

Benefits of 'keeping' honey bees

There is the riot of fabulous flavors of honey derived from the myriad plants that provide the nectar. And there's the brightest, longest lasting, and cleanest burning candles with the most beautiful scent made with beeswax. And then there's the nutritional power house that is bee pollen, and the power of honey for healing wounds as well as cleaning up infections. Add to the list bee venoms efficacy in treating autoimmune diseases.

Then there's the money. In this destructive economy we have created, you pretty much need some of this to survive. Our family has been able to live largely through our work with honey bees. And what a blessing to have one's work be nourishing - to the bees, to the plants touched by the bees, as well as to the 'keeper'.

One more way in which working with honey bees can benefit is that it gives people an opportunity to be present. Every sense is called into play. During a heavy honey flow one can hear the loud, steady hum of foragers flying to the nectaries, smell the nectar being evaporated, see the air crowded with worker bees. Is there a racy, frantic sound and look to their flight, and they're bouncing off your head or your veil? They are not happy! A very potent sting serves quickly to strengthen the attentiveness, the care, the bond between bees and keeper. During a period of population expansion, one can smell food as well as the larvae themselves, wafted to you by the bees moving air in and out of the hive to regulate temperature and evaporate nectar. It's the same smell as nuzzling your newborn baby!

Furthermore, if a beekeeper is attentive, awareness increases in scope via the web of connections between the bees and plants, the soil, the microbes in the soil, the weather, There's no end to the connections. As with other ways of working with the natural world (careful farming, foraging, ...) attentive careful work with honey bees can take one beyond ones self to know that everything is connected. In our present chaotic world, and one so full of distractions, this work can provide context, a place; home.