

THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

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What You Missed

Our last meeting featured a talk by Kate Frey, garden designer and co-author of "The Bee Friendly Garden". Kate's talk was about pollinator gardens.

It's a fascinating relationship between plants and pollinators.

Most important message: Our gardens can be positive spaces for biodiversity.

Native bees: Planting for pollinators will not just be for honey bees. Native bees, beetles, butterflies, etc. will also be attracted to your garden. It's fun to watch and see which species are visiting at different times of year.

Most native bees coexist with certain plants and will only be in the garden at certain times. Some bees are plant specific, such as squash bees. They only visit plants in the squash and gourd families.

Many native bees are solitary. 30% are crevice nesters, such as in hollow plant stems.

Simple rules for pollinator garden success:

- Create healthy gardens that require no pesticides by using the right plants in the right place
- Compost adequately. Most of our soils have about 1 ½% organic matter. Plants prefer 6% +.
- Abundance, not minimalism. Have patches or repeated plants of the same flower. Honey bees practice floral constancy. As a rule of thumb provide at least a 3' x 3' patch of the same flower to attract honeybees.
- Goal: 12 months of bloom. Use annuals, perennials, shrubs, and trees.
- Make sure plants offer floral resources. There are many landscape plants that don't.
- Include water for honey bees.
- Sunny spaces are best. Use native and non-native plants.
- Provide mulch-free nest sites and bee blocks for native bees.
- Use drip irrigation, good compost and nutritious mulch. Sonoma Compost & Point Reyes Compost are good sources for organic compost.

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What's the Buzz?

Our next meeting will be on Thursday October 5, 2017 at the American Legion Log Cabin, 20 Veterans Place, San Anselmo, CA. starting at 7:30 pm. The meeting will feature a talk by Gro Amdam, PhD, Professor, Arizona State University, School of Life Sciences. Dr. Amdam will speak about "Vaccinating Honey Bees: Concept, Data, and Feasibility".

Upcoming Meetings:

November 2, 2017

Gene Brandi, President, American Beekeeping Federation, "Beekeeping from a Commercial Perspective".

December 7, 2017

Janet Brisson, owner of Country Rubes, "Small Hive Beetles".

January 4, 2018

Marin Beekeepers, "Panel Discussion: Community Breeding".

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- Don't use landscape fabric. It doesn't allow nutrient cycling. Woodchips are for paths or under mature trees. Don't use for planters. Woodchips rob the soil of nitrogen. Mulch with a coarse compost, or green waste compost.

Who else visits the gardens?

Predatory wasps, parasitic wasps, lady bugs, beetles, butterflies, and many species of birds.

Winter annuals to plant in the fall - Cover crops. Work in some compost into the soil and then plant:

- Phacelia tanacetifolia
- Gilia capitata

Other good plants are:

- Ceanothus
- Coffeeberry
- Toyon

Some great weeds:

- Milkweed – good summer bloom
- Tarweed – good summer bloom
- Coyote Brush – blooming now (male plants are a good source of pollen)
- Vinegar weed = late blooming

Hardy annuals to plant in fall or early spring:

- All kinds of poppies
- Borage
- Ichium – blue better
- Phacelia minor
- Nepeta – cat mint
- Penstemon
- Evening primrose
- Salvia columbariae – needs to be seeded
- Sun Flowers – drought resistant (lots of wild and/or multi-headed sunflowers)
- Basils – bloom for months

You want plants that are appropriate for your climate. Most plants will eventually decline and need to be replaced :

- California fuschia – mostly for hummingbirds but bees will cut a slit in the tube to rob the nectar
- Humming bird mint
- Most herbs
- California buckwheat
- Asters – another long blooming plant
- Zinnias for hummingbirds
- Mexican sunflowers

- Gaillardia
- Single Dahlias
- Agastache
- Ornamental oreganos – Santa Cruz, Bristol cross

A "must plant" for beekeepers:

Calamint – calamentha nepetoides (great honeybee plant) 18" x 18" - summer into fall blooming

It's ok for plants to touch one another. It makes for a more interesting garden when plants flow into one another.

There is a huge amount of plants attractive to pollinators. Kate's book has several lists of plants suitable for our area.

Some gardens that you might like to visit:

- UC Davis Hagen Das Honey Bee garden
- Digging Dog Nursery, Albion
- Mendocino Coast Botanical Garden

Shop at local nurseries like: Annie's Annuals

February 1, 2018

Mace Vaughn, Pollinator Program Co-Director, Xerxes Society for Invertebrate Conservation, "Habitat and Lobbying".

March 1, 2018

Leo Sharaskin, editor, Keeping Bees with a Smile, "Natural and Practical Beekeeping".

April 5, 2018

Samuel Ramsey, Doctoral Student, University of Maryland, "Varroa Research".

May 3, 2018

Elina Nino, Extension Apiculturist, UC Davis, "Effects of Supplemental Forage on Bees".

June 7, 2018

Marin Beekeepers, "Gadgets and Gizmos".

July

No meeting: Marin County Fair, June 30 – July 5.

Hive Tips

By Bonnie Morse, [Bonnie Bee & Company](#)

Reducing Hive Size

Temps are starting to drop (well, they are forecast to do so in the near future) and your beekeeping season is winding down. Time to start thinking about winter preparations, if you haven't already (though the bees have been getting ready for months). Remove unused space and unneeded honey so the bees will not have to work as hard to keep warm. In our area, bees need about 30 lbs of honey per colony going into the winter. For smaller colonies, a guide would be to have about 50% food / 50% brood.



Planning for Winter

If you have a box on top of the hive that has no (or very little) built out comb on the frames, it needs to come off for winter. It is highly unlikely the bees will be building comb up there this season and that is a lot of dead air space where heat generated by the cluster will escape to.

Local Source for Bee Equipment

Need to add a box to your hive but don't have the equipment and can't wait? Check out Fairfax Backyard Farmer. They carry basic hive parts, tools, beekeeping books, protective clothing and more.

They also have a hand crank extractor and a solar wax melter that they will loan out with purchase of any equipment. The Fairfax Backyard Farmer also offers classes in beekeeping as well as many other subjects that might interest the backyard farmer in you.

The store is located at 135 Bolinas Road in Fairfax. You can check it out online at www.fairfaxbackyardfarmer.com

Mites, mites and more mites, oh my!



We've been checking a lot of colonies around the County lately and one thing is clear – there's lots of mites out there!

It's not too late to start checking. Not sure how? Check out [this pamphlet produced by the bee lab at the University of Minnesota](#).

You really can't tell just by looking at a colony how bad the mites are. Sure – you know you have a problem with a significantly decreased adult population and when you see sick larvae and discolored uncapped pupae. But don't be fooled by what appears to be a thriving colony with frames of apparently healthy brood. You never know what is lurking under those brood cappings unless you check.

As we saw with the two years of data collected in the broodless study, monitoring boards under screened bottom boards may not give you an accurate reflection of what's going on the hive. Sugar rolls (or alcohol washes) are important tools for determining you level of infestation.

Where are all the drones?

Drones have started to disappear for the season. Some resourceful colonies still have some drones around – and are even continue to raise drone – but they have all but disappeared in others.

What does this mean to you? Well, if you have a colony that supercedes the queen this fall, the new queen may have difficulty mating, or getting well mated. It also means you should be particularly careful during hive inspections as a colony may have a more difficult time replacing a killed or injured queen despite weather that would make mating flights possible.

Beekeeping Classes

Upcoming Classes

Overwintering Your Bees

Preparing for winter, how to handle common winter problems, how to clean up / store equipment.
Saturday, October 21, 9am – 12:00pm, \$50 per person
Location: The Fairfax Backyard Farmer, 135 Bolinas Rd, Fairfax.
Register through [The Fairfax Backyard Farmer](#)

Backyard Beekeeping

Considering becoming a beekeeper? Take the first step by learning about this fascinating and important pollinator. This is a great time of year for new beekeepers to start planning so equipment is ready and bees are ordered in time for the 2018 season.

In this class, you'll learn about the roles of the queen, workers and drones within a colony and how they interact with seasonal cycles. Learn about basic considerations you'll need to take into account before jumping into this exciting new hobby, including where to place your hive, equipment options and sources, bee sources, and time required.

At the end of class, you'll have the opportunity to sample some local honeys from around Marin County.
Saturday, November 11, 9:00am – 12:00pm, \$50 per person
Location: The Fairfax Backyard Farmer, 135 Bolinas Rd, Fairfax
Register through [The Fairfax Backyard Farmer](#).
Limited to 12 people.

Apis Arborea - the ancient craft of tree apiculture

Saturday, October 21, 9am – 4 pm
Location: The Wheelwright Center at Green Gulch Farm

As wild bees survive in non-managed ecosystems and nest sites, they represent a resource for new strategies for contemporary apiculture and a fundamental shift in bee stewardship. During the workshop, we will build "honey bee nest sites" in logs, using traditional and contemporary tools. Wear layers. We will be outside for most of the day.

Info and registration at
<http://www.sfzc.org/green-gulch/calendar/workshops-retreats/apis-arborea-tree-apiculture-workshop>

Fall Pollinator Plant Sale



Our friends at Marin ACE are once again holding a fall pollinator plant sale with 20% of the proceeds going to the Bee and Butterfly Habitat Fund. This fund is helping to re-establish pollinator habitat on farms in the Midwest along the monarch corridor. For just \$100, they can plant an acre of forage.

Fall is a great time for planting. You can take advantage of fall root growth, winter rains, followed by spring root growth so a plant can get better established before another dry summer sets in requiring a lot of irrigation to keep plants looking their best. And Marin ACE is a great place to get your pollinator friendly, neonic free plants!

Someone will be on hand with an observation hive on Saturday from 11am – 2pm. Looking for a beekeeper or two to be present on Sunday from 11am – 2pm to talk about bees and point people in the direction of their favorite plants!

Party at Peterson's

Setting up to do honey extraction from a small number of frames can be very time consuming, messy and generally a lot of work. For this reason Club Member, David Peterson, hosts a fall Extraction Party in his Honey House (his garage) in Ross, now an eleven-year tradition.

On of September 23, there were 17 participating Club Members. Bob Thiel started the day off at 8:30 AM. Benjamin Steinman and his wife were the last – finishing up about 9:30 PM. There were also a few others that were new beekeepers with no frames to extract but just came to observe. Several NewBees only had a few frames to extract while others came with two or three supers of full frames. More than 249 frames were run through the Club's extractor resulting in about 600 pounds of honey.

With the larger turn out this year, two extracting stations were set up – one with the 12 frame and the other with the six frame extractor. The 12 frame got most of the action with the 6 frame picking up the slack. Dave sets up the extraction equipment in the garage since getting kicked out of the kitchen where he originally extracted by crushing and rendering.

Dave manages some of the Club's extraction equipment at his place, both a 6 frame and a 12 frame. Rob Tysinger manages a second 6 frame extractor in Novato and the Nordquists manage the Club's 20 frame extractor. Extracting from deeps requires the 12 or 20 frame extractors, although there is an adaptor for deep frame extraction with the 6 frame extractor that Rob manages. The 6 frame extractors are great for doing mediums.

This equipment is available for use by all Club Members and can be reserved by contacting Dave at dpeterson307@aol.com, Rob at rob@tysingerengineers.us or Neil at neilmary@verizon.net.

Generally, it requires a station wagon, SUV, van or truck to transport the extractors. A truck is required for the 20 frame machine. Club Members can check them out for use a few days at a time. There is also an electric uncapping knife, a scratcher and uncapping bin available to go with each extractor. The equipment should be picked up, used, cleaned and returned within a few days.

From the Librarian's Desk

Don't forget to check your bookshelves and bring back your borrowings - as always, every item you return is worth a chance in the lucky draw. For those new to the Club, the library is available to all members. Stop by & say hello on Thursday!