

The
View
FROM

高瀑園
HIGH FALLS GARDENS

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SAVE THE DATE

Aug. 14
Garden Weeding Party
(Practitioners)

Sept. 18
HFG Annual Field Day

Oct. 16
Garden Clean-Up Party
(Practitioners)

Oct. 30
Conference sponsored by
CADE Medicinal Plant
Project and Farmers'
Museum, Cooperstown NY

*Call or email HFG for
details and directions.*

Dear Friends of High Falls Gardens,

Events of this spring have served to remind us how our efforts to create a garden — which human need defines as a sanctuary, a protected place to savor and study Nature — are all too dependent on forces in the big world. Our sense of control, whether in the garden or in the world at large, is an illusion. We can only cooperate with Nature, which rewards the gentler human virtues such as self-understanding, empathy and persistence.

In international affairs, it is the lack of these very qualities in our leaders that generates such stupidity and needless destruction as recently witnessed. The bomb-droppers, bioengineers and other control freaks throughout human history have never been able to understand that meekness is not the same as weakness. Those of us who have chosen to go back to the Garden have a lot of gentle persuasion to do before we can inherit the Earth.

Bee Colony Survives Winter, But Not Spring

HFG is now an initiated member of the ranks of embattled beekeepers, having lost our one colony to the awesome environmental pressures on the honeybee. In February the bees were still flying around on every calm, sunny day. But spring build-up never happened, and by June they were all gone.

The post-mortem analysis was accomplished with the aid of valuable information gleaned from a three-day workshop on Organic Beekeeping presented at the end of April by Gunther Hauk and Ron Breeland at The Pfeiffer Center in Spring Valley, New York. We believe that the most likely explanation is that the Varroa mites were present in the colony by March. The mites' preferred

breeding place is inside the drone cells and when the queen begins intensive laying to create "spring build-up," the dramatic upsurge in hive population that usually takes place in March and April, the mites increase in numbers exponentially. Laden and weakened by the mites, the bees could not deal with the mouse that invaded the bottom super, then the ants, then a raccoon or skunk that stuck its grubby little claw inside and grabbed handfuls of honeycomb. In their normal state the bees are strong enough to defend themselves against such invaders.

Experienced beekeepers often are able to determine what's happening inside the colony and can take measures to support the bees. Our inexperience is cause for mourning, but fortunately the Organic Beekeeping workshop provided enough new information to make us wiser as well as saddened, and next year we will try again.

The reasons for the dramatic decline of the honeybee are controversial in a way that's familiar to students and practitioners of Chinese medicine and other holistic philosophies, who hold that disease is caused by imbalance in the organism rather than by bugs. Bugs are Nature's housekeepers, they invade and recycle diseased plants and animals in order to promote the health of the whole. The organic beekeepers believe that the honeybees' problems are due to pervasive immune system weakness caused by diverse environmental pressures. These adversities range from the massive amounts of pesticides dumped on suburban lawns (the total quantity now dwarfs that used in conventional agriculture) to the disruption of the communal life of the hive by conventional

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The View FROM HIGH FALLS GARDENS

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DEAR FRIENDS

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beekeeping practices such as artificial production and insemination of the queen, feeding with refined sugar water, routine destruction of drones and suppression of swarming behavior. The honeybee is also the miners' canary species among our domesticated animals. While cows, chickens and pigs nominally survive the torture tactics of modern conventional agriculture with its antibiotic-laden confinement systems, the bees respond by dying en masse. The beekeepers wonder what it will take to alert the world — failure of a major food crop due to lack of pollination, perhaps?

Yet the workshop at The Pfeiffer Center, originally limited to twenty-five participants, drew an assortment of forty-five professional beekeepers, commercial growers, gardeners and hobbyists — the latter categories thought by many to represent hope for the honeybees' future. If enough backyard gardeners can be mobilized to provide sanctuary for the bees, relating to them in a respectful and humane manner rather than instrumentally as honey factories, then their chances of survival may be enhanced. Our gardens may serve as arks, floating in the deluge until humankind awakens from its illusion of control.

New Sprinkler System

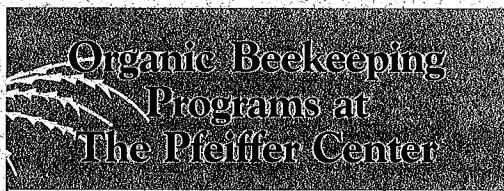
As we go to press the main field at Hillview Farm sports a new sprinkler system, just in time to mitigate the drought. Once again this past winter snow cover was minimal,

and rainfall abnormally low throughout the spring with the second-driest April on record. HFG advisor (and organic farmer with over twenty-five years experience) Steve Gilman suggested we adapt the inexpensive, low-tech system he uses on his fields and then helped us through the details. Now a new five-horsepower pump draws water from the creek into a two-inch water pipe that cuts across the field. Six faucet units made of standard plumbing parts stand up from the main line and feed twelve hoses with adjustable impulse irrigators at the ends. Modular and flexible, the system allows for hoses to be gathered up and stored at the end of the season, while the main line will eventually be buried to ease maintenance of the white Dutch clover aisles between the beds. Drip irrigation, a water-conserving technique desirable for perennial beds or for some vegetable row cropping operations, was ruled out in this situation because the clover aisles need water too, and a very large number of lines would be required. Many thanks to Steve, and also to Steve Richardson of Philmont who contributed some ABS water pipe and fittings.

Chinese Herbs Planted at Quirk Middle School

To follow up a report in the previous issue of *The View*, we are happy to confirm that not all plans were waylaid this spring. The Quirk Middle School near downtown Hartford, Connecticut overcame obstacles to plant several species of Chinese medicinal plants in two raised beds on their premises. HFG provided guidance for the project and Johnny's Selected Seeds of Albion, Maine donated the seeds.

Pauline White and her fellow teachers at Quirk were all ready to plant in an empty lot across the street that had been reserved for community gardens. City officials then found an unsafe level of lead in the soil and prohibited the students from using the site. The intrepid teachers, undeterred, pushed for the creation of raised beds in the central courtyard of the school, a large, windowless brick structure built during the 1960's.



Organic Beekeeping
Programs at
The Pfeiffer Center

For information on when the next program on Organic Beekeeping will take place, call The Pfeiffer Center at 914-352-5020 x20, or email info@pfeiffercenter.org.

Visit of Chinese Agronomist Derailed by Embassy Bombing

Last year during Robert Newman's tenure as curator of the medicinal plant garden of the Nanjing Institute of Botany, he met and befriended several colleagues. One of them is Wu Zhong-fa, Senior Agronomist and Garden Manager of the Guangxi Botanical Garden of Medicinal Plants, the largest such collection in China. About Newman's age (fortyish), with a bachelor's degree in agriculture from the Forestry College of the Guangxi Agricultural University, Wu had worked his way up at the GBGMP, writing or co-authoring several books and articles in the process and becoming an authority on the ginger family. The idea of an exchange visit came up when Newman was in Guangxi, a visit during which Wu could see the medicinal plants growing in North America and also teach the Americans who are growing the Chinese species. The GBGMP agreed to back the visit financially, and Newman mobilized his U.S. network.

From January to the end of May we worked on The Visit, and a number of people at various botanical and agricultural institutions got pretty excited about it and even pledged contributions toward expenses. We had a great itinerary arranged for Mr. Wu. First off (with Jean acting as chauffeur), he would go to UMass Amherst, which under Lyle Craker's direction had contributed essential paperwork to the visa process, then to Cornell to present a seminar arranged by Professor and Plant Pathology Department Chair Helene Dillard of the NY State Agricultural Experiment Station. Then to Claverack to review the plants at HFG's Hillview Farm field, then up to the Adirondacks to see native medicinal plants in the wild, courtesy of

Kate Gilday and Don Babineau of Woodland Essence Teaching Center, next to Avoca to see Matthias and Andrea Reisen of Healing Spirits Herb Farm, also to Cooperstown to see wild-simulated cultivation of American ginseng at Sylvan Botanicals, thanks to Sylva and Scott Harris.

And that was just in New York! He was also scheduled to spend time with Cindy Riviere of Plant It Herbs in Ohio, attend an intensive one-week course including field work called "Medicinal Plants of Southeastern Ohio" at Ohio University, and visit Peter Borchard of Companion Plants. Also included on the itinerary were the Montgomery Botanical Center in Miami (specializing in palms and cycads), Elixir Farms in Missouri, and finally West Coast stops including Jerry Black of Oregon Exotics and, of course, Robert Newman.

Just as all the kinks were finally worked out and Wu had the correct paperwork to take to the U.S. Consulate in Guangzhou to get his visa, the Gang-That-Couldn't-Shoot-Straight bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. All the U.S. consulates in China closed and when they reopened they laid down new rules, making it much more difficult to apply for visas. After several hassles and delays, Wu was finally turned down and by way of explanation handed a general rejection notice claiming insufficient evidence to "establish to the consular officer's satisfaction that [he had] sufficiently strong professional, economic, social or family ties to China to compel [him] to leave the United States after a temporary stay."

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The ninth of June was planting day and the kids went to work with a vengeance, assembling the units, shoveling clean fill, raking and, finally, tucking in the seedlings nurtured for months in their classrooms. They had previously constructed attractive trellises made of tree branches for the *Codonopsis pilosula* to climb on. *Allium tuberosum*, *Astragalus membranaceus*, a *Ginkgo biloba*, *Glycyrrhiza uralensis*, *Impatiens balsamina*, *Perilla*

frutescens, *Prunella vulgaris*, and *Scutellaria baicalensis* filled out the beds.

Outside the courtyard at one end of the school lot, the neighborhood is graced by a few old trees spared by some merciful hand during school construction. Among them is an enormous grandfather ginkgo, said to be one of the largest on the East coast. 園