



News from The Melissa Garden

### Fall 2010 Newsletter



Dear friends,  
We hope you and your bees are thriving as we come to the end of a bee season and begin to think about next year.

We especially want to call your attention to a new film about bees, **The Queen of the Sun** by Taggart Siegel. Taggart filmed at The Melissa Garden, including some footage with

bee steward Michael Thiele. See the calendar below for Bay Area dates and check out the film's website to see when it will screen in other parts of the country.

A few other items we think you will be interested in:

One is the bee-hexagon.net web site which has abstracts from the first international organic beekeeping conference that took place in Bulgaria this summer. The other is to let you know that the American Apitherapy Society has set the dates for its next conference: November 12-14, 2010 in Los Angeles. Meanwhile, Apimondia's world apitherapy conference, Apimedita, is underway in Slovenia.

With very best wishes,  
Barbara, Jacques, Priscilla, Michael, Kate and Juan

**The wisdom of bees in natural nest environments**  
**News from Michael Thiele**



In August of 2010, Apimondia organized the First World Conference on Organic Beekeeping. Most of the presentations were from Europe and Africa and Asia. Among many interesting topics, there was one fascinating presentation by Janet Lowore and Nicola Bradbear from Bees for Development. They shared their experience from working with African apiculturists. They could show how a path is taken, which is lead by the intrinsic value and the natural life forces of this animal, the honey bee. Just to name a few key points: Honey bees live in frame-less conditions, there is no migratory beekeeping, no interference in any of it's life cycles. Bee colonies are set up in a natural spacial distribution, nests are made out of natural materials, and swarming is the only option for offspring. Please read more below from the abstract of the presentation.

It's an encouragement for all of us to reflect on our practices, and to determine in which ways we obstruct the health of this creature, and in which ways we can support it! It is time to think outside the box, literally!! Conventional equipment and management practices have evolved from a paradigm of life which is destroying nature, life and hearts. Bees are our allies, and they can touch our hearts, if we are brave enough. They can inspire a heart-consciousness, which will change our range of perception and understanding, and they can help opening our mind. Imagine living with their sense of self, where the individual's life is completely dedicated to service and the well being of others! Can we dare to see the world through the eyes of a bee, and let go of our dualistic way of understanding? They are a gift given to us, and they speak to us with love. Let's listen to them .....

Michael Thiele

#### ORAL PRESENTATION on SUSTAINABLE APICULTURE

Janet Lowore and Nicola Bradbear; of Bees for Development. Apiculture may be considered sustainable only when examined from ecological, social and economic perspectives. Practiced well, tropical African beekeeping is sustainable for both the individual colony and the whole honey bee population. In tropical, sub-Saharan Africa, beekeeping methods have remained unchanged and represent an enduring example of sustainable apiculture. These beekeeping systems are typically extensive, as opposed to the intensive practices of conventional, globalbeekeeping. Beekeepers in tropical Africa regard their production base to be the whole population of honey bees within their local area, in contrast to intensive beekeepers whose focus is at the individual colony level. Labour is invested in making many no-cost or low-cost hives and spreading them far apart in natural forest areas. Day to day colony management is not done and this keeps colony stress levels low and saves labour. The spread of colonies resembles the natural

system and minimizes the risk of disease spread, drift, or localized forage shortages. Colonies abscond as a strategy to cope with pathogens, and in response to seasonal changes, and beekeepers regard this as normal. Accepting that at harvest time a significant percentage of hives may be empty is a key tenet of extensive beekeeping: high yields are achieved by harvesting from many colonies. Extensive beekeepers do not alter the genetic identity of locally adapted populations, nor do they translocate honey bees for the benefit or convenience of humans. Instead, they benefit from the morphological, behavioral and population biological characters that achieve survival and natural reproduction of honey bees (and their associated pathogens) in their local, natural environments. Increase is achieved by natural swarming, and beekeepers rely, with success, on natural swarms to acquire bees. The bees nest comprises all natural combs, and whole combs are harvested. The constant replenishment with fresh comb probably reduces build up of diseases, and income from beeswax negates any additional benefit that might otherwise be gained from the replacement of drawn comb. The outcome is that tropical, sub-Saharan Africa remains the last place where intact, indigenous populations of *Apis mellifera* thrive and are free from the deleterious effects of imported pests and diseases, and where the forces of natural selection allow the persistence of well adapted populations both in the wild and within the ownership of beekeepers.

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### **News from Kate Frey**

With declining day lengths and cooler temperatures, many plants at The Melissa Garden are putting on a brief flush of lush fall growth before they begin to fade into autumn. Nepeta, Calmentha, Grindelia, Salvia uliginosa, Salvia 'Indigo Spires,' Oreganos, Scabiosa, Agastaches, California fuchsia, Cleome, Verbena bonariensis and Bidens are all still blooming strongly and attracting lots of bee and other pollinator visits. The roses -- Rosa chinensis mutabilis and the giant, fragrant climber 'Mermaid' -- are covered in blooms. The garden is still full of flowers and the perceptible sound of bees. Lots of butterflies are visiting the Verbena bonariensis and hummingbirds are busy fighting over the California fuchsia blossoms. The sun's lower angle and with more humidity in the air, makes the garden's brilliant colors glow magically.



The former lawn area garden is a tapestry of purple, blue and white with some yellow sprinkled in. Calamentha, Nepeta, Russian sage

(Perovskia), Eriogonum fascicularis, lavender, and Vitex create a froth of blue/purple and white and many flowers per square inch that offer large amounts of nectar and pollen to pollinators and beneficial insects of many varieties. These plants have been blooming continuously since May with zero maintenance performed. The California goldenrod has just finished blooming and its sprays of yellow flowers have become fluffy plumes. The bright yellow yarrow Achillea filipendula is still blooming. A new plant for the Melissa garden, the giant sunflower Helianthus giganteus is in full bloom with flowering stems at least 9 feet tall. The flowers are small, pale yellow and covered in bees. The towering stature of the sprays of flowers makes one feel small. The smaller- to 4.5 feet- hairy sunflower Helianthus hirsutus has just finished blooming and is a really good companion for the Achillea filipendula, California goldenrod and giant sunflower.

In the main Melissa Garden we have cut back some of the lavender, bidens and nepeta each week to ensure a continuous supply of flowers. The plants that were cut back earlier have put out a new flush of foliage and flowers. We have begun mulching the soil with composted greenwaste to maintain soil fertility. Earthworms are active with rising soil moisture levels and falling temperatures and we want to make sure there is organic matter for them to incorporate into the soil to improve soil fertility levels and structure.

In the orchard, now is the time to have covercrop seed on hand to broadcast before the fall rain begins. This year we are broadcasting more California poppy seed and some crimson clover. We should have strong seed bank of the bee's favorite- Phacelia tanacetifolia already present from last year. <http://www.leballistersseed.com/>

A star of the summer and fall garden has been the Delta sunflower- Helianthus annuus from Annies Annuals and Perennials

<http://www.anniesannuals.com/>

It has been blooming constantly from July and is absolutely covered in blooms right now on an enormous, multi-branched plant. It is an annual that should be planted in May. No dead-heading required.

## **Calendar**



## **Queen of the Sun at the Mill Valley Film Festival**

**Tuesday, October 12, 6:00PM**  
**CinéArts @ Sequoia, Mill Valley**

**Wednesday, October 13, 7:00PM**  
**Rafael Film Center, San Rafael**

During a time when honeybees are mysteriously disappearing from hives around the world, this award-winning film documents the global bee crisis and the struggles and triumphs of the passionate people trying to address it.

**Saturday, October 24, 2010: 10am-4pm**

**Fundamentals of Living with Bees: living with bees and how to enrich one's life and the world - with Michael Thiele**

This day will give the opportunity to approach and study bees in a holistic way. We will learn about their life forces and new ways of supporting their health and instinctual well being. Once we understand who they are, we know how to be with them. We will examine various hive designs, and we will provide resources for winter tasks and the beginning of the next bee season 2011. We will investigate our own range of perception and how we can deepen our relationship with the bees. Biodynamics and the specific approach of the Melissa Garden will be part of the day. People not currently living with bees are welcome. Most of the class will be held outside, weather permitting. Please dress accordingly and bring a bag lunch. Fee: \$45

**Wednesdays, 7-9pm**  
**October 20, 27, November 3, 10, 17, 2010**  
**Living with Bees: a course in holistic apiculture**

This course will give the opportunity to approach and study bees in a holistic way. We will investigate our own range of perception and how we can deepen our relationship with the bees. First we need to understand who they are, and then we know how to be with them. The life of the bees is centered around altruism, love and service. They are a gift given to this world. How can they inspire us to establish a new relationship with them and the world? We will study various texts (see under resources on this web page) and new ways of taking care of bees. Biodynamics and consciousness studies will be part of it. This course will be an opportunity to prepare for a new approach on various levels for the 2011 bee year. People not currently living with bees are welcome. The book on bees by Rudolf Steiner will be at the base of our studies. The course will consist of 5 evenings, at Michael's apiary at 686 Snow Road in Sebastopol. Fee is \$20.00 per evening/ \$80.00 for the entire series. To register, go to [www.gaiabees.com](http://www.gaiabees.com).

**We will be adding more dates for garden tours, so please check our web site!**

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