

The Monthly Extractor



Volume 37, Issue 10 October 2014

Monthly Meeting:

Oct. 13- 6p.m. Social hour-Bring your own cup for tea, talk to beekeepers who can help you with your questions, check out our library, and renew your membership.

7 p.m.- Serge Labesque on Preparing Hives for Winter

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

Table of Contents	
1. From Our President	2. My October To Do List-Serge Labesque
3. Serge cont., Bee Plants of the Month – Alice Ford-Sala	4. Bee Wise – Hive Beetles are Here! – Emery Dann South Cluster Report- Christine Kurtz
5. Bee Education Takes Off – Jen Espinoza	6. Photos from Heirloom Festival, Board Meeting Minutes
7. Board minutes cont. & Treasurer’s Report	8. Photo from September Meeting & Silent Auction Information- Christine Kurtz
9. General Meeting Minutes & Board member request	10. Ads by our Sponsors
11. Time of Meetings and Contact Information	12. Beekind Ad

From Our President

The Association worked together to make a fantastic display at the Heirloom Festival again. I am so proud to be part of an organization that knows how to work together as a team. I might be biased but I think SCBA must be the best beekeepers association in the USA! We honor and learned from our experienced beekeepers at the same time we work hard to help our new beekeepers. This gives us a great balance. It is not easy when an organization grows as fast and as big as ours has over the last few years. Sometimes that can ruin an association. Fortunately we found several ways to come together and are still open to new ideas to keep on improving.

Thanks to all of you who have taken the time to volunteer in so many ways. Your sharing of time and talents is over the top wonderful. Jen Espinoza has been doing a super job fielding the many calls and e-mails from teachers asking for classroom presentations. She could use more volunteers, by the way. Come December you will be able to see so much of what we have been doing. The power point review we will see at our annual dinner will have photos of many of you having fun with the bees and each other and the public. Be sure to bring your family!

Many members are working hard to find items to be sold at our December Silent Auction. If you are soliciting your friends or businesses, remember we are a 501c3 so all donations are tax deductible and SCBA will provide a receipt for the IRS. Christine Kurtz is the chairman of this event. E-mail her at petalumabeelady@yahoo.com to get the soliciting form and letter of intent that you can then either print or e-mail. You can also call her at 707-840-3220 with any questions.

Ettamarie Peterson, President

My October Beekeeping To-Do List

By Serge Labesque © 2014

Home apiary

White pompons of California buckwheat brighten a small area of the parched hillside that dominates our home. Not far away, the coyote brush is also blooming, and the rosemary is offering its bluish, pink and mauve flowers. All are visited by bees that frantically hop from blossom to blossom. If it were not for these plants, I don't know what the bees could find around here, and I am glad that I planted them all. The bees do not come from my hives though. They must be from our neighbors, Diana's or Dave's hives, as their colonies are only a few hundred yards away. The bees that I used to keep around here either were moved away, or absconded a few months ago. There just was not enough food for them in early summer, or they were unable to tolerate the tough conditions this year has brought in these dry hills. Even though I watch these foragers with a pinch of envy and regret, I am very happy to see that some bees can make it around here this year.

I've known for many years that this place was not a good one for bees. In this regard, it is arguably one of the worst in the county. Indeed, even during the most favorable years, bee forage is insufficient to allow the colonies to store more honey than what they need to survive. But I like to have a few hives around our house, if only to see the bees flying and working on the shrubbery that I grow with mixed success. Year after year, I try to add more bee plants, even though I know that they do not make a significant difference for the bees around here. Certainly this does not compensate for the loss of bee habitat that the expanding vineyards have caused, but it's a step, albeit tiny, in the right direction.

The location of an apiary can be of vital importance to the bees that inhabit it, because the vegetation that surrounds the hives provides all the food sources the bees will have access to, not to mention protection from the wind, rain and excess sun. For the beekeepers who are not driven by commercial interests, the selection of an apiary site is quite often based on convenience. Not surprisingly, most beekeepers keep at least a few of their colonies near their homes.

Next spring, maybe I'll bring a couple of colonies back home, if only for their company.

October in the apiaries:

In the fall, we bring the beekeeping season to an end, and at the same time we are laying the foundation for next year. In the spring, the bees will hopefully reward us for the good decisions we make now. On the other hand, knowing that our mistakes could be irremediable, we pay careful attention to this autumnal phase of the beekeeping year.

By the end of the month, the colonies must be ready to face winter; their diminishing brood nests will contain the winter bees that will form the winter clusters. These winter bees will carry the hives through the next challenging months. To do this successfully, the clusters need to be in good health, adequately supplied with honey and bee bread, and headed by good queens.

During the past weeks, we assessed our colonies and we took some steps to prepare them for fall and winter. The hives that were in good condition did not require much more attention than a gradual decrease in their volume. Maybe harvesting a little honey from them was justifiable. Other hives required more attention from us. Now, we need to verify without delay that whatever we did, combinations or requeening, for example, was successfully accomplished. If this is not the case, we have to act immediately: Often, as long as the colony is queenright, it is best to reduce the hive to as small a volume as the colony can occupy while keeping it neatly organized. It will very likely overwinter like a nuc.

By the end of the month, we will have removed unused combs from the hives. The colonies will have very compact brood nests of mostly sealed brood. The brood nests actually contain the developing winter bees that will form the winter clusters. The bees that we see flying in and out are summer bees gathering anything they can from coyote brush, ivy, overripe pears or grapes that birds or yellow jackets have punctured. They will no longer be around in a few weeks. Sufficient amounts of stores should surround the brood nests to cover the needs of the bees until the spring nectar and pollen flows. The masses of provisions that dominate the brood nests will include in their centers some beebread that was accumulated during the summer, some uncapped honey, and maybe empty cells as well. This will be where the winter bees will be rearing their first brood, next year. If there is any excess honey in the hives, it may be harvested without hesitation. We will then reduce the entrances of the hives and protect them with mouse guards, if they are not already installed. Ventilation of the hives will be ensured, and clean monitoring trays will be in place.

Winter is an unforgiving season for bee colonies that are not adequately prepared in the fall. It's time to secure the hive tops against strong gusts of wind. A brick, a stone or a rope will do. All this needs to be done before the end of this month.

In summary, this month:

- Assess colonies, their health, queens, brood nests and stores.
- Check how the bees have organized their brood chambers and how the stores are packed around them. Ensure that there is some comb with empty cells, and pollen centered above the brood nests, between frames of honey.
- Verify that the hives are queenright.
- Combine or requeen hives that are not performing satisfactorily (early in the month).
- Reduce the volume of the hives to match individual colony strength and needs.
- Remove old and misshapen combs (follower boards greatly facilitate this).
- Early in the month, configure hives for the consolidation of honey stores (Scratching the cappings of patches of poorly located sealed honey helps.)
- Harvest, extract and bottle surplus honey only.
- Render wax from discarded frames and from cappings
- Return wet frames and cappings to the bees for cleaning (by placing them above hive top feeders or inner covers).
- Watch out for yellow jackets and any instances of robbing.
- Ensure that hives are adequately ventilated.
- Install mouse guards and reduce hive entrances.
- Routinely clean and scorch tools and equipment.
- Store unused equipment to protect it from damage caused by wax moths, mice and the weather.
- Secure the hive tops against high winds.

Serge Labesque © 2014

Bee Plants of the Month By Alice Ford-Sala

Native Plants of the Month Bulbs

This is a great time of year to plant some native flower bulbs. The best thing about them, besides the fact that they attract all kinds of pollinators, is that they are easy to care for- just plant them, water them only if we don't get some good drenching rain, and wait for them to bloom.

Here are a couple of good choices:

Calochortus

Mariposa Lilies, Fairy Lanterns

Mariposa Lilies are beautiful additions to any garden. *C. albus* has hanging flowers that do look like clusters of dainty lanterns. They are usually white but can also be pink or light green. *C. albus* can grow in light shade, and is easy to grow. *C. splendens* is more open, with upright lavender or lilac colored petals and a striking purple or red splotch on the inner petal. They prefer more sun and very well drained, even rocky soil. *C. venustus* are usually white but can be pink, lavender or red. They look a little like a California poppy. They can take full sun or light shade from other plants- maybe under a Manzanita? They also demand good drainage.

Iris douglasiana Douglas Iris, Pacific Coast Iris

These gorgeous lavender or purple spring flowers are a welcome sight while out on a coastal walk. Douglas Iris can grow in a variety of soils, but must have good drainage. Near the coast they can take full shade. In hot inland valleys they appreciate some shade. They can grow under oaks or other trees. They can be watered a bit in summer, as their green leaves do not fade in summer like many other bulbs.

Beneficial Plants of the Month Bulbs

Scilla siberica Siberian squill

Siberian squill has blue pollen! It is native to Eurasia, and in some references, it can be invasive in the Eastern United States. I have some in a raised garden bed and haven't found it ranging through the garden at all. And the bees do love it! The pretty blue-purple nodding flowers also have a slightly sweet fragrance. It can take full sun to part shade and likes regular water and decent soil. If you have the space, you can plant a drift of it-planting up to 100 bulbs at a time.

Eranthis Winter aconite

These are tubers that you can plant like bulbs. The pretty yellow buttercup flowers appear in early spring or late winter, a welcome source of nectar. They can take full sun or partial shade and good soil with moderate moisture. You could plant a drift of them alongside Siberian squill for a pretty contrast that is sure to please the bees.

BEE WISE AND BEE AWARE: "HIVE BEETLES ARE HERE!" By Emery Dann

As beekeepers, just when we do not need another pest...! And our bees do not need another pest...! Hive beetles are here in Sonoma County! Hive beetles are jet black, about the size of a split pea and they move rapidly trying to hide from the light or my hive tool. Hive beetle larvae has three legs on each side near the head of its body helping it move quickly. Wax moth larvae have no legs. I am seeing hive beetles and their larvae in many strong or weaker hives in Sonoma County. Beekeepers in the Southern States have battled them for years. The beetles have come here from transporting hives from infested areas. HIVE BEETLES AND HIVE BEETLE LARVAE REPRODUCE AND DAMAGE BEE HIVES FASTER AND FAR WORSE THAN WAX MOTHS!

The common thought is that hive beetles need to pupate outside the hive in sandy soil. I no longer believe this is true. . I AM SEEING BEETLES AND LARVAE MULTIPLY BY LIVING IN HIVE DEBRIS FEEDING AND GROWING MORE IN NUMBERS THERE. I am seeing (and killing) every hive beetle or larvae I see trying to hide under top feeder cork debris. But the beetles are very fast and try to escape. I also see some beetles and larvae in debris under the hive or on monitor trays. Anyone using pollen substitute patties needs to check and remove them to see if they are feeding hive beetles. Hive beetles can fly up to 5 miles to find the next beehive they can infest. What can we do???

You can do a hive beetle search on the internet. "Know thy enemy!" There are small plastic oil traps you can buy and place inside for hive beetles that attract beetles and prevent bees from getting inside them. Other traps are available. I do not recommend using chemical poisons for traps, which will also affect honey bees by their close proximity to the trap. Cleanliness is now more important than ever. Do not let debris build up that can incubate and feed the beetles and larvae inside or under the hive. Check your frames for hive beetles. Reduce your hive entrances to keep out intruders. Hive inspections before winter are extremely important, NOW! DO NOT NEGLECT TO INSPECT! If a beehive becomes infested with beetles and larvae, the bees will not survive or will abscond and you will lose the hive! This is VERY SERIOUS and the best time to deal with this problem is WHEN IT IS SMALL! Keep in control before beetles get out of control. Know what is happening inside your hives! Be on the lookout for hive beetles—they are a major threat to our bees here in Sonoma County!

South Cluster Report By Christine Kurtz

South Cluster had a series of 3 Fall hive dives in September, here is a recap of the first one which was my first experience with Top Bars, and although this style is not my preference many issues beekeeper face are the same from beginner mistakes, to wonky comb, to bee health.

Two top bar hives were inspected. The first top bar was started from a Petaluma swarm this season. The first challenge was quite a bit of wonky comb and we talked about timely inspections to keep up with comb corrections, everyone who is doing natural comb whether top bar or Langstroths needs to check regularly in comb building season and do correction as future inspection can be very challenging or sometimes even impossible. American Foul Brood has been reported to be on the rise and it's vital that beekeepers have access to their brood nest for health inspections. In some places we could separate the comb and inspect the brood nest, which looked nice and healthy. We identified the different components found in the hive from capped honey, nectar, capped brood, larvae etc.... but what happened to the honey stores? The beekeeper admitted that he took considerable amount of honey from this top bar in the summer and unfortunately set up his hive to starve for the winter. This is a big lesson for beginner beekeepers, whether to take honey or not, what is surplus honey, when to harvest, how long is the dearth going to be etc..... The host beekeeper decided to feed this colony due to beekeeper error.

The second colony was a split from this first year swarm made in July and the host beekeeper was stumped about its lack of growth. He had transferred four top bars with comb into a new top bar set up. The bees were successful to raise a new queen. We had the privilege to see her highness, but there was no capped honey and very, very little nectar and no new frames were drawn out with wax. We talked about nectar flow and how comb building is directly correlated to the nectar flow and at some point at the end of spring, which can vary slightly with location. This year the main nectar flow in Petaluma was long gone in June. So the awareness of nectar flow is something all beekeepers need to be keen on. Here again the beekeeper decided to feed as the split was made too late in the season for the bees to do it on their own. Feeding sugar syrup is a controversial issue as one has to mitigate beekeeper mistake, the extreme drought, keeping unfit colonies alive or letting them go, the lack of nutrition in sugar water that can affect overall health, whether to have true survivor stock or not etc....

Depth and different sizes of top bars was also discussed as the two top bars were of different sizes and how challenging that can be to do splits and help one with the other with a frame of eggs and brood in case of queenlessness.

Our exhibit at the Heirloom Festival in September was wonderful. Many children and adults learned about bees thanks



to all our volunteers.



Board of Directors meeting

September 1, 2014

Met at the home of Ettamarie Peterson. Meeting called to order at 6:50 pm after a fabulous meal.

<u>Board members Present:</u>	<u>Board members Absent:</u>	<u>Committee Chairs Present:</u>
Ettamarie--President	Hasna Wood--2 nd VP	Christine Kurtz--Past Pres.
Laura Baker--1 st VP	Cheryl Veretto--1 st At-Large	Thea Vierling--Regional Coord.
Rita Maloney--Treasurer		
Becky Jackson--Secretary		
Jen Espinoza--Education		
Denise Wright--2 nd At-Large		
Cathy Kopshever--Volunteers		

President, Ettamarie Peterson thanked Janet and Corrie Leisen for the fantastic picnic at their farm. And all the organizers (Kelli Cox and her crew) and all who made it happen.

1st VP of Membership, Laura Baker reports 396 total members now.

2nd VP was absent, but Thea Vierling reported for her. Hasna will take Amina Harris, the speaker to dinner, and host her overnight at her home. Rita Maloney moved that the Board allot funds (undisclosed) to allow Hasna and Amina to have dinner before the meeting, at SCBA expense. Denise Wright seconded the motion and all approved (7 ayes). Jen Espinoza asked if this will be normal from now on, and it was decided that we would review it case-by-case.

- September: Amina Harris from UC Davis on honey tasting. Hex jars of honey will be given to her from our member's apiaries.
- October: Kate Frey, a Master Gardener from Melissa Gardens.
- November: Gadget Night & nomination of officers
- December: Potluck and Silent Auction
- January will be Rob Keller, and Hasna was asked to get him narrowed down to a topic.
- February will be Serge Labesque on swarms/splits.

The minutes of the August 4th meeting were reviewed. Laura moved to accept the minutes as presented, Cathy Kopshever seconded and all approved (7 ayes).

Treasurer, Rita Maloney presented the June, July, and August financial reports showing August expenses of \$4184.52 and income of \$2052.03. The main expenses were rent for the 4H building, and printing hand puppets for education events. Ettamarie instructed Rita to inquire about getting the books audited, and she agreed.

Group Reports

Regional Cluster Leader-- Thea discussed end-of-term board and cluster leader changes. She is searching for people to fill the open positions. There was discussion on Paid Workshops vs. Bee Cafes.

Education—Jen Espinoza reports she's booked 2 schools already for classroom presentations. She will talk at the next general meeting to recruit new educators to help.

It was mentioned that Casa Grande High School has approval to start a beehive at the school. Ettamarie will announce, and ask if there are any who can donate equipment.

Technology—Cheryl Veretto absent, no report.

Pre-Meetings—Christine Kurtz appreciates all who come as experts to talk to others during Pre-meeting time, including Geoff Whitford. She would like to start a Q&A 10-minute session at the beginning of each meeting. There will be a Q&A Suggestion Box set at the Membership table, to either be answered then, or later in the newsletter.

Swarms—no report, but John Krafft will be asked for a report by the next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

- No Spray signs. The Board concluded that we will no longer sell merchandise except for what is set up with Café Press on our website.
- Open Board Positions discussed, with everyone to be on the lookout for interested volunteers.
- Silent Auction—Christine constructed a letter and a donation form. She challenges us all to help get donations. The Clusters will send out the challenge to their members.

NEW BUSINESS

- Apiary Award @ County Fair—Costs \$50, and we agreed to continue the sponsorship for next year, reevaluating it each year that they ask us to sponsor. The Fair also asks for a knowledgeable honey judge for next year, and we will try to find someone.
- Incinerator rental partnership with Marin—Discussion about joining with Marin to have or rent a portable incinerator to burn diseased equipment. Not enough information yet, we will wait for more specific details.
- Volunteer Chair, Cathy is set for the Heirloom Festival. Katia Vincent is working with her on set-up. Denise and Thea will also help. Jen has a bee costume she will bring on Monday set-up date. Christine will bring observation hive.

Next September Board meeting is at Cathy Kopshever's home

Meeting Adjourned at 9:18 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Becky Jackson, Secretary

Treasurer's Report October 1, 2014

By Rita Maloney, Treasurer

The combined bank account totals are \$15,206.28. We are in great financial shape as the year winds down. We still have our main fundraising event, the Silent Auction, to bolster our coffers for 2015. We will be very close to meeting our 2014 budget projections in both income and expenditures. As we begin the process of preparing a budget for 2015, input is always appreciated from members. You can email me at treasurer@sonomabees.org for any suggestions that you may have. This is YOUR Association and I welcome your feedback.



Did you miss the big show last month? The Big Bee came to the meeting in all her glory with lights on. The song and dance with Ettamarie, Christine Kurtz and Thea Vierling was to encourage everyone to get donations for the silent auction in December!

Mark your calendars for the fabulous 2014 Silent Auction to be held at our monthly meeting on December 8!

Thea Vierling and Christine Kurtz are gathering items for the auction again and are waiting for your fabulous donations. We know that we have a very creative and generous group and you would know if you had the privilege to see what was available for bid last year! However, creative and generous folks still need nudges and reminders because life is so busy, but now that the bee season is winding down don't forget about the other side, the wonderful educational association that we are all part of and we need your help to gather things for the auction. An appeal went out through the regional clusters and the contest is on...whichever regional group gathers the most donations will have Thea and Christine for a special bee cafe or hive dive, and whoever screamed out loud at the last monthly meeting that we were going to do it in bikinis... well we just might! Anyhow the contest ends at the end of November.

General Meeting Minutes September 8, 2014

Held at the Rohnert Park 4-H Building, 7:00 pm. About 110 members present.

A surprise visit by the Queen Bee and Thea introducing the Silent Auction for the December meeting and how we are welcoming donations from everyone. The clusters have a contest of who can bring in the most donated items.

Jen Espinoza, Education Coordinator, asked for more help in giving bee presentations to the schools that request it. There are 4 requests already this year, and school just started. Contact her at education@sonomabees.org.

The pre-meeting time featured honey tasting of some of our members' samples. Yumm!

Speaker tonight is Amina Harris from UC Davis' Robert Mondavi Honey and Pollination Center. The vision is to establish UC Davis as the leading authority on Bee Health, Pollination, and Honey Quality.

The Center works with all aspects of the beekeeping industry including agriculture, grocers and chefs, beekeepers and future beekeepers, urban homesteaders and students. Particularly important is educating the public that the vast extent of the earth's resources depends on pollination.

She works with an advisory committee representing all sides of beekeeping, including Eric Mussen, Mea McNeil, Ann Evans, Randy Oliver, and Neal Williams.

The Center has many educational opportunities and classes including Mead Making, CA Master Beekeeper Courses, and a Bee Symposium with Marla Spivak on May 9, 2015. They also sell a Honey flavor & aroma wheel, and Pollinator-themed notecards, which Amina had for sale tonight.

Concerning flavors of honey, which we got to taste with Amina asking for descriptive terms from the audience, the only defect of honey is fermentation.

Some stats:

- There has been a decrease of colonies in the US, but the price per pound has increased.
- 66% of honey consumed in the US is imported.
- 1.4 lbs. per year is the average per-person consumption.
- To claim a honey variety, a 5-mile radius around the hives has to be predominately that plant. Therefore, there is no "Lavender honey" in the US as there are no lavender fields that large.
- Labeling laws are inconclusive right now concerning the % nectar required to call a honey a specific variety. She would like to see labeling laws require 50% or more of the single floral source.
- No honey in the US is certified organic. Neither is any in the US certified Non-GMO. All pure honey is considered 'natural'.
- Unregulated and undefined terms: "unheated", "unfiltered" "raw".

Amina advises that beekeepers shouldn't apply for the Cottage Foods certification through the Department of Health. She says certification through the Dept. of Agriculture is all that is required for beekeepers selling honey.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm

Submitted by Becky Jackson, Secretary

Would you like to run for a board position for 2015?

Every November, we accept nominations for the SCBA Board of Directors. Please read the following job descriptions and see if you would like to help SCBA by becoming a board member. These are non-paid positions but they are essential to the workings of our organization. If you, or someone you know, might be interested, please consider e-mailing your nomination to president@sonomabees.org or bring the name to the meeting. We would like to know who is interested early so we can help that person learn more about the position. This is especially important for our treasurer's job. Rita would like to facilitate a smooth transition to the next treasurer.

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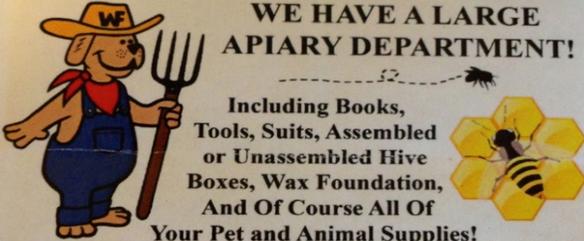


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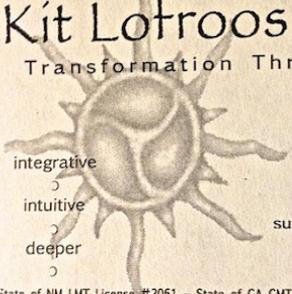
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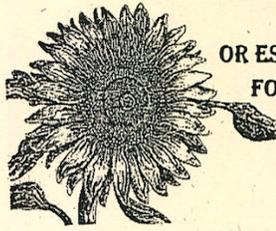
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We thank all our sponsors for putting ads in this newsletter.

Regular monthly meetings of the Sonoma County Beekeepers' Association are held on the second Monday of each month, at 7 pm. 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 meeting or by mail. Please see our web site for the application and various kinds of memberships available.

Our mailing address is

Sonoma County Beekeepers' Assoc.
P.O. Box 98
Santa Rosa, CA 95402-0098

2014 Board Members and Other Helpful People

Pres. Ettamarie Peterson 707-765-4582 President@sonomabees.org

Past Pres. Christine Kurtz –(707) 849-3220 pastpresident@sonomabees.org

1st Vice Pres. Membership– Laura Baker - 1stVP@sonomabees.org

2nd Vice President –Hasna Wood 2ndVP@sonomabees.org - 707 827-3515

Secretary – Becky Jackson - Secretary@sonomabees.org

Treasurer Rita Maloney Treasurer@sonomabees.org

Librarian –Nadya Clark Librarian@sonomabees.org 707-938-4762

Reps. at Large – Denise Wright – atlarge2@sonomabees.org

Cheryl Veretto Webmaster@sonomabees.org

Volunteer Coordinator – Kelli Maciel 707-762-1800

Editor Ettamarie Peterson – Editor@sonomabees.org 765-4582

Swarm Chairperson- John Krafft swarms@sonomabees.org

Webmaster- Cheryl Veretto Webmaster@sonomabees.org

Historian – Kirstie Stramler historian@sonomabees.org

Extractor Techs- Call Ettamarie 707-765-4582 or Janet Leisen 707- 528-2085 or Denny Pederson e-mail denny1@sonic.net to rent the electric extractor for \$5 a day. Rental fee is \$5 per day. Denny is located in Forestville. Janet is North of Santa Rosa. Ettamarie is in Petaluma. There is a hand extractor at Deborah Rogers' home and her e-mail is deborah@olivequeen.net She lives in Glen Ellen.

My cosmos flowers are still feeding my bees!



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