Pamorinda OUR HOMES

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Bees Doing Their Business in the Back Yard

By Cathy Tyson

hat backyard gardener doesn't like a good buzz? From bees, of course. Now even neophyte horticulturalists can enjoy the benefits of bees without having to actively manage a hive – and reap a bounty of honey in return for the "rent." Enter Mike Vigo, Orinda resident, former securities broker, trader and principal at 033 Asset Management, Robertson Stephens and Montgomery Securities. The full time "Bee Rancher" has brought his business acumen and very unique hive concept to backyards throughout Lamorinda.

It all started with a 4H project that his three girls were involved in four years ago; the family learned what it takes to manage healthy, happy bees from the ground up. Friendly, personable Vigo was ready for a change at work and saw the bee business as a golden opportunity, noting key similarities in both service oriented businesses: "It's all about maintaining and fostering relationships." Armed with an Agriculture Business Management degree from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, a beekeeping software program, diligently updated spreadsheets and electronic notes on each and every hive, he's applying lessons learned in the securities business to managing The Bee Ranchers.

Word of the local enterprise has spread from friends and family and beyond. He now manages over 50 hives – one has landed in the backyard of Wendy and Andy Scheck, organic gardeners and the publishers of this newspaper. Like proud new parents, they were up early on the morning after their initial bee installation checking on the new arrivals.

Delivery and set up of the Scheck's lovely cedar



Mike Vigo delivers Bees at night

hive took place in the evening; Vigo was well prepared with a headlamp to navigate through the backyard carrying the components of the hive. No drama, no gloves – the install went off without a peep from the occupants.

Photos Andy Scheck

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"Day one is always special," said Vigo describing the orientation flight of the hive foragers. "They have GPS (global positioning system)" – or as fellow staff writer Cathy Dausman points out – "Bee PS."

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