



Thinking about Keeping Honey Bees?

PLEASE READ the following material so that you are best informed in making the decision to start keeping bees:

We have put together the following information to give you a basic idea of the Practical Beekeeping for Beginners course along with details on what beekeeping entails. This message is *not* to discourage you from beekeeping but to provide a realistic view of the commitment required to successfully keep bees.

- 1. Beekeeping requires adult participation and the ability to pick up 40 pounds or more.** Beekeeping requires a determination to succeed, some heavy lifting, the probability of stings (especially as you are learning), and year-round management. We encourage engaging and educating children. However, teenagers and children are often not successful without adult guidance and perseverance, therefore 1 adult family member must attend the course instruction and be participatory in the beekeeping venture. Be aware that manipulating bee hive bodies does require strength enough to lift heavy boxes filled with honey weighing sometimes well over 40 or more pounds.
- 2. Time commitment required.** Beekeeping is for folks who have both the time and the desire to devote to the bees. If you have very little free time now then this venture may not be right for you to commit to at this time. Starting out, you should plan to spend 1-2 hours *per hive, every week* during April through October. November through March requires far fewer visits.
- 3. Regular care and attention is required.** As evidenced by the news of declining honey bee populations over the last decade, honey bees are under pressure from parasites, disease, environmental pollution and chemicals. Neglect or poor colony management, and a lack of adequate food sources contribute to colony survival. Successful beekeeping today requires more knowledge and attention to the bees than ever before. Therefore, you cannot simply put bees in your yard and watch them from a distance, while still expecting them to survive and provide you a bounty of honey. Bees are livestock that depend on your regular care and support for survival. Successful beekeepers need a good understanding of the biology of the bees and their parasites, the skills to recognize and manage disease, and a willingness to support the colonies by treatment and feeding when necessary. Failure to understand and help the bees with these stresses can result in colony death and beekeeper frustration.
- 4. Beekeeping and HOA restrictions.** In the State of Virginia, bees kept in hives are classified as livestock. If you have an HOA or other property restrictions, investigate the regulations before committing to beekeeping.
- 5. Beekeeping start-up costs.** Beekeeping involves some expense. The class registration fee is \$125 and includes the instruction, books, and an electronic copy containing all the lectures, a glossary, and useful formulas to provide support for the bees. The woodenware (the hive and associated components) will cost \$200-\$350 per colony depending on your ability to construct it. You



will also need personal protective equipment and tools, which can run \$75 - \$200 per person. You will then have to purchase the bees to start your colony costing approximately \$120 - \$200 per colony. Start-up can be over \$1000 to setup a two-colony bee yard in your the first year, more if you live in an area where you have to protect your colonies from bears with an electric fence.

6. Beginning Beekeeping Course time commitment. This course consists of seven (8) weekly class periods which last 2 hours each. There is a one-week break when the bee club meets. We provide books, handouts and lecture material as an introduction to the new "language" of beekeeping. We will make every effort to give you all the information you need to be successful. It is incumbent on you to attend all the classes, study the material, and ask questions so that we can help you learn the material. We encourage you to clear your calendar, so you do not miss any classes. We will also connect you to another beekeeping "mentor" and suppliers of live bees in nucleus colonies or "nucs" to purchase. *The beginning course is part of the Virginia Beekeeping Teachers Consortium- there are similar classes held all over Northern Virginia, Richmond and Piedmont. You can make up a class in any other location and/or repeat your attendance and sit through the class again in subsequent years.*

7. Continuing education and mentoring. Continuing education is very important once you get started. The course fee includes a one-year membership in the Prince William Regional Beekeepers Association (PWRBA) and you may also want to join the State wide Virginia State Beekeepers Association (VSBA). PWRBA offers ongoing bi-monthly association meetings to provide you with the support and tools you need to be successful. The VSBA offers bi-annual meetings covering a variety of beekeeping topics. PWRBA will provide you access to a mentor to help you during your first year of beekeeping. The mentor can answer questions or perhaps work with you in your hives as an introduction to the live colony. For the most part, it will be up to you to manage the interaction with your mentor.

Questions?

Join the Prince William Regional Beekeepers anytime at a local meeting. Find us here

<https://pwrbeekeepers.com/>

Contact the Bee School Principal Erik Brown 703-477-0511

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Thanks for your interest in honeybees