

The Monthly Extractor

Volume 50, Issue 4

April 2024

President's Message

As I write this message, it is the first day of Spring, and I am looking out at all the flower buds starting to emerge and the grass growing tall everywhere. It feels so exciting because the world is about to explode with energy and activity! Welcome to April everyone!



we will take a moment to cheer for our friends, who drop everything that they're doing when a swarm call comes in and speed off to rescue them. We thank you and the bees thank you.

Here's the [link to report a swarm](#).

Spread this to everyone you know.

Swarms are swarming, seeds are sprouting, and SCBA is poised and ready to celebrate the huge variety of pollinators that live in Sonoma County and the nectar-rich plants that feed them all.



One of the best parts of April is our Spring Fling! It is the biggest, members-only event all year. It's a great

time to catch up with all your SCBA friends, attend some great workshops, and enjoy a lovely lunch. Plus, this year there's a honey-dessert contest! My mouth is watering already. Don't miss it! We would love to see you there on April 27 at Bees-n-Blooms.

April is also the month when we see so many swarms swirling around, looking for a home. So, of course, April is our Swarm Rescuers and Bee Share Coordinators Appreciation Month! If you want to be a swarm rescuer, if you have or will receive bees from a swarm rescuer, or if you just admire the work that swarm rescuers do every day, then this is the moment to join us as we all stand up and clap until our hands are sore, for the incredible work that the SCBA swarm rescuers do to help the bees find good homes.

We have more than 30 swarm rescuers and coordinators in our program, spread out all over our beautiful county, so I cannot name everyone here. But we'll see them at our April General Meeting, and

April is going to be beautiful. Take some time to be outside with your bees and your garden. Pull up a chair, sip a lovely beverage and quietly watch the bees work.

Thank you all for being members of SCBA and thank you for being a Bee Tender! Beekeeper = Bee Gardener = Bee Tender! And don't forget to Plant! Plant! Plant!

See you outside,

Carol Ellis, President

Contents

President's Message	1
General Meeting, Calendar, Board Report	2
The Buzz! & Serge Labesque's To-Do List	3
The Pollinator Garden: Possibilities.....	4
Apiary Board Meeting Report	5
From the Program Director: Members Springing Up	6
Spring Fling!	7
Gardening for Bees: The Benefits of Sunflowers	8
Cluster News/Regional Coordinator	9
East Cluster Meeting Notes.....	10
West Cluster Notes.....	12
South Cluster News.....	13
Bee Culture and the SCBA.....	14
Book Nook: <i>The Wildcrafted Cocktail</i>	14
Cooking With Honey: Honey Sugar Cookies.....	15
Business Members	16
Sponsors	17
Contacts	18

The SCBA newsletter reflects the various techniques, theories and art of sustainable beekeeping.

SCBA April GENERAL MEETING

April 8, 6:00 to 8:30pm

Druids Hall: 1011 College Ave - Santa Rosa

Guest Speaker: Tora Rocha, Pollinator Posse

We are excited to have Tora Rocha, from the Pollinator Posse, to talk to us about creating a pollinator friendly habitat and the essential aspects of creating a healthy ecosystem in your own backyard.

Tora has received the Jefferson Award for public service for her work and is an expert in landscape design and gardening for pollinators, with more than 40 years of experience. She is passionate about pollinator conservation and healthy eco-systems, which led her to create the Pollinator Posse, a grass roots non-profit group of volunteers dedicated to education and outreach about the importance of native bees and how to landscape in ways that protect these important insects.

SCBA General Meetings are open to the public and are a great way to meet fellow beekeepers, bee-tenders, and pollinator habitat enthusiasts. There will be light snacks and beverages, and you are welcome to bring something to share.

SCBA April CALENDAR

The SCBA online calendar is updated frequently. Check it out to see current events.

April 6 -- [East Cluster Café](#)

April 6 – [Alternative Hive Café](#)

April 7 – [East Cluster Hive Stand Workshop](#)

April 8 – [SCBA General Meeting](#)

April 11 – [G4Bs Fieldtrip to Singing Frog Farms](#)

April 14 – [North Cluster Café/Hive Dive](#)

April 15 – [Beekeepers Zoom Forum](#)

April 19 – [SCBA at CMSC](#)

April 20 – [Central Cluster Café](#)

April 20 – [South Cluster Café](#)

April 20 – [West Cluster Café](#)

April 27 – [Spring Fling](#)

July 21 – [Flower to Table Pollinator Brunch](#)

Board Report March 2024

By Andy Baxter
SCBA Secretary

This month's board meeting was held on March 4 at 6:40 through 9:20pm. We had no external visitors, so straight to business which included:

- Event planning for the swap meet, Spring Fling, Pollinator Brunch. Workshop prep is going well; food committee planning is on track and donations are coming in already.

- Speakers for all of this year's general meetings. Multiple leads being pursued. Note - the board welcomes suggestions for potential speakers.

- T-shirt contest for the 30th anniversary year. We already have several entries and are considering multiple categories.



- Gardening update. Petition to support legislation on neonicotinoids proposed. G4B has a great plant selection for March and will be offering worms at the spring fling.

- Swarm rescuer training program. Kelli Cox has started a new program to train new rescuers and have them shadow experienced rescuers until ready to "graduate" as independent rescuers.

- Candice Koseba shared details of traveling to Africa with other beekeepers. Watch this space for a future presentation.

Spring Starts With Gusto!

By Kelli Cox, Your 1st VP of Bees

As many of you know, I've been in London for the last ten days with my grandson visiting family. This morning, we went to a farmers' market and met a lovely beekeeping couple. As it's still very cold here, they are quite a bit behind us; their bees are bringing in pollen but they have no sign of drones. There's definitely no swarming -- yet! The pollen where they live is mostly dandelion and scrub, which makes for a "delightful mixed flavor," they say.



Back at home, you have all been very busy! I've been seeing impressive swarm posts on Facebook mostly from the Central and South. Please make sure to report your swarms as soon as possible.

As you all know our Pollinator Brunch has been pushed back. We did get some sign-ups at the General Meeting so will let you more about that at April's meeting.

Now I'm looking forward to seeing you at the Spring Fling! Lunch will be provided but this year I'm asking folks to bring your favorite dessert to share!

Additionally, there will be a Honey inspired dessert competition. Any "honey inspired dessert" will be judged by three judges and you ... The top three winners will receive a prize. Directions will be explained on the day.

Until then, Bee well



Community Members stopped by our booth at the Northbay Science Discovery Day to learn about bees.

Serge's April To-Do List

By Serge Labesque

- Inspect your hives regularly. Focus your attention on the open brood (eggs and young larvae) for signs of health issues and of colony preparation for swarming.
- Ensure unimpeded development of the brood nests. Add frames to provide egg-laying space and comb-building opportunities.
- Add frames and supers for nectar storage space.
- Ensure the presence of clustering space between the brood nests and the hive entrances.
- Perform hive divisions when the colonies are initiating their preparations for swarming.
- Rear a few queens from your best stock.
- Observe the monitoring trays, particularly for signs of brood diseases, chalkbrood mummies, European foul brood-affected larvae or other health issues.
- Gradually open the entrances of the hives to match the increasing forager activity.
- Harvest only surplus early spring honey. Make sure you leave enough honey in the hives, 20 lb. being adequate for a mature colony at this time of year.
- Monitor the swarm traps that were set out.
- Re-queen or combine overwintered hives that are not performing satisfactorily or have failing queens.
- Keep some equipment at the ready to catch the occasional swarm.
- Maintain sources of water for the bees.
- Remove weeds from in front of the hives.
- Discard old and misshapen combs.
- Render wax from discarded frames.
- Routinely clean and scorch tools and equipment.
- Plant bee forage! Plant like a gardener gone berserk! Feed the bees!

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THE POLLINATOR GARDEN

Pollinator Possibilities in the April Garden

By Ann Gallagher White, 2nd VP

For me, the words “pollinator possibilities” stir up images of hope and creativity. Overcoming obstacles is part of beekeeping or bee tending and for that to happen requires hope. We had a gloriously wet winter again and with the moist soil underfoot, I am planting seeds and scheming over catalogs and in nurseries to generate pesticide-free forage year-



round. Examples of hopefulness are also found in this newsletter. Be sure to read Gardening Coordinator Kim Bergstrom’s article that suggests we all plant sunflowers to discourage mites and encourage healthy hives. Most importantly, make a commitment to be pesticide-free in your garden and make your garden an oasis for pollinators (and people).

Here are a few other ways to support pollinators this spring so we can continue to encourage their habitat/forage with the abundant nectar and pollen they need to thrive:

Tour an inspirational garden: We all want to participate in a tour or dig this spring but first, we need inspiration. Sign up to go with a group or go on the spur of the moment on your own. SCBA is touring Singing Frog Farms this spring and those who attend the Spring Fling can tour Bees and Blooms’ Garden. There are so many gardens to tour! Here is a [source for inspiration](#). Bring your ideas home to your own garden.

Participate in No Mow May: Native bees use our lawns to hatch and thrive and we can support them by refraining from having overly tidy lawns this May/spring, allowing pollinators to flourish. “Lawns cover 40 million acres, or 2%, of land in the US, making them the single largest irrigated crop we grow. Lawns are mowed, raked, fertilized, weeded, chemically treated, and watered — sucking up time, money, and other resources. Lawns provide little benefit to wildlife and are often harmful. Grass-only lawns lack floral resources and nesting sites for bees and are often treated with pesticides that harm bees and

other invertebrates,” according to [Bee City USA](#). You can reduce the area you mow, or you can leave the lawn to grow longer for beneficial effects to pollinators, they add. A big thank you to Franny Minervini Zick for sending in this idea!

Plan abundant blooms for each season: Plant a tree or a shrub for each season if you have the space or if you have a porch area or a window box, plant pollinator flowers seasonally. If you need help determining what to plant, check out our gardening website for suggestions and check out [Pollinator Posse’s website](#).

Volunteer/Donate: SCBA programs need your help to flourish so we can establish pollinator gardens, grow plants, hold plant sales, and give educational presentations to members and outreach to our community. Buy a ticket to our largest fundraiser and upcoming Pollinator Brunch or purchase a VIP table. Let’s all contribute whatever we can to our organization so we can continue to help pollinators thrive!

Please reach out to 2ndVP@sonomabees.org with your own ideas and inspiration for spring pollinator health! Happy Spring and Happy Gardening!



Members Linda Sotto, George Ellison, and Sylvia Cook at Northbay Science Discovery Day

Apiary Board Meeting Notes

By Angela Nowicki

The Apiary Board met on February 29, 2024. Here are things that SCBA members should know:

Registration Fee Process

In the fall of 2023, the Apiary Board submitted the Registration Fee code/law revision to the State Office of Administrative Law (OAL) for review. The OAL has requested that the Apiary Board submit more information regarding the data that they used to justify the rewrite of the code. Jennifer Berger, with the CDFA Apiary Protection Program, said she would submit the documentation requested.

You can review the [OAL notices](#) regarding this submission by clicking the link.

Please note that page 1272 lists numbers of colonies of 1-9 fee as \$0 (see below). A comment was made during the meeting that an enforceable code cannot have a fee of \$0. So, either this fee structure must begin at 10-50 hives, or 1-9 hives will have to have a fee amount. I have contacted CDFA and asked them if the 1-9 colonies would be removed from the fee structure and I await their response.

CDFA Hobbyist Meeting

There was supposed to be a hobbyist meeting on March 13, 2024, but I was advised that the CDFA wanted to provide more time for everyone to attend, so it has been pushed to the month of April. The meeting will review the survey and comments from the initial apiary hobbyist meeting. Information on this meeting can be found on <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/plant/pollinators/ApiaryProtection.html> once it is posted.

Next Apiary Board Meetings

- **May 16, 2024, 10am to 12 noon**
- **August 15, 10am to 12 noon**
- **October 24, 10am to 12 noon**

County Contracts with Commercial Keepers

There is a plan for a task force within the Apiary Board to develop a proposal to contract with counties, and likely with the state of California, to place migratory bees on county lands..

Commercial and Hobbyist Meeting

A side note, Glen County Ag Commissioner, Marcie Skelton, said she was interested in having a meeting of Hobbyists and Commercial keepers. The idea is to try to dispel rumor, untruths, and misunderstandings on both sides of the table. Let's see where this idea goes.

SCBA Volunteer Positions

SCBA is run by its members. There are lots of ways to help and volunteer. If you are interested in one of these positions, OR if you have ideas on other ways to contribute, reach out to our Program Director, [Shannon Carr at programdirector@sonoma-bees.org](mailto:Shannon.Carr@programdirector@sonoma-bees.org).

Education Coordinator – Help SCBA's Education Program with connecting educators and schools looking for a presentation. Reply to emails from school, assign an educator, and keep record of school presentations. Presenting to classrooms does not need to be a part of this position unless you want to do that too.

Grant Researcher – Research grants and donation opportunities locally in our community as well as financial opportunities available outside of our county. Find potential grants and send to the Grant Writer.

Social Media Coordinator – Write up and schedule posts for Facebook and Instagram. Share information to, and monitor, the private Facebook groups. Would like a monitor from each cluster for each private Facebook group.

FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

SCBA Members Spring Into the Community

By Shannon Carr, Program Director

Its official! Spring is here!! And everyone is abuzz as the weather continues to get warmer.

Swarm season has officially started. Our Swarm Rescuers have started to get calls and are collecting swarms. They are refilling their apiaries first and will soon start calling members on the Needs Bees List. If you are on the Needs Bees List, remember to be ready! Communicate with your beeshare coordinator, send them pictures of your setup, and be ready for that call.



Statistically swarm season peaks in April and while we cannot guarantee everyone on the list will get bees, we have been able to fill the wish list the last few years. If you are not on the Needs Bees List and wish to be, reach out to me to resend the annual members survey to get on the list.

Last month we got to join our community at the North Bay Science Discovery Day. Thank you to Sylvia Cook, Lynn and Gary Grant, Linda Sotto, George Ellison, and Benson for joining me and interacting with the thousands of children and their parents who stopped by our booth to learn about bees and pollinators. Benson brought his observation hive and children were able to see honey bees up close, see the comb they built, larvae, and the queen even made an appearance. We have a "new to us" donated microscope we set up with prepared slides with bee, butterfly, dragonfly, and other parts as well as pollen and petals from various flowers. The kids and their families learned a lot and our members had a great time sharing their stories, experiences, and knowledge with them. It was a fun day for all!

This month we are getting ready for Spring Fling! We are all excited and hope you are too! [Spring Fling](#) is on Saturday April 27 and is a Members Only event. We have 11 workshops we are putting together including beekeeping, hive dives, garden tours, garden workshops, and equipment. We have a team putting together a delicious lunch and there will be a dessert competition with the only requirement to submission being your dessert must include honey. Gardening for Bees will be bringing hundreds

of plants they have been propagating for a plant sale and there will be a raffle with some beekeeping equipment and other fun prizes.

We have rescheduled our fundraiser, the Pollinator Brunch, so we can attend the inaugural Bay Area Butterfly Festival on May 19 at Mare Island in Vallejo. Pollinator advocates from all over the country will be coming together with presentations, workshops, educational and networking opportunities for those wanting to create a better environment and future for pollinators. As advocates for honeybees, native bees, and all pollinators we feel this is an important opportunity we do not want to miss. More information and opportunities to volunteer will be emailed out closer to the event.

Keep an eye the [SCBA Calendar](#) to keep informed of all upcoming events within

SCBA.

We will hold our 2nd annual [Flower to Table Pollinator Brunch](#) on July 21. This event is SCBA's main fundraiser. The brunch itself is filled with dishes inspired by pollinators, we will have speakers who will share with us what our community is doing to help pollinators, and the silent auction will be set up in a way that will represent and highlight each Cluster, displaying the uniqueness of each region.

Tickets are on sale! \$60 for members, \$75 for non-members, \$500 for a VIP table for 6!



A young "native bee" visits our observation hive at the North Bay Science Discovery Day

SONOMA COUNTY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION'S

SPRING FLING!

(A Members Only Event)

SATURDAY APRIL 27

10:00 AM - 2:30 PM

at Bees N Blooms



[HTTPS://SONOMABEES.ORG/EVENT-5607258](https://sonomabees.org/event-5607258)

Workshops

10:30 - 11:30

Hive Dives

Garden Tour

Beekeeping 101:

All about Honeybee

Beekeeping 103 :

Pests, parasites, and
problems in the hive

G4Bs: Habitat Workshop

Equipment Workshop:

Stencilling your Super

Lunch,
Raffle, &

G4Bs Plant Sale

Workshops

1:00 - 2:00

Hive Dives

Beekeeping 102 :

All about the Hive

Native Bees

of Sonoma County

G4Bs: Pruning Workshop

Equipment Workshop:

Cleaning, storing,
and maintaining



Sunflowers: Food and Mite Protection for Bees!

By Kim Bergstrom, Gardening Coordinator

I hope that many of you were able to join our Gardening Liaison's at your bee cafés to learn how to start plants from seeds. I heard from many of the gardening liaisons that you all had a great time, learned a lot, and got to take seeds in 6-packs back home! The G4B's group is working on starting "pollen-rich sunflower seeds" in their home nurseries.

A recent study in the [*Journal of Economic Entomology*](#) showed that sunflower pollen was associated with reduced levels of Varroa mites in honey bee colonies.

In that study, field colonies of bees were given supplemental pollen (sunflower pollen, wildflower pollen, or artificial protein patties) in late summer when Varroa levels often begin to rise. The colonies that were given supplemental sunflower pollen saw a 2.75-fold drop in Varroa infestation levels relative to bees receiving artificial pollen patties. Additionally, the bees receiving wildflower pollen had more mites than the ones fed sunflower pollen, but the difference was small.

Another significant finding looked at the association of Varroa mite levels and sunflower crop acreage. The scientists found that honey bees located near sunflowers had lower mite levels—even when the total land covered by sunflowers was small (a median of 0.32 percent). A big takeaway for G4B's is that "sunflowers appear to add protection against a major threat to honey bees (i.e., mites)," so to help the bees we will be selling 6-packs of pollen-rich sunflower seeds like Lemon Queens and Mammoth Gray-stripe at the Spring Fling and future plant sales! Please consider buying and planting sunflowers this spring to help your bees!



Sunflower power! Photo by Ettamarie Peterson



South Cluster starting seeds. Photo by Kim Bergstrom

Clusters Highlight Bee Math, Bee Genetics & Seeds

Sacha Lepley, Regional Cluster Coordinator

Wow! March Bee Cluster Cafes were buzzing with information about bee genetics, swarms, bee math exercises and planting pollinator plants from seed. Shout out to Thea Vierling, Christine Kurtz, and Susan Kegley for sharing their wealth of bee knowledge. Thea presented on bee genetics, bee math, swarms, and splits to both East and West Cluster Cafes! Christine Kurtz presented to South's gathering at Maryle Brauer's home and garden, while Susan Kegley presented to Central at Bees N Blooms. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

I learned so many different things at each presentation. North approached this topic by having a hive dive demonstrating splitting a hive into two hives at Bernier Farms. Thank you to Paul and Yael Bernie for hosting the event and making pizzas in their outdoor oven. Also, thank you to other members who opened their homes for fellow beeks to share about gardens and bees including Maryle Brauer and Kristine Wiskes (South Garden Liaisons) and Gülten Eicher (West Garden Liaison) as well! And to all the garden liaisons who led the seed planting activities at the cafes including Maryle, Gülten, Ellen Schwartz and Joe Cutler (West), Angie Nowiki (Central) and Maureen Buf-ton-Landwehr (North). Elizabeth Holdmann's work as seed coordinator featured at most of the cafes as members were able to take home seeds that she had collected, packaged, and labelled. Again, thank you to each of these members for their contributions.

I really enjoyed the West Cluster's SCBA Spring "Bee Ready" Swap Meet at Michael Ellis School. I saw many members making frames, cleaning equipment, getting equipment, purchasing honey and native plants while enjoying the hot dog deal. Huge nod of appreciation to Cheryl Koeller, for her dedication as a cluster coordinator, organizing bee cafes, swap meets, hive dives and researching possible West Cluster volunteers. Her hard work shows. Meanwhile, Tripp Hunter has taken on organizing East Cluster activities and learning Wild Apricot and the Google Drive. Yes!!! Thank you.

Check out your cluster's April bee cafe where the focus will be basic hive inspections, equipment cleaning and gardening tools. Please acknowledge your cluster coordinators for their work when you see them. Susan Kegley & Roger Simpson (central), Bernie Leda, Bill Bridges, & Mike Shook (north), Cheryl Koeller & Maile Pieri (west), Tripp Hunter (east), Rachel Parker & Gayle Slade (south). I appreciate the time and work that all cluster coordinators are giving to make our association an active, supportive, educational group.



Register for the Spring Fling at Bees N Blooms, an SCBA members event on Saturday, April 27 starts at 10 am. Includes lunch and many workshops both in morning and afternoon. Lots of fun had the previous two years here. Beautiful surroundings for our association to meet, learn and get to know each other. Also, sign up for the dessert competition! Go to [SCBA Calendar](#) to register for Spring Fling, Bee Cafes, and garden events.

The Pollinator Brunch has been moved to July to make way for the Bay Area Butterfly Festival on Sunday, May 19, 2024, 10 am to 5 pm on Mare Island, Vallejo. SCBA will be there, and I hope you will be there too. For tickets go [this link](#). And, keep collecting donations -- we'll use them for the silent auction and to give away at the Spring Fling!



East Cluster Gathering at Sonoma Library

by Nancy Bundschu

A treasure trove of interested bee people gathered for meeting East Cluster new friends and remembering the old on March 2. Tripp Hunter made swift work of presenting the agenda, announcing exciting programs over the next few months. Spring Fling (fun member day) Saturday April 27 and SCBA big fund raiser. Mato Herceg is donating a case of wine while Gundlach Bundschu Winery is donating a tour of their organic winery. What other donations can our East Cluster members obtain?

Of note: Darrel Jones will lead a special event "Hive Stand Building Workshop" on Sunday, April 7, 2024. Sign up on the calendar.

There was a brief discussion of methods for bee keeping data:

- colored marking pens
- photos
- recording and transcribing
- drawing a sketch of the frames on the inside of the hive
- noting the data on a piece of paper.

See Ellen Schwartz and follow up Cluster email for a copy of her hive dive form and to learn more about this method.



Thea Vierling

Again, kudos to Ellen Schwartz and Joe Cutler, our plant coordinators for keeping us focused on seeds, planting and keeping the gardens going. We all walked away with our favorite seed plants thanks to their great effort including the yellow and red aster flower, Coreopsis Tintorea, Mexican Sunflower, Yarrow,

and Bee Balm.

Thea Vierling's presentation on Bee Math, Genetics and Queen Rearing reinforces the important factors in determining the health and what is happening in your hive. The question, do you have a healthy laying queen? She highlighted 8 behavioral traits that bees have developed to combat the varroa mite problem and had video clips to show us. The films were fascinating. I did not know about the ankle biting trait. I hope I can find those traits in my next colony!

Tripp acknowledged Ellen, Maralee Joseph, and me with lovely bee earrings for our volunteerism.



Audrey Kraft, John Kraft, and Mato Herceg

Maralee then bestowed a crown on our own Queen Bee, Thea Vierling. Our many thanks to Mato Herceg and Sacha Lepley for the help setting up the meeting room and supporting the visual presentations. The meeting was so well done, and we all learned so much!

We are looking forward to visiting our members' apiaries for our Bee Cafes this year. Thanks to

all who can host. If you are new to beekeeping or have a unique challenge, and would like assistance with your hive inspection, please contact: eastcluster@sonomabees.org. And East Cluster members please join us on April 6 for our next meeting (place TBA). It helps our organizers if you RSVP but come anyway, we'd love to see you!

Alternative Hive Dive in East

By Thea Vierling

We had an informal hive dive on Friday the 15th of March in Thea's Cathedral hive. Jim Spencer and Susan Simmons led the dive with Christina Kennedy and Lynette Cayson as assistants. Christina is an excellent beekeeper, especially with top bar hives, so she was very adept with the frame manipulation. The Cathedral hive is "a handful" with its large, heavy frames which are difficult to remove. The Cathedral hive is to the Top Bar hive what the DD (double deep) is the Lang hive. There is no resting space for the full frames after you take them

East Cluster, Continued next page

East Cluster, from prior page

out of the mother hive. Thea made a modified Top Bar Hive nuc box (see picture) to place the full frames in which worked great.

The alternative hive “cluster” has many members, and it appears that there are enough folks in each cluster to have a good hive dive. Beekeepers can learn a lot about beekeeping from non-traditional hives because one must look at the overall hive in a different way. It changes your perspective which is always a good thing! It helps us to think outside the box and it lets the bees tell us what to do.

Thea showed the group a frame from a DD where she had put a full frame of brood (sealed and unsealed) from her Cathedral hive to help the dwindling population in the DD. It worked great.



Modified Top Bar Hive



Photos of East's Hive Dive by Thea Vierling. Cathedral hive with Christina Kennedy and Lynette Cayson



Thea's house with Christina Kennedy, Lynette Cayson, Jim Spencer, and Thea Vierling

West Cluster's Busy Bees

By Cheryl Koeller and Maile Pieri

The Swap Meet was a HIT! Our Spring Bee Ready Swap Meet on March 9 was a fun and educational event. I want to thank Geoff Whitford, Bryan O'Malley, and Mike Turner, who donated many items for SCBA to sell. Many SCBA members came to the event and were able to purchase used hive equipment, supplies, bee suits and products of the hive at bargain prices.

I would also like to thank the members who came out with goods to sell from their business and help support our event. Candice Koseba, who brought hive equipment, candle making supplies, books and other hive products from her Sonoma County Bee Company. And John McGinnis from Buzz Off Honey had a truckload of hive components that he makes and sells. Geoff Whitford and his daughter were giving taste samples and talking about his honey and hive products; and Gülten Canbolat, my favorite West Cluster Garden Liaison, talked about and sold many native plants she has been propagating.

Matt Lodge and Kelli Cox saved the day barbecuing hot dogs. Each event is a learning experience, and our next swap meet will be bigger and better! Ken McLean of West Cluster and Roger Simpson from Central Cluster demonstrated the framing jig and helped members assemble frames using the jig. This is a wonderful and easy contraption that you can use to line up and assemble 10 deep or medium frames at a time. The framing jig is available for check out from the SCBA library at the Druids Hall. You can contact Shannon Carr, programdirector@sonomabees.org for any rentals from SCBA. Ken and Roger also demonstrated and helped members scrape and use a torch to clean used hive components.

SCBA Beekeeping and Gardening at the CYO Camp in Occidental

Ricardo Corrale is a new West Cluster member

who teaches at the CYO Camp in Occidental and is excited to introduce beekeeping and adding more pollinator plants to the curriculum. The camp is a weeklong program for middle schools that is based on the BEETLES Program of UC Berkeley. It is a nature-based, student-centered science learning experience in various outdoor science programs.

Susan Ament, another West Cluster member, will be mentoring Ricardo about beekeeping and helping to educate interested students who are attending camp this year. Susan and I visited the camp grounds, and we think we have a great spot to set up the hive he picked up at the Spring Bee Ready Swap Meet. Next step, getting it all set up and ready to receive a swarm!

Shannon Carr and Ann Gallagher White have also visited the garden site at the camp to get ideas for the G4B's group who plan to advise and help plant additional pollinator plants in their garden.

Our April Cluster Café will be held at the CYO Camp

and Christine Kurtz will be our speaker. Christine will give a presentation on Hive Biology and using a mock hive will show the mechanics of going into a hive and pictures of specific things you might find - eggs, larvae, worker vs drone sealed brood and different kinds of queen cells!

THE QUEEN RULED

West Cluster had an amazing opportunity to hold our March Cluster Café at our Gardening liaison, Gülten's home. It was a beautiful spring day and 17 members attended.

Our knowledgeable and energetic guest speaker, Thea Vierling, has been a beekeeper since 2008. Thea brought her little bee family of stuffed animals and shared a wealth of information about the honey bee life cycle of drones, workers, and the queen. She talked about worker bees being from fertilized eggs, yep! sperm is laid with worker eggs; who'd expect to have sex education at the Cluster Café!

I love learning about the important numbers in beekeeping: 1, 2, 3. OH, but what about 8, 9, 10? And



Ken McLean is helping Ricardo Corrale set up to assemble 10 frames with the framing jig. Photo by Carol Ellis.

Continued, next page

West Cluster, from prior page

do you know the combination 16-21-24? The little stuffed bee toys helped us to see and pay attention to the differences of each type of honey bee and made Bee Math interesting and fun!

Gülten demonstrated how to plant seeds, split, and propagate seedlings, and shared with us two organic soil mixes that she makes and uses in her garden. She shared several notable tips: compacting your soil slightly then laying those very tiny seeds on top with a sprinkle of soil over them, allowing the



Gülten showing how to open the roots before transplanting a plant. Pic taken by Sara Bard.

seeds to germinate and grow strong roots deep into soil; and opening roots before planting to a larger container or into the ground so they don't get tangled or grow round and round instead of going down. Gülten had also prepared dozens of one-gallon containers with Maximillian Sunflower (*Helianthus Maximilani*), a North American species of sunflower, for everyone to take home. This perennial bright yellow flower will provide food for the honey bees in late fall, during dearth time. Gülten was helpful to members after her presentation with propagating with seed planting or splitting and sharing seeds she has available.

This beautiful day was topped off with "dogs on the grill" and friends talking about bees and plants.

I hope you are all checking the events on the website and reading the emails we send about our events. Cluster Cafés, hive dives, and workshops that are scheduled with the clusters in the association are a great way to get to know other beekeepers and gardeners, meet a Bee Buddy and add

plants you propagated to your garden.

I am very happy to let all our West Cluster members know that we have almost all our Cluster Cafés hosted. I cannot express how appreciative we are to have secured a host and location for so many of our Cluster Cafés. I have also reviewed the survey that was sent out by SCBA and will be contacting those who said you would like to host a bee café, hive dive or gardening/propagation workshop.

If you have any suggestions or questions about West Cluster, please email us at westcluster@sonomabees.org.

South Cluster Studies Applied Bee Math

By Rachel Parker & Gayle Slade

Spring has sprung, and South Cluster's beekeepers and bee tenders of all experience levels gathered at Maryle Brauer's cottage on March 16 to discuss our hives' growth and growing needs. Petaluma Bee Lady Christine Kurtz stopped in to help us with applied Bee Math: What do the various stages of larval development mean for your hive's future? Are they getting ready to split? Or, are they re-queening? How can you split your hive successfully? Lots of great questions, answers, and reminders that beekeeping is full of surprises.

After the bee math discussion, we moved outside to the seed workshop to learn best practices for planting from seed. Moist soil, a variety of seeds, starter pods, and vermiculite were on hand for members to pot up. Our Garden Liaisons Kris Wiskes and Maryle Brauer gave valuable tips for improving the odds of success with seedlings. Thank you both for sharing your expertise and time with South Cluster! Thank you also to Elizabeth Holdmann for the large supply of seeds! No one left empty-handed.

Our next Cluster Café will be on April 20. Location and details to come!

Bee Culture Magazine's Link to SCBA

By Ettamarie Peterson

Over the years I have enjoyed writing articles for the *Bee Culture* magazine. Several times the articles have either featured what SCBA and/or members of SCBA have done. I wrote the articles as good examples of what a beekeeping association can do to help members and/or the public.

In August 2020 the article titled “Gardening for Bees, Learn from This Pacific Coast beekeeping association” was published. That was about the year our cherished member Cheryl Verreto, a master gardener, organized our association into a massive exhibit in the Hall of Flowers for the Sonoma County Fair. Then I described what our wonderful 2019 garden leader Ellen Sherron told me about the Gardening Program we have. I explained what Ellen described as a smart, enthusiastic, loyal volunteer group. I mentioned how Alice Ford-Sala wrote a monthly column for our newsletter telling members about “the plant-of-the-month.” The article included a link to our G4B’s brochure and photos of our fair exhibit and monthly plant sales.

In the December 2021 issue our long-time member Hector Alvarez was featured. In my article, I explained how I first met Hector in the Sonoma County Beekeeper’s Club (now an association). Hector was a member of SCBA for many years and was recognized by the international Slow Foods Organization and sent to their week-long conference in Italy with his wife and two daughters. He is one of the commercial beekeepers that takes his many colonies to pollinate the almonds annually. I described the hard work he does throughout the year to make his honey and pollination business so successful. (By the way, Hector was honored this year at the Second Annual NorCal Public Media Food and Wine Awards as one of the six outstanding producers of quality food.)

In April 2022 my article on the joys of swarm catching article was published. Christine Kurtz has her photo in that article. A photo of me that Darlene McGinnis took of my catching a swarm was also in that article.

I have just submitted an article about our wonderful members Doug and Katia Vincent and their Beekind store. SCBA is mentioned in that story as well. It has been accepted so that is one more reason for you to subscribe to *Bee Culture* magazine. I have learned so much having my subscription for over 20 years!

Continued, next page

SCBA BOOK NOOK



Wildcrafted Cocktail

By Ellen Zachos

Have a Drink on the Wild Side! And check out the newest book in the SCBA Library! The *Wildcrafted Cocktail*. Make your own foraged syrups, bitters, infusions, and garnishes by Ellen Zachos.

If you love a good cocktail, and you relish the hunt for seasonal, foraged foods. Combine your passions, shake, garnish, and enjoy. This book will show you just how easy it is to make delicious and intriguing, one-of-a-kind mixed drinks with common flowers, berries, roots, and leaves that you can find along roadsides or in your backyard. Foraging expert Ellen Zachos gets the party started with recipes for more than 50 garnishes, syrups, infusions, juices, and bitters, including Quick Pickled Daylily Buds, Rose Hip Syrup, and Chanterelle-infused Rum. You’ll then incorporate your hand-crafted components into 45 surprising and delightful cocktails, such as Stinger in the Rye, Don’t Sass Me, Merry Woodsman, Silverberry Sour, and Tree-tini.



SCBA has more than 250 books, DVDs, and equipment in our Library. *Wildcrafted Cocktail* is just one of many books about bees, gardening for bees, and products from the hive in our collection. You can view all our books and DVDs available to you at [SCBA-Library](https://www.sonomabees.org/SCBA-Library).

SCBA Library is available to members at in-person general meetings and during the week by appointment. If you are interested in checking out a book, email our librarian at Librarian@sonomabees.org to plan to pick up one or two of the books, DVDs, or equipment available to SCBA members.

Honey Cookies

By Rachel Parker

Sugar cookies were a staple of our kitchen for all holidays and milestones – Christmas, Easter, Halloween, graduations, baby showers, the list (and my supply of cookie cutters) is endless. I've wanted to make a rolled cookie that uses honey, but I've been wary of honey's moisture content changing the chemistry of the beloved cookie. This version replaces some of the sugar with honey – more of a honey supplement than replacement. The result is a slightly soft sweet cookie; think gingerbread cookie texture. The recipe says icing is optional, but the cluster café attendees definitely preferred the cookies with frosting. My husband is eager for me to try these with lavender sugar; I'm thinking orange. What will you try?

I received a honeycomb patterned rolling pin for a birthday present, which I'm still learning to use.



with parchment paper or use a silicone mat.

Roll the dough on a floured surface to ¼-inch thick. Cut with a 2-inch cutter and place on a prepared pan.

Bake for 11 to 14 minutes or until the cookies are golden brown. Transfer to a wire rack and cool completely. Glaze if desired.

Honey-Orange Glaze

1 cup powdered sugar
1 tablespoon honey
2 tablespoons orange juice

Combine in a bowl. May add more juice or water to reach desired consistency.

Honeybee Sugar Cookies

From *Honey, 50 Tried & True Recipes*
by Julia Rutland

1 cup unsalted butter, softened
½ cup sugar
1/3 cup honey
1 large egg
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
2 ¼ cups all-purpose flour
¼ teaspoon salt

Honey-orange glaze (optional)

Cream the butter and sugar with an electric mixer. Beat in honey, egg, and vanilla.

Combine flour and salt. Gradually add the flour mixture to the butter mixture, beating well. Divide the dough in half and flatten each piece into a disk. Wrap and refrigerate several hours or overnight.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees; line a baking sheet

Bee Culture and SCBA, from prior page

The magazine was started in 1873 by Amos Ives Root. It is designed for beginning, sideline and commercial beekeepers who want the latest information on keeping bees. From industry news to upcoming events, *Bee Culture* is a must-have resource for beekeepers around the world. Published monthly; print and digital editions are available. [Click here](#) for subscription information. Note that discounts are available for beekeeping association members. Use codes BEECLB1, BEECLB2, BEECLBD, or BEECLBB2 for discounts

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Liz is a beekeeper and potter motivated by the intersection of art and conservation. Along with pottery, she offers live bee removal and backyard beekeeping services.

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SCBA Member Matt Lodge of Sonoma County Properties will donate 10% of the income from a property sale to the non profit of the sellers' choice.

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