President’s Message

Dear fellow SCBA members,

Happy New Year! I am very excited to be serving as your 2020 SCBA President.

Our winter party was a fun and delicious evening. A big thank you to everyone who helped with set up, food preparation, wine pull, Bingo, the raffle and cooking yummy dishes! A special thank you to those who donated prizes for the raffle. The lucky winners were Jim Crumpler, Janet Leisen, and Stacy Biagi.

Off to a great start! Thanks to the visionary groundwork of our outgoing president, Kelli Cox, new Program Director Miles Sarvis-Wilburn, the board of directors, and our task force committee, we will enter the New Year with a more efficient, sustainable and productive association structure.

And, this is only the beginning. Here’s a glimpse of our exciting year ahead: As many of you know, Miles Sarvis-Wilburn, our new program director, is overseeing our three programs: Membership, Community Education, and Gardening. These vibrant and growing programs will be bringing new and exciting educational opportunities to our members, schools, and community. We hope you will take the opportunity to volunteer and be a part of these programs.

Membership:

Membership renewals are due no later than January 31, 2020. Don’t forget to renew!

Gardening 4 Bees:

This very large program is busy planning propagation workshops and focusing on bringing pollinator friendly plants and education to our meetings and the community.

Community Education:

Schools: Education committee is gearing up to launch its school pollinator garden project in partnership with the gardening program.

Events: Coordinator Kelli Cox is pulling together the events committee to determine which events and fairs SCBA will participate in this year. She will be at the January meeting with sign-ups for 2020 events.

Swarm: The swarm committee is already meeting to review the goals and the needs of the SCBA Public Service Swarm Program for 2020. You will be hearing more about this soon.

There are many opportunities for you to become involved. The success and growth of our association and programs depends on your continued help and support! Volunteer today and join our team. It’s great way to network, meet new bee friends, and it’s a lot of fun.

Stay tuned, our year is just beginning! May your bees and flowers be well.

Ann Jereb

2020 SCBA President
This Month’s Calendar

Monthly Meeting: Monday, January 13, 2020
6:00 p.m. - Come in, check out the library; browse & buy at the plant table; talk about bees with experts and your cluster leaders and have refreshments (bring your own cup please).

7:00 p.m. Alternative Hives - Panel with Michael Joshin Thiele, John McGinnis, Jim Spencer, and Susan Kegley. This month’s program highlights SCBA’s own beekeepers who have extensive experience in keeping bees in alternative hives. While most beekeepers use Langstroth hives, there are some interesting hive designs that the bees (and some beekeepers!) prefer. The panel will discuss Warre, top bar, and double deep hives, as well as a wide range of unusual hive designs based on what bees do in nature. We hope to see you there!

Monday, January 25, 2020
10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. - Scion Exchange in Vet’s Memorial Bldg. Santa Rosa (If you are a member of Redwood Empire Rare Fruit Growers you can get in as early as 9:00 a.m.)

Greetings Fellow Beekeepers!

My name is Miles Sarvis-Wilburn and I am so pleased and honored to be serving as your Program Director. I have been working closely with the outgoing and incoming Board of Directors to improve the structure of our organization with the goal of making it easier for members and volunteers to get the most out of our wonderful programs.

I look forward to continuing this work in collaboration with you! Please feel free to reach out directly via programdirector@sonomabees.org.

Sincerely,

Miles

Regional Cluster Coordinator News

Cluster Activities 2020

Winter Solstice is typically referred to as “the beginning of Spring” for us as beekeepers.

January 11 marks the day of our first 2020 Regional Cluster Coordinator meeting. Cluster Coordinators are busy planning Cafés and activities for this next year.

_Urgent need request_ remains in place for the Central Cluster. We are still in need of 2 coordinators to join this fun team. Central Cluster Café and workshop events will not be scheduled without volunteers to make them happen. If you are interested in helping Central Cluster with activities planning please reach out to centralcluster@sonomabees.org.

Please remember to watch your e-mail for invitations from your Cluster Coordinators. Looking forward to enjoying 2020 beekeeping season with you all,

Rorie Sweeney
Regional Cluster Coordinator

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The New 2020 Officers

President: Ann Jereb, president@sonomabees.org
1st VP: Karen Cappa 1stVP@sonomabees.org
2nd VP: Carol Ellis 2ndVP@sonomabees.org
Treasurer: George Herrmann, treasurer@sonomabees.org
Secretary: Susan Kegley secretary@sonomabees.org
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 upper 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 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

Ordering of 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.).
January in the apiaries – Mid-winter hive expansion

It’s winter. The bees spend most of their time hidden inside the hives, assembled in life-sustaining clusters. Yet, when the weather is mild enough, some of the bees come out to perform cleansing flights or to forage. This is a modest amount of visible activity, which lasts only for a few hours on the mildest days. It is good news though, as it reveals that the colonies are alive. In fact, they are not idle. The queens have started laying eggs again. From a few dozen eggs per day at first, their production is increasing steadily. With growing brood nests inside the hives, the winter bees are hard at work, feeding the developing larvae and keeping their young sisters warm.

Over the next two to three months, the colonies have to become large enough and strong enough to be able to multiply and to efficiently exploit the early spring honey flow. To achieve this, they must raise thousands of young bees and keep them healthy. So, the nurse bees have to eat more honey, which is their source of energy, and also bee bread, when fresh pollen is not available. Their food comes mainly from the contents of the hives since the bees can gather very few supplies during the short winter days.

At present, the clusters are established in the upper combs of the brood chambers. There they are surrounded by honey and patches of bee bread, which were processed and saved several months earlier. The colonies consume their supplies at an accelerating pace that is driven by the development of the brood nest. The warmth generated inside the clusters helps the bees access the honey by softening the wax cappings. As the cells are emptied, they are prepared to receive eggs or droplets of nectar, when the weather permits foraging. The lower combs of the hives were vacated in late fall by the emergence of the winter bees from the fall brood nests. Most often, these cold parts of the hives remain empty during the winter. The bees will use them in the spring, when the weather is milder, or when the colonies have gained enough strength to expand into these colder quarters. In a few weeks the young bees that emerge from the brood nests will become more numerous than the gradually disappearing winter bees. Then the clusters will grow larger around the brood nests, to the point that lack of usable space in the hives could limit the development of the colonies.

If a vigorous colony does not have enough space to permit its free development, it either will not grow well, or it will be forced to swarm by the overcrowded condition of its brood chamber. Sometimes, this may happen very early, before the end of winter. None of these outcomes is good for the bees. Swarming includes the production of young queens that have to mate well in order to become good, productive queens. This just cannot happen in winter, because drones won’t be mature or will not fly in sufficiently large numbers when the temperatures are too low.

In order to avoid these problems, I make sure the volume of my hives is increased around the end of January or in early February. The addition of space is most important around the brood nests and clusters, in the upper part of the brood chambers. This is done very rapidly on a nice sunny and calm day, without breaking the clusters, inspecting the brood nests or disturbing the bees unnecessarily. I may execute this manipulation in one of two ways, which can be combined. The first and easiest of the two is the placement of supers with a few frames and follower boards directly above the brood nests. The second method is the insertion of empty frames alongside the brood nests. This is probably more effective in helping the cluster and the brood nest grow than the simple addition of a super, but it takes a little more time to perform. When the conditions permit, I like to combine both methods by moving one or two lateral frames of honey from the upper brood chamber into the center of an additional super. These frames are replaced by empty ones (See the attached drawing.) This allows the growing clusters to expand into the space that is liberated in the upper brood chamber while keeping their stores near the brood nest. At the same time, the bees are enticed to expand into the new super. Once this is done, the colonies will have been given all the space they’ll need until early spring.

Monitoring trays that are inserted under the screens of hive bottoms are very informative pieces of equipment that are particularly valuable during this season. By examining the debris they collect we can tell much about the colonies, including the size and location of their brood nests and their strength, which can be derived from the amount of condensed metabolic water.

Continued on page 5
The hive entrances deserve a little attention, too, if only to make sure they do not become blocked by an accumulation of debris or corpses of bees that died inside the hives.

Winter is an unforgiving season for the bees and there are times, unfortunately, when we find a colony that has failed. When this happens, the hive has to be closed immediately to prevent robber bees from entering. It should be removed from the apiary as soon as possible and examined to help determine the cause of the failure. The equipment will then be cleaned for reuse, or discarded, as may be appropriate.

The bees are already preparing for spring. So should we.

In summary, this month:

- **Inspect the exterior condition of the hives:**
  - Hive tops should remain properly set and secured.
    - Observe the entrances and the ground in front of the hives.
    - Verify that the hive entrances are not obstructed.
    - Maintain adequate and safe ventilation through the hives.
- **Examine the monitoring trays.**
- **Verify that mice have not entered the hives.** Telltale clues of their presence, such as coarse pieces of comb and mouse feces, etc. are visible on the monitoring trays.
- **In the latter part of the month and weather permitting, quickly peek into the top of the hives to assess the location of the clusters.**
- **Place supers or additional frames where and when warranted.**
- **When no activity is observed, place your ear against the side of the hive, and listen for bees.** If the colony is dead, close the hive, remove it from the apiary, diagnose the problem, and discard or clean the equipment, as appropriate.
- **Clean and torch tools and equipment.**
- **Plan next season.** Evaluate the need for equipment and bees.
- **Procure, build and repair beekeeping equipment.**
- **Plant bee forage!**
- **Read and learn more about bees and beekeeping.**

May your bee colonies bring you good health and joy in 2020!
Beekeeping Class Schedule

Class: Introduction to Beekeeping

- **Class Dates:** 1/28/2020 to 2/18/2020
- Weekly – Tuesdays, 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM
- 4 sessions
- Lark Hall, Room 2009

**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:** 52
- **Class Fee:** $78.00
- **Materials Fee:** $16.00
- **Registration Fee:** $2.00

Class: Intermediate Beekeeping for Spring & Summer

- **Class Dates:** 3/03/2020 to 3/10/2020
- Weekly - Tuesdays 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM
- 2 sessions
- Lark Hall, Room 2009

**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 spring & summer management of beehives in Sonoma County. Detailed explanations of techniques that are used for fall, queen management, and hive management for winter will be given.

- **Max Class Size:** 90
- **Class Fee:** $60.00
- **Materials Fee:** $8.00
- **Registration Fee:** $2.00
Welcome 2020! May it be a healthy and happy New Year for you and your loved ones, including our dear hardworking bees!

This year I plan to concentrate on bulbs, tubers and rhizomes. Some of us lost houses and landscaping in the horrific fires of the last couple of years. Fortunately, many are moving back into newly rebuilt abodes, or have moved to new locations. Whether you are re-landscaping, or just adding more plants to an existing garden, consider adding bee friendly bulbs.

Bulbs are easy to plant, usually bloom the first year after planting and give our bees some needed nutrition.

I intend to include at least one native bulb in each month's column. There are so many gorgeous natives, they are easy to grow, and they attract native pollinators when in bloom.

Native Bee bulb Single Leaf Onion Allium unifolium Family: Liliaceae

You may recognize the family name as belonging to our edible allium family, which includes onion, garlic, leeks etc. Indeed, you could eat the tiny bulbs and greens which have a garlic flavor. But why not plant a swath of A. unifolium for the delightful tiny rose-pink clusters of flowers that appear in late spring to early summer? The flower stalks are 1-2 feet tall.

A. unifolium is adaptable to a many soil types, isn’t fussy about water – from no summer irrigation to tolerating regular watering. Sun or partial shade are fine, deer and rodents tend to avoid them. They do particularly well with other natives such as buckwheats, sages, native grasses, and other native bulbs. Just give them plenty of room when you plant them, as they tend to multiply. They will even self-sow, remove the seed heads if you don’t want volunteers. Or dig them up every few years and share with friends or move them to other garden spots.

Don’t stop with A. unifolium, there are 50 California native alliums!

Hybrid Bee bulb Allium giganteum Giant Allium

Here’s a show-stopper! Large lavender blooms arise from 5-foot stems. They are umbels of tiny flowers that bees can’t get enough of. Plant them at the back of a garden bed or along a fence for a spectacular summer display. Plant them in well-drained soil, as deep as the height of the bulbs, in groups of three bulbs per square foot. Give them some nice soil, add a little bulb food and then wait for the show.

There are so many beautiful alliums, we could talk about just this family all year. Unfortunately, January is a bit late to be ordering them for planting right now. You can pre-order with some nurseries for fall, or check with your local nursery, they may still have some in stock that you could plant now.

Here are some online nurseries:

- https://www.americanmeadows.com
- https://www.johnscheepers.com
- http://www.telosrarebulbs.com
- https://www.dutchbulbs.com

Alice Ford-Sala
**News from Your Events Coordinator**  
**Kelli Cox**

Fellow beeks, Happy New Year!

This is going to be a great year for SCBA and even greater with your help! I will be at the January General meeting with a volunteer signup sheet for 2020 events.

Thus far we know we are going to represent at The Butter and Eggs Parade in Petaluma, The Sonoma County Fair, and The Gravenstein Apple Fair. There will be plenty more but smaller.

The first need for Volunteers is at the Scion Exchange in the Santa Rosa Vets Memorial Building on January 25th from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. 6 total volunteers are needed to be at our table. We need 2 from 9-11, 2 from 11 - 1 and 2 from 1 - 3. (Note members only will be able to come in at 9 a.m. but you can come in to work that first shift.)

Ettamarie is the point person so please contact her if you're interested @ editor@sonomabees.org.

**Editor’s note:**

Many of you have been to this event and/or are members of the Redwood Empire Rare Fruit Growers Association. This is an excellent event they put on every year. You can pick up scions from many heirloom varieties of fruits such as apples, plums, grapes, pears and peaches.

They have informational talks and demonstrations on how to grafted the scions and root stock ready to grafted for sale. If you volunteer for one shift, come at early or stay late to participate.

I always go with a permanent marking pen, masking tape to wrap around the scions I take, newspaper to dampen to keep them fresh and a shopping bag. This is one of the most educational and rewarding events of the year, I think!

Beest,

**Kelli Cox**  
Events Coordinator

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**School Pollinator Garden Pilot is off to a Strong Start**

The new School Pollinator Garden Project began as the seed of a notion when Gardening for Bees (G4B) developed and sold Super Simple Starter Kits last year. The Starter Kits made the job of planting school pollinator gardens seem easy enough to imagine. So Angy Nowicki worked with Monte Vista school and it became the first participant in the gardening pilot.

From that single school test, the Project began to bloom, led by a team of educator/volunteers:

- **Angy Nowicki** – G4B liaison, compiling plant suggestions, boxing Starter Kit plants.
- **Maggie Weaver** – managing the Educator component on the SCBA website, organizing presentation dates, conducting many bee anatomy presentations.
- **Mari Barrell** – directing communication via the School Garden Network, announcing the program, designing the school application, maintaining contacts with schools.
- **Kim Bergstrom** – developing handouts on planting layout, spacing and care of each plant.

The Project launched into the 2019-20 school year by identifying a set of Sonoma schools that met criteria intended to help assure school commitment, ongoing oversight and bee-friendly practices in line with SCBA guidelines. To qualify, a school must have a garden plot (approx. 100 square feet), a garden coordinator, a watering plan and a commitment not to use pesticides. Schools also needed to agree to accommodate SCBA educational presentations in the Fall, before plants were gifted to their schools, and again in the Spring, after gardens are established.

The program is designed for all students in Pre-K through 6th grade. It begins with a presentation to each participating class about the importance of bees as pollinators, teaching students about bees’ need for habitat and for forage/food all through the year. In addition, presenters provided school garden coordinators with useful information on soil amendment and garden prep.

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Six schools that applied via Google form were accepted into this year’s Pilot:

- Rainbow Bridge Preschool in Kenwood
- Penngrove Elementary, Penngrove
- Prestwood Elementary in Sonoma
- Proctor Terrace in Santa Rosa
- Community Soil Foundation/Mark West Elementary, Santa Rosa
- Steele Lane Elementary, Santa Rosa

SCBA volunteers presented educational talks at most of the schools in October and November. Starter Kit plants were delivered and students developed a planting plan, then planted their gardens.

Plants were propagated by volunteers at G4B workshops and tended by G4B home nurseries volunteers. A key aspect of the Starter Kits is that they include plants that bloom in every season, especially during the late summer/fall dearth. Plant mixes will vary according to what is available and how large or mature plants are at the time schools are ready for them. A typical Starter Kit for Fall 2019 included: White Yarrow, Calendula, Stonecrop Autumn Joy, Japanese Spirea, Pineapple Sage, Coral Bells, Bulbine and Rosemary

In the spring, schools will receive Maximilian Sunflower root stock to add to their gardens to finish out the Sept-Nov forage.

Current state of progress at each of the 2019-20 Pilot schools:

Rainbow Bridge Preschool in Kenwood – Ellen Sherron presented a talk about pollination, bee habitat and how children might help the bees. She also shared gardening tips with school gardening staff.

Penngrove Elementary, Penngrove – Mari Barrell presented to the 4th grade and Maggie Weaver followed with an education talk and delivery of plants. Mari supplied many of photos below illustrating steps in the Project. She noted, “The Penngrove students were thrilled when their Calendula began blooming just two weeks after they plant it.”

Prestwood Elementary in Sonoma – Maggie Weaver presented on gardening, Miles Sarvis-Wilburn covered pollination and he took photos (also below).

Proctor Terrace in Santa Rosa – Angy Nowicki presented the gardening talk and Miles covered pollination. Both took pictures there as well.

Community Soil Foundation/Mark West Elementary – Presentation and planting are set to follow holiday break.

Steele Lane Elementary – Presentation and plant delivery will be scheduled after the New Year.

Once all schools have completed their planting, Pollinator Garden leaders will meet to share what they have learned and how they might improve presentations, plant mixes, planting and interfacing with schools for the next school year.

A Second Round of School Presentations Is Planned for Spring 2020

Spring presentations to the same students in each of the six schools will track the outcomes of the garden project. Project leaders will again share what they learn and fine-tune to serve additional schools in future years.

Any SCBA Member Can Be Part of this Project

The School Pollinator Garden team will be looking for both Education and G4B volunteers in each of the Clusters as they roll out the program on a larger scale. Ideally, presentations will be a team effort, pairing a volunteer from the Education Committee with one from G4B Group, sharing the gardening and pollination portions of the talk. These talks are a fun way to support bees, as well as your local community, while you share SCBA natural beekeeping practices. Interested gardeners should contact Angy Nowicki fernfeeler397@gmail.com of G4B; Education volunteers contact Maggie Weaver mweaver795@aol.com

Watch for more Pollinator Garden Project updates and photos as the school year continues and gardens get growing. And a big thank you to all involved in the Pollinator Garden Project who contributed to the facts, photos and teamwork that resulted in this article.

GOT SPARE POTS?

The Gardening for Bees Group welcomes your used plastic gardening pots.

However, the growers can only accept certain sizes: 3-inch pots, 4-inch pots, 1-gal. pots, 6-packs and flats.

If you have any of these you’d like to share, please bring them to the January meeting and leave them in the lobby. They will be used and appreciated.

Continued on page 10
Photo Essay of the Steps in the Pollinator Garden Project

Starter Kit of plants and presentation materials. Photo by Miles Sarvis-Wilburn.

Students note important points about bees, gardening and pollination. Photo by Mari Barrell.

Maggie Weaver shares the importance of bees with Prestwood Elementary students. Photo by Miles Sarvis-Wilburn.

Garden is prepared for planting, including the No Spray sign, in keeping with SCBA practices. Photo by Miles Sarvis-Wilburn.

Students dig in with towels and good energy to start their very own school garden. Photo by Mari Barrell.

Maggie Weaver presents to Prestwood Elementary 6th Graders. She stresses the bee’s need for blooming forage in every season, all year. Photo by Mari Barrell.

More digging, more enthusiasm as students start their pollinator garden. Photo by Mari Barrell.

Students customized a planting plan that will provide for space each plant will need as it grows. Photo by Mari Barrell.

The important finishing detail – irrigation to ensure the plants are sufficiently watered to get a good start and survive through next year’s dearth. Photo by Mari Barrell.
Monthly Meeting Minutes
December 9, 2019

Location: 4H Building, Rohnert Park
Meeting started: 6:55 p.m.
Approximate attendance: ~ 140

Items covered:

- Yearly holiday party
- Tally of election results for board of directors for 2020
- 2020 Board of Director elections held. The results are:
  - President - Ann Jereb 134 votes
  - 1st Vice President - Karen Cappa 135 votes
  - 2nd Vice President - Carol Ellis 132 votes
  - Treasurer - George Herman 133 votes
  - Secretary - Susan Kegley 134 votes
  - At large for 2020 (Appointed):
    - Katia Vincent
    - Angelo Sacerdote
    - Candice Koseba
  - Current 2019 board members thanked for their service.
    - President: Kelli Cox
    - 1st Vice President: Ann Jereb
    - 2nd Vice President: Susan Kegley
    - Treasurer: Julie Gugel
    - Secretary: Peter Jones
    - At-large: Katia Vincent
    - At-large: Angelo Sacerdote
  - Kelli explains at large board positions to membership
- Thanks given to our many awesome volunteers!

Prizes and Bingo games played.
Meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Peter Jones
Secretary
Regular monthly meetings of the Sonoma County Beekeepers’ Association are held on the second Monday of each month, at 7:00 p.m. at the Rohnert Park 4-H Building.

**Meeting Location:**
4-H Building  
6445 Commerce Blvd,  
Rohnert Park, CA 94928  
[Google Directions](https://www.google.com/maps/place/4-H+Building+6445+Commerce+Blvd,+Rohnert+Park,+CA+94928)

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 [https://sonomabees.org](https://sonomabees.org), at our monthly meetings, or by mail. Please see our website for the application and various kinds of memberships available.

**Mailing address:**
Sonoma County Beekeepers’ Assoc.  
P.O. Box 98  
Santa Rosa, CA 95402-0098

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