



BEEKEEPING PROVES TO BE A Sweet Endeavor for Newark Residents

BY STEVE URENA

Bees may be known for their ability to create honey and to keep gardens full, but they also use pollen to make beeswax and royal jelly, a secretion believed by some to have medicinal qualities. Honey is also used to make wine. Unlikely as it may seem, a growing number of people are harnessing the positive side of bees in backyards across Newark and in neighboring towns.

And it's a good thing because the U.S. Department of Agriculture is concerned about the decline in the numbers of bees worldwide due to colony collapse and other diseases. The insects are responsible for pollinating 80 percent of America's flowering crops, which is one-third of everything we eat.

"We have seen a higher interest in beekeeping," says Robin Dougherty of the Greater Newark Conservancy, an organization designed to improve the quality of life in urban communities. "Reasons include the creation of small businesses that sell honey and products from the hive, along with simply having local honey for your family. There are now several individuals selling honey at local farm stands, and there is room for more in the market."

There is a high demand from honey lovers who find the natural product tastier than its industrialized counterparts. With natural honey, they don't run the risk of consuming unnatural materials that may be used in the production of corporate brands. Rob Sommer of Ward Coffee Company in Newark sells several items from local beekeepers and explains why they're good for business:

"We carry several different products from two beekeepers in the area. Honey of course, bee pollen, whipped honey, raw honey, and honey sticks. I would like to carry more because they sell well. While the prices tend to be higher because they're not mass producing, I find it to be of better quality and more appealing."

Beekeepers in Newark are happy that the trend is growing. Local keeper James Lecky does it simply for the love of it and has placed a single hive in the back of his house on the roof of a screened porch. He has formed a special bond with his bees and uses the hive to make honey, candles and mead. The honey gets fermented with fruits, in this case beach