PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Dear Fellow SCBA Beekeepers,
Summer has arrived with a blast of heat! With the summer solstice on June 20th, we’ve passed the longest day and shortest night of the year.

I am truly missing our bee community. The Covid-19 rules of social distancing and gathering mean that we won’t be having our summer picnic, but will have a July general meeting instead. See below for more information.

We are fortunate to have the technology to stay connected with Zoom.

The joys of summer bring a bounty of flowers and veggies to our gardens and warm days running around in tee shirts, shorts and sandals (and masks!). For our bees, the mark of summer solstice signals time to start preparing for winter. Although our bee colonies may feel large and busy, they are about to get smaller and their food less abundant.

Did you know that June 22-28 was Pollinator Week? In 2007, the US Senate voted unanimously to dedicate one week of the year to pollinators in hopes of protecting and celebrating all they do for us. This dedication has become an internationally recognized week when communities all across the world hold educational events and spread love for these amazing creatures.

In lieu of our July picnic, we have a special opportunity to explore the plight of the honeybee and other pollinators with a free viewing of the newly released documentary “The Pollinators” in advance of the July 13 general meeting. See page 2 for more information.

Zoom link for July 13 general meeting.
https://zoom.us/j/95454977385
Meeting ID: 954 5497 7385
Time: Jul 13, 2020 07:00 PM Pacific Time
Sign in at 6:30, meeting starts at 7:00

Although the world can feel pretty unsettled and at times worrisome, remember to take a moment each day and enjoy the peace of your garden and watching your bees.
Hope to see you at the Zoom general meeting July 13th.

Ann Jereb 2020 SCBA President

THIS MONTH’S CALENDAR

Monthly Meeting:
General Meeting Announcement

Join online for a panel discussion and Q&A session of “The Pollinators” documentary film at our July 13 general meeting. The panel will include: Peter Nelson, the film’s director and producer, and Susan Kegley, of Bees N Blooms who appears in the film.

July 13, 2020 General Meeting via Zoom:  
https://zoom.us/j/95454977385  
Meeting ID: 954 5497 7385  
Time: Jul 13, 2020 07:00 PM Pacific Time  
Sign in at 6:30, meeting starts at 7:00pm

Be sure to watch “The Pollinators” in advance of the general meeting. The film will be available for a free online viewing on Sunday July 12th and Monday July 13th, prior to the general meeting.

Alternatively, you can rent “The Pollinators” film at any time on services such as iTunes, Amazon, Google Play, etc.

Please look for an email with the free link. It will be sent to all SCBA members as soon as it is available.

To view a trailer of the film click:  
https://youtube.com/watch?v=xpgxhNVSjqc

Membership Reminders
By Irene Sample, SCBA Membership Coordinator

Hi SCBA members: Just a quick reminder that if there is anything you need to change about your membership information, it's easy to do by logging in to https://sonomabees.org/ and editing your profile. You can change your contact information, your cluster preference, your special interest choices, and other settings.

BEE SHARE PROGRAM UPDATE

Strong Swarm Season Winding Down
By The Bee Share Team

The 2020 swarm season and the Bee Sharing program are winding down. Following the pattern of the last two years the number of swarms per week dropped off sharply in the month of May and virtually fizzled out in June.

As of June 24 (when we went to press) ten swarms had been reported for June. This compares to eight for the full month of May in 2018 and 22 for the full month of June in 2019. The total number of reported swarms throughout Sonoma County through June 24 stands at 409! That is dramatically ahead of 242 for the 2018 swarm season through the end of June and 235 for the 2019 swarm season through the end of June. Please refer to the updated bar chart below for a plot of swarms by week.
As of June 24, a total of 10 splits were reported throughout Sonoma County. That compares to 34 through the same date last year. If you have splits to report please do so at the Member Split & Swarm Report page (see below).

**SPLIT and SWARM REPORTING REMINDER** - In response to requests for online reporting you can now report your splits and swarms via your laptop, tablet or phone at this Member Swarm Report page. Clicking on the link will prompt you to sign-in to the website to file your report. If you aren’t able to access the web site to file a report, please email your cluster coordinator or bee share coordinator who can send you instructions for reporting via email.

For those who do use the web site to file a report, the top of the Member Swarm Report page also has links to the latest table of swarms by city and the latest plot of swarms by week. You can also find links to those pages under the SCBA MEMBERS-ONLY INFO menu.

The Member Swarm Report page also has contact information for your cluster Bee Share coordinators. If you have a swarm or split to share please reach out to your cluster’s bee share coordinator. Thanks for supporting the Bee Share program by

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<th>Cities</th>
<th>Aggregate Swarms Reported thru 6/24/2020</th>
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<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Cotati, Oakmont, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa</td>
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<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>Cloverdale, Geyserville, Healdsburg, Windsor</td>
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<td>South</td>
<td>Novato, Penngrove, Petaluma</td>
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<td>East</td>
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<td>West</td>
<td>Bodega, Forestville, Freestone, Graton, Guerneville, Occidental, Sebastopol</td>
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reporting your splits and swarms and through your generous sharing of those extra splits and swarms that you make available!

**Honey Extractor Rental**

One of the benefits of SCBA membership is access to our honey extractors. We currently have a honey extractor for each cluster, as well as one fruit press shared across all regions. Members can find the terms of this rental, as well as the necessary contact information, in the "SCBA Members-Only Info" section of the website. To see this section, you will need to be logged in. Happy spinning and crushing!

**SERGE LABESQUE’S MONTHLY TO-DO LIST**

Please note the following column is a reprint from 2019. While reading it, keep in mind that there will be differences in weather from year to year.

**July in the apiaries**

by Serge Labesque © 2019

Summer is in full swing with hot and dry weather conditions. The location of our hives makes a difference for the bees. While the colonies that depend on natural vegetation may have access to very little nectar, pollen and even water, others, may benefit from irrigated gardens, parks and crops that can create and sustain generous honey flows.

Because the populations have reached their maximum size for the year and the brood nests are shrinking, large numbers of bees can become foragers. Therefore, the flight paths in front of the hives are very busy. The bees supply their colonies with all the nectar and pollen they are able to gather. They may also bring water, especially during the heat of the day when cooling and humidifying the brood nest areas becomes necessary in order to protect the young. If the hives receive the early morning sun the foragers are stimulated to collect nectar early in the day, before it becomes dehydrated by the hot sun and the dry summer breeze.

The nectar flow being reduced, the shrinking brood nests tend to move upward on the combs, sometimes to the point of leaving the lower combs empty. With the exception of hives that may still be benefitting from a sustained summer nectar flow, in most instances, comb construction has essentially stopped.

During the summer, the addition of nectar storage space is done more measuredly than in the spring. This is particularly important when large DD frames are used, because in these cases, we want to make sure that the brood nests and the stores will be entirely located in the double-deep brood chambers by the end of summer or early fall.

To prevent their hives from overheating, the bees collect water or hang outside the hives. Unfortunately, this reduces the attention they would otherwise be giving to the brood or it hinders their capacity to gather nectar and pollen. So, beekeepers...
may provide shade to the hives, as this can minimize the impact of the sun on the colonies. In some locations it is also helpful, if not necessary, to keep water constantly accessible to the bees. Although the screened upper ventilation slots of the hives are to be kept open to make sure any excess heat can be released, it is good to avoid excessive ventilation of the hives. The bees need to control the temperature and relative humidity around their brood. For this reason, I leave the monitoring trays in place under the screens of the hive bottoms.

Beekeepers have shifted their attention to the honey supers at the end of the spring honey flow. Now, ripe surplus honey may be harvested. The combs must be promptly processed to avoid Small Hive Beetle damage. Still, it is important not to miss assessing the colonies’ health and queens at this time of year. The level of varroa mite infestation is one key indicator of some of the characteristics imparted by the queens to their offspring, and a predictor of the future of the colonies. Monitoring trays are invaluable tools that help to figure this out, as they do not harm the bees while collecting the mites that fall from the nests. Monthly or more frequent examinations of the trays help to document how the colonies handle the parasite. From the observations and notes that are made, it becomes possible to begin planning any justifiable hive combination or requeening.

Although the inspections of the brood chambers are less frequent during the summer than earlier in the year, the timing of these manipulations is to be chosen carefully to prevent triggering robbing. Most often this means avoiding the middle of the day, when nectar is scarce or not available to the foragers. The best time to inspect hives during this season is in early morning, when foragers are out, active and finding nectar and pollen to collect, or in late afternoon or early evening, when they begin to return home. It is prudent to pay particular attention to the bee activity in front and around the hives to spot any would-be robber bees or other problems before opening the hives. The entrances are somewhat reduced in order to keep them defensible against robbers and the yellow jackets that will soon begin to threaten the hives. And of course, smokers have to be used and manipulated with great caution in areas of dry vegetation.

**In summary, this month:**

- Keep an eye on the health of the colonies.
- Provide adequate and safe air circulation through the hives (upper ventilation slots and follower boards).
- Be aware of situations and manipulations that can trigger robbing.
- Make sure that the components of the hives fit tightly to prevent secondary entrances that might allow robber bees to enter hives.
- Adjust the size of the hive entrances to reduce the risk of robbing, particularly in developing colonies.
- Ensure that sources of water are continuously available to the bees.
- Provide afternoon shade, if at all possible.
- Follow-up on the development of young colonies (Keep notes!)
- Evaluate the quality of young queens. Replace failing or undesirable queens.
- Monitor the mite population build-up.
- Consider combining or requeening inherently weak colonies or those that are not developing properly.
- Monitor swarm traps.
- Keep some equipment at the ready to catch the occasional swarm.
- Manage honey supers (less space is needed as the nectar flow decreases).
- Finish harvesting surplus spring honey, but do not overharvest, particularly from hives that are kept in the dry hills, where the bees will be consuming more honey during the summer than they will be producing.
- Extract and bottle surplus honey.
- Return wet frames and wax to the bees.
for cleaning or re-filling.
- Discard old and misshapen combs and frames.
- Remove frames of undrawn beeswax foundation from the hives.
- Render wax from discarded frames and from cappings (separately). Solar wax melters work very well during this season.
- Beware of the fire danger while using the hot smoker in dry grass.
- Routinely clean and scorch tools and equipment.

Serge Labesque © 2019

Bee Plants for July By Alice Ford-Sala

Galanthus Snowdrop Family: Amaryllidaceae

We have all seen this early-blooming flower in winter-early spring: White nodding bells that let us know longer days are coming. But did you know this is an excellent source of pollen for our bees? It comes at an important time when the brood nest is starting to grow. Native to Europe and Asia, they are very adaptable to a variety of climates. They do need some winter chill.

This is an easy bulb to grow. **Order them now for fall planting.** Then plant them in good soil 3 inches deep and 3 inches apart. They do need some moisture year-round. Galanthus do well in a woodland garden, on a hillside, rock garden or border of a flowerbed or lawn. They can tolerate full to partial sun. Plant them in groups and over the years they will naturalize to form a large drift. They don’t divide well, so plant them where you can leave them alone. The foliage will die back after bloom.

The bulbs are toxic, and are deer and rodent resistant. Don’t eat them!

G. nivalis, Common snowdrop. This is the one we are most familiar with. White flowers with green markings echoing the deep green leaves are borne on stems 6-9 inches tall.

‘Flore Pleno’ has double flowers with pretty green centers.

G. elwesii, Giant snowdrop. These pretty winged flowers, white with green markings, can reach 1 ½ foot tall. They are said to be more tolerant of warm winters.

G. ikariae aka G.woronowii. Very small, 4 to 6 inches tall, this delicate flower looks like snowdrops dotted with emeralds. The leaves are shiny green. Blooms a little later than the others.

GARDENING FOR BEES JULY UPDATE

G4B’s Best Bee Forage Plant Sale Yet!

By Kitty Baker

“Thank you for your work on this wildly successful sale!” Maryle Brauer, Gardening for Bees (G4B) Group leader gave high praises to the team behind the June Pop-Up Plant sale. “It was amazing teamwork and energy that went into the porch sales. It was so fun to fulfill one of our main missions with this creative undertaking in the time of the Covid 19 Virus. Enjoy your food, bees and beeks!”

How successful was the sale? G4B treasurer Stevie Lazo reported forage plant sales to break all previous records: “Rita Maloney took in $773 and Angelo Sacerdote took in $688 for a sweet grand total of $1,461.00! Fantastic!”

Alice Ford-Sala
No Pop-Up Plant Sale in July
The record sale means more plants in the ground for our bees in months ahead. And, because there will be no Pop-Up Plant sale in July, we are pleased that the June Pop-Up promises so much future forage. When the next sale dates are confirmed, G4B will post on your SCBA Cluster Facebook page.

Gardener-to-Gardener Forage Plant Care
Raspberry pruning: According to Fine Gardening website https://www.finegardening.com/article/pruning-red-raspberries, “red raspberries are their own worst weed” when left unpruned. Overcrowded canes compete. Crowding invites disease and shades leaves and buds on the lower plant, causing them to die, resulting in fewer fruiting branches.

Although roots and crown of raspberry plants are perennial, the canes are biennial, living for a 2-year cycle. First-year canes are green primocanes. Second-year canes are floricanes. Summer-bearing primocanes won’t flower until the following year; everbearing produce a small late crop.

In the second year, buds grow into fruiting branches that bear a summer crop. As berries ripen, florican leaves yellow and die and, according to Cornell University research, canes continue to send carbohydrates to the crown and roots well into early winter, helping the plant survive dormancy.

Autumn beauty and Chocolate sunflowers were sold at the June Pop-Up sales. Photos by Sibyl Bugarin

Raspberry canes ready for pruning. Photo by Maryle Brauer.
Cornell pruning advice:
1. In late winter cut last year’s spent floricanes to the ground.
2. Remove less robust canes and canes growing outside the row. Thin to 3 to 5 canes per linear foot, keeping tallest, thickest canes.
3. Wire or trellis with easy-to-remove ties. For best sun, ventilation and disease resistance tie half the canes to grow toward either side of the row, forming V or X shape, encouraging new canes to grow up the center, with fruiting canes on the outside for easier harvest.

And, About Pruning those Floppy Salvia…
A frequent question. The answer varies by Salvia variety. You’ll find excellent deadheading, pruning and soil advice specific to each of the many common varieties on page 304-5 of The Well-Tended Perennial Garden by Tracy Disabato-Aust. The website Medium posts a link to browse the book, so you can easily read up on the finer points: https://medium.com/@welcomed_gamboge_ferret_838/download-in-pdf-the-well-tended-perennial-garden-the-essential-guide-to-planting-and-pruning-3ab89cf28273

High Time for Sunflowers:
“Now is the time to get sunflowers in the ground!” says Sibi Bugarin. She offers these tidbits on G4Bs’ multi-branching, open-pollinated sunflower varieties:

- Bees will self-medicate on sunflower pollen when ill or infected with pathogens. By planting sunflowers that produce pollen (most of the open-pollinated varieties) the needs of the bees are met and more bees come to the flowers.
- Also, they are great in bouquets and garden borders.

For Love of Fennel
“Bronze fennel with its feathery blue-green plumes, copper tips and golden flowers are beautiful as they unfold into the magnificent 4- to 5-foot plants they are destined to be,” notes Sibi. This native plant is “a major pollen and nectar source for swallowtail butterflies and other pollinator species. For culinary use, add the flowers and pollen as a seasoning to salads to give a sweet anise-like flavoring. Use the leaves to make a soothing afternoon tea.”

Annuals Can Offer Ongoing Presence:
Did you know that many annual plants offered by G4Bs at plant sales will go to seed and return year after year? Their main goal, according to Kate Frey, author of The Bee-Friendly Garden, is to grow quickly, bloom abundantly, and produce as much seed as possible as quickly as possible. Some will reseed in your garden, eliminating the need for replanting.

Kelly Corbett’s lush crop of Farewell to Spring Clarkias is a perfect example (see photo below). “I love all these volunteers,” Kelly commented. She explained that Ellen Sherron shared Clarkia seeds saved in 2018, which Kelly planted last year and was delighted to find a sea of them self-seeded in her garden this spring. “The bloom is short, mostly over now,” Kelly says, “but these and other annuals can be an important addition to a pollinator garden – an extra bonus for the bees.” Kelly also appreciates how her Nigella Love-in-a-Mist with its
blue-purple blooms and easily re-seed from season to season.

Maryle offered examples from her garden of the robust blooms from annuals that have gone to seed and proliferated from just one or two original plants.

Check out her photos of Gilia capitata “Blue Thimble Flower” and Bachelor buttons – both adored by honey bees. Also pictured is Agrostemma – a magnet for native bees.

“Here are a few bee-friendly annuals I’ve grown,” Ellen Sherron adds. “All great plants. Most do reseed.”

Calendula (Calendula officinalis)—this one blooms pretty much all year long
Pincushion flower (Scabiosa atropurpurea)
Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia hirta)
Borage (Borago officinalis)—everyone should have this plant
Honeywort (Cerinthe major ‘Purpurascens)
Phacelia, lacy (Phacelia tanacetifolia) and other annual phacelias
Sunflower (Helianthus annuus)
Cosmos (Cosmos bipinnatus and C. sulphureus)
Coreopsis
California poppy (Eschscholzia californica)
Mexican sunflower (Titthonia rotundifolia)
Love-in-a-mist (Nigella damascene)

However, Ellen has some reservations about relying too heavily on annuals “primarily, because they die after the growing season, they don’t really create a habitat, either above- or below-ground.”

Photo credits: Agrostemma, Love in a Mist, Clarkia by Maryle Baeuer. Bachelor buttons by Kelly Corbett.

JULY is all about watering!!!! A reminder that generous watering at this time helps build robust root systems that late-season plants need to survive and flourish – a promise of greater bee forage yields, come the summer/fall dearth.

Direct-Sowing: An Option to Consider
An article in Marin Magazine featured advice about direct-sowing seeds rather than buying nursery plants and transplanting.
https://www.marinmagazine.com/lets-be-direct/

Here are some takeaways from the article:
* Some plants with delicate roots, like zinnias, fare better from seed than from transplants.
* Make sure seeds are fresh, dated for the current year.
* Read seed packet directions, then prepare the area by loosening soil, removing weeds and working in organic compost.
* Plant by creating a long furrow, then place seeds at recommended spacing.  
* Planting depth rule-of-thumb: plant twice as deep as the width of the seed.  
* Keep seeds moist – but not soggy – with a fine water spray from planting to sprout.  
* Once seedlings have two sets of leaves, thin to avoid crowding.

**Local pruning advice:**

**Christine Kurtz on Raspberries**

Raspberries are among my favorite fruits. I remember as a little girl foraging for raspberries in dappled sunlight in the woods of Switzerland, popping them in my mouth to get that explosion of familiar flavor I looked for year after year. The first berry of the year was always the best!

Many years later, when I finally had my own garden, raspberries were a must: store-bought raspberries were too large, too watery, and flavorless. In addition, bees love raspberries, which produce a bumper crop of blooms and flower twice. Depending on the year, the first or second crop may be more fruitful. Either way, with a nice patch, there are plenty to eat raw, use in desserts, make jam, freeze for smoothies and invite a few friends to pick.

Each everbearing raspberry stem will fruit twice, then die. There is a continual regeneration of raspberry stems. Older stems that bore the second crop last year will bloom first and give your first crop, then leaves turn yellow and the stalk can be pruned away. Meanwhile new shoots will start growing and infill the patch with nice dark green leaves. Those will bloom for the second crop and should be dead-headed once done. They will not die off. They keep a green center and will produce your first crop next year.

Raspberries do best with regular watering and tend to prefer cooler weather, as this year has been. I started picking my first crop May 24. Four weeks later I’m still picking the last of them. Once fruiting, I can almost pick a bowl every other day. The second crop will come sometime in late July or early August as the new shoots had not started to flower as of June 23.

I don’t know what variety my raspberries are, as they were given to me by another gardener more than 20 years ago from her patch, which was given to her years before that. Raspberries send out runners and can be propagated easily to expand your own patch or to share with others. I will be giving starts to the garden group, so watch for those at a future plant sale. They are a proven stock and will not disappoint anyone.

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**What’s Good for Bees, Also Good for Beekeepers!**

Here’s a fun link that show you how to use your fresh-cut lavender to make infused oil. The process uses the buds and soft upper stems, leaving the woody stalks. Serge suggests we use to help control moisture in our hives – a no-waste equation.

[https://healingherbal oils.com/lavender-oil#section-2868310000](https://healingherbal oils.com/lavender-oil#section-2868310000)

---

**LAVENDER OIL**

**Ingredients:**
1 cup fresh, finely chopped lavender  
2 cups organic olive oil  
1 ½ teaspoon 100 proof vodka

*Photo from Healing Herbal Oils website*
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Due to Covid-19 concerns, the Sonoma County Beekeepers’ Association has suspended our in-person monthly meetings. Regular monthly meetings are held on the second Monday of each month, at 7pm and are currently available via ZOOM (ordinarily, we meet 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.