

SITHEAN ACRES

Donna and John Bishop were having some trouble with their garden a number of years back. Their plants – especially their tomatoes – would just not grow because there weren't enough pollinators in their yard in Battle Ground. So, they got two beehives and started extracting honey from them. Someone suggested they sell their honey, so they started bringing jars to gatherings to see if anyone was interested. One thing led to the next, and before they knew it, they were selling honey at markets multiple days per week.

Their table at the market boasts a wide selection of honey varieties, including blackberry, wildflower, fireweed, and pumpkin. The unique flavors are a result of placing the beehives in different fields where certain crops are growing. The bees pick up the pollen from that crop, affecting the flavor and color of the honey.

Harvest happens once per year in late summer. First, Donna and John go through the hives to make sure the bees have enough honey to last them through the winter. If there is leftover honey, they utilize an extractor that uses centrifugal force to pull the honey off of the hive frames. Then, they run it through a fine metal strainer and put it into jars.

Sithean Acres has become a family effort. Donna often gets help at the markets from her three oldest granddaughters: Skye, 21; Ava, 16; and Violet, 10. She is proud that her grandchildren are comfortable with counting out change without the use of a calculator. Donna said the market experience has also been a great way for her grandchildren to become more comfortable with talking to others.

Donna said she enjoys educating customers at the market about bees and the importance of pollinators. She advocates for people to put pollinator-friendly plant varieties in their yards to support butterflies, hummingbirds, dragonflies, and bats. And she encourages people to limit their use of pesticides and herbicides, which affect the reproduction, navigation, and memory of bees.

"The people who come to the market are amazing," she said. "The community is very welcoming. We've learned a lot from everyone there."

