



Essex County Beekeepers' Association Bee School Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I am not sure I want to become a beekeeper, should I still attend the school?

A: Yes, many of the students have not decided if they want to take up beekeeping. The school is an excellent way to learn enough about beekeeping to decide if it is for you. During the course we will point out the time when you must decide to actually get a hive or wait another year. Some of our students have no intention of becoming a beekeeper, but just want to learn more about it.

Q: Does the Bee School have specific requirements for COVID-19?

A: To attend the in-person Bee School sessions, you must show proof of being fully vaccinated (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>).

Q: Should I buy a book before taking the class?

A: You will receive a book as part of the class. We are using "Beekeeping Basics" (AGRS-093 Penn State Extension).

Q: What is the advantage of taking a course over just reading the book?

A: All Beekeeping is local. It is important to learn what practices are used in your geographic area. Things that work in New Jersey, may not work in eastern Mass. All of our instructors are local beekeepers.

Q: How much does Bee School cost:

A: Adult: \$85; (Includes a single ECBA membership for the current year.)
Youth (12-18 years old): \$50 and requires an accompanying adult registration.

Q: I read in a book that I should order my bees before March. Will I be able to get bees during the course?

A: Yes. The Bee School will not provide you with bees or equipment, but we will put you in touch with sources that can provide you with bees and equipment that match the time line of the course.

Q: Should I go ahead and purchase hive equipment before School starts?

A: We recommend that you wait until after classes start. There are lots of choices to be made, and the school spends time helping you sort out the choices. You may change your mind after seeing the different trade-offs. There will time during the course to purchase hive equipment.

Q: I noticed most bee keeping schools start during the middle of winter. Why is that?

A: That's because spring is the ideal time to start a hive in the New England area. The course is designed to get you started at the proper time of year, and ends at about the time you will have your hive started.

Q: I am not sure I want to start another hobby that costs thousands of dollars. How expensive is it to take up beekeeping?

A: The cost varies with your amount of equipment and books you want to buy. The first hive with bees could be as low as \$250, but \$350 - \$400 may be a more typical expenditure. A second hive will cost less (~\$160), because you will not need to duplicate some equipment.

Q: How much time does beekeeping require?

A: Simply put, as much or little as you want to put in. Minimally, you will need to spend a few hours per month for a few hives with nearly no time requirements during the cold months.

Q: Does my town allow me to keep bees?

A: The class will have discussions about where to locate apiaries. You will have to consult your own town laws to find any restrictions, however most towns have several beekeepers. Being a good neighbor is an important subject which is covered during the course.

Q: Where is the Beekeeping Building at the Topsfield Fairgrounds and where do I park for in-person classes?

A: Here is a [map](#) of the Fairgrounds; the Beekeeping Building is #33. If you enter the Fairgrounds through the Main Gate from Rt 1, you will see signs directing you to the parking area for Bee School.

Q: Topsfield is too far away for me. Is there a school nearer to me?

A: We offer in-person, as well as on-line, participation. A list of Massachusetts beekeeping schools can found at the [Massachusetts Beekeepers Assoc.](#) web page.