

Special Report: Seven Things You Must Know Before Becoming a Beekeeper!



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Beekeeping is the new buzz! More and more individuals are becoming beekeepers not just because it's so fascinating, but because so many health-conscious consumers are flocking to the health benefits of honey! Today's health-conscious consumer wants to decrease the risk of diabetes, which afflicts 27 million Americans due to all the sugar in our diet.

Even if beekeepers aren't large commercial operations, they sell honey for a pretty penny in their local communities. People are willing to pay more for a high-quality product with superior flavor and nutritional value. And even if beekeepers don't sell their honey, their own families reap the benefits of a

delicious and nutritious sweetener! Unlike addictive, fattening sugar and high fructose corn syrup with zero nutritional value, honey contains antioxidants, vitamins and minerals!

But before you jump on the honey bandwagon and become a beekeeper, there are seven basic items you *must* know.

1. Before Getting Started

Depending on your carpentry skills, you must be willing to spend at least \$350 on equipment to get started. If you can build your own hives then your start up costs will come down considerably. You must also invest in modest recurring costs, such as medication and repairs.

You must also be willing to invest some time. This includes tending to your hives, making repairs and updating your inspection log. One colony can keep you active for up to 40 hours a season; one colony is typically 30,000 to 60,000 bees.

And of course, you have to ensure that none of your family members is highly allergic to bee stings. You must educate and cooperate with your neighbors.

You might get stung! Bees aren't aggressive, but accidents do happen, and they will naturally defend their hive if you drop a frame.

You should also check with your state department of agriculture to see if bee colonies in your area must be registered. You should also check local zoning laws to see if keeping bees in your area is legal.

2. Lot Size

Your property and the surrounding two-square mile area must provide a steady supply of nectar- and pollen-rich plants from spring through fall. If there are not enough plants within a two square mile area, the colony may starve to death. A nearby water supply is also absolutely essential.

Another consideration is how much space you can dedicate to the bees' inbound and outbound flight zone to and from the hive. The flight zone should not be used frequently by people or pets.

Some beekeepers have urban lots as small as 110 feet by 60 feet! If you do have a small urban lot, it's a good idea not to have more than two hives. Some beekeepers have several acres. The space you need mostly depends on pollen sources available within two square miles and the size of your colony.

3. Equipment

Here's a rundown of the most basic equipment you need for beekeeping:

- **Supers.** These hive boxes hold 10 frames.
- **Entrance feeders.** These feeders help a brand new colony get started. Fill the feeders with a mixture that is five pounds of sugar and two gallons of water; simmer until the sugar dissolves. Stop feeding the bees when a nectar flow begins; the sugar syrup will compromise the quality of the honey sugars--besides, it's illegal to sell adulterated honey.
- **Bee smoker and bellows.** Smoke calms bees and masks any alarm pheromones released by guard bees.
- **Hood and veil.** This basic beekeeper garb will keep you from getting stung on the eyeball!
- **Vented leather gloves.** Leather gloves are sting-proof. They should be long-sleeved and well-fitted. Gloves help keep you from getting sticky.
- **Frame grabber.** This is a spring-loaded tool that enables you to grasp a frame with one hand, allowing you to turn the frame to inspect both sides.
- **Hive tool.** This tool is similar to a pry bar, with a notch on one end to pull nails and scrape cappings. A bent lip on the opposite end helps pry frames and boxes apart.
- **Log book.** A simple notebook will do, with enough space to keep notes for several seasons.

4. Installing the Colony

The best time to launch a beekeeping operation is in spring. Blooming flowers and trees will supply ample nectar and pollen for the colony.

Bees can be ordered from any apiary; different apiaries stock different types of bees. You can order bees by the pound, as well as new queens. You should give the apiary approximately 60 days to prepare your bees. You should also request that the apiary marks your queen and clips her wings prior to shipping.

Bees are delivered in screened boxes via U.S. mail or United Parcel Service. A box of bees typically contains two to five pounds of bees; that's about 25,000 bees. This box includes all female worker bees, a handful of male drones, and a small box--called a queen's cage--with one young mated queen.

Here are the basics on installing a new package of bees:

1. Remove four frames
2. Remove the lid and feeding can from the shipping box
3. Gently spill the bees into the super
4. Remove the cork on the queen cage and attach a small wire to the non-drilled end
5. Slide the queen cage between two frames toward the center of the super
6. Carefully insert the frames into the super
7. Place the inner cover and lid on the super
8. Install a temporary entrance feeder so the bees can produce spaces for the queen to lay eggs.

5. Inspecting the Hive

You should inspect the hives at least every two weeks to ensure that the bees have plenty of room, are storing honey, are free of disease, and that the queen is laying eggs. You will spend approximately 20 to 30 minutes per colony. If you observe odd behavior, you should inspect the hives more frequently.

You should inspect whether:

- The bees are building new comb on the foundation
- There is brood in the center of the frame of comb

- There is capped honey
- Whether pollen is present in the cells

A normal hive will have most of the frame filled with brood, a small arch of honey at the top of the frame, and some pollen stored between them.

Be sure to log your observations, particularly swarming behavior, treatments, feeding, or anything unusual. In the log book, you'll want to include: date inspected; number of colonies; number of swarms; general health; any signs of disease; estimated poundage of honey; whether the queen was located; whether there are any freshly laid eggs or young larvae; whether other insects or predators were sighted; and anything noteworthy or different from the last inspection

Colonies can fall victim to bacteria, viruses, protozoans, fungi and parasitic mites. Sometimes hive equipment is attacked by other insects. The most common bee diseases are American foulbrood, European foulbrood, chalkbrood, nosema, wax moths, tracheal mites and varroa mites. Medication and treatments are essential for the colony's survival. Treatments should be given as often as recommended.

6. Swarm Capturing

Signs of swarming include:

- Clinging to the outside of the box
- Hanging from the bottom in a conical shape (very good sign)
- Covering the front of the box in a scattered manner, facing downward and exhibiting nervous behavior, especially in the evening.

You can capture swarms with pheromones that can be placed in swarm capturing boxes; these can be ordered from beekeeping supply companies. Contrary to their appearance, swarms are usually quite gentle.

Be sure there are no obstacles below the swarm; pure clearance is ideal, but may be impossible, particularly if the swarm is in a tree. Make a platform to hold a cardboard box that's large enough to house the swarm. Place the box beneath the swarm and powerfully shake the object it is attached to in one strong motion. This is easy for tree branches, but can be

tricky if the swarm is attached to a mailbox or car bumper. You may need to scrape the bees off the object. Try to get the entire swarm.

7. Harvesting Honey

Honey is typically harvested from July until September. The season may be a bit longer in warmer regions.

Be sure to leave 60 to 90 pounds of honey for the colony to survive winter. You should leave 60 pounds absolute minimum. To estimate this amount, check the honey supply in the brood chamber. A deep frame full of honey weighs approximately six pounds; the bees need 10 of these for winter. Two shallow frames equals one deep frame. A new hive should have a double brood chamber with one box completely full of honey; the lower box should have outside frames filled with honey.

For plastic frames with plastic foundation, use a large container, such as a five-gallon bucket. Use a filter cloth, such as cheesecloth or paint strainer sacks sold by paint dealers. Place your hive tool at the edge of the frame end bar and press it into the wax. Push the wax and honey onto the straining cloth, draped over the container; the honey passes through, but the wax is strained out. Scrape the honey from the foundation with your hive tool; the wax comb and honey come off quite easily. You can reuse the frames in the super. The bees will clean them and reuse them. Bottle the filtered honey.

This is just the Beginning!

If you're ready to take the first step in becoming a beekeeper, please consider *Beekeeping 101: A Beginner Beekeepers Guide*. It is one of the most comprehensive training manuals available anywhere, offering simple, easy-to-understand instructions for the beginning beekeeper. From special inspection procedures for spring and fall, to identifying common diseases and how to treat them, *Beekeeping 101* will equip you with everything you need to know to be a busy beekeeper!

[Click Here to find out more about Beekeeping 101!](#)