



News from The Melissa Garden

Issue #7

March 2010

Dear Friends,

We are going into our third Spring at The Melissa Garden and look forward to seeing the plants in their greater maturity much like greeting old friends. Beekeeper Michael Thiele writes, below, about our ongoing efforts to discern what we need to do to support the bees. Our original mandate was to create a sanctuary for the bees to insulate them from known stressors and tend to them to the best of our knowledge. Yet, with all our love and concern, we still lost a few colonies this winter. We keep asking, "What are the bees trying to tell us? What do they want and need?" The only answer seems to be to stay with them as their allies at this critical time and keep attempting to discern any new insights.



In this vein, we will be holding a few bee celebrations later this year. We would like to gather our bee-loving friends, and hear from you on your bee experiences and wisdom. Dates to be announced on our web site.

Bzzzz,
Barbara, Jacques, Priscilla, Michael, Kate and Juan

"The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift."

--Albert Einstein

– "The mother of the bees is the wife of the god who created all things."

From Michael Thiele:

Spring is coming! The light is noticeably growing, and many flowers and trees are beginning to bloom: Acacia, willow and plum trees,

ceanothus, and pacific coast iris. A few days ago, I saw the first shooting stars and small lupines on the rolling green hills. Eucalyptus trees are filled with the sound of bees. The life forces are moving more strongly and the "bien" is growing. Barbara saw some Drone brood mid February! This life energy is very contagious! This is early California spring.

The Melissa Garden seems to be in the middle of a big transition, and with it comes a wide spectrum of observations and insights. For some time now we have approached bee health by omitting any kind of treatment with medication. That means no usage of sugar and etheric oils as well as all organic acids. In short: All of them have an impact on the "inner systems" of the bien. Any medication effects the symbiotic relationship between the "bien" and the many different microorganisms within. The benefits of natural selection are diminished, and treating under the premises of the "parasite-host" paradigm may increase the virulence of the varroa mites. A growing number of "apiculturists" is working without medication. We divide colonies in the spring, when the "bien" is in swarm mood - or we let them swarm. Last year we accepted many outside swarms as well. Swarming is one of the most beautiful and touching moments of the season. It's a celebration of life and steeped in confidence and hope. Whoever is around for that, watches it in awe with heart felt reverence.

By the end of fall and the beginning of winter, we had lost several colonies. We felt each loss in the depths of our hearts. It was very painful to let each of them go. Sometimes it seemed like a loss of hope and a grim outlook into the darkness of a struggling ecological and spiritual world. There was doubt and many new questions and not necessarily clear answers. Death makes its way into our beekeeping and the world seems to be at stake. It's scary! If we turn the question, we may see the miracle of life even more clearly. As we tend the bees of the Melissa Garden we must be patient for it may be several more bee seasons before the situation stabilizes.

Then came winter. Everything went inwards. All was quiet in the hive. The darkness of the season helped ease us into the not-knowing, allowing a space for stillness and quiet listening instead of leaping to the next answer/solution/strategy. It feels like turning a koan. We felt we had to hold it and accept, what was right now! Not-knowing can be a way of opening our senses for that, what is beyond our conditioned mind and beyond our mechanistic world view. Among other causes, the true nature of bees has been obscured by the loss of feeling. Mechanistic thinking reduced them to square boxes and movable, interchangeable parts.

We have to wake up! We have to revive forgotten dimensions of consciousness. The status of the bees only reflects our mind and attitude. There is a wisdom in the "bien" which we can only see with our hearts. We need to approach them from ours hearts, and re-

discover it as a sense organ. One place of our perception can be centered in our heart. We can "see" with our heart. And because it's so true, I would like to quote Rudolf Steiner again: " That which we experience ourselves only at a time when our hearts develop love is actually the very same thing that is present as a substance in the entire bee colony." We need to validate the realm of emotions as an essential part of life, next to analytical thinking. Not being able to name something does not mean not to understand.

In many ancient cultures, bees were understood as being sacred. For one of the oldest indigenous cultures of the world, the San in Africa, "the mother of the bees is the wife of the god who created all things." Sacred like the life of which we are a part. And in this way, bee-tending can nourish the bees and the world and it can inspire our own lives. Bees are a link to the wisdom of the heart - and an element of the earth's consciousness. It reminds me of the wisdom of first nation cultures, like the Barasana of the Amazon basin: for them, "human beings , plants, and animals share the same cosmic origin , and in a profound sense are seen as essential identical, responsive to the same principles, obligated by the same duties, responsible for the collective well-being of creation. There is no separation between culture and nature. Everything is related, everything connected, a single integrated whole." For the Aborigines, "... a moment begins with nothing. We start and walk, and from emptiness emerge the songs, the musical embodiment of reality, the cosmic melodies that give the world its character." The Penan of Borneo " explicitly perceive wealth as the strength of social relations among people, for should these relationships weaken, all will suffer. ... The greatest transgression in the their culture is *sihun*, a concept that essentially means a failure to share." According to Wade Davis, indigenous cultures can "teach us that there are indeed other ways of being, alternative visions of life, birth, death, and creation itself."

And finally I would like to mention Ervin Laszlo's book about "the science of the 21th century". It's very inspiring and encouraging, especially in a time when one may think of "hope" as an even more important part of our life, with some urgency in regards to the state of our dear Mother Earth. In his conclusions, he says that ... "beyond the world of mainstream sciences, a new concept of the universe is emerging. ... In its place comes a new/old concept: the informed universe. The Akashic field is a highly integrated, coherent system, much like a living organism. ... A cosmic field that links all things in the world is a perennial intuition, present in traditional cosmologies and metaphysics. ... This will profoundly change the concepts of ourselves and the world."

We are looking forward to another year with bees. There are many new ideas for projects. We would like to chart local feral hives and possibly provide nest cavities. We may keep our apiary more contained by accepting only swarms that come on their own. We are also thinking of an apprenticeship program for next year. If you are interested in

ordering a Golden Hive, please contact us. Also, we always appreciate hearing from you and learning from your bee world. Please feel free to email us.

I wish you all another wonderful and inspired year with our "membrane-winged companions" (bees belong to the order of Hymenoptera. The name refers to the wings of the insects, and is derived from the Ancient Greek μῆν (humen): membrane and πτερόν (pteron): wing). May we all enjoy them and learn from them. And may we support and protect them.
Thank you.

Michael

*" ...Our separateness is an illusion;
we are interconnected parts of the whole-
we are a pond with movement and memory.
Our reality is larger than you and me,
and all the vessels that sail the waters,
and all the waters on which they sail."*

Ervin Laszlo

Sources:

"Bees", by Rudolf Steiner

"The Wayfinders", by Wade Davis

"Science and the Akasha Field", by Ervin Laszlo

Events & Classes

To register for a class, send an email to queenbee@themelissagarden.com, or leave a voice message at (707) 433-2114. Be sure to include both your email address and phone number when you make your reservation.

(Class date to be announced for spring 2010) Herbal Skin Salves Made with Beeswax

Learn how to make healing herbal skin salve! Use common plants, oils and beeswax to create an ointment that will promote wound healing, and help your skin heal itself from fungal infections and rashes. Learn how Camilla Barry taught women in Afghanistan to make this salve and start their own successful businesses.

Fee : \$50.00

Camilla Barry has taught science and nature studies for over twenty years. She founded a nonprofit agency, Classrooms Across Cultures, to lead teacher-training in Afghanistan. This past summer she completed her 8th trip to Afghanistan, where she helped develop the national science curriculum. Her lessons about bees and botany led to founding several women's businesses, selling the same skin salve that will be taught in class.

Sunday, March 14, 2010: 10am-4pm

Light, Blossom and Bees ~~ with Michael Thiele

We will gather in the early spring and prepare our journey with the bees through the "bee-season". We will study the life forces and rhythms of the bees and the different ways we can support and nurture them. Biodynamic Beekeeping standards and The Melissa Garden approach will be part of the curriculum. We will see, how "bee-tending" can become an art, and a practice of respectfully engaging in the web of life. The day will include practical aspects of bee-tending e.x. natural comb, swarming, hive designs, initial set up of hives and more. Weather permitting, we will be in the apiary with the bees. Beginners are welcome (this is the first day of day-light-savings).

Bring a bag lunch

Fee : \$30-60 sliding scale

Sunday, April 18, 2010: 10am-4pm

Bee Spirit ~ with Michael Thiele

This day is dedicated to what Rudolf Steiner calls the "love life" of the bee-colony: "That which we experience within ourselves only at a time when our hearts develop love is actually the very same thing that is present as a substance in the entire beehive." We will combine the study of their life forces and rhythms with the exploration of our deepest heart connection with the emanation of the bees. We will explore

the nature of bees and our relationship with them through stillness, observation, meditation, inner journey and exposure. We will approach bees not only as beekeepers, but rather as sentient beings, with an open mind and heart, and a strong focus on listening on all levels. We will take a look at different ways of relating, and examine new levels of communication with them. The day will be centered on the premises that bees can be a medium to touch our own heart , and to touch life as a miracle. Please feel free to bring a journal, something to draw, or anything else, you would like to bring. Having bees is not a prerequisite at all.

Bring a bag lunch

Fee : \$30-60 sliding scale

Saturday, May 23rd, 10am to 4pm

Bees, Bees, Bees Galore

**- Hosted by Daily Acts (register with
www.dailyacts.org)**

Our tour starts at Beekind, a beekeepers resource in Sebastopol. Then April Lance, master gardener, teacher and beekeeper, and Kathy Kellison, founder and director of Partners for Sustainable Pollination, will show us five acres of nectar-rich, bee thriving environment in Healdsburg. We'll end this dynamic day at The Melissa Garden honeybee sanctuary.

**Tours of The Melissa Garden,
by Garden Designer Kate Frey**

Garden Tour Date schedule for 2010:

Friday, March 19 ~ 10 - 11:30 am

Friday, April 16 ~ 10 - 11:30 am

Friday, May 21 ~ 10 - 11:30 am

Friday, June 18 ~ 10 - 11:30 am

Friday, July 16 ~ 10 - 11:30 am

Friday, August 20 ~ 10 - 11:30 am

Friday, September 17 ~ 10 - 11:30 am

Come experience the buzz and blossoms at our honeybee sanctuary with garden designer Kate Frey. We will have regular tours throughout the year on the first Friday of most months. Learn why we decided to create this special garden as a honeybee habitat, and about some of the honeybee and pollinator plants in our lush garden. One of our beekeepers will be on the tour to give a brief introduction to some of our "alternative hives." Wear comfortable shoes.

Kate Frey is an internationally distinguished garden designer who has been awarded two gold medals at London's Chelsea Flower Show. She worked for 18 years at Fetzer's organic garden in Hopland, CA which was used as a test plot for pollinators by Dr. Gordon Frankie at U. C. Berkeley. She now specializes in creating beautiful habitat and pollinator gardens.

Registration

Fee: \$25.

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