

# Do I want to Become a Beekeeper?

Things to consider before getting your first bee hive and becoming a beekeeper...

January 2025 SAZBA Meeting

# Why do you want to become a beekeeper?

- Make your own Honey in your backyard
- Get pollination for your garden and landscape plants
- Part of homestead or urban farm
- Help support pollinators
- Learn about and interact with honey bees
- Develop the “skill” of beekeeping
- Possible income source

# What equipment does it take to be a beekeeper?

- Protective/ Inspection equipment: Bee suit/Jacket, Smoker, Hive tool
- Hive Equipment: For each colony you will need lid, bottom board, 2 deep brood boxes (with frames), and one deep or two medium honey suppers (with frames), sugar water feeder.
- Honey Harvesting Equipment: Kitchen utensils, flow frames, electric knife, extractor

# What equipment does it take to be a beekeeper?

- Expect total equipment start up cost to be at least \$400-1000 for 1 or 2 backyard hives (this doesn't include bees)

# What equipment does it take to be a beekeeper?

- There are many opinions and approaches to the use of certain beekeeping equipment. This includes what style of beehive you should use, whether or not you should use smoke when inspecting, How much protective equipment to use, if/not to treat bees if they become sick, if and how to supplementally feed, ect.

# What equipment does it take to be a beekeeper?

- I suggest starting out with a normal Langstroth Hive set up, treat for mites, feed your bees, wear all safety equipment and smoke your bees when inspecting
- Once you have the experience and knowledge to keep bees alive using standard methods you will be much better equipped to explore the world of non-traditional hive setups and bee management practices

# What kind of Time/Labor does it take to keep bees?

- Most of the year (Feb-Nov) you will want to inspect your hive once every 10-14 days. With experience you can inspect less frequently but not recommended for beginners
- Each inspection will take 30min to 1hr from start to finish (more time if you have 3+ hives)
- Inspections will require heavy lifting while in a bee suit. You should be able to lift and move around 40-50 lbs. It is possible to do less lifting with some strategizing or special equipment.

# What kind of Time/Labor does it take to keep bees?

- Long vacations with no inspections done to hives during the spring, summer or fall can be problematic, though there are ways to work around this
- Expect to get stung on occasion. If you are allergic to bee stings or reluctant to take up a hobby that sometimes comes with some pain, beekeeping may not be for you
- Have a backup plan in case your bees become unmanageable (a person you can call or a safe remote place you can move a bee hive if the bees become an issue)



# What kind of space is required to keep bees?

- It is legal to keep hives in your backyard in Tucson and surrounding areas
- Most lots qualify to have 1-2 hives. Larger lots are allowed to have more hives
- It is recommended that you talk to your neighbors about having bee hives in your yard prior to actually getting them.

# What kind of space is required to keep bees?

- It is important to provide shade to bee hives in our climate. A shady location out of the way of foot and pet traffic in your backyard is ideal for a beehive
- Avoid putting hives near block walls or other structures that will radiate heat
- Make sure that the location of your hive allows for easy access to inspect hives

# What kind of space is required to keep bees?

- Bees will frequently visit a water source near their hive. This is especially true during hot and dry parts of the year. Make sure that your bees have access to a consistent water source in your yard to avoid issues with your neighbors
- If your neighbors have a swimming pool or water fountain it is likely that your bees will end up visiting those for water which can create problems

# How do I get Bees for my first Hive?

- Southern Arizona is a region of the country where wild honey bee colonies are abundant and swarms frequently take up residence in unwanted locations
- Pretty much all wild bee colonies in our area are a variety of honey bee referred to as “Africanized Bees” or *Apis Mellifera Scutellata*. They are known for being very aggressive and territorial and swarming frequently
- These “Africanized” honey bees are difficult and dangerous to try and keep in a backyard hive especially by anyone other than an expert beekeeper

# How do I get Bees for my first Hive?

- It is highly recommended that you start with bees from a trusted source of Italian or Carniolan Queens
- This will make inspections much more peaceful and significantly lower your likelihood of getting stung during an inspection
- The Italian/ Carniolan Bees will not be nearly as likely to swarm during the year and easier to manage to keep from swarming

Questions?