

## GETTING STARTED WITH BEEKEEPING IN MUSKOKA

- Research the *Apis Mellifera*:
  - web: **Michael Bush** (<http://www.bushfarms.com/bees.htm>) / **Michael Palmer** youtube
  - book: **The backyard beekeeper** 3rd edition by Kim Flottum (2014)
  - book: **The complete idiot's guide to beekeeping** by Stieglitz / Herboldsheimer (2010)
  - book: **Beekeeping for dummies** by Howland Blackiston (2009)
  - book: **BEE TIME - lessons from the hive** by Mark L. Winston (2014)
- Join the **Muskoka / Parry Sound Beekeepers Association** (email Cathy Crowder at [muskokabeesmith@gmail.com](mailto:muskokabeesmith@gmail.com)) and find a mentor (ask Cathy)
- (Jan / Feb) Order your “nucs”: find reputable suppliers on the OBA website: <http://www.ontariobee.com/sales-and-services/where-to-buy-bees>
- Buy your hive equipment. At a minimum, for two hives you will need the following: (~\$1700) (you should start with two hives, and while this is certainly not required, it is a good idea)
  - **nuc** (bees + queen, ~\$200) + complete **beehive** (~\$300 with wax foundation frames) x 2
  - **smoker** (\$40), **hive tool** (\$15), **bee brush** (\$10), **gloves** (\$15), **hat + veil** (\$30)
  - You might want an actual bee suit with a veil, but this is more expensive.
  - An **electric fence** is REQUIRED unless your hives are on a roof or otherwise out of reach from the bears (~\$600 for solar fence from Dean's Home Hardware or other)
  - Our nearest suppliers are:
    - <http://innisfilcreekhoney.com/> (Brian Scott, Innisfil, just south of Barrie)
    - <http://www.dickeybeehoney.com/> (Peter Dickey, Innisfil, just south of Barrie)
    - <http://dancingbeeequipment.com/> (Port Hope)
    - Complete list of stores on OBA website: <http://www.ontariobee.com/sales-and-services/equipment>
- Register your hives with OMAFRA (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs): <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/>

### Bee Life Cycle

caste	egg hatches in cell	cell is capped	adult emerges	
Queen	3.5 days	8 days +-1	16 days +-2	28 days +-3 laying eggs
Worker	3.5 days	9 days +-1	20 days +-1	42 days +-2 foraging
Drone	3.5 days	10 days +-1	24 days +-1	38 days +-5 fly to DCA

Workers live about **6 weeks** during regular season, drones can live up to 4 months, queens can live up to 5 years! Workers can live longer during the winter: from 4 to 6 months.

Brood is kept at about **35°C**, but during the winter the cluster can stay closer to **25°C** if no brood are present. Bees will forage between **10°C** and **40°C** but **22°C** to **25°C** is optimal for foraging.

Deep frame = 7000 cells, ~8 lbs / 3.6kg of honey | Medium frame = 4600 cells, ~6lbs / 2.7kg honey

If you think you have a problem, the best solution is to **STOP**, close up your hive and ask your mentor / association / online forums, etc. before you do anything else. The only two exceptions to this rule are if you suspect **robbing** or if a **swarm** is sitting within reach. (thanks to Michael Bush for this great advice)

**Muskoka Bee Calendar** (thanks to Claude Dupuis, our OMAFRA local bee inspector, for a great start to this)

	Jan / Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Order nucs	X X										
Research / Learning	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X
First inspection			X X	X							
Emergency feeding*			X X	X							
Pollen Available			X X	X X	X X	X X	X				
Electric fence up				X X							
Nectar Available				X X	X X	X X	X X	X X			
Remove winter wraps				X X							
Make nucs					X X	X X					
Harvest pollen				X X	X X	X					
Sticky board test					X X	X X	X X				
Add honey supers					X X	X X	X X	X			
Harvest honey							X X				
Emergency feeding*									X X	X X	
Winterize hive										X X	X
Electric fence down										X X	

\* emergency feeding means “only if necessary”, 2:1 syrup (2kg sugar + 1l boiled water)

In many cases the X’s mark a range that often depends on weather.

**Winter**

- Hive covers are not required but almost everyone uses them.
- Polypropelene covers from Wellington County Beekeepers seem to be one of the best: <http://www.ontariobee.com/sales-and-services/polypropolene-winter-hive-wrap-program>
- The most critical aspect of winterizing your hive is to make sure that there is sufficient ventilation. The bees generate warm air which rises and it has to escape or it will condense and drip down and kill the bees.
- Bees never freeze to death, they only starve to death - so make sure they have enough food for the winter. (rules of thumb: 1.5 to 2.5 frames of honey for each frame of bees or ~100 to 150 lbs of honey per large hive)
- Consider leaving fondant or dry sugar throughout the winter as an emergency feed.
- Consider moving your hives together and try to block the north wind.

When you are working with the bees remember:

GO SLOW,  
BE PATIENT,  
DO NOT JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS,  
HAVE FUN, and, the bees know what they are doing.