

Establishing Your First Hive

Chuck Crisler



What is Covered

1

What you Need

2

Where to get it

3

Setup/Preparation

4

Installing the Bees

5

Follow up

What is NOT Covered

1

Equipment Details

2

Bee Hive Structure/Bee Biology

3

Bee Pests & Diseases

4

Harvesting Honey

5

Work for Next Year

1 - What you Need



- Personal items
- Supplies/Tools
- Field items

Personal Items

- A good veil - a simple veil, a jacket with attached veil or a full bee suit.
- Gloves - cotton or leather with mesh.
- Heavy weight long pants.
- Boots to tuck the pants legs into.
- A baseball (or similar) hat.

Supplies/Tools

- Bee food (sugar water, pollen substitute).
- Honey-B-Healthy.
- Hive tools (discussed with equipment).
- Liquid smoke or a smoker with fuel.
- Bee Brush.
- Small, clean, working hand sprayer.
- Carry bucket.

Field Items

- A hive with 5 medium hive bodies.
- Queen excluder and mouse guard.
- Feeder(s).
- Drone frames (3-6 per hive).
- Bees.
- A site for the hive(s).
- Water close by for the bees.
- Electric Fence (optional but recommended).

2 - Where to get 'things'



Hives

- Purchase (Hillside Beekeeping, BetterBee, many others)
- Make your own
- Purchase 'used' equipment

Supplies

- Bee food - sugar water, 1-1 or 1.5-1 ratio (sugar to water)
- Other food items - check website for recipes
- Other 'accessories' should be purchased - discussed on equipment presentation

Bees

- Purchase a Bee 'package' (most common). Least cost, early, easiest to manage.
- Purchase a Nuc (small, started hive). Later availability, already working.
- Purchase a complete hive - check references (why are they selling?).

3 - Setup/Preparation



Site Selection

- **MUST** have easy access for you
- Free of roots, protruding rocks, low branches
- Southern sun for early morning warmth
- Out of view from neighbors
- Bees need a clear 'fly-way'
- Water close by

Site Setup

- Clear the area/Level the ground
- Arrange the hive(s)
- Keep a spot close to each hive to stack the boxes for inspection
- Put in a foundation for each hive (lumber or concrete blocks)
- Start with 1 hive body per hive, 9 frames, not 10, gap in the middle
- Get a large rock for each hive
- Mix (or buy) your feed

Prepare to receive Bees

- Put some bee feed in your squirt bottle, about a cup per package
- Fill your feeder(s)
- Rub bees wax on plastic frames and spray them with bee feed to encourage bees to draw them out
- Pry bar or medium screw driver to open wooden package(s)
- Italian bees have queen in package
- Carnolian queens are separate

4 - Installing the Bees



Bring your package home

- Put your package in the trunk or keep covered - protects the driver.
- Keep bees protected from heat/sun/cold
- Package has feed but install ASAP.
- **DO NOT 'Blow' bees away.**

Install your package

- Remove hive covers, insure gap in center, put on bee suit.
- Thoroughly spray bees with bee feed.
- **FORCEFULLY** bump the package on the ground **SEVERAL TIMES**.
- Gently open the package, retrieve the feed can and queen, place lid back on package.
- Secure queen cage in the frame gap in the hive - leave the stoppers in.

Install your package (con't)

- Spray feed on bees again.
- Open package, dump bees into hive.
- Shake to get more bees into hive.
- Bump on the ground again to get more bees into the hive.
- Gently spread the bees out into the hive.
- Close up the hive and put the empty package on the ground in front of the hive.

5 - Follow up



Follow up

- After 2 days, remove the cork stopper from the candy end of the queen cage. Do not remove the other stopper.
- After 5 days, check that the queen(s) are out of their cage(s). Remove the cage and put a frame back in.
- After about 2 weeks you should have eggs and maybe larvae.

Follow up (con't)

- When the bees have drawn out about 7 frames, add the next box on top.
- Move an end frame to the new box and put a drone frame in the 3rd spot from an end.
- Repeat for the third box.
- Put the queen excluder and a honey super on when the third box is drawn out.

Follow up (con't)

- **DO NOT** let your bees run out of food.
- Don't go into the hive more often than necessary.
- Do watch your bees to insure that they are going out and foraging.
- Do open the hive once every 2-3 weeks to check on their progress.
- You may need a honey supper, so be prepared!

Follow up (con't)

- **Your Goal:** Raise a strong and healthy hive that can survive the winter.

Follow up (con't)

1. **Problems to watch for:**
2. Hive Congestion - a 'honey bound' hive leads to a swarm. Yes, they can swarm the first year.
3. Insure that the queen is producing eggs continually. Check for larvae and capped brood.
4. Check that they are collecting and storing honey and pollen.
5. Check that the bees look good.
6. Check that the hive smells good. On warm days it should smell like warm honey.
7. Make sure that nothing 'bothers' the hive (bugs, varmints, etc.).

Congratulations!

- You have completed the first step in a rewarding new endeavor.