

How to Start Beekeeping: A guide for first time and aspiring beekeepers in S. AZ



SAZBA Meeting
2/16/23



The Basics that you need to start Beekeeping:

- Location
- Equipment
- Bees
- Knowledge

Locations for keeping bees:

- Location should be:
 - Level
 - Well shaded
 - Out of high foot traffic areas
 - Away from captive animals
 - Have a consistent water source
 - Protected from bears, skunks, and ants
 - Have space to stand beside hive for inspections



Locations for keeping bees:

- From the Tucson City Codes:

3. Bees:

Number permitted: One hive, stand, box or other structure, natural or otherwise, containing bees is permitted for each 2,500 square ft of LOT area. Exception: Zones SR and IR (TCC 11.3(1)) where more than 1 hive is permitted.

Structures and facilities: If bees are kept within 30 ft of any exterior lot boundary line, a barrier must be erected that will prevent bees from flying through it. The barrier must be at least 5 ft high and consist of plant, hedge or any constructed material. The barrier must extend at least 30 ft beyond the **APIARY** in both directions. (TCC 11.3(1)).

Provision of water: Fresh, clean watering facilities for bees shall be provided on the premises. (TCC 11.3(1)).

Locations for keeping bees:

The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook group page for 'Tucson Beekeepers'. The page features a navigation bar at the top with icons for home, video, marketplace, community, and events. Below the navigation bar is a search bar and a profile picture of the group. The group name 'Tucson Beekeepers' is displayed, along with the description 'Public group · 2.6K members'. A blue '+ Invite' button is visible. The main content area shows a large image of a beehive frame being held by a person wearing gloves. Below the image is a blue banner that reads 'Group by Southern Arizona Beekeepers Association'. The group name 'Tucson Beekeepers' is repeated below the banner, with another '+ Invite' button. At the bottom, there is a navigation menu with options: Discussion, Featured, Your Items, Media, Files (which is highlighted), People, and Reels. A search icon and a menu icon are also present in the bottom right corner.

Facebook Search

Tucson Beekeepers
Public group · 2.6K members

+ Invite

Browse Manage

Community home
Overview

Admin tools

Admin Assist
0 actions, 0 criteria

Participant requests
0 new today

Badge requests
0 new today

Group by Southern Arizona Beekeepers Association

Tucson Beekeepers

+ Invite

Discussion Featured Your Items Media Files People Reels

Locations for keeping bees:

Tucson Beekeepers + Invite 🔍 ⋮

	Introductions	Document	April 11, 2015 at 6:05 PM	by Joaquin A. B. Munoz	⋮
	Tucson Honeybee Relocation Contacts 21520...	Spreadsheet	April 21, 2015 at 8:29 PM	by Joaquin A. B. Munoz	⋮
	Slovenian Beekeeping.pdf	PDF	January 11, 2019 at 11:01 PM	by David Harrod	⋮
	TBA523Notes.docx	Document	June 1, 2015 at 6:26 PM	by Joaquin A. B. Munoz	⋮
	CITY OF TUCSON BIRDS AND BEES august 1...	PDF	August 4, 2015 at 10:02 PM	by Jaime M. de Zubeldia	⋮
	2018VitaCALENDAR8MB.pdf	PDF	March 1, 2018 at 10:31 AM	by David Harrod	⋮
	PIMA COUNTY birds and bees August 15.pdf	PDF	August 4, 2015 at 10:05 PM	by Jaime M. de Zubeldia	⋮
	Marana_Birds and the Bees AUGust 15I R2.pdf	PDF	August 4, 2015 at 10:04 PM	by Jaime M. de Zubeldia	⋮
	SAHUARITA birds and bees.pdf	PDF	August 4, 2015 at 10:04 PM	by Jaime M. de Zubeldia	⋮

Equipment for Beekeeping

- Hive Components
- Smoker
- Hive tool
- Suit/protective clothing



Equipment for Beekeeping

- Hive Components (Langstroth)
 - Hive Bodies (deep, medium, brood chamber, super)
 - 8 vs 10 frame
 - Lids and Bottom boards
 - Frames
 - Feeders
- Other types of bee hives (top bar, long lang, ect.)

Equipment for Beekeeping

- Langstroth 10 frame deep hive bodies are the most popular choice for most beekeepers (a lot of advice you find online will be based on this equipment set up)
- 8 Frame or medium hive bodies can be used to reduce the amount of weight being lifted during inspections

Equipment for Beekeeping

- A strong colony will need at least 2 deep brood boxes and 1 super during honey production



Equipment for Beekeeping

- Smoker
 - Used to calm bees for a hive inspection and to move bees as needed



Equipment for Beekeeping

- Hive tool
 - Used to manipulate and pry frames during inspections



Equipment for Beekeeping

- Suit/ Protective clothing
 - Full Suit vs Jacket vs Veil
 - Different veil styles
 - Gloves
 - Light colors only

How to Get Bees

- Purchase a Package or Nuc



How to Get Bees

- Package of Bees
 - Comes with a caged queen and 3 lbs of bees
 - Can be shipped so available for purchase from national suppliers
 - Colony starts with no comb or resources so takes them a while to get going once installed
 - More affordable than a nuc



How to Get Bees

- Nucleus colony “Nuc”
 - Comes with an accepted and laying queen
 - Has drawn comb, resources, and brood
 - Grow faster and less chance of failure than package
 - Only available locally for pick up
 - Typically only fit deep Langstroth equipment



How to Get Bees

- Purchase a Package or Nuc



How to Get Bees

- Swarm collection or Cut-outs



How to Get Bees

- Swarm collection or Cut-outs
 - Not recommended for beginners to acquire bees through swarms or cut outs in S. Arizona due to prevalence of Africanized bees
 - Feral bees in our area will likely be aggressive/territorial and swarmy which makes them hard to manage and unsuitable for urban areas
 - It can be hard to tell the temperament of a colony by how they behave during collection and rehoming. Sometimes bees that act very sweet as a swarm end up very mean once established in a hive.

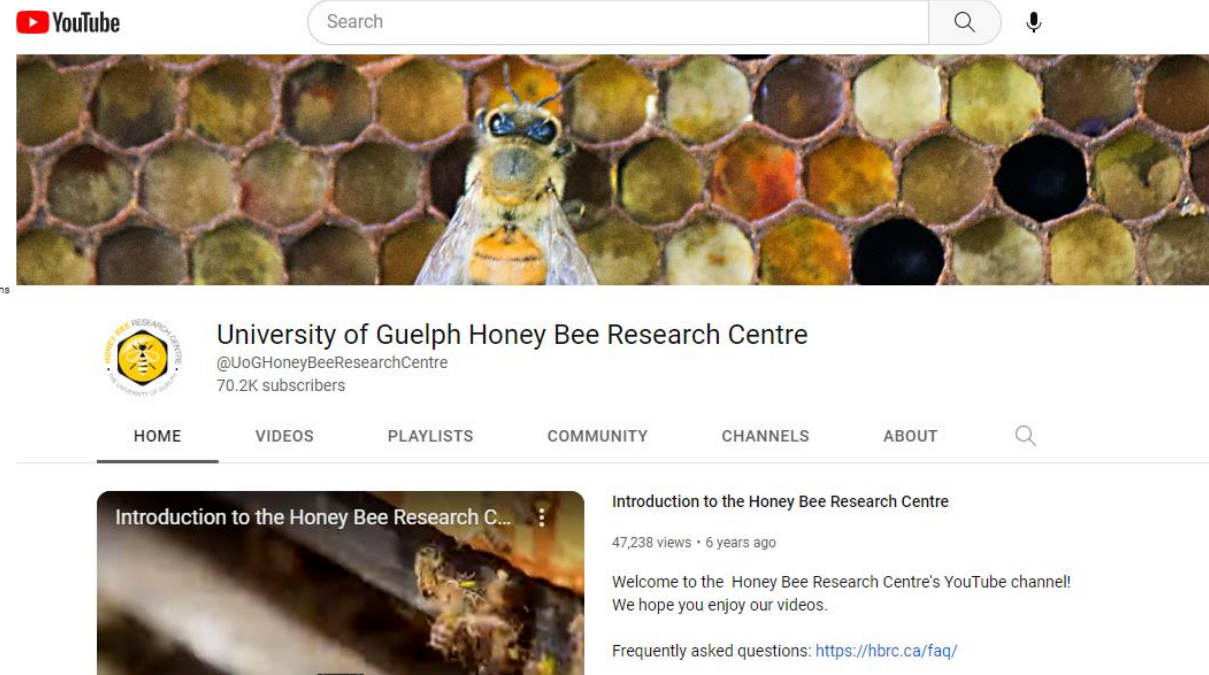
Knowledge

- Beekeeping is a complex undertaking that will require a lot of learning
- Beekeeping practices are diverse and many are set in their ways or strongly opinionated about the “right” way to do things
- Beekeeping is regional, what works well in Oregon or North Carolina won't necessarily work in Arizona, and vice versa.
- Not all beekeeping information you find online is good/useful. Don't take what one site or person says as gospel. Get multiple opinions and ask experienced local beekeepers when you can.

Knowledge



- Scientificbeekeeping.com – Randy Oliver
 - <https://scientificbeekeeping.com/first-year-care-for-your-nuc/>
- University of Guelph – You tube Page
- SAZBA Meetings
- Other local meetings and classes



Warnings about Keeping Bees...

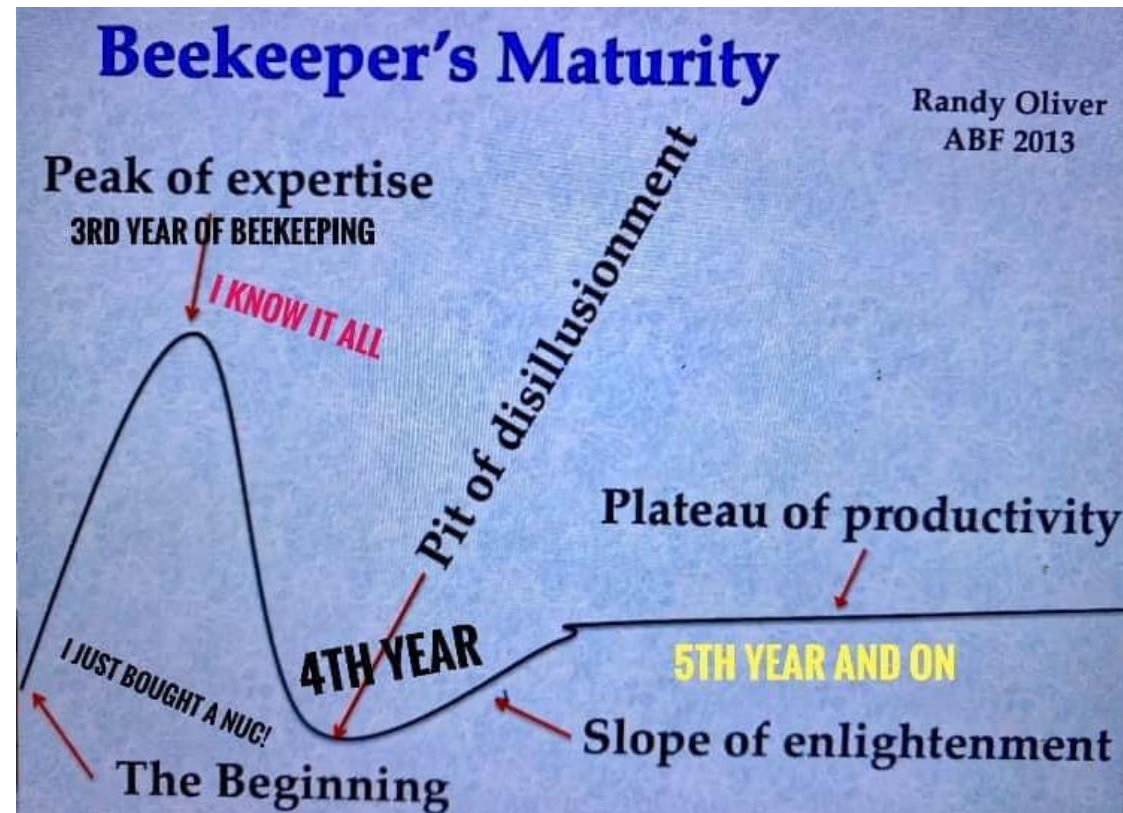
- Beekeeping is animal husbandry and should not be taken lightly or half-heartedly. It is cruel and potentially dangerous to neglect to manage your bees properly.
- Beekeeping is not intuitive, easy, or hands off. You will have to do and learn a lot over the course of many years before you will be a competent beekeeper

Warnings about Keeping Bees...

- In Southern Arizona hives left unmanaged will die off or end up “Africanized” with feral genetics.
- Unmanaged hives that die from parasites or disease will spread their infection to other nearby beehives. Beehavers can kill more than just their own bees with neglect.

Warnings about Keeping Bees...

- The internet is a useful resource to learn about beekeeping, but beware not all info/advice you find on the internet is good or relevant to our climate.



Your main jobs as a beekeeper:

- Provide a safe and secure home for your bees to live in (keep humans, bears, skunks, and ants from attacking/messing with your bees)
- Monitor your bees for Varroa mite infestation and treat them as needed
- Provide food for your bees as needed
- Add space or take away space from the hive as needed to accommodate changing colony size
- Keep your hives from swarming



Goals as a First year Beekeeper

- Confidently conduct inspections of the hive
- Be able to spot eggs and all stages of developing brood
- Feed your bees sugar water
- Test for mites (and treat if needed)
- Get bees to draw good comb on frames
- Get your Hive(s) to survive their first winter

Goals as a First year Beekeeper

- Confidently conduct inspections of the hive
 - Inspect a colony once every 2 weeks from February to July. Cut inspections down to once per 3-4 weeks from July-November. Don't inspect (or do so minimally) during November-Jan.
 - When inspecting a hive you want to look for signs the queen is present and doing well and that the bees have ample space and resources to take care of themselves
 - You want to take note of the trajectory of the colony (has population gotten bigger since last inspection, are they drawing out new comb on frames, ect)
 - You want to look for signs of swarm preparation

Goals as a First year Beekeeper

- Be able to spot eggs and all stages of developing brood

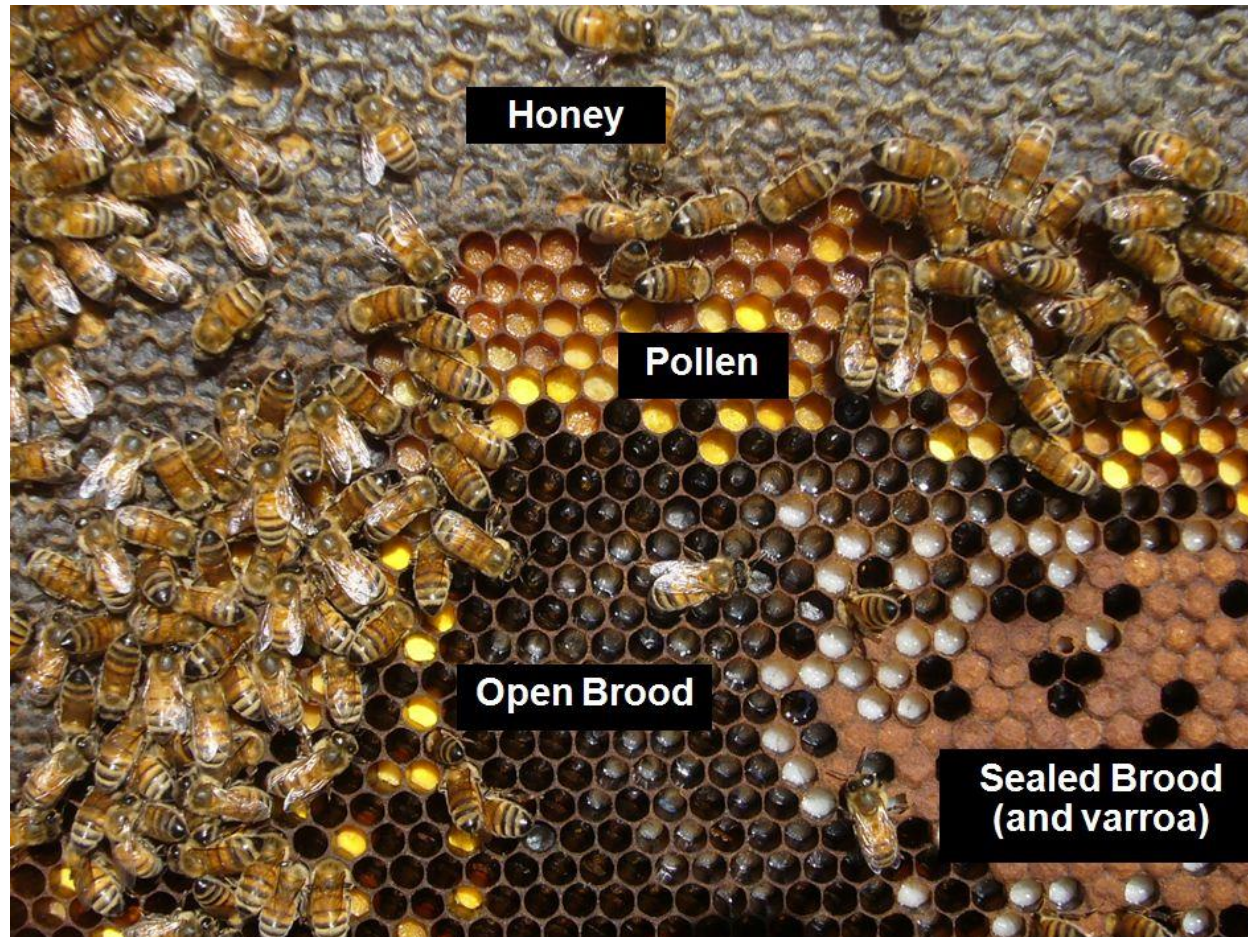


Image from Scientific
beekeeping.com

Goals as a First year Beekeeper

- Be able to spot eggs and all stages of developing brood



Image from Scientific
beekeeping.com

Goals as a First year Beekeeper

- Confidently conduct inspections of the hive
- Be able to spot eggs and all stages of developing brood
- Feed your bees sugar water*
- Test for mites (and treat if needed)*
- Get bees to draw good comb on frames*
- Get your Hive(s) to survive their first winter*

*Come to other meetings to learn more about these topics

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Thank you for Listening!

Questions?

Experiences from first year Beekeepers: Fran & Geoff

