



“NEWBEES” WELCOME TO THE TAMPA BAY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Monthly Meeting on the 2nd Thursday of every month.

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 876, Auburndale, FL 33823, Phone: 863-662-5057

The Tampa Bay Beekeepers Association, Inc. (TBBA) exists to promote beekeeping. The TBBA includes hobbyists, commercial & migratory beekeepers, sideliners and enthusiasts who share a common interest in bees and beekeeping. One of our aims is to encourage and to assist new people into the fascinating craft of beekeeping.

We know that you are new to beekeeping and we want you to feel welcome to use the resources and knowledge available to you in the longest/oldest bee association in Florida established in 1950. Feel free to ask questions, ask for advice and network to assist you in your beekeeping journey.

HONEY BEES: The honey bee is not native to the Americas, it is actually an import from Europe. The European honey bee is extremely adaptable and has been able to flourish in America till the arrival of outside threats and diseases. A colony of honey bees at first impression is a lot of bees each doing their own thing. However studies we have shown that bees are highly social insects and there is a clear purpose behind all their movements.

A healthy honey bee colony consist of:

- a) **Queen.** A single mated queen is the mother of all brood & bees within the hive! She is able to keep the colony around her by her pheromones (scent). The queen is the only fertile bee in the colony able to create worker bees. In a strong colony, in the right season, the queen can lay up to 2000 eggs a day. Without a *good* queen, the colony is doomed. A queen can live for a couple of years however she is often replaced every 16 to 24 months by the colony or the keeper.
- b) **Workers.** The workhorse of the colony is the worker bee. All the workers are female and they maintain and keep the colony going. The workers go through stages of jobs in the colony, from cleaner, brood nurse, guard to forager. The foraging workers bring pollen back to make bee bread (food for the young bees) and nectar to turn into honey as food for the adult bees (and for the beekeepers!). At the height of the season, the workers live only about 45 days and die of exhaustion. In a healthy colony in a honey flow, there can be 30,000 to 60,000 workers managing the hive.
- c) **Drones.** Drones are male bees and their only job is to mate with a virgin queen outside of the hive. They do not contribute anything to the colony, they only eat, cannot even sting, and after mating they immediately die.

As beekeepers we try to maintain healthy colonies of honey bees in a hive. The beekeeper will observe and assess the health of the queen and the bees and intervene when it is deemed necessary for the health of the hive. You may be asking yourself a lot of questions such as: Is this something for me? Do I want to be involved with a box full of stinging insects? Do I want to help Mother Nature and assist in the survival of Honey Bees? Do I want to learn a new craft? Do I want to collect some of my own honey? Do I want to make new friends in an intriguing hobby? Do I want to learn about the fascinating life in the bee hive and observe the honey bees in their colony? We would like to help you along with information and we hope the answer is an *educated* and resounding YES! (or an *educated* no.)

By attending a meeting you are on your way to getting familiar with honey bees and becoming a beekeeper.

We have a couple of suggested steps to aid you in your journey.

- 1) Educate yourself, read books, listen to the speakers at the meetings, attend a hive field day, consider Bee College, attend the TBBA Yearly Seminar, subscribe to Facebook pages, magazines and bee-supply catalogs.
- 2) Obtain hardware, gather and prepare your hives and your beekeeping tools. We strongly suggest to have your hardware in place, level and painted before getting your bees:
- 3) Educate yourself some more, attend another field day, meet a mentor and be (a little more) comfortable around bees.
- 4) Obtain Bees and install them in your hive.
- 5) Learn from your own bees, register your hives with the state, attend meetings and learn more/share your experiences.

As a beginner beekeeper we also suggest starting with a 2 hive setup. With 2 hives you can compare what the bees are doing and have resources available in case you need to assist one weaker hive with brood or the other resources. (and you learn twice as much/fast too!)

HIVES: In Florida, by law, a managed bee colony has to be kept in inspection friendly hives. This means that if you have 1 or 5,000 hives, each hive has to have removable frames so the comb, brood and bees can be inspected by agricultural inspectors. The common/most used hive is a Langstroth/Langstrom hive consisting of Bottom Board, Deep/Brood Box, Queen Excluder, Super/Medium Box, Top Cover (and sometimes an Inner Cover), Entrance Reducer, and Frames with or without Foundation. Other hives sometimes used are Top Bar Hives, Long Langstroth Hives or Warre Hives and all have removable frames. Despite all the publicity, we would advise against using the “Flowhive” for beginners.

TOOLS: Recommended tools: Smoker (to calm the bees), Hive Tool, Veil and Hat or Bee Suit or Jacket with Veil, Leather or Plastic Gloves, Feeder/Way to feed the new bees and rubbing alcohol for disinfection of your tools. There are lots of other items/tools/gadgets/doohickeys and stuff available but we suggest you get started and work your bees and see what you prefer/want/need as you learn and grow with *your* bee keeping experience.

BEES: A small established colony of bees (called a Nucleus, NUC for short) is preferred to start out with. The NUC will give you an established colony that will build out quickly. Other options are a package of bees or even trying to trap a swarm and requeening the swarm. We recommend buying proven, local stock with a young queen. Remember the queen *IS* the life of the colony, so obtaining a good queen is very important! Check at the meetings as often one of the professional members has NUC's for sale. Swarm trapping is an option for free bees however there is no guarantee you will catch a swarm with a decent queen and no guarantee you can get started this year!

COST: There is a wide variety of equipment qualities available and a wide range of costs that go along with it. A simple hive setup would start between \$125 up to \$200. The cost of the bees depends greatly on availability, quality and the supplier. On the average would be about \$150 for a well established queen-right 5 frame nucleus. Minimal protective equipment and the necessary tools would start between \$65 and \$100. Used hives are sometimes available, however be sure to know the source as not to obtain hives that are contaminated with diseases, pests or insecticides.

BOOKS: Nothing will help you more than schooling yourself and reading at least one of the many excellent books on beekeeping. Some of the recommended books: "The Backyard Beekeeper" by Kim Flotum, "First Lessons in Beekeeping" by Keith Deliplane, "Beekeeping for Dummies" by Howland Blackiston.

RESOURCES AND USEFULL LINKS:

- <http://tampabaybeekeepers.com/> and join TBBA Meetings & Field-days & Facebook. For members there is also a library to use as well as a loaner extractor for when you are ready to harvest your own honey.
- Apiary Registration www.FreshFromFlorida.com and Search for Beekeeper Registration.
- UF Bee Research (Dr. Jamie D. Ellis) You Tube and at <http://entnemdept.ifas.ufl.edu/honeybee/index.shtml>
- UF Extension: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/> and search for "Honey Bee"
- D&J Apiary is a beekeepers supplies distributor and is at most the meetings with a trailer with some supplies. You can also preorder supplies & pickup at the meeting to save on shipping costs www.dandjapiary.com
- YOU-TUBE for example: The "FatBeeMan" or search for beekeeping. Please be careful as there is a lot of good but also obsolete, incorrect and/or information not pertaining to Florida.

Lots more information is readily available at beekeeper supplier websites such as: Dadant.com, MannLake.com, BrushyMountain.com and information sources such as Beesource.com. and lots more on Facebook and other web pages!

Ask questions, at the meetings, field days and on line, your fellow beekeepers will be glad to help. It is good to have local connections and/or a local mentor, they will know what is or will be blooming and when the nectar flows are. They also can advise you on the effects of the local climate impact. Starting out, this info is really, really, really helpful.

Beside our annual 1 day seminar in the spring, we also have monthly **work/field-day** in the association's bee-yard with 60 plus Langstroth hives, normally from 9 a.m. to 12 noon on the Saturday following the meetings.

We suggest you come out to a work/field-day (morning) and you have the opportunity to get firsthand experience with the bees and their hives. There is no cost, and everybody that worked in the yard is treated with a free lunch! You can be as much involved as you want (observe or hands on) and have an experienced beekeeper explain the workings of the tools, the bee colonies, show you the different type of bees, stages of brood, nectar, bee bread and honey. Just make sure to wear a light colored long-sleeved shirt, long pants (jeans), gloves and closed toe shoes. The association has always some veils available to use. We want you to be comfortable around bees, network and know what you are interested in. **THIS IS A GREAT INTRODUCTION and an INVALUABLE EXPERIENCE** you can get for free and we even feed you!

Join us at the next field/workday: Write the address mentioned in the meeting below:

Depending on the season, Date: _____ Time: _____
the association's bee hives _____
are at different locations. _____

This Month's Contact & Phone#: _____