

GETTING STARTED IN BEEKEEPING



THE BEGINNER'S JOURNEY



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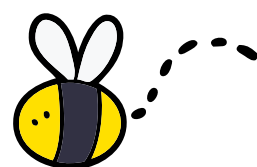




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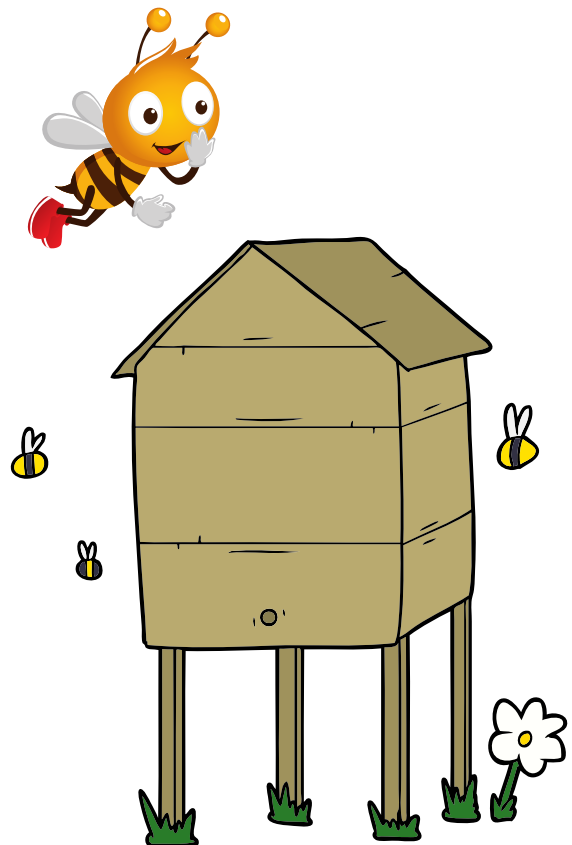
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INTRODUCTION TO BEEKEEPING

Hey there, prospective beekeepers! You're probably reading this eBook because you're interested in getting started in beekeeping. The prospect of a person being able to keep his/her own bees and harvesting their own honey is a very interesting and rewarding activity.

Beekeeping has been practiced by humans for a very long time. In the past, logs were used as beehives. Today, more advanced equipment such as the Langstroth beehive are used. Beekeeping is also called apiculture.

A beekeeper with many beehives close to each other in one place is said to have an apiary. Getting started in beekeeping can be daunting if you do not have the proper guidance and information. Once you get into the groove of things however, you will quickly start enjoying being a beekeeper, and this eBook is here to guide you right along the way.

Whether it's just a hobby or you plan to go commercial, there are a number of things that you will have to know before going ahead with the adventure.

Let's take it one by one, shall we?



WHAT IS BEEKEEPING

You might hear the term being thrown around all the time, but just what is beekeeping, and what does it entail? Let's start from the bottom.

Now beekeeping, or **apiculture** as it is also known, is the human activity of maintaining honey bees. A beekeeper, or **apiarist** (that will soon be you), is someone who keeps honey bees for the purpose of collecting their honey and other products that are produced by the hive such as propolis, beeswax and royal jelly, or to pollinate crops, or to produce bees for sale to other beekeepers. Beekeeping can be done using stinging or stingless bees.

ABOUT HONEY BEES

Honey bees are insects that live in colonies that are led by the queen bee. The insects can sometime be very dangerous especially when they are provoked as they can inflict harsh stings. That's why it's very important to take proper precautions when dealing with them.



Honey bees produce their own food called honey that they usually feed on in times of inclement weather conditions not favorable for them to go out of the hive. Honey is a very precious commodity loved by many people around the world due to its great taste and also due to its medicinal properties.



BEEKEEPING THROUGHOUT THE AGES

Beekeeping is an old practice with depictions of it found in art and artifacts from 10,000 years ago. Early beekeepers of that age used pottery vessels to house honey bee colonies. They developed on to making simple hives and smoke in beekeeping. Later, the storage of honey in jars came about.



In the 18th century, Europeans took a lot of interest in beekeeping. They studied the life cycle and biology of honey bees with the intent to understand honey bee colony organization. Improved understanding led to the discovery and exploitation of 'bee space'. It gave rise to movable frames in beehives, and the artificial beehives commonly used in beekeeping to date.

Through history, beekeeping has been practiced using skeps, pottery vessels, log hives, top bar hives, Warré hives, and the Langstroth beehive. Of these, Warré, Langstroth and Top Bar hives are the most popular to date. We'll take a quick look at these later on in this eBook.



BEEKEEPING

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

DOES BEEKEEPING TAKE A LOT OF TIME?

The practice of beekeeping is usually dependent on seasons and so will vary greatly according to the time of the year. If you take winter for instance, a beekeeper usually does nothing except for checking on the bees and maybe clearing beehive entrances blocked by snow.

When the seasons change and it's summer time, that's when the beekeeper will be very busy. This is the time when every hive must be checked almost weekly to ensure that no swarming has taken place. It is the time when more honey supers are added to hives.

These tasks can seem daunting at first as a beginner, however, with more experience, you'll be able to complete them in a matter of minutes and go about your business.

IS BEEKEEPING DIFFICULT?

Beekeeping does not involve strenuous work at all, even though there are instances when you will be required to move the hives from one point to the next.

By joining your local beekeeping association, you will learn more about how you can limit the physical labor input that beekeeping may require from you.



IS BEEKEEPING PROFITABLE?

Beekeeping is very profitable when you do it the right way. With proper beekeeping practices and a suitable beehive, you can enjoy a satisfying income with every harvest of beehive products.

Beekeepers with a large number of beehives enjoy more profits from their beekeeping activities. In addition to the monetary value of beekeeping, you get to contribute to keeping nature balanced.



Hobbyist beekeepers get a lot of satisfaction from knowing they promote better pollination of plants. Honeybees in a single colony can cover very large areas with their pollination activity as they forage for pollen and nectar.

WHAT ARE THE EQUIPMENT THAT I NEED?



The very first thing you need to have is of course the beehive, because that's where the bees will live.

You can build your own hive at home (if you're so technically inclined) or purchase an already built hive.

The other things you will need are the bee smoker, bee feeders, beekeeper suit, beekeeper hat and veil.

Some manufacturers are smart enough to package the essential supplies into a beekeeping starter kit which you can order online and have it shipped right to your door.



WHICH ARE THE BEST TYPES OF BEES?

There are usually a number of bee races that are kept for the purposes of honey production, cross pollination, and other bee related products. Even though there are several types of bee races, their differences are usually not that big. As long as these types of bees are well reared and taken care of, a beekeeper's objective to get maximum honey will be achieved.

ITALIAN BEES

Italian bees are a type of bee race that is usually more commonly found in North America. Italian bees use less propolis than the darker types of bees. To identify the Italian bee, check out for bands on their abdomen in a brown or yellow color. The major weakness of the Italian bees is that they are usually more susceptible to robbing and drifting.



CORDOVAN BEES

Cordovan bees are a subset of the Italian bees, but are distinguished based on their color. They are usually a little gentler than the Italian bee but in contrast they tend to rob more. They are distinguished by their distinctive yellow color but they don't have the color black. Unlike the Italian bees that have legs and heads that are black, the Cordovan bees have legs that are purplish and heads that are purplish too.



CAUCASIAN BEES

Caucasian bees are usually distinguished by a distinctive silver gray to dark brown color. Compared to the Italian bees, they tend to be a little slower during the spring. They are generally even gentler than the Italian bees and are usually not as productive as the Italian bees but are less prone to robbing. They are known to do propolis a lot more than the Italian bees.



STARLINE BEES

Starline bees are bred from various Italian bee strains. The Starlines are usually very productive and also very active, creating tremendous amounts of honey, however the second generation queen is ineffective and you'll need to re-queen every year.



RUSSIAN BEES

Russian bees originally came from Primorsky area of Russia and are known to be very good at resisting mites. They are a lot more defensive compared to other bee races. They are also more productive but working with them can be a little cumbersome due to their defensiveness.



HOW MUCH SPACE SHOULD I HAVE?

Honeybees attract the question of how much space they need due to two factors. The first is that they fly away from the beehive to forage. Second, bees sting their enemies including people if they are determined to be a threat by the bees.

In most cases, the minimum space you need to start beekeeping is the space your beehive will occupy. Additionally, consider that walls of your house or perimeter fencing near the beehive can be an obstruction to bees. They can fly upwards and away at a rate of one foot upwards for every foot available horizontally.

WHAT BEEHIVE PRODUCTS WILL I GET FROM BEES?

HONEY

Honey is the most popular beehive product. It is sweet to the taste and can be eaten alone or used as a sweetener. It is also applicable in many recipes at home. Honey is added into many products in the beauty industry. It also has many medicinal uses that make it a frequent ingredient in remedies.





BEESWAX

The wax that bees use to make comb is one of the harvested products in a beehive. Beekeepers can then sell the wax or use it at home. Traditionally, beeswax has been used to make candles. The candles made from beeswax last long and drip less.

Beeswax has found many functions in households and the beauty industry where it is used to make lip gloss, lip balm, salves, moisturizers and hand creams. It is also found in eye liner, mustache wax and in hair pomades that make hair look shiny and sleek. You may also use beeswax in your home recipes for beauty creams.



PROPOLIS

Propolis is a sticky substance used by bees to seal cracks and seal up spaces. It is found in significant amounts in a beehive and is harvested as you harvest honey. Propolis found on beehive frames is removed to prevent bees building honeycomb outside the assigned space in the frame. Propolis and its extracts are used for its antimicrobial and immune-modulatory properties.



OTHER BEEHIVE PRODUCTS

Other beehive products you may harvest include new queen bees to sell to other beekeepers. New queen bees are great for improving the gene pool of a honeybee colony.

Royal jelly and bee pollen are also collected from beehives and used for their high nutritional value as well as medicinal properties.





POLLINATION BENEFITS

This is not necessarily a beehive product, but in their search for nectar and pollen, bees cross-pollinate plants of many species. Many plants depend on insectaided cross-pollination to prevent selffertilization or limit its occurrence. By keeping bees, you are sure to enjoy better pollination in your own gardens and for the plants around your area.

WHAT IS A BEEKEEPING STARTER KIT?

A beekeeping starter kit is a set of tools, equipment and protective wear. The starter kit is sold as one unit to allow beginner beekeepers have all they need when gettingstarted in beekeeping.

A hive tool and protective clothing for beekeepers feature prominently in beekeeping starter kits. Various manufacturers of beekeeping starter kits add varying tools and equipment. Some beekeeping starter kits may also have a beekeeping book included.

Beginner beekeepers should carefully go over the various offerings in beekeeping starter kits before deciding which one to buy. Since you will only be buying one starter kit, it pays to get the one with most items included in it.

There are great manufacturers of beekeeping tools and equipment with quality and very useful beekeeping starter kits.





WHEN TO HARVEST HONEY?

Usually most beekeepers wait for the end of nectar flow to go and find out if they can harvest the honey. Conditions will usually vary depending on your location but the best time start harvesting honey is at the start of summer towards the start of fall.

During winter, bees usually don't go out of the hive because of the extreme weather outside. This means that there is no way for them to get food from outside the hive and they will keep themselves from starving to death by eating the honey they have in the reserves.

The bee colony needs at least one full season for a sizable population to be grown that will be large enough to produce a surplus honey for you to harvest. When the frames contain at least 80% of capped and sealed honey, you can go ahead and do the harvesting. A little patience however can even be more rewarding for you in the long run.



CAN I KEEP BEES AND NOT HARVEST HONEY?

The motives and inspirations behind starting beekeeping vary from one individual to the next. Some beekeepers start keeping honeybees for their ecological value. You can keep bees without aiming at harvesting beehive products for their economic value or personal use. If you do not harvest honey from a beehive, the stocks build up over time. Due to increased availability of food resources, the honeybee colony increases in number of bees rapidly. Ultimately, swarming occurs. This is one of the targets of beekeepers who only keep bees for their pollination activity. You can prevent a honeybee colony from swarming by splitting the hive yourself. Beginner beekeepers looking to expand their apiary by increasing the number of honeybee colonies have used this method successfully. They can have many colonies in a short period of time. Splitting a hive is a delicate operation that should only be carried out when you have some beekeeping experience. You may invite a more experienced beekeeper to help you out if you are a beginner beekeeper.





CAN MY CHILDREN BECOME BEEKEEPERS?

Beekeeping has no age limit. When you are a beekeeper, you can have your children accompany you to beehives. They learn about beekeeping early on in their lives and become very successful beekeepers. Start the children out with brief beehive inspections and bring them into the more tasking beekeeping activities gradually. Children love and appreciate involvement in beekeeping. You will also benefit much from the extra hands.

When you have children involved in beekeeping, be sure to emphasize to them the need for safety around bees. Teach them about working around bees in advance before you take them on a visit to a real beehive with a honeybee colony in it. You could also start children on honeybee colonies that you know are less aggressive.

There is great beekeeping safety equipment for children available. Shop around for suitable beekeeping suits and other protective wear that fits your child. This includes gloves, hoods and veils and boots. Make sure to replace the protective beekeeping wear once the child outgrows it.



WHAT ARE THE BEST BEEKEEPING PRACTICES?

There are two very important beekeeping practices that you should be aware of when getting started in beekeeping. These are beehive inspection and feeding your honeybee colony. Beehive inspection is required in regular intervals to check for your honeybee colony health. Identifying problems to the colony early allows you to address the problem before it overwhelms your honeybees.

A beehive inspection checklist is useful to make sure you get the most out of every beehive inspection you carry out. Feeding the colony helps it get strong quickly and survive harsh times such as winter. A honeybee feeder placed inside the beehive is recommended. It reduces the chances of attracting bees from other colonies that may turn out to be robber bees.



WHAT BEEKEEPING COURSES SHOULD BEGINNER BEEKEEPERS TAKE?

Learning how to be a good beekeeper is greatly aided by beekeeping courses. Organizations that focus on beekeeping and beekeeping clubs have short and long courses for beekeepers. You may take the beekeeping course of your choice physically or by correspondence. Beekeeping courses cover basic certification and are segmented in modules. Advanced courses for beekeeping earn you the advanced Theory Certification in beekeeping.

Beekeeping courses include examinations and assessments. They help ensure beekeeping is practiced with good standards. In addition to the information provided on this website, beginner beekeepers should find a reputable institution offering beekeeping courses near them. You can also take the correspondence learning option if you are working so that you can learn at your own pace.

