



Essex County Beekeepers' Association 2025 Bee School Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who should attend this school?

A: Bee 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 just want to learn more about bees and beekeeping.

Q: Why not just read a 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 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 with an accompanying adult registration.

Students must obtain their personal copy of our textbook: "Beekeeping for Dummies," H. Blackiston, 5th edition. ISBN 978-1-119-70258-0. This is available in both Kindle and paperback formats, from many on-line and local resources (eg Amazon and others)

Q: Why does the class start in the middle of winter?

A: Spring is the best time to start a hive in Essex County, and the course is designed to finish around the same time that you will start your hands-on beekeeping. Our goal is to give you the basic information necessary for your hive to thrive, along with the connections that will help during the following year.

Q: Is beekeeping expensive?

A: The cost varies with the amount of equipment and books you buy. The first hive with bees will cost about \$600-\$1,000. A second hive will cost less because you will not need to duplicate some equipment.

Q: Does my town allow me to keep bees?

A: The class will have discussions about where to locate your apiary. 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: How can I get bees and equipment?

A: The Bee School will teach you about the equipment that you will need and will put you in touch with sources that can provide you with both bees and equipment along with some guidelines to help you through the process. We do not recommend used equipment.

Q: How much time does beekeeping require?

A: You should expect to spend an hour or two per week during the first summer with nearly no time requirements during the cold months.

Q: What are my next steps after bee school?

A: You will have the opportunity to choose a mentor in bee school; the mentor will help you with post-school questions and techniques. Additionally, ECBA has monthly meetings where more experienced beekeepers are thrilled to share their knowledge, be it through conversation or by opening up a hive (in season) and explaining what is going on. Your bee school tuition includes a 1-year club membership.

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 associations can be found at the [Massachusetts Beekeepers Assoc.](#) web page. Many of these associations have bee schools.