



THE DIRT

June 2010

NEWS FROM THE OCCIDENTAL BOHEMIAN FARMERS MARKET

WWW.OCCIDENTALFARMERSMARKET.COM

farmer profile

BLOOMFIELD BEES

BY SARAH HADLER

BLOOMFIELD BEES
1295 BLOOMFIELD RD
SEBASTOPOL, CA

distance from market:
10.3 MILES

Geof Whitford, beekeeper extraordinaire, says that "Sonoma County, with its diverse plant population and therefore diverse insect population, is a wonderful environment to keep honeybees." Geof, and his wife Jackie, have been keeping bees in Sonoma County for the last six years. Shortly after moving to this area, Geof read an impassioned article in the West County Gazette about the declining honeybee population and what people could do about it. The article led Geof and Jackie to the Sonoma County Beekeeper's

Association and to Kathy Cox, the then-owner of Bloomfield Bees and Bouquets. Geof became an apprentice to Kathy and began taking in all of her beekeeping knowledge. This eventually led to Geof and Jackie developing a three-way partnership with Kathy and later becoming an LLC. Bloomfield Bees sells its quality honey and products at its year-round roadside stand and at four local farmers markets: Cotati on Thursday evenings, Occidental on Friday evenings, Petaluma on Saturday afternoons, and Sebastopol on Sunday mornings. You can also catch Geof sharing his bee wisdom at 6pm every Friday on KOWS radio station. All this, and a full-time job, too! Geof says, "I can't help it, I developed a habit—I became addicted to Kathy's wildflower honey."

**"I DEVELOPED a HABIT—I BECAME
ADDICTED TO WILDFLOWER HONEY."**

—geof whitford



One Thursday afternoon in between rain showers, I spent two hours with Geof, and it became plain to see why he is so enchanted with honeybees. Bloomfield Bees has hives scattered around Sonoma and Marin counties, in fifteen different locations. It is a mutual exchange, the bees pollinating local farms and crops, Bloomfield Bees harvesting the honey. As we talked, Geof was in the final stages of preparing a few hives to go out to a local gardener and farmer. We donned bee suits and Geof gently and carefully moved the frames from one hive into another, talking to the "girls" as they buzzed about. They very quickly began settling into their new home once it was in place. I learned that new bees who are learning to fly will orient themselves by hovering around their hive and venturing out a little bit further each day, memorizing the hive's location. Geof pointed out that temperature is a very important determinant in how much and how far the bees fly. The inside of a hive is between 95 and 100 degrees.

If it is below 60-65 degrees outside, it is too cold for them, unless the sun comes out to warm them; we saw evidence of this as we watched the bee

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activity ebb and flow as the clouds and sun took turns in the sky.

After looking into the hives, checking out the "bee tree" (a rescued oak limb with a vibrant and diverse bee population), seeing the honey extraction equipment, tasting fresh pollen from the hive (like spongy-sweet drops of sunshine), and examining propolis (a caulk-like substance that is antibiotic, antiseptic and antifungal), I finally got my sweet reward and sampled eight different kinds of honey, including the best-selling Sonoma County wildflower. I must say, my favorite was the lavender honey, a dark, rich grainy honey with hints of lavender floating through.

Geof always keeps a few empty hives with four or five frames in them, called "trap hives," in case a local hive swarms and needs a place to settle. He likens it to a traveler choosing a well-lit bed and breakfast over sleeping in the woods. Once the hive chooses to stay, he carefully tends it, helping it to grow stronger and thrive. With beekeepers like Geof, eager to share his knowledge and passion about bees, the future for honeybees, and for us, does not look so dim.

AS THE SOIL TURNS

news & notes from the market

BUT MOM, I HAVE TO GO NOW!

We've arranged to have restroom facilities available to market customers across the street at Barley & Hops Tavern. Remember to support the folks who support you in your time of need. They wouldn't mind it at all if you stayed for something off their menu or sampled from their amazing beer selection.

COME AND SIT A SPELL

There are a lot of reasons to relax and enjoy the market, but we need to be respectful of our local businesses when we plop down for a bit. Please keep out of seating areas that are cordoned off for other business customers, like the express window at Howard's Cafe.

TWO MARKETS IN OCCIDENTAL?

Yep, and we wish the Community Center well as they try to best determine fundraising for that venue. In the meantime, the OBFM remains Occidental's only certified farmers market, at the ready with plenty of fruits, veggies, and the best in prepared foods.

KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR CHILDREN!

We want to make sure that the OBFM remains a safe place for the community—please be sure that your children are supervised. **Bikes and scooters are not to be ridden through the market**, and no running along the boardwalk! Also important: as per Sonoma County health code, we can't allow dogs at the market, even if they are just like children to you.

Got news to share? Email us at info@occidentalfarmersmarket.com.

YES, I'm pleased to sponsor the Occidental Bohemian Farmers Market. I know my contribution will help support our local economy and connect our community members to the food they consume.

- \$50 SEED LEVEL
- \$100 BLOOM LEVEL
- \$250 HARVEST LEVEL
- \$ _____

NAME

STREET

CITY, STATE, ZIP

PHONE

EMAIL

Please make checks payable to Occidental Bohemian Farmers Market, and mail to PO Box 782, Occidental CA 95465. The Occidental Bohemian Farmers Market is a non-profit mutual benefit corporation registered with the State of California.

MARKET VENDORS

Farmers

Armstrong Valley Farm
Bloomfield Bees
Bohemian Farmers' Collective
Busalacchi Farms
French Garden Farm
Hands Full Farm
La Vida Buena Nursery
Mt Moriah Farms
Mudpie Farm
New Family Farm
Rainbow's End
Sam Kim Mushrooms
Singing Frogs Farm
Smiling Sun Farms
Star Mountain Gardens
Strong Arm Farm
Vine Hill Farm

Prepared Foods

Bennett Ridge Baking Co.
Café 504
Gerard's Paella
Kashaya's Pizza
Lata's Indian Cuisine
Mommy's Yammys
Salt Side Down Chocolates
Sarah's Forestville Kitchen
Sister Pie

Crafters

Varies

Services

Relax Systems Massage

Community

Master Gardeners
Occidental Center for the Arts

Please email to confirm attendance by vendors on any given week: info@occidentalfarmersmarket.com.