

Lamorinda Nurseries Bring In The Bees

By A.K. Carroll



Sarah McDonnell and Mike Vigo with the two new bee colonies.

Photos Andy Scheck

The buzz about bees is spreading through Lamorinda, most recently to local nurseries, resulting in a partnership that is beyond symbiotic.

Based out of a desire to help the plight of the honeybee, McDonnell Nursery in Orinda recently purchased two hives to put on their property.



The queen bee arrives in a cage and will be released by the worker bees after a day or two.

"From my standpoint it's a natural fit," said Mike Vigo, local beekeeper and owner of The Bee Ranchers, LLC. Vigo delivered and hived McDonnell's new bees the second week in April. "[The bees] are able to pollinate and help the plants in the nursery, and to the extent that the hives produce honey, [McDonnell] will have uber local honey to sell."

"I like local, in general," said Sarah McDonnell. "And honey being a product I use quite a bit, I'm always picking that up at farmers' markets." The byproduct of honey is something McDonnell is excited about, but it isn't her main objective in having hives. "The primary benefit is to protect the bees, to give them a safe home and to pollinate our plants."

According to Vigo, the much-lauded plight of the honeybee isn't one that will be resolved any time

soon, especially considering California's current and running state of drought. The one benefit that Vigo has seen come from the increase in notoriety concerning the honeybee crisis is the monetary contribution that corporations have started making toward saving the honeybee, as well as the research being conducted in academia.

The nursery-hive relationship is one more step in the right direction. "McDonnell is fairly progressive," said Vigo, "Ahead of the curve." Through this partnership, all sides in the pollinator-producer equation win – nurseries, beekeepers, consumers and honeybees alike. "I think it's fantastic."

Orchard Nursery and Florist in Lafayette has also been aware of the importance of local bees for a while now. "A couple of years ago we had a friend of a friend put up hives on our back hill area," said Chris Martinez. "The bees seem to be very happy and are producing quite a bit of honey."

That friend was Steve Gentry, producer of Steve's Bees honey and fourth-generation resident of Orinda. Gentry has approximately 35 years of experience working with bees. He formed a relationship with Orchard when they invited him to show and talk about bees on a recent Earth Day.

"I got into [beekeeping] because I just love bees," said Gentry. "It started with education and morphed into selling honey as regional family income." Residents can find Gentry's



Orchard Nursery and Florist's retail display of equipment

Photo Janet Kaidantzis

Life in LAMORINDA

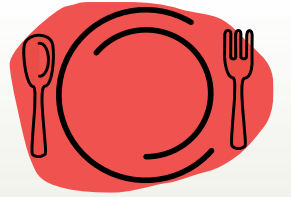
honey at Diablo Foods, Whole Foods and Open Sesame in Lafayette, at the Orinda Farmers' Market, and in several stores and markets outside of Lamorinda.

"The hive up there is thriving," Gentry said of his Orchard swarm, which he uses more for the produc-

tion of bees than the production of honey. When Gentry needs to reinforce weaker hives or divide off a new swarm to follow one of the queens he raises, the Orchard hive is a good place to go. It's also great show and tell for the local community.

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Taste of Lafayette



A Stroll Down Restaurant Row

Tuesday, May 19, 2015
5:30 - 9 PM

6 New Restaurants!

Wine & Appetizers
5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Lafayette Plaza Reception
Live Music

Stroll & Taste
6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Sample 20+ Restaurants
Walk -- or Take Free Shuttle

Dessert & Coffee
8:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Lafayette Plaza Reception
Raffle Drawing:
Dining Packages & Vacation Getaways

Taste Tickets: \$50/person *
* Early Bird Price: \$45 thru 5/8
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www.lafayettechamber.org



Presented by Lafayette Chamber of Commerce
Proceeds also benefit Lafayette Community Foundation
Purchase Raffle Tickets at the Chamber office, at Taste of Lafayette, or by email to info@lafayettec.org

Saturday May 9 11am - 4pm

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Entertainment Schedule

11:00 Saint Mary's College Jazz Band
12:30 Full Coverage Band
3:30 JM Jazz Band
3:45 Classic Car Show Trophies Awarded

Ongoing Activities

- Classic Car Show
- Dunk Tank for town notables
- Local Wines and Beer by the glass
- 26' Climbing Wall, Firetruck & Transit Bus
- Mother's Day Gift Activities
- Visit Dozens of Vendors: Business, Non-profit, Schools
- Food Trucks
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