

# The Monthly Extractor



Volume 44, Issue 11

November 2019

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

## President's Message

Here we are in October and once again dealing with fires. I, at this time have not heard if any of our members are being affected, we will know soon. My heart goes out to all who are in this now and/or reminded of the last two years. Many of you were effected and are still rebuilding, please know that you have a family in the SCBA and can always reach out for help or if you know of any folks that need help, please let me know.....

By now you should have tucked your girls away tightly. There continues to be reports of dead outs and absconding bees. Keep an eye on your entrances; there's lots of robbing happening and I fear perhaps more to come with the continuance of this hot weather.....

**Holiday Party** is coming up! Please make sure to mark December 9th on your calendar. I need a committee of about 10 folks who can help with set up and break down. You can either email me or sign up at the November meeting.

We will be at the 4 H building starting at 6pm. 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.
- In an effort to be more green please bring your dish, silverware and glass...

PLEASE don't forget to send your raffle tickets to Darlene or bring them to the November general meeting. Did I say Bingo!? Woo-hoo! You get the first card free, extra card \$5 or 3 for \$20.00

Looking forward to seeing you.....

### NEWS:

- We are still in the process of securing the Board and our various committee team members for 2020. Things look GREAT!



- We are going to be launching our new SCBA Website and membership software.
- We are still looking for a 2020 President, please contact [president@sonomabees.org](mailto:president@sonomabees.org) if you are interested.
- All will be explained further at the November general meeting.

Beest,

*Kelli Cox*  
2019 President  
(707) 280-4376

## This Month's Calendar

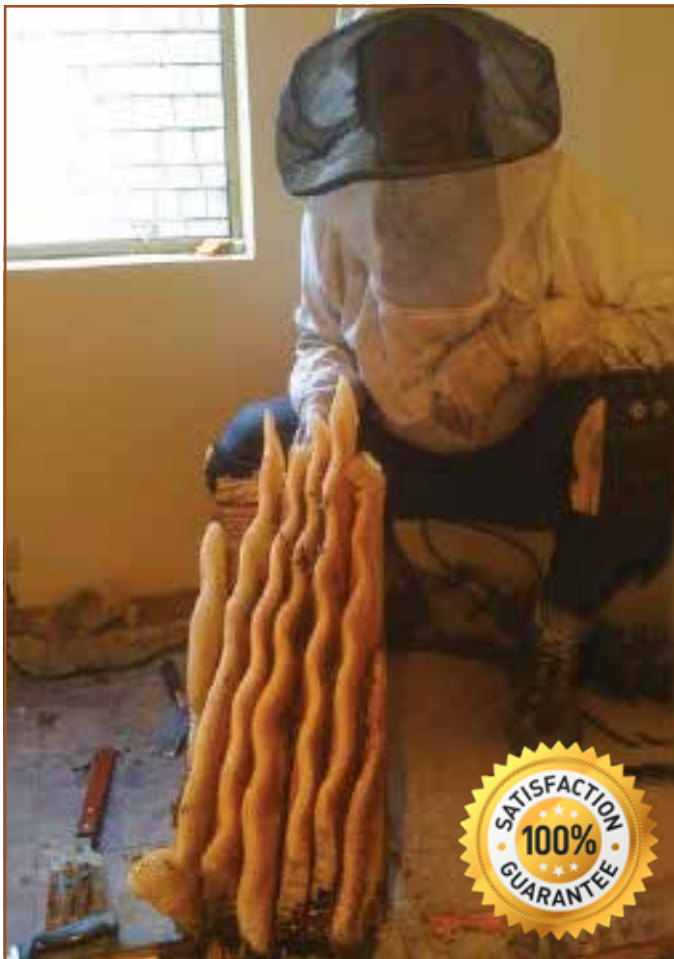
**Monthly Meeting: Monday, November 11th**

6 pm - socialize, buy plants in the lobby tonight, check out material from our library, have refreshments (bring your own cup, and meet your cluster leaders.

7 pm - The Gadgets and Gizmos night is back! Bring your favorite gadget or gizmo, homemade or bought, to share with the rest of the beekeepers. This is a great time to share something to make other beekeepers' life easier and/or more fun. Send an e-mail to Susan Kegley [2ndVP@sonomabees.org](mailto:2ndVP@sonomabees.org) to let her know what you are bringing and about how much time you will need to show it off.

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## ***Tech help needed***

Are you technologically savvy? Do you have experience working on websites, social media, Google apps, or related? If so, we'd love to hear from you!

Volunteering is the essence of SCBA where we put our time and energy towards helping the bees thrive, and some of this important work requires specific skill sets. Among many other things, we are currently working on our organization's website and drive systems and are in need of volunteers to help. Work can be systems/back-end or can involve helping other members with technology-related questions.

If you're interested, please contact Kelli at [president@sonomabees.org](mailto:president@sonomabees.org) or Peter at [secretary@sonomabees.org](mailto:secretary@sonomabees.org).

Join the IT/tech team and help SCBA migrate seamlessly into the 21st century!



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**Michael Turner**  
Owner/Beekeeper  
415/871-4662

[info@marincoastalbee.com](mailto:info@marincoastalbee.com)

# My November

## Beekeeping To-Do List by Serge Labesque

© 2019

*An open letter*

Dear Bees,

Your lives are not getting better, aren't they? The recent years have been particularly hard on you. And yet, your resilience is truly amazing.

Most of you, dear bees, are deprived of the freedom you so profoundly need. You are forced to spend days, weeks, and sometimes your entire lives working in our vast expanses of monocrops. There, you can gather food only from plants that are loaded with all sorts of pesticides.

In mid-winter, you are fed large amounts of sugar syrup or HFCS to force you to produce large amounts of brood. Of course, this creates conditions that help varroa mites to multiply. So, the beekeepers use medications to fix a problem they caused in the first place. Then you are loaded on trucks that take you to the California almond groves, where you are expected to help generate revenue for the farmers and for the beekeepers. During the few weeks you spend among the almond trees, you get doused with cocktails of fungicides and you are forced to mingle with other bees that were brought along with their pests and pathogens from all over the country.

The almond pollination is barely over when you are brutally shaken out of your nests, orphaned and mixed with millions of other bees, exposed to more pests and diseases. You are crammed into package and nuc boxes, given queens you do not know, and shipped all over the country and beyond. Some of you are trucked to other monocrops, to work in pear, cherry, or apple orchards, only to be trucked again and again to other crops that will produce more money, thanks to your pollination work.

At times, you are taken to places where you can gather much nectar, which you transform into delicious honey. But all of it is promptly stolen from you. In exchange, the thieves may give you more of that insipid sugar syrup that is devoid of the nutrients you really need. Ironically, your keepers claim that they are taking good care of you. What a shameful lie! They also stuff more medication in your nests to "keep you healthy", they say, which is another sham. They only do this to protect their livelihood.

Beyond the honey and pollination services you provide and your compliance in producing new colonies and queens for the beekeepers' benefit, more of your amazing abilities are exploited. You've been trained to locate field mines, for example. Now, you are being coated with fungicide to apply these toxic substances to plants. That is supposed to cost the farmers less money. It will cost you your lives. But few care, and the current EPA has approved the process and

the toxic products you'll be ferrying.

The regimen you are given is so hard that many of you die every year. "Let's produce more bees and more queens to make up for the losses", the beekeepers say, "We will make even MORE money!" Yes, you are sold, dear bees, just like cattle.

Throughout the year, you are forced to nest in boxes that have very little in common with the natural nest cavities you've used for millions of years. The makeshift nests you are given have to be as convenient as possible for the beekeepers.

You are telling us, first with a soft hum and then with the silence of your death that the conditions, the environment are degrading at an alarming pace. You're right, but our greed is more powerful than your wisdom. In a nutshell, the message is that "WE ARE HUMANS! You're just bugs." Please know that we do not ALL think that way.

I hope that when I hang my bee hat and veil up for the last time I will be able to look back at the time I've spent with you, dear bees, with peace of mind. Surely, I will regret the mistakes I will have made and that hurt you. I know that I'll grab run-of-the-mill excuses, such as "I was told to do this or that", or "I had to learn". But I also want to be able to think that I succeeded in serving you, not me, well.

There is a new crowd of bee stewards growing, and their mindset is changing for the better. Dear bees, you offer us a wonderful opportunity to use a snippet of our lives to contribute positively to the grand scheme of the environment. I hope that I will have grasped that opportunity to help.

Thank you.

*November in the apiaries*

The days are becoming short and the nights cooler. On mild, sunny days, the bee traffic in the flight paths is noticeably less intense than it was only a few weeks earlier. This is because the summer bees are vanishing. They leave in the hives only the winter bees. These form the clusters and will hopefully carry the colonies through the cold season that is ahead.

The hives have been secured against the wind. Mouse guards are in place in front of the reduced entrances. From this point on, we make sure that the bees are left undisturbed for a few months. Certainly, their nests will not be opened, as this would keep the bees agitated, and might possibly trigger undesirable bouts of brood production, not to mention that it would break propolis seals. However, we won't forget the bees, and we will be visiting the apiaries

regularly during the late fall and early winter. Clean monitoring trays have been inserted under the screens of the hive bottoms to help us figure out how the colonies are faring and what the bees are doing inside their nests.

Since our hive tools and smoker are going to be idle for a while, this is also a good time to do some maintenance. The equipment that we brought back from the apiaries during the recent weeks, when we were reducing the volume of the hives and harvesting the last of the surplus honey, can be taken care of. It will be inspected, repaired and cleaned or discarded, as warranted. Whatever we retain has to be protected from the weather and mice. A rapid inventory lets us know what we will have to procure or fabricate before the next beekeeping season.

As we are already thinking about next year, we can start to add a few plants. They will offer food to the bees and other animals, and they will also beautify our homes.

It's time to enjoy some of that fresh honey. Happy Thanksgiving!

#### ***In summary, this month:***

- Complete the preparation of the hives for winter (early in the month).
- Raise hives off the ground, if they are not already on stands.
- Ensure that the hives are adequately ventilated (upper ventilation slot open).
- Reduce the hive entrances.
- Install mouse guards.
- Secure the hive tops against strong winds.
- Install clean monitoring trays. The debris they will collect will carry important information about what is happening inside the hives.
- Inspect the exterior of the hives.
- Observe the flight paths.
- Clean and scorch tools and equipment.
- Store unused equipment to protect it from damage caused by wax moths, mice and the weather.
- Start building frames and other pieces of equipment for next spring.
- Review notes from the year.
- Enjoy some honey. Be thankful for the bees and look forward to next season.

*Serge Labesque*  
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**By appointment only**

**[goahwayranch@gmail.com](mailto:goahwayranch@gmail.com)**

## **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](mailto:southcluster@sonomabees.org)

#### **Central**

Brian Gully  
707-391-4727

[svo.must@hotmail.com](mailto:svo.must@hotmail.com)

#### **West**

Gina Brown  
415-828-8459

[Boragelane@comcast.net](mailto:Boragelane@comcast.net)

#### **East**

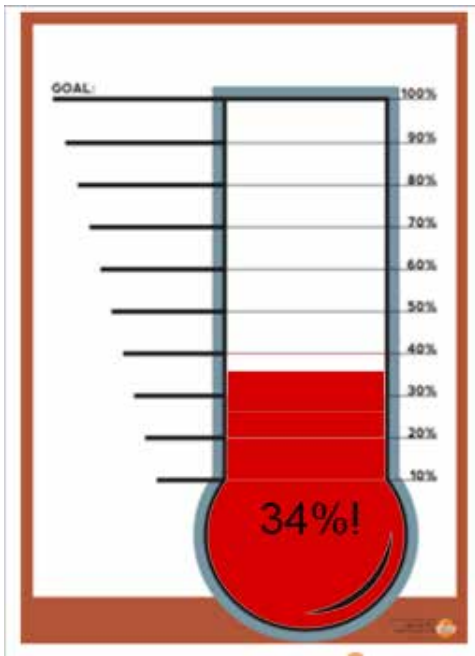
Claudine Latchaw  
(707) 971-9708

[claudinelatchaw@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:alternativehives@sonomabees.org)





## GARDENING FOR BEES

By Kitty Baker

### Gardening Group Goal-Setting

SCBA Coordinating Consultant Miles Sarvis-Wilburn met with a Gardening for Bees task force to look at the group's new structure, to set 2020 goals and to plan and coordinate our efforts to reach them. A special focus this school year is the Pollinator Garden Project, which is now getting underway at six Sonoma County schools. We hope to learn from this year's pilot and expand the school gardening project in future years.

### Fund-Raising Forage Plants

A big thank you to all the gardeners who patronized the G4B plant offerings at the October SCBA meeting. Thanks to you, Gardening for Bees raised \$339 this month for future bee forage projects. In all, SCBA members picked up 43 1-gallon pots and twenty 4-inch plants that will feed bees next fall. Thank you!

### Dearth-Defying Techniques

Maryle Brauer opened the meeting with advice for moderating the challenges our local bees must weather this vulnerable time of year. While hive population declines, bees are less able to regenerate the hive, are more susceptible to disease and face scarce forage until the first rainfall. "Arguably," stated Maryle, "dearth is the most important time to support the bees with a selection of high quality plants for nectar and pollen and very active garden management."

### Talk takeaways:

- Importance of a water to cool hive and maintain hive humidity – consider providing water via birdbaths,

## Raffle Ticket Sales Update

This year's one and only fundraiser has begun. With over 1/3 of our members turning in their ticket stubs already, we are on our way of reaching our goal. But we still have a long way to go, so please sell or buy the tickets that were sent out to you earlier and return your stubs and checks as soon as possible.

Don't forget, with every book of ticket that you sell and turn in by December 1st, you will be entered into a separate drawing for a complete hive set up donated by Buzz Off Honey, along with a hive stand donated by Darrel Jones and a gift basket of gear donated by Beekind! Need more tickets? Call or text Darlene at 707-529-8053.

In addition, the first 200 people who return their sold tickets will receive a honeybee lapel pin. If you are one of the early birds who turned in your tickets and haven't picked up your pin at the last meeting, see Darlene at the November meeting.

*Darlene McGinnis*

2019 Chairperson

[Lovewhatyoudo1960@gmail.com](mailto:Lovewhatyoudo1960@gmail.com)

chicken feeders, platter with rocks, bucket with floating corks.

- Continue to water garden plants to prolong flowering and nectar flow.
- Plant in late October to December to insure next year's blooms – water new plantings of perennials, shrubs and California natives until the soil is saturated by the rain season.
- Plants to consider\*: Calamintha nepotoides; Oregon; Maximilian and Swamp Sunflower; New England Aster; Sedum 'Autumn Joy'; Caryopteris clandonensis, including 'Grand Bleu' and 'Dark Knight'; Caryopteris incana including 'Bluebeard', Anise Hyssop; Eriogonum fasciculatum, CA Buckwheat, CN; Epilobium canum, California Fuchsia 'Catalina'; Cuphea hybrid 'Starfire Pink';
- Perovskia atriplicifolia, 'Little Spire' and Russian Sage; Salvia uliginosa, Bog Sage; Salvia azurea, Blue Pitcher Sage; Salvia leucantha, Mexican Bush Sage; Salvia guarantica 'Black and Blue';
- Coyote Brush; Abelia grandiflora "Edward Goucher"; Callistemon viminalis, Pink Bottlebrush and Callistemon Citrinus, red bottlebrush; True Geranium 'Rozanne'; Creeping or Trailing Rosemary; Lavandula stoechas 'Winter Bee'

\*Many of these varieties are available at Gardening for Bees table for a nominal donation before most autumn SCBA meetings.

# Bee Plants of the Month

By Alice Ford-Sala

**Hedgerow Bee Plant Cream Bush Oceanspray**  
**Holodiscus discolor**  
**Family: Rosaceae**

This attractive native plant should be more widely grown! It would fit in nicely with any hedgerow planting, as it is drought tolerant, grows 4-5 feet tall (up to 7 feet in some areas) and up to 3 feet wide. The arching branches give shelter to birds and small reptiles and mammals. It is clay soil and drought tolerant, once established. It is also deer resistant, and somewhat fire resistant. Holodiscus is one of the first plants to re-sprout following a fire. It grows in oak woodlands, redwood forests, chaparral, high mountains and foothills. This is one of those nice plants that can be grown in dry shade, under oaks or other trees that can't tolerate summer water.

But wait, there's more! The leaves are lobed, deep green and somewhat fragrant. In one reference, it said they smell like wet cardboard. I have one small plant, I would say they smell like pencil shavings and that's only if you crush the leaves. The plant is deciduous; the leaves will fall off in winter. You can prune it to shape if you want to. The wood was used by Indigenous people for making tools. It is said to be hard when cured.

The flowers are the star of the show. For us humans we can enjoy the lacy creamy white flowers cascading down the plant, and revel in the fragrant sweetness that in the air. If you look at the individual flower, they look like small sparkling roses.

Holodiscus attracts bees of all kinds, so much so that the plant will hum with pollinators when in bloom. It is a butterfly magnet, both for the abundant nectar and the leaves are a larval food source for caterpillars. At least 14 species of butterflies and moths have been observed on Oceanspray.

Note: Ettamarie asked me about planting wildflower seeds in fall. I wrote her back and she thought it might be good to include with the newsletter:

I would wait to plant seeds until we have had some good rain and the ground is not so dry. Then I mix my seeds with some potting soil, scatter the seeds & soil, then tamp it down, either by walking on it, or placing a board over the area and walking on the board. You want the seeds to have good contact with the soil. Then cover the area with something to keep the birds out. I used the black nursery flats (but they have to be the ones that have very small holes). Other people put down window screening, frost cloth, etc. You want to keep it there just long enough for the seeds to sprout, but not so long that they grow into the fabric, etc. You don't want the cloth to be on the ground, but raised up by 2 or 3 inches. Then water well if it's not going to rain.



Cream Bush Oceanspray

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*Alice Ford-Sala*



# Education Team News

By Maggie Weaver,  
Education Team Member

It has been an exciting summer for the SCBA Education Team. We have been working diligently restocking education supplies, recruiting volunteers, beginning work on the education brochure, developing a program for the libraries within Sonoma County, and responding to the new school requests received. Just in the last 4-6 weeks we had an education table at the Heirloom Expo in tandem with the School Garden Network. Volunteers just like you talked to hundreds of students that visited our SCBA table over three days, making pipe cleaner bees and learning about the importance of pollinators.

We also set up a table at the beautiful lavender farm, Monte-Bellaria di California, owned by SCBA member Bill MacElroy over a Farm Trails Weekend and talked to several hundred people from across the country about honey bees. There was lots of interest and the setting was hard to beat! Lastly, there were also various school presentations done across the county by teams of educators and volunteers.

We are very excited to announce the kick off of the new Super Simple Pollinator Plant Kits for Sonoma County school gardens, a collaboration between the Gardening-4Bees group and Education Program. We selected six recipient schools to be a part of this pilot year. The first honey bee presentation and plant delivery was done this month at Proctor Terrace Elementary School in Santa Rosa. Three first grade classes will take part in the program preparing the garden plot and helping the gardening teacher plant the thirteen year-round bee forage plants we gave them. We did a short honey bee presentation in the School Garden to the very enthusiastically involved students followed by more specific pollination and plant information delivered by G4B's member Angy Nowicki. It was great fun! They are so excited to get started. We will return in the spring to see how the plants have grown and continue the education process.

If any of these things sound fun to you, we would love to have you join us as we spread honey bee love all over the county! If you're a teacher and would like us to come talk to your students, it's as easy as getting onto the SCBA website and filling out an education presentation request form. If you have ideas that could enrich or improve our education efforts, you can reach us at [education@sonomabees.org](mailto:education@sonomabees.org).

It's great fun, it's extremely rewarding, and you'll be surprised how very easy it is to be an education volunteer. We would love to have you "bee" a part of this oh so important endeavor!



David Chipkin and Denise Feldman manning the table at the Heirloom Expo.



Maggie Weaver at Proctor Terrace Pollinator Garden



Monarch Butterfly Project at Proctor Terrace Pollinator Garden



# GARDENING FOR BEES

By Kitty Baker

## Part 2: Singing Frogs Farm Field Trip

One of the many benefits of joining the Gardening for Bees Group is its field trip opportunities. On October 18, members enjoyed a chance to learn best practices of no-till, organic gardening from a pro. Farmer Elizabeth Kaiser of Singing Frogs Farm led our group through the vegetable plots and hedgerows of the farm she and husband Paul operate in Sebastopol. Elizabeth shared their seasoned approach to growing vegetables for the farm's CSA.

Key take-aways included the many thoughtful choices the Kaisers have made to quadruple their soil's organic matter, to triple microbial life of the soil, and in the process, to reduce water usage and make major gains in plant health and productivity. Elizabeth pointed out numerous aspects of their practice that help avoid temperature swings that stress plants and reduce growth and yields.

You can see from the photo on Singing Frogs' website what a lush and bountiful operation the Kaisers run. Elizabeth calls the farm a living experiment because they are always learning and tweaking their approach – with the goal of disturbing the soil as little as possible while keeping a diversity of plants in the ground, and keeping soils covered and protected as many days of the year as conditions allow.



Aerial view of Singing Frogs Farm production fields from their website



Elizabeth touts the usefulness of hedgerows to buffer temperature swings and to create habitat that invites owls, birds and snakes that help with pest management – photo Kitty Baker

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A close-up photograph of a bee, likely a queen, with its wings spread. The bee is the central focus of the advertisement, with its body and legs clearly visible. The background is a light, textured surface.



# 2019 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 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](http://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.**  
**P.O. Box 98**  
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