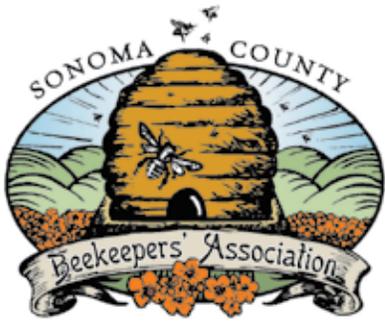


The Monthly Extractor



President's Message

Fellow Beeks,

It was great to see so many of you at both the "Coming out of Winter" presentation by Serge and at the general meeting. Ettamarie had some really interesting local history that many of us didn't know about, always good to know. Thank you Serge and Ettamarie!

As we ramp up for swarm season may I suggest you take advantage of this beautiful weather and start inventory on your equipment. Our lives are so busy that sometimes it's helpful to set aside time (in your calendar) to get some of the more mundane tasks out of the way. Sadly, many of us have lost most, some all, of our colonies. We will be addressing this in more depth at our bee cafes. On the upside, it is a good time to determine if you need to move your hive(s). Were they in the best spot(s) or have you noticed (or learned) that they should be in a different location? Are they still level? Do you need more dried lavender in the top feeder?

You should also take the time to clean your frames and decide which to keep and what to replace. Clean your supers and if you want to change from deeps to mediums (or the other way around). Now's the time.

Make sure your bee wear is clean (mold free) and your tools are all sharpened, clean and ready. If you find mold on your washable bee suits it helps to wash them in hot water with a cup of bleach, a cup of vinegar and the washing detergent. Be sure not to let the bleach go directly on the dry material as it can eat a hole in it!

For those of you who weren't able to attend Serge's presentation you can ask your Cluster leader for a copy. It is vital information to ensure the health and success of your colony if it has made it so far. Although, we're not out of the woods yet, there still might be more bad weather so don't jump the gun!

If you have lost your colonies (or not) you should be attending your Clusters Bee Cafes so you can be on the Needs Bees List, both to request bees or to share if you are going to split.

Your Cluster Leaders have spent a lot of time organizing a great year of cafes and workshops so make sure



Volume 44, Issue 2

February 2019

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

you are getting that info.

I am excited that the SCBA will be represented with a float in the Butter and Eggs Parade in Petaluma on April 27th.

Diana Holmes from South Cluster is the lead. She has a small committee that is beginning to organize. If you are interested in helping please contact Diana at dianaonboard@gmail.com. I'm sure by our next general meeting there will be some more information. This will be the first time the SCBA has been in this parade! :)

(continued on Page 2)

This Month's Calendar

Monthly Meeting: Monday, February 11

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.

Speaker is Nina Sokolov on her graduate study on effects of honey bee viruses on other native pollinators. See article in this newsletter for more information about the speaker's topic.

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The gardening group has a lot of exciting projects going on. Make sure you are in the know by contacting and joining. They can always use helping hands.

We are still looking for someone (or two) to help coordinate community events/fairs. As we have no one in this position we are not able to attend our regular events. If you would like to find out more please contact me at president@sonomabees.org.

It really is a wonderful position and a great way to meet others in our association. I guarantee you will have a

lot of worker bees who would love to volunteer.

See you at the general meeting....

Kelli Cox
2018 President

LAST CHANCE! Read This it is important!

Have you renewed your membership for 2019?

ALL 2018 memberships expired on December 31st.

If you have not renewed yet, do so now. Don't miss out!!

On February 15, 2019 all expired memberships will be dropped from the roster, and you will no longer receive email notices.

You will also not be able to participate in cluster cafes, hive dives, workshops and the swarm list. Swarm season will be upon us soon!

If you joined as a new member anytime after August 1, 2018, your membership is current through December 31, 2019.

How to renew for general and business memberships:

:



1. The **easiest and fastest way** to renew for general and business memberships:

Online at: <http://sonomabees.org/2019-membership/join-now/>

2. OR, **download** and complete a **membership application** and mail it with your payment to:

**SCBA,
P.O. Box 98
Santa Rosa, CA, 95401**

3. OR, apply at the next SCBA meeting. Bring the completed application to the meeting, and payment can be made with Cash, Check, or Credit Card. Everyone (new and renewing) must complete an application with his or her payment. This is the only way we can ensure that the information we have for you is current.

Thank you!

Ann Jereb
SCBA 1st VP Membership
1stVP@sonomabees.org

My January

Beekeeping To-Do List by Serge Labesque

© 2019

Four swarm stories and a lesson

My wife phoned me as I was on my way back from work. "The sheriff just called. There is a swarm in Glen Ellen", she said. I jotted down the information he'd given her and I immediately went to collect the bees. The swarm could not be missed. It was huge. It covered an area nearly 4 feet in diameter in the center of a quiet residential alley. But the unmistakable stench of insecticide reached me before I got to the bees. The bees had just been drenched. Nobody was in sight though, and I was standing alone in the middle of the street next to the mass of dead and dying bees. Nobody came out of the houses that lined the alley either, but I had the strong feeling of being watched from behind drawn curtains. For a while, I downheartedly collected a few of the disoriented foragers or scout bees that were returning. It was hopeless. A beautiful swarm had been destroyed.

A few days later, a woman called from Oakmont. A swarm had landed on the wall of her house, near the kitchen vent. As soon as I arrived, she told me that the swarm had moved inside and that bees were dropping onto her kitchen range. The man of the house had emptied a spray can of insecticide in the duct while I was on my way. Saddened and angry, I told the couple that they had just killed thousands of precious pollinators, and I left them with the insecticide-coated bees that were piling up on their cooktop.

On another day during that spring, I responded to a call from the Sonoma police. A swarm on the move had landed on a sidewalk, not far from the touristy Plaza. The mass of bees marched without hesitation into the nuc box I'd set near them. I clearly posted the area with caution tape. I would come back to collect them that evening. The police said that they would keep an eye on the bees during their rounds. But when I returned I found the box vandalized. The frames and hundreds of bees, queen included, were scattered and crushed on the sidewalk. The police said that a man had come, claiming that these were his bees, because they had left his hive in the morning with his honey!

On yet another occasion, a large number of bees were flying through an opening in a manhole cover near Eldridge. Undeterred by the car and pedestrian traffic, a swarm had apparently decided to set up residence below the pavement. While a CHP officer who had been dispatched to the site was watching for oncoming cars, I started lifting the cast-iron manhole cover, but I lost my grip on the heavy plate as soon as I had it up an inch or two. The metal cover was finally removed with the help of the policeman, revealing the sobering sight of a mass of bees drowning several feet below us. Evidently, the swarm had been shaken loose from the cast iron cover plate when I dropped it. I felt like an awful klutz...

These are only four of too many sad swarm stories I've experienced. Fear, ignorance, and clumsy beekeepers

are just a few of the dangers swarming bees face in this human environment, where safe nesting cavities are scarce. Who knows how many swarms are deliberately or accidentally killed each year? Scientists have shown that less than 25 percent survive through the following winter. Knowing this dismal statistic, how can any beekeeper concerned about his or her bees allow them to swarm, especially in urbanized locations?

It's certain that capturing swarms, setting out swarm traps and dividing hives help to save bees. Also, beekeepers can effectively reduce the risks bees would face by swarming by actively managing their hives at the end of winter and in early spring. This includes providing adequate space for colony development inside the hives. In this way, the colonies can gain as much strength as their potential and the weather conditions permit, and the congestion of the brood chambers, which often leads the bees to swarm, can be avoided.

I consider dividing the colonies a key part of my spring hive management practice and an important measure to keep bees out of harm's way. However, if a few colonies swarm when all has been done to avoid or to postpone the onset of swarming, at least they are strong. Also, good weather and the spring honey flow might then be on their side. When this happens, we can only hope that they will find a safe nesting cavity or that a good beekeeper will rescue them.

February in the apiaries

It may be raining, it may be cold and windy, and there is no forager activity in front of the hives, but the bees are not idle. Inside, the queens are steadily increasing their production of eggs and the brood nests are swelling. Every day, more and more adult bees emerge from the combs and the populations are growing. As the young bees take care of the brood, which must be kept fed and warm regardless of the weather, the consumption of the stores accelerates dramatically. The timing of this intense mid- and late-winter activity may seem odd, but it is because the bees are preparing for spring, for the honey flow and the season of colony reproduction. Indeed, since it takes six weeks for eggs to become foragers, the colonies need to have large and growing brood nests before the end of February in order to have enough foragers to exploit the important early-April sources of nectar and pollen.

Adequate colony growth can happen only if the queens have access to egg-laying space. But the expanding clusters, too, demand more space. And some comb needs to be available for the storage of nectar when the weather allows the foragers to fly to the blossoms. It is in anticipation of this need for more volume inside the hives that a few frames are added alongside the brood nests or that supers holding a few frames are placed directly above the brood chambers in mid-winter. The brood nests are

not exposed during these rapid manipulations, which are performed only when the weather is favorable.

Once the bees have been provided with sufficient space inside the hives, we keep an eye on their activity whenever we have a chance to walk through the apiaries. In a few weeks, however, regular rounds of open-hive inspections will begin to let us know whether the colonies can benefit from even more hive volume and to avoid the congestion of the brood chambers, or if they are initiating their preparations for swarming. An early signal of preparations for swarming will be seen in the amount and pattern of the open brood: Solid areas of eggs and young larvae indicate that the colony is still growing, whereas sparse and scattered open brood amidst large quantities of healthy sealed brood announce that the colony at hand will soon be swarming.

Unfortunately, some colonies will not make it to spring for a variety of reasons. These may include queen failure, disease, poisoning or starvation. The lifeless hives need to be closed and removed from the apiaries without delay, and their contents have to be examined to determine the cause of the losses. Then, the equipment may be cleaned or disposed of, as necessary.

At this time of year, once we have provided enough space in the hives to ensure that the colonies can develop well, it's good to be patient until the weather conditions permit and warrant safe manipulations and monitoring of the brood chambers. This still leaves us a little time to complete the preparation of our equipment for spring, if that was not done earlier. Also, a few plants that will produce nectar and pollen for insect pollinators can be added around the apiaries. This is without a doubt the best way to help bees, all the bees. What's the use of having hives if bees cannot find the food they need in their surroundings?

In summary, this month:

- **I highly encourage all beekeepers NOT to order, buy or bring in package bees, nucs and queens from outside their immediate area! Instead, arrange to obtain bees from neighbor beekeepers.**
- Inspect the exterior of the hives:
 - Verify that hive tops are still properly set and secured and that the hive entrances remain unobstructed.
 - Observe the landing boards and the ground in front of the hives.
 - On nice days, observe the flight paths and the bee activity. Adjust the entrance reducers, if necessary.
 - Make sure the upper ventilation slots are open to prevent the build-up of metabolic moisture inside the hives.
- Examine the debris on the monitoring trays.
- Early in the month, on a sunny, windless day, perform cursory inspections of only the upper part of the hives.
- Provide additional hive volume: Place supers with a few frames of empty drawn comb and follower boards. Add frames alongside the clusters.
- Take care of or dispose appropriately of any equipment that held colonies that failed, as warranted.
- Build and repair beekeeping equipment.
- Plan for spring.
- Plant bee forage.

Serge Labesque
© 2019

Scion Exchange Thank you to Our Volunteers!

By Ettamarie Peterson

Our table was staffed by 12 volunteers from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. It was wonderful the way some of our volunteers stayed extra long times so very often we had 3 enthusiastic beekeepers at the table talking to the public about how they could help bees by planting for them. Some of the people visiting our table wanted to know more about beekeeping in general so of course our volunteers told them about our organization and gave out our cards along with the new gardening for bees brochure the garden group has recently published.

Extra thanks to John and Darlene McGinnis for taking the SCBA materials back to the storage shed after the event. It is a joy to be part of SCBA when so many volunteers are willing to take time out of their busy lives to promote the welfare of our bees!

February Speaker

Nina Sokolov, Graduate Student at UC Berkeley

Nina is investigating the impact of commercial bees on spillover of new diseases to honey bees and into wild bee populations. Work has been done to show that important viruses, such as deformed wing virus, are being found in wild bee species, with unknown effects to their fitness and population numbers. The Varroa mites that are usually associated with the negative impacts of this disease are specific to honeybees however, so the lethal effects are exclusive to honey bees. But research has shown that this virus can decrease foraging efficiency and can be transmitted even without the mites. This has important implications for disease transmission when bees will be sharing floral resources together. The previous studies showing that the virus is in other bee species have mostly been done in the UK, so little is known about the California populations. This research will ultimately determine the factors that are influencing disease transmission in honey and wild bees and help inform management decisions.

Come to hear what she has learned so far and what we might be able to do to help her in this important research.

Spring 2019 Beekeeping Classes at SRJC

Spring Classes at Santa Rosa Junior College with Serge Labesque. Website: <https://srjce.augusoft.net/>

Class Name: Introduction to Beekeeping

Class Date(s): 02/05/2019 to 02/26/2019

Weekly - Tues 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM

4 sessions starting 2/5/2019, ending 2/26/2019

Lark Hall, 2009

Number of Sessions: 4

Number of Weeks: 4

Class Web Description: This short course will introduce students to beekeeping with a strong emphasis on bee-hive 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: TBD

Class Fee: \$78.00 Materials Fee: \$16.00

Registration Fee: \$2.00

Class Name: Intermediate Beekeeping for Spring & Summer

Class Date(s): 03/05/2019 to 03/12/2019

Weekly - Tues 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM;

2 sessions starting 3/5/2019, ending 3/12/2019

Lark Hall, 2009

Number of Sessions: 2

Number of Weeks: 2

Class Web 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 and summer management of beehives in Sonoma County. Detailed explanations of techniques that are used in apiary expansion, swarm prevention and capture, queen management, and hive division will be given.

Max Class Size: TBD

Class Fee: \$60.00 Materials Fee: \$8.00

Registration Fee: \$2.00



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- ~ Wooden Swarm Traps ~ Solar Wax Melters ~

*Designed and endorsed by Serge Labesque
Recommended by Christine Kurtz*

John McGinnis

(707) 478-9787

803 Lynch Rd, Petaluma, CA 94954

By appointment only

goahwayranch@gmail.com

SCBA

Monthly Meeting Minutes

Date: December 10, 2018

Location: 4H Building, Rohnert Park

Meeting started: 7:00 PM Approx. attendance: ~ 85

Items covered

General announcements

- Looking for Events Coordinator to help coordinate events for 2019
- 2019 Board Members introduced
- Looking for those interested in considering board positions for next year, 2020.
- Please contact president@sonomabees.org or secretary@sonomabees.org if you are interested.
-

Speaker info

- Ettamarie Peterson - History of Beekeeping in California

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Jones,
Secretary

2019 SCBA Swarm List Notice

Swarm season is approaching. To those members wishing to be on the SCBA public swarm list, please read the important information below.

All swarm list members are required to have:

1. One year of beekeeping experience
2. A current SCBA membership
3. Previous/Current SCBA swarm orientation
4. Returning members will automatically be placed on the 2019 Public Swarm List

Requirements for returning swarm list members:

Contact information: the phone numbers you have submitted on the renewal application will be used for the 2019 swarm list. It is very important that these numbers are accurate and immediately accessible. Cell numbers are preferred. Recognizing that you will be providing an important public service in the name of SCBA, you must be agree to be accountable for the following items:

- a. Available to respond to swarm calls in a timely manner. If unavailable to respond to caller must provide caller with 2-3 names/numbers of other swarm list members.
- b. Follow the rules of etiquette when dealing with the public.
- c. Safe capturing of the swarm and handling of the bees is important. This includes not removing the bees until dusk or dawn!
- d. Provide swarm capture free of charge to the caller.
- e. Report your swarm capture to the swarm coordinator (this is for data collection only).

Requirements for new swarm list members:

Members that wish to be on the community service swarm list must have at least one year of beekeeping experience and are required go to the swarm orientation before being approved.

- a. The swarm orientation has been scheduled at the 4H building in Rohnert Park. **6445 Commerce Blvd, Rohnert Park, 94928**
- a. Date and Time: **Thursday February 28 6:30 – 8:30**
- a. No RSVP necessary

East Cluster Equipment Workshop

By Susan Simmons, Lauri Dorman and Kristina Torres

The East Cluster Equipment workshop had a big draw this year, over 23 people attended, from the town of Sonoma all the way up to Oakmont. Lots of beginners but also some seasoned folks with lots of great input. Everyone shared and learned so much. Here are some of the high lights:

Darrell Jones is one of our more inventive and ingenious beekeepers! He showed us some of his swarm catching equipment and told some stories which were informative and fun! Yes, he is the guy who makes the plastic water bottles on the long pole to catch those swarms way up high. He also makes plant saucers from the bottoms of the water bottles to put under your planters. "Waste not, want not!" He has a bent over screw driver which he uses to clean out the troughs on some of the frames. He demonstrated ways to clean frames and discussed several different kinds of frames which are used with no foundation, with plastic foundation and with wire crimped foundation. And of course afterwards, several folks had lots and lots of questions!

Lauri Dorman, queen of the equipment bucket, went through all the contents of the bucket which was excellent. Lots of questions from all 23 participants! And all of this over the great lunch that several members made!!! (Thanks Lynn, Erin, Kristina, Heather, Mary... and probably others). Lauri gave everyone a copy of the list she uses to full up that bucket and I saw lots of folks taking great notes! Don't forget the toothpaste and the benedryl lotion. Ohhhh and rubber bands too!

Susan Simmons ended the workshop with some frame making and discussions about which frames are the best. We were all impressed with her hammering skills and getting the wire into the frames nice and tight. In the picture of Susan, you can see the hive which John McGinnis loaned us so we could show folks what a perfect hive looks like with all the latest and greatest bells and whistles some of which come from Serge but others John has improvised himself. Someone thankfully bought the hive so we don't have to take it back up the hill.

All in all it was a great day. Lots of bee buddy activities and people getting excited about The Beginning of BeeKeeping 2019!



Girl Scouts Merit Badges

Linda Hagle and Thea Vierling

The education group has been getting lots of requests for presentations these days. These requests come through the SCBA website. All requests are responded to by Jen Espinoza. Jen gets requests from schools, non-profits and community service organizations. These requests are then sent out to the education liaisons in the geographic areas of the requests and they are responsible for finding presenters. One very unusual request was received by Jen from a Brownie/Girl Scout troop. She knew exactly who to send it to because we have a lot of aging Girl Scout members in our SCBA organization!

Many years ago, every Girl Scout had a sash that would go over one shoulder and was worn "proudly" to every meeting. The sash had all the merit badges sewn on it and then was decorated with any additional pins and awards scattered on the sash. Thea was a Girl Scout a long time ago although she is not going to be specific about the exact date. If you take a look at her sash, it says #1, which means it was a long time ago! Also if you look closely, it no longer fits around her neck and over one shoulder so it is pinned to her shirt! That was many pounds ago! Many years ago Linda also was a Girl Scout leader for her daughter's troop. Her daughter's sash, totally covered by badges and awards, is amazing. Her troop number was 127. Nowadays the troops have numbers like 1,318 and they wear a brown, sleeveless vest and the badges are large in comparison. The badges are on the back of the vest and they are ironed on (although sewing is still a merit badge).

The Girl Scout Leader told Jen that the girls are working on their "Bug" merit badge. Many of the requirements for this badge include projects such as gardening to help pollinators, improving neighborhood gardens, and seed collection and dispersal. Girl Scout troops can use the "Girl Scout hut" in Rohnert Park. It's a spacious one room hut with a bathroom, running water and lots of supplies like crayons, cups, paper, flip charts, etc. We had a great time. The girls made seed packets to distribute to school gardens and planted a few seeds in the small containers provided by the education group.

All you aging Scouts out there (boys and girls) please come join us. And let's include 4-H in this as well. Ettamarie Peterson runs the 4-H group for beekeeping with Marcus Sugihara. Marcus started beekeeping as a young boy and led his son's 4-H project in Sebastopol years ago. Getting the word out to all young people about pollinators, honeybees and swarms is so important. We aren't getting any younger and we need young beekeepers to take our place. If you want to help us tell young people about the honeybees, using your volunteer time, email: education@sonomabees.org!



What is your twelfth of a teaspoon? Bee Sharing and Regional Groups

By Christine Kurtz

As a beekeeper, while watching and studying the inner workings of a hive and its inhabitants, the wisdom demonstrated is there for us to ponder on. Like pearls of wisdom from a master to its pupils our own condition, the conditions of our close environment and eventually beyond are brought forth. Beehives are like mini-universities where you can learn about a myriad subject ending with the letter Y (biology, physiology, ecology, heredity, density, meteorology, botany, pathology, virology, bacteriology, entomology, geography, history, paleontology, evolutionary biology, community.....

The more you study to understand what is going on with our most precious honey bees, the more subjects ending in Y will tickle your curiosity and what arises is another kind of Why? Losses this year are unusually high. Why? It involves a little of all the Y ending words above and particularly a weather pattern which triggered a chain of events:

- Spring kept playing tag with winter, bees responded with going into swarm prep and aborting several times
- Drones were raised and discarded 2-3 times in spring showing a lack of incoming resources and colony stress
- Percentage of Drones raised and present in hives far exceeded the average 20% ratio made an unbalanced resource expenditure and more opportunities for mites to reproduce
- Mating was incredibly challenging as many of us struggled to keep queen right colonies
- The dearth was brutally long as robbing was fierce in late Summer and Fall which made us question hive density and how many hives an area can sustain under such conditions.

This was then followed by 2 weeks of the worse air (literally in the world) due to wildfires adding stress to colonies and pollutants.

Preliminary nationwide BIP survey for 2017-2018 is already at 40% and numbers will rise as the cut off date is not until April 1. (<https://beeinformed.org/results/honey-bee-colony-losses-2017-2018-preliminary-results/>)

You will notice that fall losses is rather high again like it was in 2013. In 2013 I lost my entire apiary of 10. I know what losses feel like and I feel for all of you who are mourning your losses. We do have colonies, however, that navigate it all!

It can be overwhelming though! What are we measly beekeepers to do? And here we can

turn to the wisdom and lessons of the hive. A honey bee in her lifetime brings in enough nectar to barely make a twelfth of a teaspoon of honey. A twelfth of a teaspoon! Remarkably the bees don't contribute the twelfth of a teaspoon for themselves but for their future sisters that will carry the colony through the next winter. A single bee doesn't go: "OMG I have to come up with at least 35-40 lbs. of honey to survive winter!" She diligently, without complaining, does her work. She is a piece of the whole. So if we take that wisdom we can each ask: "What is my twelfth of a teaspoon?" How can I contribute selflessly to my bee community? This year, more than ever, we need each other. We can share our time, we can share our knowledge, we can share our apiaries, we can become a bee buddy (beekeeping with another or small group regularly), we can share our bees so we can have enough "stores" to feed us through the next season. Community is what is going to be able to pull us through.

Regional Groups

Our regional groups have organized and set the educational themes for the bee cafes. Each group meets once a month and location is dependent of volunteers. Most of you had your first meeting of meet and greet and equipment Café already and February will be all about swarms. Opening your house for a bee café could be part of your twelfth of a teaspoon. Taking on a bee buddy could too. Watch for invites in your e-mail and check your spam if not getting them. To participate in cluster groups your need to be a member and the grace period is about to end (February 14) so renew if you haven't right away. If you have any questions you can reach your cluster coordinators via e-mail by cluster region (North, South, East, West, Central) for example southcluster@sonomabees.org or centralcluster@sonomabees.org etc.... Don't know which group you belong to or have membership questions contact membership@sonomabees.org.

Bee Sharing Program

This a volunteer program where we are sharing our locally adapted surviving bees in the hopes to strengthen the resilience the bees have to adapt to the conditions of the current times. We have noticed that in general these bees do better and contribute to the overall health of the honey bees.

The bee sharing team has also met and is sending out a small survey (again watch your e-mail

and check spam). Please fill it out promptly so we can compile a list as soon as possible. Organizational work happens behind the scene and some of us are painfully learning the tech part. Would you be **willing** to share a split from your surviving colony? An extra swarm? An entire colony? The bees that survive this year are extraordinarily resilient and those are the ones we need more of. Could this be your twelfth of a teaspoon? Your way to selflessly nurture and feed your community for the future. If you would like to be a recipient of a split or swarm be ready to be contacted to see if you are ready to receive bees. Equipment ready? Thinking about or have a bee buddy? Brushing up and furthering your knowledge? Volunteering? Planting to feed our pollinators? All those help us see that you are invested in mindful stewardship. Think about what your twelfth of a teaspoon might be. A twelfth of a teaspoon will help us be nurtured and survive as a community where everyone can enjoy bees, whether you currently have some or not. It will feed us past our imagining. What is your twelfth of a teaspoon?

Humbly yours,

Christine Kurtz

Regional Group Coordinator & Bee Sharing Team Member



Photos Showing How We Can Work Together (Just Like the Two Bees on the Beekeeper's Hat)



Bee Plants of the Month

By Alice Ford-Sala

Hedgerow Bee Plant

California Currant Ribes

Family Gooseberry (Grossulariaceae)

Ribes are an excellent plant for a hedgerow. The California currants are beautiful and welcome late fall-through-early spring blooming natives that grow easily in most gardens. They have very fragrant and resinous leaves that release a pleasant woody scent when you brush up against them or rub their leaves. The yellow, pink, white or rosy red flowers are delicate tassels visited by honeybees, hummingbirds and native bees throughout the cold months when little else is blooming. Many fruit-eating birds enjoy the berries that set later in the season. This past fall I had the fortune to be home when a flock of cedar waxwings enjoyed a raucous feast of Pink-Flowering Currant fruit under my kitchen window.

Currants do well in filtered sun or partial shade. They make a nice woodland garden planting under the shade of trees. They can take full sun if it's not too intense. They can also take some summer water, and actually will do quite nicely with moderate watering. They need decent drainage but are not as picky as manzanita or ceanothus about wet roots in the summer.

There are several varieties that would make an excellent hedgerow, either by themselves or in combination with other bee forage plants:

Ribes malvaceum/Chaparral Currant grows 4 to 8 feet tall, with a very upright shape. One of the earliest to bloom usually in early winter, the dangling pink flower clusters are hummingbird and bee magnets, often buzzing with native and honeybees on a warm winter afternoon. Chaparral Currant is briefly deciduous in late summer, but leafs out again with the fall rains.

Ribes sanguineum var. *glutinosum*/Pink-Flowering Currant also has a pleasing upright form. Growing from 5 to 8 feet tall, there are several varieties that are quite gorgeous. 'Claremont' has strikingly beautiful nectar-rich flowers in a vibrant pink. 'Tranquillon Ridge' has deep pink, very abundant flower clusters and is especially vigorous. *Ribes sanguineum* var. *sanguineum* 'White Icicle' is a more compact currant, and as you might have guessed, has pretty white flower clusters. 'Elk River Red' has deep pink-red blooms.

Ribes aureum/Golden currant grows 3 to 8 feet tall and bears small clusters of yellow flowers. It can sprawl somewhat, but is easily pruned to keep under control if needed.

Ribes speciosum/Fuchsia-Flowered Gooseberry has small dangling fuchsia shaped flowers. It is very thorny, so that could be a drawback or an advantage depending on your needs. It does well under oak trees, needing no summer water and tolerating filtered shade. It will go dormant even earlier than other Ribes, but again, leafs out with the fall rains.



Alice Ford-Sala



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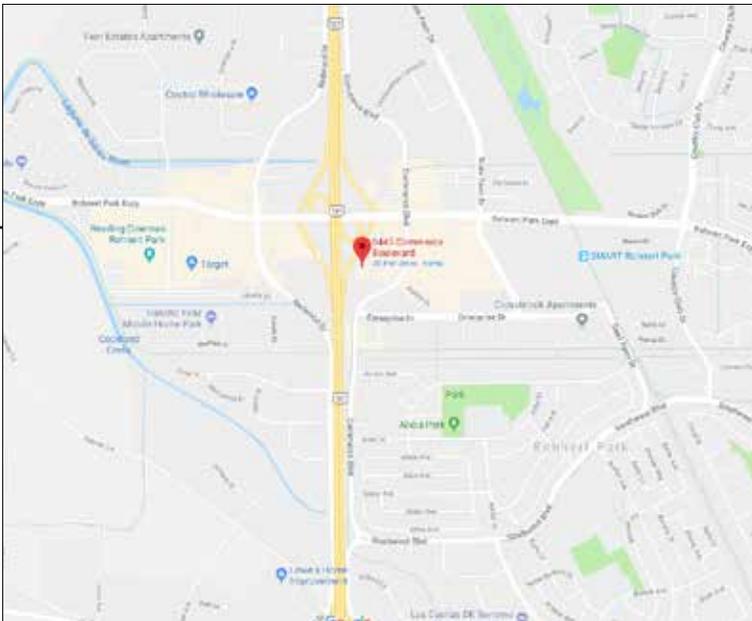


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Contact Information

Regular monthly meetings of the Sonoma County Beekeepers' Association are held on the second Monday of each month, at 7 pm 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.



Our mailing address is:
Sonoma County Beekeepers' Assoc.
P.O. Box 98
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