

How to Set Up Your First Beehive

Imagine you're sitting at a four-way intersection, a red stop light hanging above you, while the hum of buzzing comes from a pair of rectangular wooden boxes strapped into the passenger's seat next to you. The Nuc boxes—or nucleus colonies—contain more than 10,000 bees each. Bees cling to, and crawl across the wire mesh stapled over the openings that prevents the insects from flying in and out of the boxes. You can tell by the sound of their buzzing that they are agitated, frustrated that they are contained, unable to come and go as they please.



Here I am with my packaged bees in the car!

You can't help but wonder what the drivers of the cars and trucks surrounding you would think if they knew that 20,000 bees or more sat so close at hand. You imagine what the scene might look like if the unthinkable happened and there was an accident. These thoughts are immediately followed by wondering if the wire mesh covering the entrances on the Nuc boxes is secure. The light changes to green, and you gently edge the car out into traffic.

Driving down the road with thousands of stinging insects is one of life's greatest thrills, I can't even begin to imagine why everyone wouldn't want to try it! But before you can bring your bees home, there are a number of things you need to do to prepare for their arrival.

Select Your Apiary Location



Site your apiary in a location that will keep hives dry, buffered from the wind, and with good sun exposure.

When you're trying to decide where to locate your apiary, consider the following carefully:

Nectar and pollen sources: While honeybees *will* travel up to 3 miles or more in search of food, they prefer to have it easily accessible, within 300-500 yards of the hive. There should be forage available to them in one form or another throughout the entire season—from early spring, through the fall.

Bees need water: Just like every other living creature on the planet, bees need water to survive. Not only do they drink water, but they also use it to reconstitute crystallized honey, and to make bee-bread—the mixture of honey and pollen which they feed their developing larvae. If you don't have a natural source of water nearby, such as a pond, or stream, consider placing a bird bath, or a 2-gallon dog waterer near the hives.

Exposure to sunlight: Ideally your hives should be facing south, with a fair amount of southern exposure. Yet at the same time, partial shade, or dappled sunlight can be a benefit to the hive during the height of the summer sun and heat.

Protection from wind: Nestle hives up against shrubs, or at the edge of a forest; place them alongside a shed, garage, or other outbuilding so that colonies are protected from strong prevailing winds—this is especially important if you live in a climate where winter can send frigid gusting winds barreling down on your hives.

Keep hives dry: Bees are susceptible to a number of fungal diseases which are promoted in wet conditions, so choose a spot for your apiary that is dry and offers good drainage during the spring thaw and prolonged periods of rain. Also consider tilting the hives forward slightly so that condensation that builds up inside the hives runs out of the hive, rather than dripping down on the bees and brood nest.

Protect colonies from harmful pesticides: Industrial farmers use insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides that all affect the health of honeybees in one way or another. Even golf courses can pose a problem for your colonies. If you live near such a threat, consider seeking an alternative location for your apiary, there are many landowners, homesteaders, or small farmers that would be more than happy to have you set up your apiary on their property.

Ease of access: This is more for your benefit than that of your bees. When you have your gear, tools, and equipment in tow, and you're going to take honey off your hives in the heat of summer, you'll appreciate being able to drive your truck to the apiary location.

Prepare your hives



Assembling equipment, yourself can help save money when making that initial investment into beekeeping.

Before you bring home your bees, your hives should be completely assembled and set up at the location you have chosen for your apiary. All the frames should be put together, foundation inserted (if you're using it), the exterior of your boxes should be painted (or not—depending upon your principles), and you should have settled the hive components in place upon the foundation of your choice.

A note about hive foundations: Beekeepers use hive foundations to raise hives up off the ground to keep them dry. You can use just about anything to serve as your foundation—from the commercially prepared types available from suppliers like Brushy Mountain, to cement blocks, logs, wooden pallets, or tires.

Also note that you will begin your hive with only one deep brood box, since bees grow their hives from the bottom up, and you will not add the second box until the bees have drawn and filled at least three-quarters of the frames in that first box. The same goes for the honey supers—you will not add a super until the second box has been almost completely filled. This prevents the bees from creating misshapen combs.

Packaged Bees vs. Nucs



Consider the Pros and Cons of each before investing!

Typically, packaged bees are imported from the south (unless, of course, you're *in* the south-lol), and come in 2, 3, or 5 pound packages. You can get them with or without a Queen—beekeepers sometimes invest in a Queen less package of bees to strengthen weak hives in the spring. Basically, these are the bees and that's it. Packages are ideal for beekeepers who have lost bees during the winter, and have drawn combs leftover from previous hives.



Nucs arriving!

Nucleus colonies, or Nucs, are essentially a colony in miniature. A box—either waxed cardboard or wooden—containing 3, 4, or 5 frames filled with brood (the bee larvae in all stages), worker bees and their egg-laying Queen, along with pollen and honey to sustain the tiny colony. Often these are colonies that are started late in the previous summer, are overwintered, and are ready for a rapid population increase to build up into a new hive with the start of the spring nectar flow.

Nucs are relatively easy to establish. The downside is that it's easier to transfer pests and diseases from one apiary to another this way—partly because there's no way for you to inspect your Nuc when you go to pick it up (and often new beekeepers will not know what to be looking for anyway), but partly because the sale of Nucs is not regulated by officials. Also, beekeepers who sell Nucs often use them as a way to unload their old combs, which should be swapped out every 5 years. And finally, Nuc strength can vary from one to the next, and there's no way for you to know what you're getting when you take a Nuc home.

Installing Packaged Bees



Packaged bees awaiting installation.

When you pick up your packaged bees you should first inspect the package. While some mortality is normal, half-an-inch of dead bees or more at the bottom of the package is *not* normal. Protect the package from direct sunlight, and store them in a cool dry place until you're ready to install them. Be sure to feed your bees—a simple solution of sugar-syrup (a 1 to 1 ratio of sugar to water), in a spray bottle works well—mist the sides of the package and allow the bees to clean it off. Install your packaged bees later in the day to prevent them from flying away from an unfamiliar hive, and do so within 48 hours of bringing them home.

There are 2 methods for installing packaged bees:

Method A

Allow the bees to exit on their own: Firstly, plug the entrance with grass to prevent bees from flying away, then open the package. Take out the Queen cage, remove the cork on the cage and pierce the candy blocking her exit using a toothpick. Affix the Queen cage to the face of your drawn comb if you have it; if you're beginning your packaged bees on foundation, simply place the Queen cage next to a frame containing the wax foundation. In either case you should shake a couple of handfuls of bees onto the Queen cage so that she has plenty of attendants to tend her, and free her from the cage, then settle the package inside the hive in the center and close up the hive.

Method B

Install by shaking: Spray the bees in the package with sugar-syrup to prevent them from being able to fly away, then remove the feeder can to open the package. Take out the Queen cage, and tend to her in the same manner as described in method A, then gently shake all of the bees into the hive.

In either case, you should feed your bees sugar-syrup—especially so if you are installing your bees on foundation. Bees need a strong nectar flow underway, along with lots of new, young bees (since it is at this stage of their lives that bees are able to produce wax), to build their combs. And because drawn comb is necessary both for the Queen to lay eggs in, and for the foragers to store nectar and pollen in, your new colony cannot sufficiently increase in numbers until they have combs to work with.

Installation of Nucs

When you get your nucleus colony home, place the Nuc box directly on top of your assembled hive and immediately remove the screens covering the entrances. The bees will begin to emerge from the box and you will see them alight, circling the air above the hive in what is known as an “orientation flight”, which allows the bees to determine the location of the hive in accordance with the position of the sun. This enables the bees to find the hive when they are returning from the field with nectar and pollen.

You can leave the Nuc for 24 to 48 hours, or longer if the weather does not cooperate, and they will be perfectly fine coming and going from their miniature colony. Keep in mind though, that some nucleus colonies are going to be stronger than others, and if you should see the bees “bearding” or hanging off the front of the box, you should take action to move the bees into their new home to give them more space to expand.

To transfer the bees from the Nuc box to the hive you’ve prepared, remove 3-5 frames from the center of the hive, open the Nuc box (wearing appropriate gear, and using your smoker as you would in any beekeeping situation), and carefully transfer the frames from the Nuc to the new hive.



Examine each frame as you install your nucleus colonies.

Take this opportunity to inspect the condition of the Nuc you've received—does it contain larvae in all stages of development? (eggs, grubs, and capped pupa) Do the bees have frames containing both pollen and honey? If you see anything out of the ordinary, or suspect a problem, you should contact your bee-supplier immediately.

Otherwise, place the frames from the Nuc box into the hive in the same order in which you found them—directly in the center of the hive. Depending on the number of frames of brood your Nuc contains (ie – 3 or more) you may be able to insert an empty frame—or a frame of foundation—in between the brood, or between a frame of honey/pollen and the brood nest, to encourage your bees to begin building comb there. However, if you have less than 3 frames of brood, it is best not to break them up, to allow the worker bees to maintain the temperatures needed for the baby bees to mature.

When you've transferred the frames into the hive, check the inside of the Nuc box to make sure the Queen has not been left behind. If you do not see her hanging out in the box, go ahead and close up the hive, but leave the Nuc box either on top of the hive, or on the ground in front of it for another 24 hours so that any stragglers can join the rest of their colony.

Installation Follow Up

Once you've moved your bees into their new home, you can leave them alone for 5-9 days, with the exception of feeding. At that point go examine them briefly. Mainly you're looking to see that the Queen is alive and well, and doing what she's supposed to be doing—laying lots of new eggs.

If you installed packaged bees, with a Queen in a cage, make sure that she has been released from that cage, and if she has not, go ahead and remove the screen at this time, and let her crawl out of the cage onto a frame so that she can get to work.

In the case of nucleus colonies, simply look for new eggs, and you will know that your Queen is alive and thriving, offer the colony more space and frames as needed to fill up their first and second brood boxes.

Feeding Hives



Feeding bees through the inner cover allows them easy-access even on cool days or in increment weather.

This can be a controversial topic at the meeting of your local beekeepers' group (I know it is at ours!). Some beekeepers have sugar available to their colonies throughout the year in one form or another, while other beekeepers refuse to put sugar on their hives at all, even if it means starvation for the colony.

Personally, I try to avoid using sugar if I can, even if it means that I will get less honey. However, if my bees are at risk of starving to death, I will feed them organic cane sugar to see them through til the nectar begins to flow again.

And at the same time, feeding is especially critical for packaged bees on foundation who cannot begin to even build up their population until combs are established.

If you should decide to feed your bees there are a variety of methods available. I suggest that beekeepers do their homework, and make the choice that best suits them, their principles, and the needs of their bees.

Go get your bees!

You'll suddenly be filled with excited anticipation—and probably no small amount of trepidation—when you finally get the call from your bee-supplier that your bees are ready for you to pick up. Take a deep breath! Go over all your preparations one last time to ensure that everything is in order, and then go get your bees.



Fully established bee colony.

I truly believe that the growing numbers of backyard and homesteading beekeepers is vital to the survival of pollinators. The relationship between plant and pollinator has made our planet what it is today, and that relationship is at risk. By taking up the art of beekeeping, more and more people are coming to realize that these are more than mere stinging insects. There is a world of marvel that most of us never notice because they are small and we are big, because society has deemed insects “icky” and many of us shudder at the thought of getting close to a “bug”. But beekeeping opens our eyes to the beauty of pollination, we begin to see insects in a new light—suddenly we see the magnificent color, shape, and characteristics of the beneficial insects all around us. We realize that we are part of this intimate relationship that plants have with their pollinators.

Good luck on your beekeeping journey! The world is a beautiful place!

COMMENTS

I see a great deal of variability in nucs. Many swarm prevention splits made up with queen cells are sold as nucs and bought by new beekeepers who don't understand what they are buying. Even though they are in nucleus boxes, those aren't nucs in my book. I have no problem with packages, especially for those with drawn comb that they want to use. Mated Maine queens are often not available until much later in the season than packages. I encourage automatic requeening with Maine or Northern stock for colonies introduced as packages.

You're absolutely right, Andrew; it **is** important, when selling those nucs made from splits with Queen-cells, to explain the difference to newer beekeepers. And I have less issue with packages IF they are re-Queened with a Queen from northern stock. I feel it's vital to have that bloodline that is adapted to life here in the northeast. Thanks for sharing!

We just set up several fruit trees. bee shortage is a concern so I'm glad to set up food for them but also the trees need pollinators. so how do I go about mowing and tending the yard while attracting bees so close to the house? A couple years ago, I had a fig tree that had every kind of hornet, wasp bee and yellowjacket at the same time. Had to cut the tree down – to sad. couldn't get rid of the hornets etc...

The main thing is to avoid pesticides. You can also mow in rotation during critical times of the year (ie-during the dandelion bloom, the clover bloom, etc.) and mow a third of the yard at a time so that the remainder of the yard is still available to insects as a food source. Mowing after 4pm when bees are largely done foraging for the day helps too. And you could consider leaving a corner of the yard unmowed, allowing it to revert to a more natural state this will create something of an oasis for insect life. Hope that helps! Thanks for stopping by!!!

My colony died last winter and I just installed a new hive. I have many frames of honey left from the old hives. So... I put one full frame of honey in the new hive for the new bees. Do you think it's a good idea? And should I still feed any sugar water? Or should I put any water inside the hive? I have the entrance reducer set to the smallest hole right now to let the new bees adjust to the new home. And I am concern if I do not feed them sugar water or water, they will have no source of water or very limited amount through in and out of the little hole. What do you think?

Well the bees will seek out water from the world around them; consider what you have available in your neighborhood for water. But yet, if you have no pond, or stream or other

such body of water nearby then you should provide water. Check out all the different ways of providing water for bees and other insects: <http://bit.ly/2pAsMcZ> They don't need it right inside the hive, and not necessarily right next to it either.

Definitely feed sugar water in a 1:1 ratio, and I would definitely use 1-2 or more frames of honey from the last hive to help feed your new bees. If you have any frames with pollen in them 1-2 frames of pollen should be added to that hive as well. Having plenty of honey/sugar-water and pollen available will spur your new bees into brood-production so they can build up quickly. And definitely leave your entrance-reducer open only with the smallest opening until that colony is strong enough to defend itself.

Good luck!

One question I do have is when starting a new beehive from packaged bees on bare foundation, how much sugar would you recommend having on hand to feed them with to get them started?

I've been buying 25lb bags at Walmart for \$11.96; I would keep one of those on hand at all times.

I live in central Minnesota on 2 acres. We have a large garden and are surrounded by a turf farm and a hops grower. I'm concerned I don't have enough space to put the boxes out of the way of most of what we use on the property. I was just thinking about when we mow the lawn, we don't have a place that isn't far enough from an area we have to mow—will that bother them if we get too close with a mower? The hops farm is ideal to have for them but what about the turf farm? It literally butts up to our property.... will this have any dangers to the bees if they use chemicals?

Firstly, I don't think the mowing is a problem so long as you plan accordingly. I usually mow around hives late in the evening like dusk then the bees will be in for the night. You might have some guard bees come out though, so I would dress appropriately. You might also consider using a weed-whacker right in front of the hives. Secondly, I'm not sure what kinds of chemicals they use on hops. I wonder if it's possible to talk with that neighbor about it? Maybe you could communicate that evenings is a better time of day to spray pesticides to reduce the impact on local beneficial insects (including your bees, but also things like parasitic wasps, etc.)?

I bought a nuc this year and i received it on June 8. When I installed the nuc, I saw the queen and the nuc was great. I visited the hive 9 days later and I didn't locate the queen (that's happen) but I didn't saw new eggs. Is it possible that the queen didn't lay eggs in 9 days?

There should not be a gap in egg production Daniel. If there are no new eggs something has probably gone awry; if you're not feeding the colony that could slow production, or if there is not enough space in that could limit brood production. If you can rule both of those out, and there are still no eggs, you'll need to get a new Queen to introduce to that colony. I would make sure to locate the original Queen (if she is still there) and squish her before introducing the new one.

I'm super excited as I'm beginning my beekeeping journey in April! I have 2 nucs coming my way and am taking the intro to beekeeping class at Spicer Bees. I look forward to reading more good info and using this as resource as I begin my journey!

I have a two-box setup. It sat empty last year. I want to start myself up with bees, to help them continue pollinating for us all. And to help provide my family with honey. With the two-box set up will I need to purchase 1 nook or two? Is the placement for these, South at the entrance or east at the entrance?

You need just 1 nuc. Install it into the bottom box and allow the bees to fill it at least 3/4 full before adding the second box. They will fill that one too, with brood, pollen and honey, and that will make up your brood chamber. Entrances are usually placed facing south.

Can you advise on an 8-frame versus a 10-frame for the Maine winters? And a deep with supers versus the medium super's setup?

The set up would be largely the same, though I recommend leaving an extra box of honey on the hive going into winter just to make sure the girls have enough stores.

My husband and I bought five acres last summer and we are considering raising bees. However, we live in an area where there are a lot of agricultural fields, the nearest being right behind the back of our property. We have a long, skinny lot, so that the entire length is about 0.2 mi. If we would set up the hive near the middle of the property (the best location for a mixture of sun and shade), do you think that would be far enough from the field to keep them from harm from pesticides, etc.? We have a small wood and are developing a large garden, a small orchard, and lots of flowers, so I think there would be plenty of pollen on our property by the time we would be ready for bees. I am just concerned about the corn field and would appreciate your thoughts.

Unfortunately, I don't think bees would be safe from pesticide exposure in the setting you've described. Bees will travel up to 3 miles in search of food—further if food is scarce. If you're determined to have bees I recommend putting them on a friends' property where they're not surrounded by agricultural fields—unless of course it's an organic or small scale farm.

Waiting for my bees to arrive...I have a top bar hive all painted up and ready to go, but am trying to figure out what to put on the ground under the hive and in a small area I am going to put up some garden fence around. I want to prevent my dogs from disturbing the water source that I have available to them. I feel I should make it big enough so they are not disturbed by the lawn mower, so about 6x8 or so. I was thinking of putting down landscape cloth then covering it with shredded bark to keep it maintenance-free. Any suggestions? Thanks much!

I used mill-felt under the hives at one of my apiaries. It smothered the grasses beautifully. Also, if you mow later in the evening when the bees are less active, they'll be less upset about the noise. Hope that helps!

I have seen mite screens that go below the hive. Is this a necessity?

Those are screened bottom boards, and while they are not a necessity, they are certainly a valuable tool in the fight against the Varroa mite. The screen allows the mites to fall out of the hive, and you can take it a step further and use a sticky board in conjunction with the SBB to catch the mites to prevent them from climbing back up into the hive. It's also useful in tracking the mite-infestation in the colony.

After a colony is setup, how do you manage the queen? To clarify- she won't live forever, so should you allow other queen cells to mature? Won't there be a risk of swarming and reducing your hive's population? Or do you destroy the queen cells and just replace the queen when she becomes less productive or dies?

That is a whole article in itself! What you do with the Queen is really going to depend upon what your motives for beekeeping are, the situation of the individual hive and Queen, and your personal values. Ultimately the goal should be to maintain strong populations and to prevent swarming if possible. If you have an inferior Queen she should be replaced and whether or not you allow the bees to raise their own Queen should depend upon the reasons for the Queen's failure. Other things to consider when re-Queening are the timing. If it is too late in the season introducing a new Queen would be pointless. It's really an involved topic and I will try to do an article about it sometime soon.

I live in central Minnesota; I have purchased a starter kit and I am learning as much as I can on how to set up a hive. I am looking at the spring of 2015 for my start up. I am also planning on opening up a greenhouse and berry farm on the same property which is about 15 acres. Any extra thoughts on what I need. I have one box that came with the kit but not sure if it is all complete.

You'll definitely need at least one more box to get started with, and I'd suggest 2 honey supers too. Be sure to have your protective gear, lol, and tools—like the smoker. Don't hesitate to contact me if you have more questions!

Had a quick question. I live in Southern Louisiana and very interested in beekeeping. I make my own medicines, soaps, lotions, and various other things and it calls for honey in most recipes and of course I want to use everything organic. I actually have a thriving colony on the side of my home.... I know its crazy people say I need to get rid of them but want to save this colony. I don't think they are African "killer" bees because I walk by them and they swarm all the time...even make their way inside and have not done anything to me, anyone in the household, or my pets. In all actuality I don't know how big the hive really is. Its inside the south outdoor wall of my home. My home is a 130 yrs. cypress home and don't want to have to do too much to break up the house but I don't want to hurt the bees...Is there any way to save the colony of wild bees and get them to move to boxes if I put them in to yard??? How would I go about doing this...Please help before everyone else gets tired of them, they aren't at earth and nature loving as me and just see them as pests :(.... any info would be greatly appreciated.....Thank You in Advance

Generally speaking, the bees are not going to abandon an established home to move into a beehive set up nearby. You can try setting out a hive—it's more enticing if there is drawn comb, and honey/pollen, and a spritz of lemongrass—to catch a swarm, but the chances of them choosing that site as their new home is rather slim. What's more, even if the colony inside your walls puts off a swarm and you manage to catch it, half of the original bee-population will remain behind with a newly hatched Queen, and they will continue to live there as they have been. The best way to remove the bees is to suit up, bring out a smoker, and pull apart the wall—taking care to preserve the lumber, trim, etc. that you might put it back up after. I strongly recommend that you contact your local beekeeper—if you do not know of one, contact your state's beekeeping organization to inquire about it. Good luck—and Thanks for caring about bees, and taking the time to protect pollinators!

I'm not so much interested in having bees for honey but more to increase their numbers as I understand the honey bee population is diminishing rapidly. Would I still set up an apiary in the same way? or should I just encourage swarms in whatever way that would be to set up shop in my hives?

Typically, a swarm doesn't just move into a hive—beekeepers often try to lure swarms into empty hives set up nearby, but they rarely choose those hives as their next home. If you decide to move forward with beekeeping—even just to promote the honeybee population—it's best to manage a hive the same way you would if you were after the honey. The difference being, that you could leave an extra honey super on the hive during the winter months to help feed the bees. Anything more than that is still surplus, and generally speaking, the bees are not going to eat it once it's crystallized; they prefer fresh food—who doesn't? lol

Just closed on a home with nine acres and a big garden and bee hives are on my to do list. Can wait to get started. How many hives should one start with?

I usually recommend 2—keep it small while you're learning the ropes. The advantage of having more than 1 is that if you get a weaker hive, sometimes you can take brood or honey, etc. from the stronger hive to give the weak hive a boost. Congratulations on your new home and property!

We started raising bees five years ago and the last two years have been awful. In 2012 we spent almost \$2000 to replace our hives that had died over the winter and the nucs that we got from California were very weak. They only survived a couple of months. Last year we decided just to put out boxes and see if we could catch some swarms. We got four. Again, with a terrible winter, they all died. It's just gotten too hard with all the GMO seeds and other problems. We got 60 gallons of honey the first two years. We also found it hard and expensive this year to find packaged bees for sale. Hopefully next year will be better.

Any tips on overwintering your hives? I live in NH and this is the 3rd winter that I've lost my bees to the cold. They did not starve my hives were full of honey. Also, where do you purchase your bees? I can't seem to find any anywhere! Everyone is sold out!

Many beekeepers in New England lost hives this winter—it was brutally cold! The biggest tips I can give for overwintering are just to provide adequate ventilation, be sure your hives are situated to take advantage of the winter sun, place moisture-absorption materials (ie-homasote board) on your hives, and maintain strong, healthy colonies. But even if you do all these things, when you have the “Polar Vortex” creating extended periods of frigid cold, you can lose your bees—even if they have honey on the frame directly next to them, they will not break that cluster to go get food if it is too cold. As far as purchasing bees, if you did not order them in January or February—you're going to be hard-pressed to find them now with so many beekeepers looking for bees. Check with your local beekeepers' groups, get on the swarm hotline (Maine has one—dunno about NH), set out swarm-traps, and hope for the best!

Bee keeping can be a bit expensive. your hive boxes alone will run you \$75 apiece and you should start off with two hives. your bee packages alone are \$100. so, your set up fee is \$300 to \$500 to start off with. Just wanted to get this out as a first time bee keeper people want to know the cost. You should also join your local bee keeping club if there is one around. Bees are work. Also honey bees are not aggressive outside their hive. there is one thought on their mind and that is to do their job. By the way most all the bees in the hive are girls there are drones which fertilize the Queen and funny thing is that when winter comes they kill all the drones keep drones' eggs to hatch out when warm weather comes. drones have no other purpose so as to keep the girls from starving in the winter they kill them off so as to not eat the winter storage of food. winter can also be hard time on bee hives. read and learn all you can. my first hive was infested with web worms. it took one week and they destroyed the hive even borrowed into the wooden boxes. read and learn and do not give up bee keeping is not for the faint of heart.

People should look into their local laws. And inquire whether or not the need to have a certificate to have bees and if that state requires you to register your hives. They also need to read up on bee sicknesses like varroa mites, foul broods and nosema.

There are some cities that have banned beekeeping, due to concern for its citizens. Here in Maine, beekeepers are supposed to register their hives with the state—this is to ensure that should there be an outbreak of disease (for example American Foulbrood—which is highly contagious), the state apiarist can look up beekeepers go around to all the hives in the afflicted area to prevent further spread of the disease. It's relatively inexpensive in Maine to register hives—\$2 for up to 5 hives, and then it increases incrementally the more hives you have.

Before we moved to our new location, we kept bees on a 1-acre plot in-town—the hives we practically on top of the property line, and the neighbor's house was maybe 6 yards away. Our bees never once bothered the neighbors—though 'she' did grumble behind my back from time to time when I was in the hives. But people, children (other than my own), and pets—we never stung. There are good management practices you can employ to keep happy bees and maintain happy neighbors at the same time. I wouldn't immediately write it off.

Is it practical to try and set up a hive in the city? I live in Houston, Texas and am curious about attempting this in my back yard. I don't know if there would be enough flowers, etc. in a typical neighborhood. What are your thoughts on this?

Oh lots of folks are keeping bees in cities these days! In New York City they are keeping hives on rooftops. I believe that a city's beautification efforts help provide food for bees; for example—trees planted along sidewalks, small flower beds, gardens and parks, window boxes, and such—all provide food for bees. Go ahead and google urban beekeeping, and beekeeping in New York City—and by all means, contact beekeepers in your area to see how they are doing.

Only thing I'd add is that southerners need to protect their colonies from fire ants by placing them on tables. The legs of those tables need to be placed in containers filled with old motor oil. Also, if you're near an urban area, shield your colonies from public view to protect the land owner from irrational neighbors' constant complaints. Because somebody's grandmothers' cousins' uncles' neighbor's roommate was killed by Africanized honey bees while visiting Alaska lol.

What is the risk of getting killer bees in your order? Or attracting them?

The risk of having Africanized bees breed with your honeybees increases the further south you are located. Here in Maine it's highly unlikely that we will ever see them. I would

like to point out, however, that Africanized bees—while much more aggressive (hence their nick-name)—they are some of the most productive bees you can possibly have. There are some beekeepers who are learning to work with them and having good success.

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