



Essex County Beekeepers' Association

Topsfield, MA

Since 1923

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: What book should I buy before taking the class?

A: You should purchase a book for the class. Currently we are using "Beekeeping for Dummies" fourth or fifth edition, ISBN 978-1-119-31006-8 or 978-1-119-70258-0. You may find "The Backyard Beekeeper" ISBN 1-59253-118-0 also interesting.

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

A: **a)** All Beekeeping advice is local. It is good 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.

b) You can ask questions

c) You can collaborate with fellow students in your area

d) You can sign up to get a mentor from the club

e) You get membership in the club for one year

Q: How much does Bee School cost:

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 materials.

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 schools 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 a second smoker or beekeeping clothing.

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, and this is covered during the course.

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

A: The ECBA Bee School will be on-line this year (2021), with virtual sessions in Zoom, including live Q & A sessions. A list of Massachusetts beekeeping schools can found at the [Massachusetts Beekeepers Assoc.](#) web page.

Q: What if I have questions or need help after the course ends?

A: As part of the course, the ECBA works to align mentors with students; you will have the opportunity to choose a mentor who lives near you.