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Beekeeping Basics



New Born Bee Emerging

If your thinking about getting into Beekeeping either as a Hobby or Sideliner level there are several things to think about before jumping in and possibly getting in over your head. This section will cover the basic things you should consider and should know from the very start before you even purchase your first piece of gear or assemble your first hive to becoming a full fledged Beekeeper.

The most common mistake beginning Beekeepers make: Getting too Big too Fast!

DO NOT get into Beekeeping to help save the Bees!!!!!!! Do not be the new beekeeper that gets Bees just so you can do your part to help save the bees. Colonies must be managed to aid in preventing disease and pest. An unmanaged colony can do far more harm to feral colonies as well as to other Beekeepers managed colonies as a diseased colony can affect any colony/s within a two to three mile radius of the diseased colony. Many new beekeepers or beekeepers that are just getting back into beekeeping make the mistake of growing to rapidly which has led to disaster for many beekeepers. Over the years we have seen beekeepers go from a couple of backyard hives to having up to a hundred colonies and end up over worked and over whelmed. Often times Honey accounts are set up with vendors not knowing what the year to year honey output for their area actually is. Don't make promises you cant back up. If your having to purchase another Beekeepers honey to sustain your honey sales chances are very good your in over your head. Modern Beekeeping operations have to be self sustaining in order operate at a profit. Many Beekeepers also look down on bottling another beekeepers product as their own which can also lead to legal problems in the event the honey is tainted.

CCD (Colony Collapse Disorder) Do Not get into Beekeeping because you want to help save the bees. More and more first time Beekeepers are getting into Beekeeping because they saw or heard on the news that Honey Bees are vanishing and may become extinct or they read on some beekeepers site or blog that they are looking for landowners to let them place their hives on their land in exchange for a quart or so of Honey from each hive to help keep the Honey Bees from becoming extinct. As studies have shown most CCD cases are from Migratory Beekeepers and the cause of CCD is from the stresses from moving and a combination of viruses and pesticides. Honey Bees are not on any endangered species list nor are they protected in any way.

How many Colonies to start out with?

Many seasoned Beekeepers suggest starting out with (2) colonies. The reason it is suggested that new beekeepers start out with (2) colonies is that with (2) colonies they can be compared against each other in growth and other problems that may arise.

For More Info on Package Installation & Equipment setup see our [From Package to two Years Info](#)

Things to think about that may personally affect you!

- **Allergic Reaction to Bee Stings:** If you are allergic to insect stings check with your Doctor first. Finding out that your highly allergic to Bee Stings while working with Bees is not the time to find out as it could be deadly if you were to go into anaphylactic shock. At some point you will get stung. Often times stings occur when your not even working the Bees. Families with small children or pets should be extremely careful when planning for Bees.
- **Allergic to Smoke:** Beekeepers work with a smoker which is used when entering the hive for inspections. If your allergic to

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smoke Beekeeping may not be for you.

- **Work:** No matter how you look at it Beekeeping is work. Every Beekeeper (male or female) should know [how to assemble a hive body](#), as well as knowing [how to assemble a Bottom Board](#), Top Cover, [assembling Hive Frames](#), and [knowing how to wire the frames](#) for foundation as well as knowing [how to install wax foundation](#). At one point or another in your Beekeeping endeavor you will need to know these skills. Purchasing these items already assembled is expensive and does not teach skills that every beekeeper should know.
- **Heavy Lifting:** Beekeeping even on a hobby level requires some heavy lifting. However if you have back problems there are some things you can do to minimize heavy lifting which will be covered in another section or drop us an [email](#).
- **Heat:** At some point you may find yourself having to work your Bees during the hottest part of the day. Most hands on working with Bees will be during the Spring and Summer months and over heating is a major concern.

[Where are you going to put your Bees?](#)

- **Hive Location:** It is our opinion that hives should be placed in an area where they cannot easily come into contact with humans. Even the most docile Bees can become aggressive in the right weather conditions, being provoked by wild animals such as skunks or a number of other reasons. If you are located in an area where it is extremely hot we advise placing the hives in a shady or semi shady area as extreme heat is not good for Bees. Bees in Northern climates can be placed in full sun to aid in reducing SHB (small hive beetles) and mites which do not fair well in hotter conditions. Hives should have openings facing in a South/ Southeast direction to catch the early morning sun and gain up to an hour + of added work time over hives in shaded areas when possible. If hives cannot be placed in this direction they can be turned most any direction but due North to keep Northern winds from entering the hive.

[Protective Clothing and Beekeeping Gear](#)



- **Wearing protective Gear:** Always wear a protective veil, suit, gloves and tuck pants into boots or use tape to seal off pants legs. No one gets extra points for being stupid. Bees are insects that never get used to someone invading their habitat and they can become angry and aggressive at anytime for any reason. Not wearing full protective gear is not a sign of being a Master Beekeeper, fully suiting up is a sign of a smart beekeeper. Stings to the face and neck can be life threatening or can cause long term health problems.
- **Using a Smoker:** This one is a no-brainer, always, always use a smoker when entering a hive. A Beekeeper can never tell what kind of mood his Bees will be in until he enters the hive and this is no time to find out you should have brought your smoker. When a light puff of smoke is drawn over the Bees and puffed into the hive entrance, the Bees gorge themselves on honey making it harder for them to double up and sting (See "[How to Properly light a smoker!](#)"). Smoke also has the same effect on Bees as it does humans as it irritates their bronchial tubes when inhaled and it aids in preventing Bees from detecting an alarm scent that is given off when the colony is in danger or being attacked by a foreign entity.

[Fresh Water Source](#)



[Honey Bees collecting fresh water from Bird Bath and Cattle Trough](#)

Honey Bees require a fresh water source in order to regulate temperature by evaporation within the hive and to dilute honey for feeding to larva. A strong colony can use over a quart of water a day. Fresh water needs to be available at all times. Without a fresh water source honey bees may become a nuisance by visiting neighboring water sources such as swimming pools, birdbaths and water gardens.

Basic tools required to get started in Beekeeping:

- **Bee Veil & Hat**
- **Long Sleeve Shirt or Coveralls**
- **Gloves**
- **Smoker**
- **Hive Tool**
- **Frame Grip Tool/ Clamp** (*used to lift frames from hive*)
- **Pocket Knife** *Please use a clean dedicated Knife used only for your Beekeeping!* (*a true Beekeepers multi-tool that's ideal for cleaning frames, cutting comb, prying frames apart and removing propolis*)
- **5 Gallon Bucket** *or tool kit used to carry tools to and from inspections*

Note: The equipment listed above can be purchased from any quality Beekeeping supplier. Listed below are just a few suppliers we

have dealt with in the past and have been extremely satisfied with their service and quality of merchandise.

Dadant & Sons: www.dadant.com

Man Lake Ltd.: www.manlakeLtd.com

Brushy Mountain: www.brushymountainbeefarm.com

Walter T Kelley: www.kelleybees.com

[Next Page](#) (*Setting up the Hive*)

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