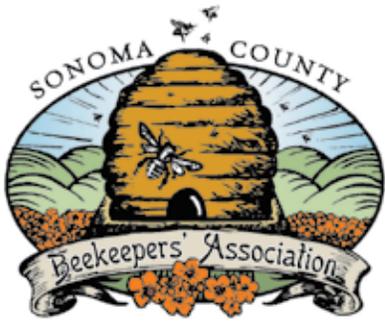


The Monthly Extractor



Volume 43, Issue 8

August 2018

This is our newsletter that reflects the various techniques, theories and art of sustainable beekeeping.

President's Message

Fellow Beeks,

This is my second favorite time of the year. Kids have gone back to school and everyone, including our bees, is winding down for the longer winter months.

Leaves are changing colors, days are getting longer, tomatoes are finally ripening and we're picking apples to make copious amounts of everything apple! :)

Summer is coming to a close and where our bees are concerned I love this piece of Serge Labesque's advice (from last years extractor)....

"Beekeepers have to make quite a few decisions at the end of summer. Many of these are crucial for their bees and, come next spring, will affect the vigor of their apiaries: Which colonies to take into winter? Which ones require immediate attention? How to manage them through the fall? How much honey should be left in this or that hive? This is just a sample of numerous questions that have to be answered."

Hopefully these are questions you're asking yourselves and are planning to get together with your Bee Buddies to winterize your hives. Check with your Clusters to see when the "Winterizing your Hives" workshop is happening (if it hasn't already) and start planning.

Exciting news! We have secured a new spot to have our Annual Holiday Potluck and Auction! Details will be in the October Extractor. In the meantime, please contact

auction@sonomabees.org with any donations you have for our silent auction or bring to our general meeting and look for the auction table.

See you at the General meeting,



Kelli Cox
President

This Month's Calendar

Monthly Meeting: Monday, September 10

Social hour 6 pm to 7 pm

General Meeting from 7 to 9 This month's speaker is Stacey Combes, UC Davis, Biomechanics of Bee Flight

Looking ahead at our fall programs, we have a good lineup:

- October, Serge Labesque, Preparing Your Hives for Winter
- November, Bill Toone, Sex Worth Dying For: Stories of semelparity-sex that ends in death
- And of course, in December, we have the annual Holiday Dinner and Silent Auction.

Upcoming Events

- Heirloom Expo September 11, 12 & 13, 2018. Sonoma County Fair Grounds Gates are open 9 AM to 9 PM. See article by Karen Cappa, Volunteer Chairperson.

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My September

Beekeeping To-Do List by Serge Labesque

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From the hive

In August, the brambles that fill a small area behind our storage shed were loaded with large clusters of blackberries, even though jays and other birds had already picked ripe berries to their gizzards' content. Visibly, the deer had also nibbled at young shoots. And there were quail, too, scurrying to find shelter under the thorny vines. Still, there was a copious share of the crop left for us! To be sure, it's not a splendid spot, but it's beautifully alive. Bees do outstanding pollination work there, spring after spring.

Bees live without preying on other animals. They collect nectar and pollen, ephemeral plant products that would otherwise go to waste. As they do this, they pollinate flowers. This permits or enhances the propagation of plants, the protection of the soil and the production of seeds, fruit and nuts, which in turn feed many other animals, humans included. It's quite a remarkable feat, isn't it? And yet, the largesse of the bees does not end with their pollination services. As beekeepers, we are immediate witnesses and beneficiaries of the bees' toil. We may be rewarded with the products of the hives for just providing homes to our colonies and for facilitating their work with savvy hive management.

On multiple occasions along the beekeeping season, I remove surplus honey from my hives. A few combs that are nicely capped can be quickly and easily harvested without alerting the bees. I transport the honeycombs back home, where they are promptly crushed. The honey is allowed to drain out of the wax and settle for about one week to ten days before it is bottled. Even after this period of time, the wet wax still holds a substantial amount of honey, especially at the end of summer, when it is very thick. The honey-laden wax may be placed in the top feeder of the hive that produced it. Then, the bees can retrieve the honey from the wax. Alternatively, the wet wax may be washed before it is rendered in a solar wax melter, and the honey-sweetened water can be used to produce mead. In this case, one might facetiously say that keeping bees leads us turn water into wine... sort of! Propolis is harvested by scraping it off the end bars of the frames. At that point, the wood frames may either be returned to the hives they came from, or rinsed with water, allowed to dry in a place that the bees cannot access, and finally run by the flame of a propane torch before being reused or stored.

The amounts of hive products that are packed in the combs are substantial. Normally, ten standard deep Langstroth frames processed as described in the previous paragraph produce fifty pounds (23 kg) of honey that can be bottled. Another six to ten pounds (2.75 kg to 4.5 kg) of honey remain in the wet wax. If this wet wax is not returned to the bees, the honey it holds may be used to produce approximately three gallons (11 l) of mead. Either way, there will be three pounds (1.3 kg) of pure wax afterwards, and a few grams of propolis. Note that these quantities are

highly variable. For example, thick combs can hold much more honey without substantially increasing the amount of wax. And the volume of mead? Well, that depends somewhat on how sweet you like it.

Since the bees work hard to produce this bounty, it would be regrettable to let any of their excess production go to waste. But still, when we harvest honey from our hives let's remember not to take any more than the surplus honey, which is what the colonies can safely spare. The bees must be served first and well!

September in the apiaries

We are now entering the last phase of this beekeeping year. The survival of our colonies over the winter and how they'll emerge next spring, depend to a great extent on their condition during the fall. Although the preparation of the hives for winter is a task that is primarily done by the bees, the beekeeper, too, can have a determining influence on the outcome.

Bees that are adapted to their local environment respond fittingly to seasonal cues. In late summer they spontaneously begin to reorganize their nests and to prepare their colonies for the next several months. Their main fall tasks include consolidating stores in and around the brood chambers and raising winter bees. The decrease in the production of eggs by the queens, or its pause, which occurs normally when the compact brood nests become full, is highly desirable. Indeed, the period of reduced brood rearing activity that will follow will spare the winter bees from nursing chores. The absence of brood will also allow the bees to control the mite populations and will reduce the consumption of stores. If any one of these facets of the preparation of a hive is not achieved during the first half of fall, the colonies may suffer or simply not make it to the next spring.

Beforehand, however, around the end of summer there is a brief bout of brood rearing which is also important in anticipation of the cold season. The young bees that are produced around the fall equinox will become nurse bees for the brood that will later form the winter clusters, the winter bees. As the bees consolidate their stores in the upper parts of the brood chambers by moving uncapped honey from more distant combs or by unloading nectar, they gradually drive the brood nests downward and closer to the hive entrances.

Unlike in the spring, the congestion of the brood chambers does not lead to reproductive swarming at this time of year. The occasional late summer swarms are most frequently absconding swarms that leave stressful in-hive conditions, such as elevated parasite loads, intense heat, or dearth, for example. When these swarms come my way, I offer them a hive, but no food, and I do not combine them with any of my colonies. It's up to them to secure what they

need to live on, exactly as if they had moved into a tree hollow.

Since life in the hives during the fall is very different from what happens earlier in the year, when the populations and their sustaining brood nests expand rapidly, fall hive management is entirely different from spring hive management. After assessing the condition of the hives early in the month, we implement without delay plans to prepare the colonies for winter. In some instances, this may include hive combinations or requeening.

In order to reduce the volume of the hives, some of the surplus honey may be harvested. The frames that still hold patches of capped honey that was left in place after the bees removed the uncapped honey, and the dark honeydew honey are taken out first. The balance of the surplus honey will be harvested in October. This is to make sure we leave in the hives what the bees will need to overwinter safely. At times, scratching the capping of honeycombs that are relocated above the hive top feeders is all that needs to be done. The bees will clean the comb while moving the honey to the brood chambers. Although the honeydew honey is delicious, it can cause bee health problems during the winter. Frames that are empty, unused, or that hold old or misshapen combs are also gradually removed from the hives. Still, while helping in the reduction of the volume of the hives, we need to respect the relative placement of their contents, which the bees have established.

Reducing the hive entrances is not to be forgotten, as it keeps them defensible by the bees against robber bees and yellowjackets.

This year, the colonies have kept producing drones throughout the entire summer in spite of the nectar dearth. Nonetheless, drone culling is to be expected in early fall. Although nectar was in poor supply, pollen foragers kept bringing their colorful loads. This could explain both the production of drones in summer, which had not happened for many years in my apiaries, and the nearly constant robbing behavior that precluded many of the open-hive inspections I had planned, even very early in the day, when some nectar should have been available. The message is that there are too many bee colonies and not enough food for them here!

The mite populations are approaching their maximum. The impact of Varroa and of its viral cohort on the colonies may become noticeable. The set of signs of damaging levels of infestation is known as Parasitic Mite Syndrome (PMS). Early fall is also when the colonies that have good defenses against the mites thrive. Notes about the differing performances of the colonies against Varroa are to be made. Next spring, we will emphasize the propagation of the colonies that are doing well and the production of queens from these good stocks.

Healthy, queenright colonies that have adequate amounts of stores in the fall have the best chance of making it through the winter, as long as they start in compact and well-organized brood chambers and they can raise bees that will form strong winter clusters.

In summary, this month:

- Assess the colonies, their health, queens, brood nests and stores.
- Monitor the progress of the colonies in their preparations for fall and winter.
- Requeen or combine hives that are not performing satisfactorily and those that have failed or failing queens. Note that only healthy hives should be combined.
- Reduce the unused volume of the hives (Follower boards greatly facilitate this.)
- Consolidate honey in honey supers (Reduce the volume of the honey supers with follower boards.)
- Manage frames in preparation for fall culling of the old and misshapen ones.
- Beware of yellowjackets and of the risks of robbing. If necessary, reduce the entrances of developing colonies and of those that are under attack. Make sure the hives have no secondary entrances.
- Avoid hive manipulations that can trigger robbing.
- Provide and maintain sources of water.
- Provide some afternoon shade, if possible.
- Ensure that hives are adequately ventilated.
- Harvest, extract and bottle surplus honey, if there is any, and in moderation.
- Return wet frames and cappings to the bees for cleaning (by placing them on top of hive top feeders or inner covers during the evening).
- Render wax from discarded frames and from cappings.
- Beware of the fire danger when using the smoker in dry-grass areas.
- Routinely clean and scorch tools and equipment.

Serge Labesque
© 2018



**Foraging at Peterson's Farm in Late August
Oregano**

Education Committee Report

By Maggie Weaver

It is amazing to me that summer is almost over, and yet, early signs of the changing seasons are everywhere.

Nowhere is it more evident than within the Education Program Committee of the SCBA. We have been very busy behind the scenes all summer planning, strategizing, and developing the rollout of our new education program format. The excitement built as lots of volunteer recruiting and materials gathering lead up to our first volunteer training of the new school year. On August 11th more than 20 volunteers gathered at Susan Kegley's farm, Bees n' Blooms. There we introduced the new format, demonstrated teaching materials, and just familiarized everyone with the varied lessons we provide classrooms throughout the county.

We have another training set for September 22nd, again at Bees n Blooms, from 10am-noon. Please join us if you have any interest in being a part of our education team. It is great fun! You don't need to be a honeybee expert or teacher. All that is required is a love of children and of honeybees...we provide the rest!

New presentation requests have already started rolling in.

Interested? Contact us by emailing education@sonomabees.org or come find us at the new education table at the SCBA monthly meetings. Catch the education buzzzzz!



Foraging at Peterson's Farm in Late August
Borage

Time to one again get ready for Our Silent Auction!

By Darlene McGinnis

The SCBA Holiday pot Luck and silent auction is underway. Donations and request are being made and donations are beginning to trickle in. I am patiently awaiting your lovely donations and will need your help again to make this year's auction a success!

Don't forget to ask your favorite restaurant, nursery, spa, massage therapist, hair stylist, or a business that you frequent for a gift certificate or donation. They don't have to be bee related. This is a time for people to pick up some last-minute Christmas gifts for those hard to shop for people on their Christmas list that might not even be into bees. How about some Vacation stays? Who doesn't want to get away? We have done this enough time that I think that everyone knows what we are looking for so it's just a matter of getting out there and doing it.

We will be having our "Wine Pull" again this year, so if you are in some way connected to a winery please see what you can do towards collecting some quality wines. If you are able to have a couple of "special bottles" donated, we can add them to the auction as well. If you know of a brewery that might want to help out with some beer that would be great also. Remember to ask your donors for gift certificates, signage, business cards and other promotional materials before you go to pick up their donation gift.

Please bring your donated items to the general meetings in September, October or November. **AVOID THE HOLIDAY RUSH!** Remember there is a lot of work that goes on behind the scene and it happens during the holidays so please get your donations in as soon as possible, Dec 1st being the last day we can accept a donation.

We are a 501c3 educational foundation and all donations are tax deductible. You can reach Darlene at auction@sonomabees.org or you can reach her by phone or text at (707) 529-8053.



Foraging at Peterson's Farm in Late August
"Apple" Succulent

Heirloom Festival

By Karen Cappa

The National Heirloom Exposition is coming again to the Sonoma County Fairgrounds from September 11-13th.

We will have a booth there near the labyrinth in the kids' area near Findley Hall.

As usual we will be talking all about bees, pollinators, planting for bees and educating kids and their families about keeping our bee population healthy and happy.

We will be having fun activities for the kids, will sell honey sticks and No Spray signs and Jolly Bee will be there to welcome everyone to our booth.

Also, the Expo is doing 2 round tables to talk about bees.

On Tuesday the 11th at 12 Noon we will have 2 of our members talking about planting for bees.

On Wednesday the 12th at 2:00 we will have 2 members talking about being beekeepers.

This event is so wonderful and unique. We are fortunate to be able to have this Exposition in Sonoma County!

If you signed up to volunteer - THANK YOU! And even if you didn't, do come and spend time there. There are amazing talks and lectures that are open to everyone with a ticket. Good healthy food to purchase and amazing gadgets, gardening helpers, plants and all kinds of surprises. Don't miss out!

You can see the schedule on their website... theheirloomexpo.com

Sonoma County Beekeepers Association Monthly Meeting

August 13, 2018

Location: 4H Building, Rohnert Park

Meeting started: 7:02 PM

Approx. attendance: ~ 96

Items covered

- July picnic was a success. Special thank you to Susan Kegley!
- Thank you to volunteers for Sonoma County Fair and Gravenstein Apple Fair!
- Special thanks to Volunteer Committee that quickly scrambled to find more volunteers in response to finding that our SCBA space was more than double the size anticipated. What a special event and space it was!!
- Heirloom Expo coming up in September
- Last year SCBA sold over \$500 in honey sticks!
- New education table display shown tonight, including a large poster board of "The Life Cycle of the Honeybee"
- New members introduced
- Reminder about the Silent Auction on December 10, 2018. Location TBD
- Thea taught us the acronym ELPA for Egg, Larva, Pupa and Adult. (She learned that from Ettamarie who learned it from a teacher.)
- Speaker information
- Gabe Jackson, The Beverage People (Santa Rosa on Piner Lane)
- "Mead and Meadmaking" - history, trends, styles, process and equipment
- See also "The Complete Meadmaker", book from the Beverage People
- There is evidence that mead was the first fermented beverage, before wine and beer!

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Jones,
Secretary

Santa Rosa Jr. College Bee Courses

by Serge Labesque

Class Name: Intermediate Beekeeping for Fall, Winter, & Early Spring Class

Date(s): 09/20/2018 to 9/27/2018
Weekly - Thu 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM;
2 sessions starting 9/20/2018, ending 9/20/2018
Santa Rosa Campus; Lark Hall, Room 2009
Number of Sessions: 2 Number of Weeks: 2

Class Web Description: This class will expand on the beehive management techniques that were explored during the Introduction to Beekeeping course. The focus of the class will be fall, winter, and early spring management of beehives in Sonoma County. Detailed explanations of techniques that are used for fall, queen management, and hive preparation for winter will be given.

Max Class Size: 90

Class Fee: \$50.00
Materials Fee: \$8.00
Registration Fee: \$2.00

Class Name: Introduction to Beekeeping Class

Date(s): 10/03/2018 to 10/24/2018
Weekly - Thu 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM;
4 sessions starting 10/03/2018, ending 10/24/2018
Petaluma Campus; Call Building, PC 697
Number of Sessions: 4 Number of Weeks: 4

Class Web Description: This short course will introduce students to beekeeping with a strong emphasis on beehive management techniques as practiced in Sonoma County without reliance on any treatment whatsoever for pests or diseases. Topics include: overview of the honey bee colony; beekeeping tools and equipment; how to start with honey bees; swarming; honey flow and harvesting of hive products; diseases, pests and enemies; hive and queen management; and beekeeping throughout the year.

Max Class Size: 57

Class Fee: \$78.00
Materials Fee: \$16.00
Registration Fee: \$2.00



Foraging at Peterson's Farm in Late August
Sedum

Bee Plants of the Month

By Alice Ford-Sala

Mint

Mentha

Family: Mint (Lamiaceae)

Mint is probably the most commonly known and used medicinal herb. The entire larger family, Lamiaceae, includes many important and useful medicinal, culinary and bee-friendly plants such as basil, salvias, lavender, oregano, hyssop and thyme.

Spearmint- *M. spicata*- is thought to be the mother mint, from whom all other mints descended. Calm and green with a sweet, mild flavor, the plant is not as showy as peppermint but the leaves and flowers are still quite attractive. Menthol is well known as a muscle relaxant and pain reliever. Beside use in teas, spearmint is widely used in the Middle East in many delicious dishes, such as tabbouli salad.

Peppermint – *M. piperita*- is well known and beloved for its refreshing and lively taste and aroma. Very attractive with shiny green leaves on sturdy reddish stems, the purple-blue flowers are bee magnets. Grow it in your garden for lovely minty teas, or infuse ice water with a variety of mints for a cooling drink on a warm day. Peppermint is commonly used to calm an upset stomach, freshen the breath and supposedly helps to ease the pain of headaches, burns (mixed with honey and applied to the minor burn), and even bee stings!

Apple mint- *M. suaveolens*- has soft fuzzy leaves and white flowers. Children enjoy rubbing the leaves between their fingers to release the exotic apple aroma.

The fruity flavor combines well with other mints, or chamomile for a delightful tea.

There are many more varieties of mints, as they like to intermingle, so they readily hybridize. Some favorites are Chocolate, Orange, Pineapple and Strawberry mints. Many medicinal sources recommend keeping the plants separate from each other so that they retain their beneficial properties.

Also highly recommended is growing mints in containers as they are notorious for running amok in the garden. They send out runners and can travel far and wide, as long as there is moisture available. I haven't had too much of a problem, I have some in the ground and some in pots. If they ever get too rambunctious, I harvest them for tea. Grow them in moderate to rich soil, and they do like water but are better controlled if you don't give them too much. Partial shade is preferred, especially if you want them to bloom, which they won't do in full shade. The bees will thank you as they make delicious honey from one of their favorite plants!

Alice Ford-Sala



Penny Royal is in the mint family

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Planning for Planting Beyond Honey

By Miles Sarvis-Wilburn

Where are our bees foraging right now? Spring is a bountiful time for nectar flow but quickly leads to summer dearth as California sustains very hot and dry months from around June through August. We must remind ourselves that honey bees are not native to this continent, and while they as a species have naturalized very well, their nectar flow has not. Honey bees unsurprisingly gravitate towards Mediterranean plants (lavender, borage, rosemary) for their forage, but many of these non-natives require large amounts of water and cannot handle our hot, waterless summers without added care from the gardener.

And so, in addition to maintaining beautiful and useful Mediterranean plants we can supplement our gardens with natives that bloom at other periods of time, require far less water, and help support the plethora of native bees, butterflies, moths, beetles, and bats that California has to offer. Here are five foolishly easy plants that make a beautiful addition to any garden and play a vital role alongside our Mediterranean counterparts.

1. Common Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

You are likely familiar with yarrow as it is native to our area, grows easily and bountifully, is gorgeous when blooming, and has many culinary and medicinal uses. This said, its use as a pollinator plant cannot be overstated. Looking closely at the beautiful blooms (white, yellow, pink, red), one finds honey bees, beetles, butterflies, moths, and many more insects feeding on the colorful landing pads. Some birds use the plant to line their nests and yarrow usually blooms from May to July, providing much needed nectar flow in these hot months. Truly, yarrow may be the most versatile of all garden plants.

2. Bee Plant (*Scrophularia californica*)

A plant named “bee plant,” how could it not be amazing? In truth, this plant is unassuming. It is not terribly noticeable when shooting, flowering, or resting. Leggy stems sprout shrub-like from the ground, with blueish green leaves until the flowers, themselves small and brown-red. This said, and perhaps like most things in life, common things are sometimes the most beautiful. I have sat and watched honey bees and bumble bees pass up pastures of flowers for this plant, almost intense in their fever to forage upon it. A member of the figwort family and also known as California figwort, the bee plant blooms from winter through spring, and sometimes even further. Bonus: bee plant is the host plant for the butterfly larvae of the Common Buckeye!

3. California poppy (*Eschscholzia California*)

Our state flower and beloved by all, the California poppy is a vital pollinator plant for our area as it is one of the earliest to produce pollen. It flowers all through the summer, is insanely easy to plant and maintain, and the flowers can be used as garnish on salads. Note: the poppy does not produce nectar and therefore is not used in honey production. This said, it is a friendly flower to most pollen-gatherers and its stunning color fits in well with most gardens.

4. Coral Bells (*Heuchera*)

Have a bit more shade than sun? Look no further than this lovely plant grown mostly for its showy foliage. I won't list a particular cultivar here as these plants are so beautiful and varied it would be wise for the gardener to pick one that fits their palate. As to the species as a whole, they grow wonderfully in partial shade, putting out patty-like leaves on arched stems as the plant grows into a little mound. Then, seemingly out of nowhere come the flowers on tall spindles beloved by hummingbirds. Plant in bunches for a stunning effect or use as a border to show off the foliage. Flowers in spring but deadheading can help flowers continue into summer.

5. Narrowleaf milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*)

Admittedly this is not the easiest plant to grow as it is more fickle than poppies or yarrow, but it deserves a spot in every garden. It is the most common form of milkweed to our area and a host plant to the endangered and rapidly dying Monarch butterfly. Planting for this reason alone is enough, but milkweed is also a wonderful bee plant. Beautiful white and pink flowers bunch on top of these tall and leafy stems and are frequented by all sorts of pollinators. Furthermore, it blooms from May to October, providing excellent forage in difficult and dry months. This plant requires a bit more water than the above four.

Summer is not the best time to plant as it is far too hot for young plants to survive with ease, however it is an ideal time to begin planning for autumn. Making space in our gardens for native, drought-resistant, pollinator-friendly flowering plants is a vital task for every beekeeper. Such a simple act promotes nectar and pollinator diversity thereby fortifying the health of local biomes and, by extension, supports our colonies.



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Recommended by Christine Kurtz*

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Email or call to reserve:

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Kelli Cox
707 280-4376

president@sonomabees.org

Central

Paul Quistgard
425-877-5123

PaulQuistgard@aol.com

West

Gina Brown
415-828-8359

Boragelane@comcast.net

East

Susan Simmons
925-408-4529

Susanjsimmons@gmail.com

The Alternative Hives (formerly Top Bar Hive) group has a fruit press available for use in honeycomb crushing.

Contact Jim Spencer at:

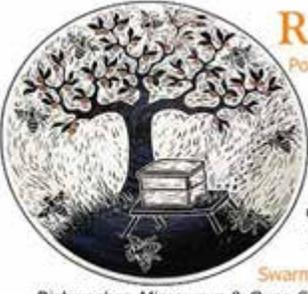
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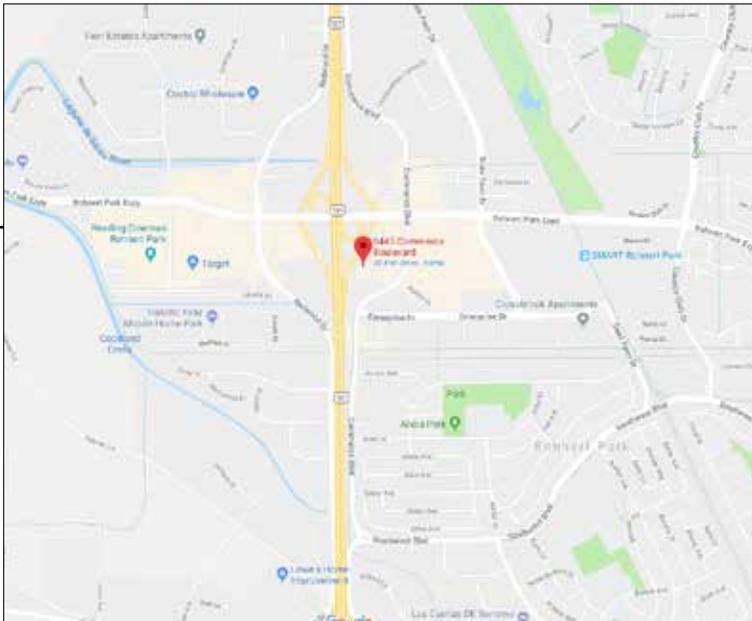
2018 Board Members

and Other Helpful People

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for the Up-to-Date
Roster of SCBA Resources

Contact Information

Regular monthly meetings of the Sonoma County Beekeepers' Association are held on the second Monday of each month, at 7 pm at the Rohnert Park 4-H Building. The meetings cover a wide range of topics of interest to beekeepers. Everyone wanting to learn about honeybees is cordially invited to attend. You do not need to be a member nor a beekeeper to attend these meetings. Dues can be paid online at our website sonomabees.org, at our monthly meetings or by mail. Please see our Website for the application and various kinds of memberships available.



Our mailing address is:
Sonoma County Beekeepers' Assoc.
P.O. Box 98
Santa Rosa, CA 95402-0098

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