

The Monthly Extractor



Volume 44, Issue 12

December 2019

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

President's Message

Fellow Beeks,

This is my last entry to you as your SCBA President, how bitter/sweet! It has been such a wonderful journey these last 2 years working alongside so many amazing selfless folks dedicated to help this Association flourish. It has certainly helped me become a better person.

This is the most extraordinary Association I have ever been a part of, and even though we all have at least one interest in common, that of our furry little friends, we also have created a the best thing of all and that is Our Community. A community that cares about each other as well as the pollinators we take care of. A community that through this association many folks have become lifelong friends! It is a community that is attempting to do something that is bigger than ourselves. I love this community and am so proud to be a part of it.

Thank you all for your continued support and tireless hours of work to help educate our outside community of Sonoma County.

I will continue (in 2020 as Events Coordinator) to serve this Association because I believe it is for the greater good and because being a part of this community is important to me.

On another note~

I look forward to seeing you at our Holiday Party on Monday December 9th @6pm. Don't forget to bring your appetizer or dessert, cutlery and plates. We will have wine for the wine pull and be ready to get your Bingo on!

"The SCBA 2020 elections are coming soon. Please look for you email Ballot in your inbox, vote and return ASAP. Thank you"



Beest,

Kelli Cox
2019 President

This Month's Calendar

Monthly Meeting: Monday, November 11th 6:00PM

Annual Potluck Dinner (Raffle only this year-no silent auction). We will be in the 4-H building.

Bring your own place setting to avoid using paper plates.

SCBA is providing dinner:
Lasagna, (veg and meat), Polenta, Green and Caesar Salad, and Garlic Bread.

Many folks have asked what they can bring so to make it easier (and fun)

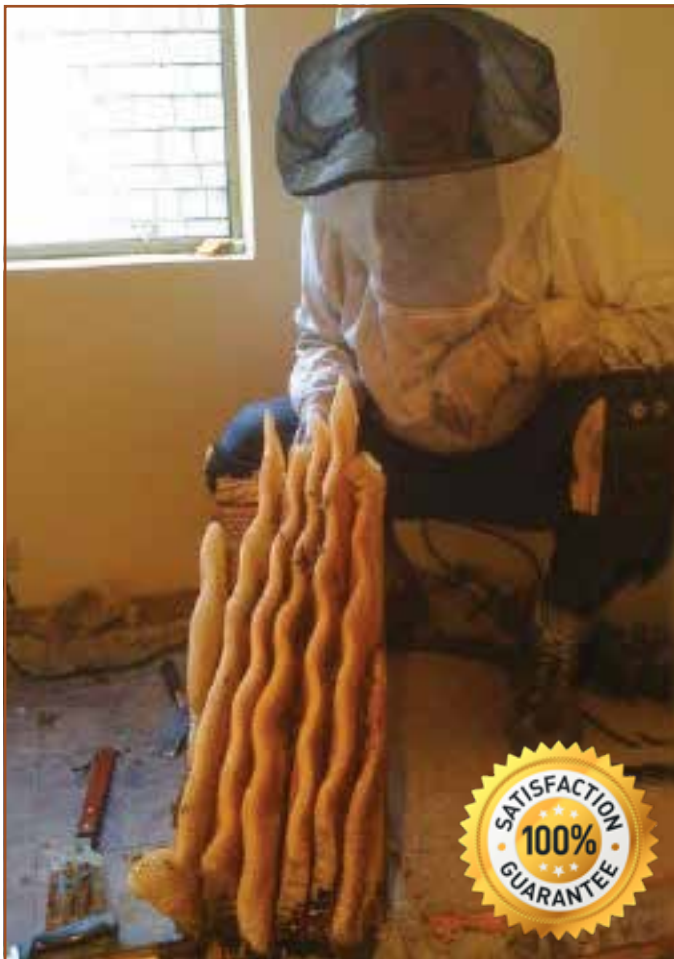
- A - M - bring Appetizers
- N - Z - bring Desserts

We will have a wine pull \$20.00 per. (similar to last year)

We will provide apple cider, lemonade, coffee and tea.

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Registering Your Hives

By Ettamarie Peterson

At the November meeting Beverly Hammond from Sonoma County Department of Agriculture gave a presentation about registering our beehives. She explained to us how Sonoma County has decided at this time not to have a registration fee. She told us how having your hives registered helps the County notify commercial farming operations near them to let you know when they will be using sprays so you can either move the hives or block the entrances so the bees will not forage when harmful chemicals are fresh. If you go to the website www.BeeWhereCalifornia.com you will get more information and be able to register.

I went to the Bee Where site and registered my colonies. I had some questions that are still not answered but I think we can make a list of questions and have Beverly Hammond answer them. For example, I asked about my 4-H beekeepers' colonies. They are too young to have their own contact information such as cell phones and e-mails. What do young beekeepers do? I also asked about

how one goes about branding the assigned numbers on the boxes. Do they have a tool we can borrow for this requirement or are we expected to figure out how to do it ourselves? I still have no clue about these two questions. The rules are very strict about branding the numbers and not crossing nor blocking them out when the equipment changes hands. The new owner adds his/her brand below the existing one. I guess you need good paper work to show there was a transfer of ownership as we do with our cattle.

If we all register our hives, then the county will certainly have a sense of how many beekeepers and colonies are in the county. This gives us a strong presence. We need that when issues about laws concerning agricultural practices that help or harm the bees are being written. If some day we want to encourage farmers to plant hedgerows and bee friendly cover crops, for example, they are more likely to listen to hundreds of beekeepers. Right now people are amazed to hear how many members are in SCBA. We are really "under the radar" as people say.

My December

Beekeeping To-Do List by Serge Labesque

© 2019

For bees' sakes, this must be said!

Bees are suffering! It's a beekeepers' leitmotiv, and yet we see little or no progress made. Helping the bees requires action on several fronts: pesticides; loss of habitat; beekeeping practices being among the most important of these.

Wrestling with pesticide manufacturers is akin to fighting the Hydra of Lerna, the mythical multi-headed monster that grew two new ferocious heads every time one was cut off. Indeed, when one pesticide is banned, new ones are already in production to replace it. Although the hard-won and all-too-infrequent bans of some of these toxic substances may look like victories, they actually accelerate the arrival of new poisons on the market and their dumping in the environment. Yet, no matter how desperate this struggle might appear, it has to be fought if only to not leave free rein to the agrochemical industry.

Yes, the pesticide manufacturers and users actually kill honey bee colonies and other pollinators with their products, but the worst and most damaging offenders really are among the beekeepers. In fact and regrettably, we are talking about the majority of beekeepers. Through conventional practices, which include treatments, feedings, and reliance on mass-produced queens, packages and nucs, they profoundly erode the intrinsic strength and the genetic diversity of the species as a whole. The dissemination of mass-produced bees and migratory beekeeping not only spread pests and diseases, but they also prevent the establishment of locally adapted populations and they destroy those that had developed successfully over time. Conventional beekeeping is so widespread that it is the species as a whole that is actually being weakened.

Beekeepers at all levels of competence cause important damage by procuring bees from commercial outfits. But the experienced beekeepers that condone or partake in the production and distribution of these mass-produced bees are particularly to be blamed, as they are very well aware of the issue and they choose to ignore it to benefit financially from this exploitation of the bees. Shame on them!

Let's not delude others or ourselves: Queens that are mated more than a few miles away from our apiaries are not "local" bees for us. Indeed, they received and carry genes that may be unsuitable in our environment and conditions. Worse, their drones and swarms alter and degrade our local bee populations.

Writing this does not earn me many friends, but I just cannot close my eyes on this dismal state of affairs and say nothing. If we want a chance to save the honey bee, we must tell the new beekeepers why they should stay away from commercially produced packages, nucs and queens. We must also convince experienced beekeepers that participate in one way or another in this commerce to abandon their detrimental practices. Surely, these are uphill

battles, but they must be fought.

Evidently, this discourse demands an alternative to the puppy-mill bees. And here it is: We can share bees and queens from our good, healthy, locally adapted colonies with neighbor beekeepers. It is so simple, easy to do, and satisfying! Since spring is only a few months away, please, let's plan on dividing our hives and raising a few additional queens for other beekeepers. Together, we can create enough splits to stop the flood of commercial bees. It will be good for the bees and for all involved.

December in the apiaries

The bees spend most of the time clustered at this time of year. The lower combs of the hives have been vacated by the emergence of the winter bees from the fall brood nests. When the weather is warm enough, a few bees come out of the hives. They may perform cleansing flights or forage on some of the rare plants that offer nectar or pollen at this season. It's a modest amount of activity though. Since the bees can gather little stores during the few hours when foraging is possible, the colonies rely mainly on the contents of the hives. However, the bees do not consume much as long as they do not have to keep any brood warm and fed. This spares stores, but it also allows the colonies that possess good grooming behavior to gain control over the varroa mites. This relatively low level of colony activity will soon end, when in a few days, a few weeks at most, the queens resume or increase their egg production.

Meanwhile, occasional visits to the apiary allow us to keep an eye on the hives. The wind may have caused damage that needs to be addressed. Even when we do not see bees flying, we can take a look at the debris that accumulates on the monitoring trays and on the ground, in front of the hives, and figure out what the bees are doing inside the hives. With an ear on the side of the boxes, we can perceive the soft reassuring hum produced by the clustered bees. We do not disturb them.

Back at home, we can work on the equipment we will need next spring. Some pieces have to be cleaned and repaired, others have to be assembled or fabricated. It is also interesting and productive to review our apiary notes from the year that is coming to a close. Maybe we can figure out why some colonies were successful and others were not. What did we do right, or wrong? Much can be learned that will make us better beekeepers.

In anticipation of the next beekeeping season, we can add a few plants that will provide some sustenance for the bees and other insects and animals, as well.

Happy Holidays to all of you from the Labesques!

In summary, this month:

- Inspect the exterior condition of the hives:
 - The hive tops should be properly set and secured.
 - Examine the hive entrances and the ground in front of the hives.
 - Verify that the hive entrances remain unobstructed.
 - On nice days, observe the flight paths and the bee activity.
- Examine the debris on the monitoring trays.
- Verify that mice have not entered hives (telltale clues of their presence are visible on the monitoring trays, as coarse pieces of comb, mouse feces, etc.).
- Ensure that the hives are adequately ventilated.
- Clean and scorch tools and equipment.
- Pour the ashes out of the smoker and scrub the tar build-up.
- Repair and build beekeeping equipment.
- Review notes from the year.
- Plan next season (evaluate the need for equipment and bees).
- Read and learn more about bees and beekeeping.
- Plant bee forage.
- Enjoy some honey.

Serge Labesque
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John McGinnis

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Honey Extractor Rental

Members have use of the association's honey extracting equipment, as available. Rental fee is \$5 per day. Extractors must be returned clean.

Email or call to reserve:

South

Maryle Brauer

707-934-7392

southcluster@sonomabees.org

Central

Brian Gully

707-391-4727

svo.must@hotmail.com

West

Gina Brown

415-828-8459

Boragelane@comcast.net

East

Claudine Latchaw

(707) 971-9708

claudinelatchaw@gmail.com

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

Contact Jim Spencer at:

alternativehives@sonomabees.org



Bee Hive Management & Local Honey Sales

Michael Turner

Owner/Beekeeper

415/871-4662

info@marincoastalbee.com

Raffle Information

A **BIG THANK YOU** to all of you who have already sold and turned in your tickets. It is greatly appreciated! We still have a lot of tickets out there so if it is not in your budget to purchase the tickets yourself, please try to solicit your family, friends, neighbors and coworkers over the Thanksgiving holiday.

Most people are happy to support SCBA and we really need your participation in order to make our 2019 fundraiser a success.

As you know, SCBA is so much more than a general monthly meeting! In addition to our many Cluster actives across the county, we also engage in community outreach and education, public swarm services, a robust gardening program to provide pollinator habitat and forage, mentorship and a slew of other support programs geared to help our beekeepers. All of this important work requires a sustained effort that cannot be filled by volunteers alone, especially as we continue to grow in our membership and outreach.

The Funds you help raise through this raffle supplements the membership dues to help pay for the many administrative services that support this great and invaluable association.

December 1st was the last day to turn in your tickets!

If you missed the deadline...PLEASE help us by turning your tickets in ASAP!

It is important that all tickets must be returned to be accounted for whether they are sold or not. You can send them directly to me at:

SCBA
c/o Darlene McGinnis
803 Lynch Rd.
Petaluma, CA 94954

Thank you and Happy Thanksgiving!

Darlene McGinnis
2019 Chairperson
Lovewhatyoudo1960@gmail.com

GARDENING FOR BEES

By Kitty Baker

The November SCBA meeting was preceded with a wealth of bee-friendly plants exchanged for donations. Approx. 33 4" and at least 55 gallon pots, for a sum of \$441 in donations to further G4B goals — helping our members supply more winter and early spring forage for bees.

The November SCBA meeting began with a short talk by long-time gardener and G4B Group member Carolyn Watson.

Carolyn spotlighted benefits and needs of several excellent drought-tolerant natives especially suited to winter/early spring blooming, including California Lilac, Rosemary, Coyote Brush (choose male plants), Manzanita, Salvia, visually-dramatic Garrya - Silk Tassel (see photo), Oregon grape (Mahonia), plus several vines and plants: deer-resistant potato vine; borage, Abutilon and Abelia; the family of brassicas – allow them to go to flower (broccoli, cauliflower, kale, etc.); Alsike clover as cover crop; seed mix of California wildflowers.

Carolyn's recommendations for new plant care:

- Until the rains come, keep soil well saturated.
- Plant using a gentle natural fertilizer;
- Be patient – most perennials take a year to establish; trees and shrubs 2 or more.
- Once established continue to water and fertilize routinely.
- Successful native perennials will provide forage for bees for years to come.



Silk Tassel – photo from Carolyn Watson's talk

Bee Plants of the Month

By Alice Ford-Sala

Hedgerow Bee Plant: Bush Germander

Teucrium fruticans

Family: Lamiaceae, Mint

To finish our hedgerow year, we add one more bee-loved plant that can work as a screen or informal fence. You probably already know that Bush Germander is attractive to pollinators by its membership in the mint family. Lamiaceae are almost always bee magnets (think lavender, sage, mint). And being in that illustrious family, you know the leaves are fragrant. Germander has a clean woody aroma.

The attractive foliage is silver-green, and looks good year-round, as it is evergreen. The undersides of the leaves appear to shine due to tiny white hairs. Bush germander grows 5-8 feet tall and at least as wide. It takes very well to pruning; I have seen pictures of it trimmed like a formal hedge. Or you can go for a more natural look and shape it lightly when it looks rangy.

The flowers are borne on spikes of lavender-blue, looking somewhat like rosemary. Bush germander blooms abundantly from mid-winter through summer, and then a bit more sparsely, but basically blooms throughout the year in Sonoma County.

Bush germander is easy to grow! It does well in sunny to light shade conditions, needing very moderate to occasional water in summer. It tolerates clay or sandy soil, but needs good drainage.

It is deer and fire resistant, a bonus in our area. You can plant it by itself or in a mixed hedgerow with ceanothus, coffee berry, ribes, etc.

May you and your loved ones have a happy and healthy holiday season.

Alice Ford-Sala



Bush Germander

Open Weekends from 10AM to 4PM, Apr 20 through Dec 31. See Website for additional special hours and unique, local gift ideas.

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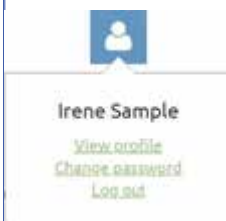
IMPORTANT New Membership System Renew (“Join”) Now!

We’re excited to announce our new SCBA membership renewal system! Now, you’ll sign up online and your membership profile will be saved. In subsequent renewal periods, you will only need to double-check your information and make any necessary changes, then remit payment and you’re done!

- To become a member of SCBA (i.e., renew your membership), go to <https://www.sonomabees.org/Membership-Application> and fill in the required information in the straightforward application.
- You’ll be sent an email with a password so that you can log in to your profile at any time to make changes. We recommend you log in to change your password to something you’ll remember.



Log in by clicking the blue and white icon in the right corner of the SCBA website.



Once you’re logged in, you can easily view your profile or change your password.

Note – If you signed up after August 1st and were told your membership was valid through 2020, you are already in the system. Click the Login icon on at www.sonomabees.org and click Forgot password to set yourself a password.

We hope you have a positive experience with the new system! We know there might be some glitches, so bear with us!

Irene Sample
Membership Coordinator
membership@sonomabees.org



SCBA Name Badges and Hangers By Angy Nowicki

SCBA name badges are now available to be ordered via email. Those interested in ordering a badge please email Angy at Badges@sonomabees.org for a badge application. Magnetic back badges are \$10.00. Pin back badges are \$8.00. Hangers are \$2.50 each. If you want a hanger, please let me know what you want on the hanger (your cluster, your board position, your group like Education, Gardening for Bees, etc.).

SCBA Board meeting

Kelli called the meeting to order at 6:14 PM Nov. 4, 2019

Present: Kelli Cox, Angelo Sacerdote, Darlene McGinnis, Ann Jereb, Irene Sample, Susan Kegley, Carol Ellis, Shelley Trimm, Bruce Harris, Katia Vincent, George Hermann, Miles Sarvice-Wilburn

1. Introductions
2. Agenda review
3. President candidate in the works.
4. Review of Board Expectations
5. Kelli presented a proposal for handling the board dinners for 2020. 10 members, 10 meals, each person responsible for a meal, \$25 per month in budget for this. Also, some for Bees N Blooms for providing incidentals such as paper plates, drinks, etc.
6. Raffle: Discussion of ticket sales status, about \$7,000 to date. Reminders going out.

SCBA Monthly Meeting

November 11, 2019 Location: 4H Building, Rohnert Park
Meeting started: 7:03 PM
Approximate attendance: ~ 86

Items covered

- Ann Jereb has decided to run for President for 2020.
- Gardening topics from Carolyn Watson
 - Winter and Early Spring - Forage for Bees
- Thea from the Education group gave an update.
- Sharing of Gadgets and Gizmos
- Speaker info
 - Beverly Hammond, California Apiary Regulations
 - Agricultural Biologist/Inspector
 - Sonoma County Depart of Ag

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Jones
Secretary



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Waxing Around with East Cluster Members

By Thea Vierling

There's nothing like getting together with some great folks and "Waxing Around"! What is "Waxing Around"? Well, it's a little bit of all of these things: melting wax, pouring molds, dipping balloons into hot wax, spraying each other with water balloons (yes, it was Susan Simmons); eating incredible snacks like baked apples with cheese cake inside; filling homemade cloth bags (Made by Susan.) with lavender (Grown and harvested by Susan), pouring salve into tin cans with labels (made by Lauri), wax cleaned and melted into cubes (melted by some of the participants like Marcella and Christina Kennedy), Waxing Around is messy; it's loud; it's exciting; and it's fun! Thankfully one of our cluster leaders, Kristina Torres, is willing to host this workshop each year at her house in Kenwood. Let's put it this way: Clean up is not fun after 30 people make candles, luminaries, lavender sachet packets and a wonderful tin of salve. Each of our cluster leaders "personed" a station to make the various items. Lauri Dorman – salve tins, Susan Simmons – sachet packets, Kristina Torres - luminaries, and Lynn Koch with Thea – candle making. People circled around so they could experience each station.

We had a surprise visit from the expert of all experts, Christine Kurtz who made a few items as well. She was not in charge but she still shared her expertise. She just "can't help herself"! She rarely gets the opportunity to just kick back and participate rather than leading the workshop. She told me afterwards. "I needed this"! I agree with her. She needed to feel the friendship of the cluster members in action! So did Lizanne Pastore who dropped by to get hugs and soak up the holiday feeling. Lizanne was East cluster leader a few years back and still leads the winterizing workshop. We missed Jim Spencer who also was our cluster leader a few years ago and is now the Alternative Hive cluster leader.

Our leaders rarely get an opportunity to just relax and enjoy cluster activities. This is so important for participants in a workshop to realize. Many of the SCBA participants do not know the history of the past leaders who have done so much to make the clusters a reality. Also during hive dives, we have on our veils so we can't see each other's faces! During this type of activity, we get to know each other in a totally different way and we really put a face to the name without the bees pinging us. Well there were a few bees in the workshop. They smelled the wax and just could not help checking out what those beekeepers were up to with their wax.

Cluster events are so well attend now that it looks easy. These events are fun but cluster leaders do a lot of work, before, during and after! SCBA members might take all of this for granted not appreciating the efforts of the prior leaders and present Cluster leaders. Here's a big applause for our cluster leaders!

Here are a few pictures of the "well waxed" machine in action. Pictures are taken by Thea Vierling, Christine Kurtz and Carolyn Watson.



Having Fun with the Students

By Thea Vierling

Take a look at a honey bee presentations to 1st and 2nd graders. It took place in Sonoma and was a great success. The kids loved it. We used the puppets, apple flowers and apple fruits on branches to explain pollination. What is it about puppets? Even adults like to see the puppet show and it really gets the message across. Then we had two relay races with the students acting like bees. They had to go out to the flowers and collect nectar and pollen and we measured the nectar and counted the pollen to see which team had gathered the most. We used a test tube attached to a fake flower and filled with yellow colored water to simulate nectar. Using plastic eyedroppers, they collected the nectar. This fine motor skill is not easy for this age level but they helped each other and got the idea of how labor intensive it is to gather nectar. They also really understood that honey comes from nectar. A lot of adults, even beekeepers do not know this!! The "Pollen Pull" was also a lot of fun.

Claudine Latchaw and Thea from east cluster education group organized this presentation with the help of our education liaison, Carolyn Watson. Get in touch with your education liaisons to tell them you want to help with presentations. South county - Mari Barrell; West County - Jackie Mendoza; Central area - Linda Hagel; North - Alicia Campos. If you need to know how to get in touch with them, email education@sonomabees.org Maggie Weaver, our Education Coordinator, will get back to you.



2019 Board Members and Other Helpful People

Click Here
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 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.



6 pm – Meet your cluster members; ask questions; bring your own cup and fill it with tea or coffee and have some goodies.

7 pm – General meeting starts. (See page 1 of this newsletter for speaker details.)

Our mailing address is:
Sonoma County Beekeepers' Assoc.
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