

How to make beekeeping a profitable farm sideline



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NEWARK, Del. — Beekeeping can be a fascinating and profitable sideline for the small farmer or home hobbyist, says Dale Bray, Delaware extension apiculturist.

If you are interested in beekeeping for the honey, for the money, or to pollinate your crops, this is the time of year to get started. If you assemble your supplies now, you'll be ready to go by the time the trees and flowers burst into full bloom.

You'll need about \$100 worth of equipment, a suitable location for a hive,

and a basic understanding of the habits of honey bees.

Check the telephone book for beekeepers' supplies. You'll need to purchase a hive to house your bees; frames and a foundation to support the honeycombs in which your bees will store their honey and raise their young; a smoker, used to blow smoke into the hive to pacify the bees; a hive tool for opening the hive; a feeder to dispense sugar syrup until the bees can produce their own food; and, of course, a veil and gloves to protect you from stings.

Next you'll need to buy two or three pounds of bees with a queen—she's the one that lays the eggs necessary to keep up the colony's population. Make sure the bees you buy are certified free of bee diseases.

Locate your hive where the bees are unlikely to sting anyone. Expose it to some sun but provide shade during the hot days of summer and protect it from prevailing winds, especially in winter.

Be sure there's a constant supply of fresh, cool water nearby.

Besides water, bees need three basic materials: nectar, pollen, and propolis. Nectar is the basic ingredient of honey, the bees' basic food. Pollen becomes food for the young bees. Bees use propolis to seal cracks and waterproof their hives.

The sugary liquid called nectar comes from flowers. In our area, the best sources of nectar for producing surplus honey are tulip poplar trees, goldenrod, and wild aster.

The color and flavor of honey depends on the kinds of plants from which the bees collect their nectar. Honey can be nearly colorless, amber or reddish, and its flavor can range from mild to strong.

Flowers also provide pollen. An average-size colony of bees uses about 100 pounds of pollen each year, so it's necessary to locate a colony near a good source.

Many wildflowers, ornamentals, weeds, shrubs,

and trees provide pollen. Asters, corn, dandelions, fruit blossoms, goldenrod, grasses, maples, oaks, poplars and willows are especially good sources of pollen.

Bees collect propolis from the buds of trees.

Worker bees secrete a fluid that hardens into tiny wax scales. They use this wax to build honeycomb. Beekeepers often provide their bees with honeycomb foundations made of sheets of beeswax. This enables bees to speed up comb construction and provides a pattern for building a straight and easy-to-remove honeycomb.

When you're harvesting honey, make sure you leave plenty for the bees. Be sure there are at least 50 pounds of honey in the hive when winter begins, or the bees might starve before spring.

To protect yourself from bee stings, try to work with bees when they are flying actively in favorable weather. Wear protective clothing: veil, gloves, close-woven, light-colored clothing

Most beekeepers eventually develop immunity to stings. However, if you become allergic to bee stings, consult an allergy specialist before you get hooked on beekeeping.

Your county extension agent should be able to supply you with pamphlets about beekeeping. The state beekeepers association would also be happy to share advice



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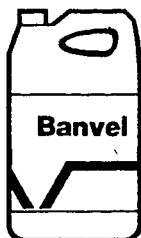
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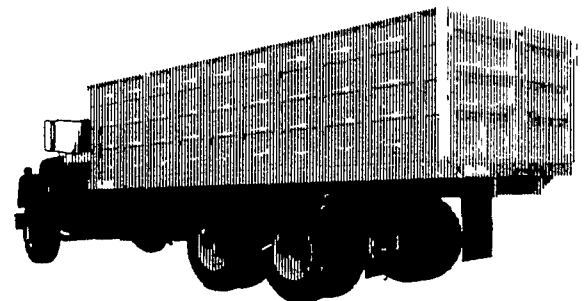


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