system, recycles nearly half of its waste and boasts a fish habitat in its underwater foundations. If that isn't green enough for you, look up: the centre's six-acre living roof houses more than 400,000 plants and grasses and four hives where the bees are as busy as…well, bees, producing honey used in the catering kitchen. Aspiring apiologists can also find these powerful little pollinators in the harbour garden at the Fairmont Waterfront Hotel (Map 1: B6) and at VanDusen Botanical Garden (page 49), which are both sweet on using the fresh honey in their restaurant menus. It doesn't get more local than that.

A Living Building

BY SHERI RADFORD

Some say beauty is only skin deep. When it comes to the Visitor Centre at VanDusen Botanical Garden (page 49), this statement couldn't be more wrong.

Sure, the building is magnificent, with its abundance of natural light and dramatic undulating roofline reminiscent of a flower or whale, but it's also one of the most eco-friendly structures in the world. Reclaimed lumber, on-site water capture and a photovoltaic system to generate electricity are just a few of the green strategies employed. Opened in 2011, the $21.9-million building was designed to be energy- and carbon-neutral and to meet both LEED platinum certification and the more stringent Living Building Challenge (www.ilbi.org), which analyzes seven key components: site, water, energy, health, materials, equity and beauty.

Just a pretty face? Not in this case. **W**