

The Monthly Extractor



Volume 45, Issue 11

November 2020

This is our newsletter that reflects the various techniques, theories and art of sustainable beekeeping. Articles are contributed by SCBA members.

President's Message

Greeting Fellow SCBA members,

The days are finally cooling off, the air has cleared of smoke and it's feeling like Fall. The bees are packing in as much last minute nectar and pollen as they can find in preparation for winter.

Now that you have completed the last of your inspections and closed up your hives for winter, it's time to hunker down and wait for spring with fingers crossed.

If you have experienced beekeeping related losses in the recent fires, please contact us.

The November general zoom meeting will be featuring Michael Smith speaking about "Honeybee Comb Building". We are looking forward to this informative and entertaining evening!

Winter gives us time to regroup and plan. This has been a challenging year on so many fronts for our communities and for the bees. Your board has been busy planning for next year and trying to anticipate the many uncertainties that lie ahead.

One crucial thing that we know for certain, your association needs your help! We continue to look for a new president and secretary for next year. Please consider stepping up to these opportunities. You will be welcomed with lots of support and a great team returning to the board. It's a great way to give back to your beekeeping community. If you are interested or have any questions, please contact me at, president@sonomabees.org.



Ann Jerab
2020 SCBA President

Stay safe and bee well.

NOVEMBER CALENDAR

Monthly Meeting: Monday, November 9

SCBA Zoom General Meeting November 9, 2020

Speaker: Michael Smith

Topic: "Honeybee Comb Building"

Sign on at: 6:30 Presentation: 7:00-8:30pm

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/95907055640>

Meeting ID: 959 0705 5640

We are very excited to announce this month's general meeting speaker is Dr. Michael Smith.

At our meeting, he will discuss the essential role comb plays in a colony of honeybees. He will discuss how the colony decides if it is big enough to invest in drone comb, reproductive comb, the seasonal use of comb, and how the bees use comb vibrations to communicate.

[More detail on Page 2]

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This Month's Speaker

At our monthly Zoom Meeting on November 9th, we'll hear from Dr. Michael Smith.

Michael Smith received his PhD from Cornell University under the tutelage of Tom Seeley. He is currently in Konstanz, Germany as a postdoc, but returning to the US this fall to start his own bee research lab at Auburn, Alabama, where he will be an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at Auburn University.

He is a social insect biologist interested in the patterns and processes of colony growth, development, and reproduction.

He's interested in how honey bee colonies function, how their nests are organized, and how individual bees detect the developmental state of their colony. "When it comes to a colony of social insects, it seems like they've shifted away from chemical cues, like hormones, and instead rely on physical ones."

- Michael's Lab Website (The Smith Bee Lab at Auburn): <https://smithbeelab.com>
- Follow Michael on Twitter: @SmithBeeLab

'Beth Evans', very pretty, numerous pink tubes with white highlights, it glows in a spring garden.

'Purple Bird' is a violet-purple with deeper purple markings.

'George Baker' has red orange flowers.

Corydalis lutea

This one is from southern Europe, *C. lutea* also has the pretty ferny leaves, the flowers are yellow, nodding and a bit smaller than *C. solida*. Does well in shade to part shade. Some sources noted it self-sows readily.



Corydalis lutea

Corydalis curvifolia rostthornii

'Blue Heron' has large fragrant blue flowers. It does NOT reseed.

Corydalis flexuosa

This one is from China and grows 12 inches high and 8 wide.

'Porcelain Blue' is quite fragrant with bright blue flowers.

Alice Ford-Sala

BEE PLANTS FOR November

By Alice Ford-Sala

Corydalis fumewort

Bird in a Bush

Family: *Papaveraceae*

Corydalis solida

Here's a pretty and little-known tuber from northern Europe. The foliage is delicate, like maidenhair ferns. The nodding tubular flowers are borne on numerous flower spikes and are loved by bees. They bloom in early spring. As you might guess from the northern European origin, *Corydalis* enjoys a good winter chill. Plant in rich well-draining soil in partial shade, 4 inches deep and 4 inches apart. Height is up to 10 inches and grows about 8 inches wide. It does well in a woodland setting, along a border, in a rock garden, or alongside a stream or pool. It usually goes dormant after blooming, but comes back every year, and can self-sow.

As a bonus feature it is said to be deer and rodent proof!



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.

My November Beekeeping To-Do List by Serge Labesque

© 2019

An open letter

Dear Bees,

Your lives are not getting better, are 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.

Regional Cluster Coordinator News Cluster Activities 2020

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
© 2019

I would like to take this time to thank our amazing group of Cluster Coordinators across SCBA for all their hard work this year, and it isn't over yet! In spite of COVID challenges, our Leaders have stepped up and embraced ZOOM connectivity to bring us together. We have hosted cluster specific as well as all-cluster ZOOM education sessions. A couple of our Clusters have created teaching videos which you can find posted on the main SCBA website under "members only" tab. These can be shared in cluster trainings or you can watch on your own.

The Cluster Coordinator Team met this weekend for our 4th quarter review and planning session. Many of our coordinators are staying on in 2021 to lead your Cluster Teams. In addition, we are looking for additional volunteers for the North, Central, & East teams. If you participate in the "Alternative Hives" group, your enthusiasm and knowledge would be most appreciated to carry on this group as well. Jim Spencer is stepping down as Leader of the Alternative Hives group. Perhaps a few ambitious volunteers can come forward and lead this group sharing personal experiences with their Top Bar, Double Deep, & Warre' hives.

Watch for an end-of-year Survey. Your feedback will help us move forward with creating 2021 cluster & all member education/activities. We expect COVID to be with us for a while and we are ready to embrace the challenges even more!

Looking forward to winterizing my hives and helping others as well. Please feel free to reach out with any questions, comments, ideas via email to regionalcoordinator@sonomabees.org.

Rorie Sweeney
Regional Cluster Coordinator

Save the date!!
Holiday Zoom Party Monday
December 14, 2020

**Ugly year, ugly sweater,
but very beautiful bee Zoom
party.**

Hi everyone! Save the date, **Monday, December 14**
(6:00PM-8:00PM)

Put on your zoom party shoes and ugly holiday (Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, etc.) sweater and get ready for some virtual fun and cheer. We will be judging the top 5 best with prizes going to the top two. Please send me your ugly sweater photos no later than December 10th to:

events@sonomabees.org.

Look out for more details soon!



GARDENING FOR BEES NOVEMBER UPDATE

Kitty Baker, photos by Angela Nowicki

We are pleased to report that the final Pop-Up Plant sale, hosted by Angy Nowicki the weekend of October 9 - 11, was a huge success. According to group coordinator Maryle Brauer, the sale's beautifully set up selection of forage plants included close to 350 plants – with special emphasis on dearth-season forage – and earned over \$1,000 in revenue. Angy provided a fun video posted on the G4B Facebook page to help gardeners anticipate the shopping experience and Covid-safe setting.

It was a satisfying finale to a remarkable year of propagating and distributing nearly 3,000 new forage plantings that have been, or will soon be, added to the county's gardens and landscapes – all for the love of our bees!



ANOTHER COMMUNITY PLANTING PARTNERSHIP

G4B is participating in a project to help with the planning and planting of pollinator forage at the Sebastopol Grange. Watch for a report on the project in the next issue of the Extractor.

LOOKING FORWARD

After such a wild and unpredictable year, a season of well-earned R&R is ahead for the Gardening Group. However, come spring, you can count on the G4B Group to continue our bee-forage boosting mission, propagating and making available at low cost, a great selection of bee-friendly plants to help you feed your bees with blooms in all seasons.

GARDENING GUIDANCE

The following article has been prepared by Ellen Sherron to encourage all beekeepers to take advantage of the Fall planting season, and to arm you with gardening insights that can make planting easier and the results more rewarding.

Fall—a Great Time to Plant for Your Bees

Ellen Sherron, Photos by Sibyl Bugarin

Fall used to be my favorite season—things are slowing down from the hectic growth of summer, and every plant, animal, and human is getting ready for the winter dormant season. Now that October and November bring smoky skies and the threat of wildfires—well, it's still a hopeful time. We can plant many trees, shrubs, perennials, and native annual seeds now, to give them a head start for next year's pollinator gardens. It's still the best season to put in native and drought-tolerant plants, which are so valuable for all-season pollinator gardens.

Fall planting offers many advantages:

- Days are cooler and shorter, so new plantings lose less moisture through leaves.
- The soil is still warm enough to establish root systems before winter that will support healthy growth of new leaves come spring. This head start will supply more water and nutrients next summer—helping plants make it through hot, dry conditions.
- You'll only have to water new plants until the hoped-for winter rains come.
- Fall plantings are less susceptible to several root-rotting diseases. The frequent watering necessary to keep spring- or summer-planted forage alive, in combination with warm soil conditions, encourages these soil-borne fungal diseases. Root systems that are well established during the fall, winter, and early spring are less vulnerable. This is especially important for California natives, which are prone to root and crown rots.
- Fall planting is usually easier on the gardener (at least when the smoke clears) —it's cooler, and there are fewer gardening tasks demanding our attention.
- Many local nurseries stock up with plants for fall planting, so you should have a good choice of trees, shrubs, and perennials to choose from, as well as flats of eye-popping cool-season annuals for color and forage.
- It's a good time to see trees and shrubs with their fall colors.



As “beetenders,” this is the time of year you’re preparing your hives for winter. Making sure they have bountiful and diverse forage when they leave the hive in late winter and all through the year is one more thing you can do to improve their chances of surviving and even thriving.

So, what should you be planting? This is a good time to look around your yard to see if you could use a few more plants to make your garden more attractive and beneficial to pollinators:

- Since bees need forage all year long, does your garden include plants that bloom through the winter and early spring? How about this time of year (the dearth) —when most summer-blooming plants have finished flowering?
- Since honeybees only collect pollen and nectar from one type of plant at a time and are more inclined to visit large groupings of the same type of plant (patches preferably at least 3' x 3', look for the plants in your garden that attract the most bees, and plant more of them in the same area.
- Diversify your plantings. Just like us, bees benefit from dietary diversity. Honeybees that have access to only one kind of flower, as in almond orchards, suffer nutritional stress. Also, if you're a plant junkie like me, it's a good excuse to visit nurseries!
- Native plants are great, especially for attracting native bees. Many are drought tolerant and create excellent habitat for birds and other animals. If you don't already have some, think of planting a few. Many bloom profusely during the winter and early spring.
- Fortunately, there are bee-friendly plants for every landscape situation:
 - Groundcovers—take out that useless, thirsty, water-polluting lawn and replace it with something both beautiful and useful.



- How about a shade tree? Or a fruit tree? Lots of wonderful blooming trees.
- A nice flowering vine would look good on the side of the house, on a trellis or arbor, or on a wire grid attached to a fence.
- Perennial borders have many uses—lining paths, between rows in vegetable gardens, as foundation plantings. See if there's a place you could include one.
- Hedgerows have countless advantages: they provide privacy, block unappealing views, divide outdoor living spaces—all while looking good and providing a large amount of forage for bees. I'm a fan of mixed hedges, which intermix cool season-, summer-, and fall-blooming shrubs.
- How about those pots full of spent summer blooms? There are lots of colorful plants available that will bloom all winter, while providing much needed cool-season forage.
- Plant some native annuals for cool-season blooms. [Larner Seeds](#), in Bolinas, has an excellent selection of native seeds. Just make sure to prepare the soil well before planting and provide adequate water until it rains and during any winter dry spells.
- A few years ago, I began planting our leach field with “invasive perennials,” such as oregano, thyme, pennyroyal, and salvias. Once established, I never have to water them and gophers never go there. Just avoid woody perennials with invasive roots.

So now you have some new plants and you've decided where you're going to plant them. Here are a few tips I've found helpful. This procedure makes it pretty easy to get them in the ground, and give them a good head start.

- Prepare your site—remove weeds (without using herbicides, of course) or mow them low*.
- Dig a hole for the plant—a few inches deeper and wider than the container it's in. If you have gophers in your area, dig holes large enough to accommodate the cages, plus a few inches.
- Put a few inches of the removed soil, mixed with compost** into the hole. Set the plant into the hole and fill it with a mixture of soil and compost. Make sure not to bury the plant any deeper than it is in the container. Tamp the soil down all around.
- Spread about an inch of compost around the new plant.
- Water the plant gently and deeply.
- Cover the soil with cardboard or newspaper for weed control. Rather than explain how to do it, watch this great little [YouTube](#).
- Make sure it's easy to water the plants all year long. Fall planting time is a good time to install a drip system.

**Plant, Plant, Plant
...and don't use pesticides!**

*Make a note to prepare new sites a few months before planting, using [soil solarization](#)—a nonchemical method for killing weeds in a large area. The soil is heated by covering weed-infested soil with clear or black plastic for 4 to 6 weeks during hot periods of the year or over the winter in this area. I use 6 ml plastic so it can be reused several times.

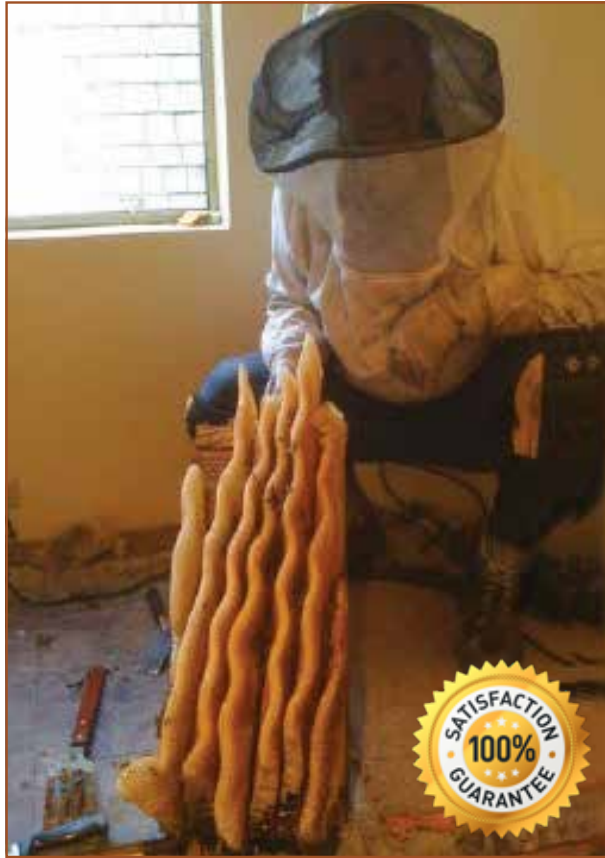
**Compost: You can buy bags of compost at any nursery or garden store. My favorite is from [Sonoma Compost](#), which, unfortunately, is now located in Nicasio. You can fill up your truck there or, if you buy a lot, have it delivered. I've been using their Hi-Test Compost for the last few years (recommended by Kate Frey!). I use it at planting and to top-dress when I cut plants back in winter.

**TIPS FOR MAKING
BEEKEEPING EASIER**
By Ettamarie Peterson

Keep a clean can with a lid with you when you do hive inspections. When you scrape burr comb off bars, etc. pop the wax into the can and put the lid on it. Also, when looking for the queen, don't scrape the burr comb first because the vibrations can chase her down. (Just read that part in the November issue of American Bee Journal.)



Michaelmas Daisy is in the Aster Family and is blooming now.
Photo by Ettamarie Peterson



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Cone flowers attract bees up to November.
Photo by Ettamarie Peterson



2020 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.
P.O. Box 98
Santa Rosa, CA 95402-0098

**REMEMBER: This month's
meeting is a ZOOM Meeting
(see page 1 for details!)**

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!