



## A Challenging Year for Honeybees

After one of the most intense winters in memory, this year's bee season started strong in April and May. Colonies that survived the 6-week stretch of temps below twenty degrees, welcomed the spring with early swarming, and enjoyed an abundant nectar flow from Maples and Black Locust. There was a sigh of joy heard among beekeepers as the winter fell away.

Then came the endless, torrential rains of June that flushed the pollen from the blossoms, and watered down the nectar during the time of the main flow. Stored honey was consumed by hive-bound bees when normally they would be filling their combs. Brood production was slowed by the low pollen supply. And, this was just the beginning.

Cool, damp and dark conditions continued in July and into August, with only periodic blessings of sun and warmth.



Feeding Frenzy

By August and September, brood was burgeoning in the hives to offset a lackluster mid-season build up, coinciding with the usual upswing of the Varroa mites' reproductive cycle. A pattern of low mite counts shifted and mite levels soared into high gear in many hives.

A robbing frenzy permeated apiaries in the swatch of the Northeast most hindered by the rains. Feeding and nurturing became the beekeepers' duty during this unusual year as we headed towards winter.

Some beekeepers did have a good year, a few in their first year. Weather was surely a factor all around, however abundant forage and lack of competition can save a season.

There are lessons of joy and pain in beekeeping. Love is always simple, yet ever complex. There are always new opportunities to contemplate our own natures as we contemplate those of the honeybee, and our role in their care.



Roosa Bee Farms' Gang Feeder holding six jars, without the bee-crushing "Stampede at Mecca" concerns of communal feeding in times of dearth.

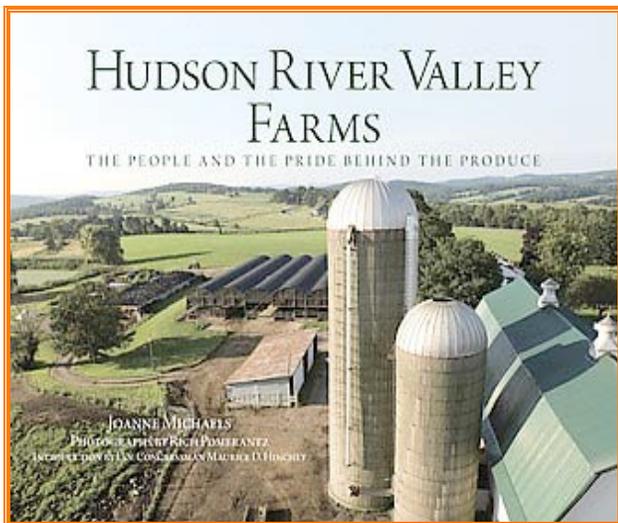
Honeybees were desperate for food starting in July. Massive feeding of Bee Tea began, trying to offset the surprising dearth of nectar. Everywhere, bumblebees prospered and proliferated, yet honeybees with shorter proboscises, were not seen on the usual flowers. I suspect the weather conditions kept the nectar from rising high enough to benefit the honeybees.

Look for an improved **Winter Bee-Candy** recipe on our website in a few weeks. Most hives in our area will need support of food as winter draws on.

## A Celebration of Hudson Valley Farmers

This summer the book **Hudson River Valley Farms: The People and the Pride Behind the Produce** was published for the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Henry Hudson's journey up the Hudson River. The text by Joanne Michaels and photography by Rich Pomerantz profiles specific farms and farmers that are a part of this vibrant agricultural valley.

HoneybeeLives is included in this coffee table book with a three-page profile of Chris and his work.



## NYC Embraces National Pollinator Week

New York City celebrated in NY Style for the third annual National Pollinator Week in June. Events were planned around the city for fun, networking and public awareness. The first annual NYC Beekeepers' Ball was held at Water Taxi Beach at the South Street Seaport with costumes a-buzz with frivolity. Check out the NYTimes slide-show [www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2009/06/23/dining/0624-BEES\\_index.html](http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2009/06/23/dining/0624-BEES_index.html)

Also underway was the serious work of encouraging politicians to once again make beekeeping legal in NYC. In 1999, a change in the city health code lumped honeybees in with "wild animals" and prohibits "all venomous insects" including honeybees, making it illegal to tend bees within city limits.

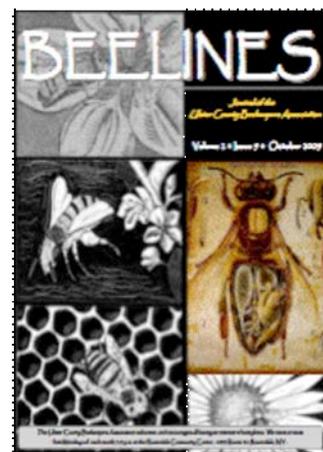
The legalization efforts have been led by the wonderful NYC organization Just Food ([www.justfood.org](http://www.justfood.org)), and the now former City Council Member David Yassky from Brooklyn.



Grai dressed as a Russian Queen Bee during the rally and press conference at City Hall on June 22, in support of legalizing beekeeping in NYC.

## The Ulster County Beekeepers' Association

continues to grow and develop a community for beekeepers, including the Beelines Journal.



Household memberships are \$20 per year, and Beelines memberships are \$10. Please Join Us! Visit the newly launched website:

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

## Church of the Regeneration

Honeybees choose the darnedest places to build their colonies. After a swarm occurs, bees from the cluster scout for a suitable cavity for the swarm to move in to and start their new home. This could be a hollow tree, an empty hive or the apse of a church!



This summer Chris had one of the more visually dramatic extractions at the Pine Plains Church of the Regeneration. Chris and his assistant Ivan Goodman braved the heights of this old church, working with a crane lift into the dark of night, to remove a colony from its pinnacle. The roof was being replaced, thus the need for the extraction.

I took this photo as the sun was starting to set, however I could not bear to stay and watch as my efforts on the ground were of no true help. There was no room in the lift for me and my camera. It would have been great fun to video tape the drama.

## Bee Happy Honey Scholarship Recipients

Last winter, Emily Adamo gave scholarship money to two recipients for HoneybeeLives' Winter Beekeeping Classes. The money came from the sales of the T-shirts and mugs she designed and sells through [www.BeeHappyHoney.org](http://www.BeeHappyHoney.org) to help the local honeybee population and promote beekeeping.

Deborah Greig from East New York Farms in Brooklyn (profiled later in this newsletter), and Marcelle Crago from Woodstock were chosen from the applications because they both have an opportunity to share their new beekeeping knowledge with others, thus perpetuating the gift.



### Our Ad for Edible Hudson Valley

Edible Hudson Valley was launched with the Spring 2009 issue. Check [www.ediblecommunities.com](http://www.ediblecommunities.com) to see the breadth of coverage, as well as find one in your area, or one where you are traveling.

Edible Communities is a network of local publications, both print and web, named after the different regions covered by the individual magazines. The focus is on the farmers, food styles and sustainable practices, among other delicious subjects.

## Green For Green Award

Chris was honored as the June "Green For Green" recipient by WDST Radio Woodstock and the Ulster Savings Bank. He received a \$1,000 savings bond for his work promoting a "green" environment.



Radio host Greg Gattine interviewed us for his morning show on WDST (100.1 FM). You can hear the interview by going to the newsletter/press page of our website.

## HoneybeeLives' Student Profiles

We love sharing our knowledge and passion of beekeeping. Chris has a unique way of translating the experience of beekeeping into practical and philosophical terms. His love of honeybees and people is in every ounce of his being, right along with his love of chaos.

People come to beekeeping for many different reasons, and myriad life experiences. Most come with open hearts and minds, ready to overcome any trepidation that the unfamiliar world of the hive, and fear of the sting, may present.

Here, I will profile a few of the people who have passed through our beekeeping classes. Perhaps their inspiration will inform and spur on yours.



Photo by Ethan Plank

### Sam Plank

Sam started beekeeping this past spring. Intrigued by two summer encounters with bees, Sam and his father Ethan pursued this interest with beekeeping classes, UCBA meetings and tending their first hive. More hives will follow.

Sam is wise beyond his years, and follows his inspiration with action and excellent questions. Sam and Ethan made their way to this past summer's Treatment-Free Beekeeping Conference in MA, camping in the torrential rain and sticking with the extremely long days of informative sessions. It was brilliant to see 13-yr old Sam engaging the formidable Dee Lusby in conversation. "I'm interested in the genetics," Sam stated during a conference break.

Beekeepers are incredibly important for our environment. Youthful beekeepers even more so, as they will carry the experience farther into the future, and hopefully their passion will rub off on others around them.



### Marge Morrissey

Marge is going into her third year as a beekeeper. A few years ago she was wearing large sunglasses at a party and someone said she looked like a bee. "All of a sudden I was dreaming bees," says Marge. "I have earth, wind, water, sunfire... all the elements are here, why not bees."

Her hives are nestled on a slope behind the house in a sacred setting watched over by the "Blessed Bee" angel sculpture. "I have gained patience and tolerance, and I learn to listen. I hear them... I feel them around me. They're my babies."



Deborah Greig

East New York Farms, in the far reaches of Brooklyn, is a vibrant agricultural oasis with enormous neighborhood impact. Deborah Greig is the Urban Agricultural Coordinator, who has taken on the responsibility for the hives in the garden, along with the many organizational and educational tasks.

The hives were started in 2005 with funding from Heifer International's City Livestock Program, to augment the farm market started in 1998, and the large corner garden cleared by neighborhood youth starting in 2000. With the pollination help of the honeybees, the farm produced 14,000 pounds of food last year.



Brooklyn Raspberries

Standing by the hive, against the chain link fence separating it from the street, I sense how odd it is to

not be able to hear the gentle hum of the hive at work. I can however see the bounty from their pollination, as the raspberry bushes nearby are heavily laden with fruit.

A city lot turned into a productive farm with the addition of honeybees seems the ultimate affirmation of life and transformation.

### **Nature Comes to the Mall**

Most everyone has heard of the organic vegetable garden on the lawn of the White House, and the hives of Honeybees being tended on this expanse of federal land. Under the watchful eye of the Secret Service, and the eyes of the nation, honeybees are given their place of importance in our lives.

This is progress, and hope, for the future of our country and our environment.

Thank you, Mrs. President!

### **Nurture Alters Nature**

Most beekeepers that work intimately and gently with their honeybees know from experience that nurturing develops sweet bees.

Findings from a study, led by University of Illinois entomology and neuroscience professor Gene Robinson were released this summer providing scientific proof in patterns of gene expression. Some of the same people involved in this "BeeSpace" project were part of the Honeybee Genome Project completed in 2006.

The focus of this new work is studying the relationships between genes and social behavior in honeybees, using both European and Africanized Honeybees.

The press release states: A new study reveals that changes in gene expression in the brain of the honey bee in response to an immediate threat have much in common with more long-term and even evolutionary differences in honey bee aggression. The findings lend support to the idea that nurture (an organism's environment) may ultimately influence nature (its genetic inheritance).

Singing or humming to your bees goes a long way.

## A Fascination with Honeybee Wings

Honeybees in flight are a mesmerizing sight. I love to watch them as they go about their busy, buzzing days. At a distance, their flight-paths catch the sun in flashes and glints. Close up, and captured by a camera, the energy and dynamics of their wings is filled with beauty and grace.

Here are some of my favorite pictures from this summer.



### Sun is an incredible life force.

We are working on clearing trees and opening up the HoneybeeLives Apiary to get more sun for our bees. Our house is surrounded by enormous pine trees on the front, eastern side, however on the back, south side there is an area of many thin, tall pin-oaks and maples among others, reaching for the sun, and blocking most of the rest of the property.

We have blessed the trees for their spirit, chosen some to remain, others to be cut and keep for an apiary pavilion to be built for outdoor classes. We had hoped to have the mass of the trees cleared this fall, however a work party was advised against and the tree man we hired was delayed by other work.

We look forward to creating a better environment for our seasonal classes held at our apiary. Anyone who wishes to help us with our apiary upgrade will be greatly appreciated.

### HoneybeeLives Winter Beekeeping Classes

We encourage beginners to take both days of the winter classes to obtain a broad understanding of the responsibilities and challenges entailed in this undertaking. These classes can be taken on one weekend, or divided into Saturday one weekend and Sunday another weekend. The Sunday class will be helpful to beginning and experienced beekeepers. Each class day is \$95. A full weekend is \$175 per person. Lodging recommendations are available.

Pre-registration is required and pre-payment is requested. Go to [www.HoneybeeLives.org](http://www.HoneybeeLives.org) for a full description of the classes.

Email HoneybeeLives @yahoo.com to register or call #845-255-6113.

## WINTER CLASS SCHEDULE

### Rosendale, NY

(Hudson Valley)

#### **Sustainable Living Resource Center**

Tuesday, January 26            6pm – 8:30pm  
**Intro Lecture of Honeybee and Organic Beekeeping**

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Saturday, January 30            10am – 6pm  
**Intro to Organic Beekeeping:  
Planning a New Hive for Spring**

Sunday, January 31            10am – 6pm  
**Understanding and Caring for Your Honeybees**

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Saturday, February 6            10am – 6pm  
**Intro to Organic Beekeeping:  
Planning a New Hive for Spring**

Sunday, February 7            10am – 6pm  
**Understanding and Caring for Your Honeybees**

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Saturday, March 6            10am – 6pm  
**Intro to Organic Beekeeping:  
Planning a New Hive for Spring**

Sunday, March 7            10am – 6pm  
**Understanding and Caring for Your Honeybees**

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### Granville, NY

(VT Border)

#### **New England Farms**

Saturday, February 13            10am – 6pm  
**Intro to Organic Beekeeping:  
Planning a New Hive for Spring**

Sunday, February 14            10am – 6pm  
**Understanding and Caring for Your Honeybees**

### Chestnut Ridge, NY

(Rockland County)

#### **The Pfeiffer Center**

Saturday, February 20            9am – 6pm  
**Intro to Organic Beekeeping:  
Planning a New Hive for Spring.**

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April 23 and 24<sup>th</sup>            Two-day class

**Organic Beekeeping: Principles and Practices  
With Chris Harp, Ross Conrad and Mac Mead**

Please visit [www.PfeifferCenter.org](http://www.PfeifferCenter.org) for more info on these last two classes, and to register for the PC classes. Their telephone # 845-352-5020 - ext 20

Gift Certificates are available for our winter classes.



Fuzzy, Baby Bee Emerging

### **We are blessed to be beekeepers.**

Thank you for your interest and support of honeybees, and for being a part of our blessings.

Grai St. Clair Rice and Christopher Harp  
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