



Essex County Beekeepers' Association 2024 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 just want to learn more about bees and beekeeping.

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 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 and requires an accompanying adult registration.

Q: I am wondering about how I will actually get bees and equipment?

A: 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 both of these and provide some guidelines to help you through the process. We do not recommend used 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 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: 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 questions and techniques. Bee school includes a 1-year membership in the Essex County Beekeepers' Association; we have monthly meetings with hive openings. We also organize hive opening events for bee school students after the classes end.

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: 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: 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 be found at the [Massachusetts Beekeepers Assoc.](#) web page.