

# The Buzzzz

The Monthly Newsletter of the Gilroy Beekeepers Association

Copyright© 2013

Volume XVII

May 2014

## In This Issue

*Photo of the Month*

*"Getting to Know Each Other"*

*Guest Column*

*President's Message*

*May in the Beeyard*

*Drippings from the Extractor*

*Classifieds*

*Calendar of Events*

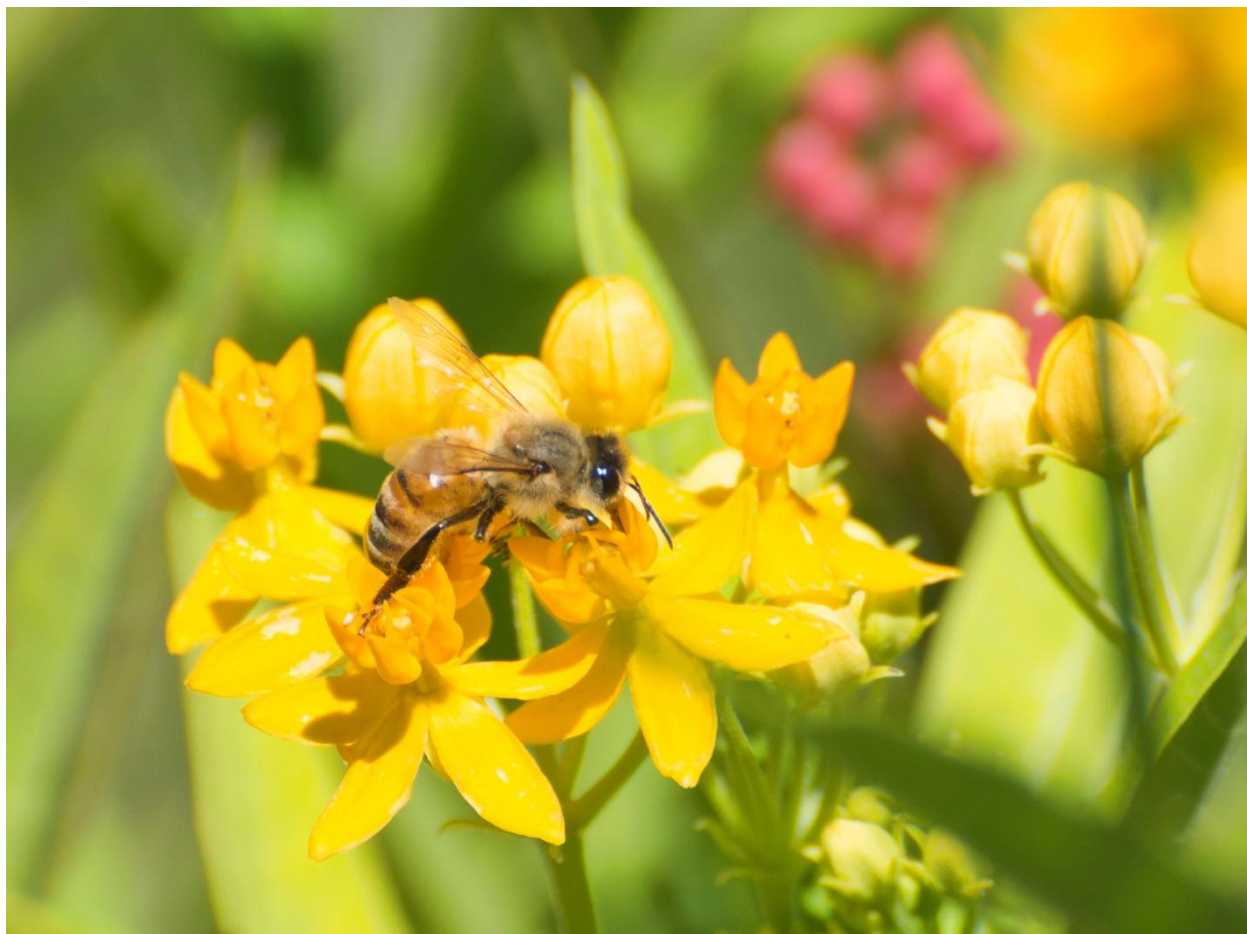


Photo by Randy Fox

## Getting to Know Each Other!

by Vicki Basham

We're getting to know Pete Harper this

packages from the bunch, and off Pete went with his new bees. He put them in his trunk, drove home, and was greeted with a huge cloud of bees as he opened his trunk! He somehow



month. Pete and his wife, Leslie, are relatively new residents of Gilroy - they moved here from Texas a couple years ago. They have 58 beautiful acres at the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains along Uvas Creek, where they not only have bees but also several Tennessee Walker endurance horses.

Just before moving from Texas, Pete suited up and watched a friend install some bees. The experience stuck with him and he decided he'd like to give it a try. As soon as he and his wife settled in, Pete found Marin Bees on Craigslist and ordered a couple packages with Carniolan queens. He drove all the way to an Oakland warehouse district to pick up the bees. "I remember seeing this guy with a ratty looking pick-up truck and tons of packages in the back, in this deserted area of Oakland! It almost seemed clandestine!" He watched as the beekeeper used his hive tool to pry loose two

managed to get both packages into hives, and still has the descendants of one of those colonies.

Pete currently has three colonies and will soon re-queen them with Pol-line queens, developed by the USDA to have varroa sensitive hygienic behavior. Pete believes in an integrated pest management approach to deal with varroa mites - using hygienic bees, culling drone brood and dusting with powdered sugar. He doesn't use chemicals in his hives, believing that chemical treating will create weak bees.

Pete's favorite way to learn about bees is through the internet. He especially likes the *Beesource* website, and also gets information from Michael Bush's website. He likes Jeremy Rose's book, "Beekeeping in Coastal California", too. "I especially like the way he breaks down

the management you should be doing month by month."

When asked if Pete had any advice for newer beekeepers, he suggested that new folks start with at least two hives, so that they can compare the activities between them. He also thinks it's a great idea to join a club. "I think the Gilroy club has been really helpful."

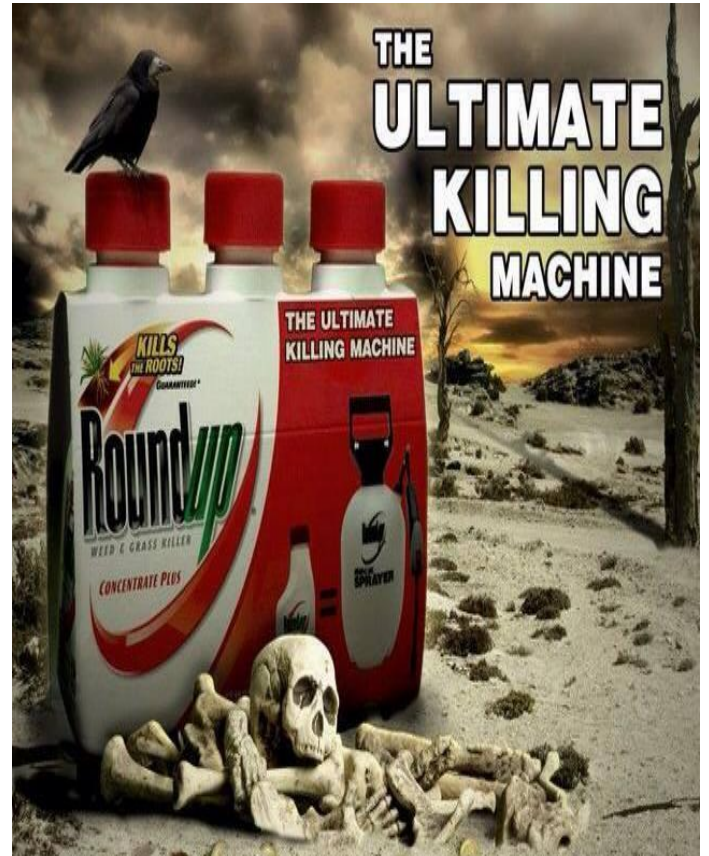
When asked about his most memorable moment in beekeeping, Pete recalls the time when a rainstorm with powerful winds blew through Gilroy one night. The next morning, just as he was leaving for the office, he discovered his hives had completely toppled over. He jumped out of his car and thought he would try to put them back in place. He received several stings and decided he'd better suit up to finish the job. He then went back to the hive, picked up a water-logged box and tried to drain some water out, when a huge swarm of bees surrounded his head. He was stung at least 10 or 12 times, mostly around his neck and hairline. He still went to work that morning, but with a double dose of Benadryl!

*Editors Note: Sue Maniscalco lives in Los Altos Hills and is a new Top Bar Beekeeper. She wrote the following article for her local newsletter.*

### Return of the Vanishing Honeybees by Susan Maniscalco

Honeybees pollinate nearly every nut, fruit, and vegetable we eat. Their golden nectar honey is enjoyed by many cultures around the world. Here in California Honeybees are dying at an alarming rate; worldwide Honeybee health has plummeted so low that there are many voices questioning the survival of the species. We know we need to do something about it. And there is.

There are several reasons causing the honeybee decline, one of which is the poison we are dumping onto our world. This article will focus on that readily available poison Roundup.



Honeybees forage 2 – 3 miles from their hive. Except for water they obtain everything they need to survive from plants. Nectar and pollen are their main food source. Pollen provides most of the protein required to build new bodies. Nectar supplies the carbohydrate they need to fly. Propolis, from plant resin, plays an important role in hive hygiene and is the waterproofing material bees use to keep their hive dry.

Dandelions to Honeybees are truly a gift from the gods, providing an early source of nutritious pollen and nectar fueling the growth of the hive in early spring. We, however, are led to believe Dandelions should not play any part in our gardens and that we have to "round them up".



Roundup, a commercial herbicide sold by Monsanto used to kill weeds on lawns, in gardens, and on crops, uses the active ingredient glyphosate. The marketing for Roundup makes us believe: "I dilute Roundup so it is safe." "I only spray it on the short weeds." "As long as it is dry it won't hurt you." But the research shows otherwise.

According to studies published in BioMed Research International, glyphosate, one of the most widely used herbicides in the United States, is by far the most toxic. Roundup is not only harming Honeybees but also the health of people and our environment around the world.

Los Altos Hills is a wonderful place to live; we are stewards of large parcels of land and can positively impact our environment. The Los Altos Hills city manager Carl Cahill told me the Town does not use Roundup any longer.

We all can find sustainable safe ways to weed: using mulch, weed whack, mow, boiling water, or pulling up those flowers that are in the wrong place in our garden. Let's all help protect the Honeybee, and in return, we will be able to continue to enjoy their Honey. Bee Loved.

References Materials

[www.Fortheloveofbees.com](http://www.Fortheloveofbees.com)

[www.Beyondpesticides.com](http://www.Beyondpesticides.com)

[www.xerces.org](http://www.xerces.org)

<http://www.hindawi.com/search/all/glyphosate>

## President's Message

by Wayne Pitts

Continuing on with our series on problems trying to keep bees alive and flying, this month we are going to talk about pesticides. I'm sure you have heard by now about the large bumblebee pesticide kill in Oregon last fall. Or about the 80,000 or so hives killed in the almonds this spring.

A little history lesson about pesticides. Why are pesticides used - to control pests thus increasing yield. There are two types of pesticides: contact and systemic. First generation pesticides were arsenic and hydrogen cyanide. Incidentally, arsenic was an

ingredient in the paint that gave the lovely shade of green that Napoleon liked. He of course, had his rooms painted with this paint. Some think that the arsenic in the paint is what killed him. Needless to say, it was soon discovered that even though the pests were being killed, the applicators were not surviving too well either and a replacement was sought. The second generation pesticides were synthetic organic compounds, the most famous of which is DDT. Finding out that there were problems with the second generation, the third generation came on the scene. Pyrethroids, which are organic compounds similar to the natural pyrethrins produced by the flowers of pyrethrums (*Chrysanthemum cinerariaefolium* and *C. coccineum*). Pyrethroids now constitute the majority of commercial household insecticides. In the concentrations used in such products, they may also have insect repellent properties and are generally harmless to human beings in low doses but can harm sensitive individuals. They are usually broken apart by sunlight and the atmosphere in one or two days and do not significantly affect groundwater quality. They quickly knock down flying insects (bees?) when used as a spray. Having to use as a spray, means that the poison is non-discriminatory, killing everything, good or bad, that is flying.

The first through the third generation were contact pesticides. The current generation is the fourth, neonicotinoid, using nicotine in a systemic delivery system. This has the advantage of only targeting the pest of the plant that was treated as a seed. The poison flows through the sap of the plant killing the pest when it bites or sucks on the plant. How does this affect bees? It has been proposed that the poison is also present in the nectar or pollen of the plant, which of course, is the food source for our bees. This concept has been countered by the argument that by the time the plant is large enough to produce pollen or nectar the amount of poison in the plant has been diluted to such a small percentage that it doesn't harm the bees. The jury is still out on this debate.

What to do? If you reread the last paragraph, you will notice a trend. Broad spectrum pesticides came first, and as the generations progressed, the pesticides became more targeted, thus having a smaller effect on non-target insects. We are not yet out of the woods yet, since we know pesticides are killing our bees. Hopefully the fifth generation will be even more specific and will not affect bees. Consider where your bees are and what they have to forage on. When you pass out the jars of honey to your neighbors, ask them not to use pesticides as a prophylactic, but only as a last resort to remove an infestation. And what are you using to treat mites? Survey after survey has found that the most common chemicals found in bees wax are pesticides used to kill/control mites. Sometimes we are our own worst enemy.

### May in the Beeyard

As May begins, all our packages received in April should be happily establishing themselves in their new homes. If a hive inspection indicates otherwise, contact the supplier as soon as possible for possible replacement. With good nectar flows all hives should be building up rapidly. Periodic checks will tell you whether or not you need to add additional brood boxes or honey supers. As a rule of thumb, when about sixty to seventy percent of a box is full of bees, it's time to add a second. If we don't give them enough room, they will swarm. If your intent is to increase your number of hives, you can take advantage of this by doing splits. Remember that in the absence of already having a queen cell, you need to have eggs or larvae no more than four to five days old. After five days, larvae is no longer fed royal jelly, a necessity to making a new queen. Of course moving young larvae is in addition to moving larvae and capped brood of all ages in addition to frames of pollen and honey.

Often times, especially as the days warm, we will see large numbers of bees hanging out on the outside of the hive, especially later in the day. While this certainly may be a sign of

overcrowding, it may also indicate that the field bees are returning with pollen and nectar faster than the house bees can store it. Consider putting an empty box (with frames) on the bottom to give the field bees a place to hang out until their number is called.

As the summer months begin, the bees will expend a tremendous amount of energy trying to maintain the hive's temperature. A big component of this is having available water. Establish a consistent source now and maintain it, preferably year round. You don't want the bees to discover the neighbors pool because the home source went dry!

### Drippings From The Extractor

by Dave Stocks

If you guessed that this month's newsletter has a theme, you're right. It wasn't planned that way! It does however indicate that we are becoming increasingly concerned about what is killing our bees. In Wayne's article he mentions that 80,000 colonies in the almonds for pollination were killed. This was approximately 20% of the hives brought to California. This occurred towards the end of the almond pollination period so the effects on this year's crop will be minimal. In fact, in the *American Bee Journal's* "Honey and Market Report" they state that "the almond pollination season went very well" and "both growers and beekeepers were happy." As almost an afterthought, the article states that, "the only down side of this year's almond pollination was that **some** beekeepers lost bee populations due to excessive use of fungicide."

It appears that the growers were using the fungicide according to the label, and perhaps, the problem lies in the label wording. The honeybee industry has expressed its concern to the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA, although sensitive to the problem, states "changing label wording is a long and drawn out process and one that cannot be done quickly."

So what does this mean to us? Only a handful of GBA members take their bees to the almonds. The rest of us are happy to keep our

bees at home in a safe environment, or so we think. Not all the damaged hives were in orchards directly sprayed with the fungicide. Many received damage due to drift, and foraging range. How many of us live near commercial farming operations or have neighbors who use pesticides, fungicides or herbicides? There isn't an easy solution. We all need to be aware of the situation and perhaps become advocates for the reduction or elimination of chemical use. For more information, visit the Pollinator Stewardship Council website at ([pollinatorstewardship.org](http://pollinatorstewardship.org)).

Whether we are attempting to make an income from our bees or just enjoy having a hive in our backyard, we need to stay informed of what is happening. We can't, however, rely on a single source of information. The old adage about asking twelve beekeepers a question and getting thirteen answers is very true. We need to hear all sides and decide what our own "style" will be. One way to do that is to subscribe to publications or newsletters. In addition to the Pollinator Stewardship Council, other great sources of information include Dr. Eric Mussen's newsletter at <https://lists.ucdavis.edu/sympa/subscribe/ucdavisbeeneews> and the Western Apicultural Society Journal at <http://ucanr.edu/sites/was2/>

**A very important reminder!** Our meeting nights have been changed to the first Tuesday of the month. This was done to put us in alignment with other bee guilds with the hope of sharing speakers. For the near future, our meetings will be held at the Old City Hall located at 7400 Monterey, Gilroy.

### **Classifieds**

Art Hall is selling his 4 yr old 2 frame manual Mann Lake spinner. He has an extra set of gears because he was worried about the plastic gears. Spare parts may be needed in 10-15 years. The unit was \$295+tax new. He is asking \$240.00. You can contact Art at 408-712-0663.

## **Calendar of Events**

### **Meetings**

**May 1, 2014**

Beekeepers Guild of San Mateo County -  
7 PM

1106 Alameda de Pulgas  
Belmont, Ca

<http://www.sanmateobeeguild.org/>

Topic:

Top Bar Hives with Les Crowder

**May 3, 2014**

Monterey Bay Beekeepers - 8 AM  
2450 N. Fremont St. Monterey, Ca

<http://www.montereybaybeekeepers.org/>

**May 5, 2014**

Santa Clara Valley Beekeepers Guild -  
6:15 PM

1292 Minnesota Ave.  
San Jose, Ca

<http://beeguild.org/>

Topic:

Treating Pest

**May 6, 2014**

Gilroy Beekeepers Association - 7 PM  
Gilroy Old City Hall

7400 Monterey  
Gilroy, CA

<http://www.uvasgold.com/gba/>

Topic:

Top Bar Beekeeping

**May 7, 2014**

Santa Cruz Beekeepers Guild - 6:30 PM  
El Rio Mobile Home Park

2120 N. Pacific Ave  
Santa Cruz, Ca

<http://santacruzbees.com>

Topics:

Gardening for Bees

## **Classes/Workshops**

**June 21, 2014**

Advance Beekeeping with Randy Oliver  
San Mateo, CA

Contact [president@sanmateobeeguild.org](mailto:president@sanmateobeeguild.org) with questions

**August 2-3, 2014**

2nd Annual Treatment Free Workshop  
Medford, OR

Details at [www.blisshoneybees.org](http://www.blisshoneybees.org)

**September 6, 2014**

Intermediate Beekeeping with Serge Labesque  
San Mateo, CA

Contact [http://www.sanmateobeeguild.org/](http://www.sanmateobeeguild.org) for details