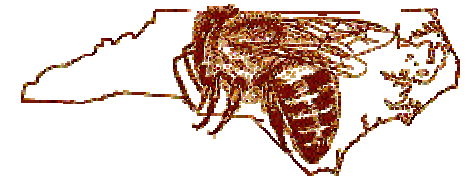


What is the Orange County Beekeepers Association (OCBA)?

The OCBA, a chapter of the North Carolina State Beekeepers Association, is a group of people who are interested in beekeeping. Most are hobbyists with only a couple of hives, some make a bit of extra money from beekeeping, and a very small handful are full-time professional beekeepers with large operations. Our members are men, women and children with wide-ranging ages, occupations and beekeeping experience. Meetings are open to the public, and visitors are warmly welcomed. Each meeting features a discussion of a timely and relevant topic, such as colony management, beekeeping problems and their solutions, getting the most value from your bees, etc.

Once a year we host a Field Day where we visit members' apiaries and see how other folks do things.

Meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the 2nd Thursday of each month, at the Orange County Agricultural Extension Office, 306 Revere Road, Hillsborough (enter through the side door on the right side of the building).



For more information:

Orange County Beekeepers Association
www.theocba.org

North Carolina State Beekeepers
Association
www.ncbeekeepers.org

Beekeeping in Orange County, NC

Why keep honey bees?

Do you enjoy apples, blueberries, cucumbers, cantaloupes, watermelons, squash, pumpkins, strawberries and other fresh fruits and vegetables? Thank a honey bee! More than 90 food crops in the United States must have bees to either be pollinated at all or to produce abundant crops. Many of the fruits and berries that songbirds, squirrels and other wildlife depend on are also pollinated by honey bees. It isn't an exaggeration to say that honey bees make a huge contribution to the quality of life we enjoy in North Carolina. So much so, they are our official state insect!



But honey bees are in trouble! In the 1980s, two types of parasitic mites swept through honey bee populations all across the United States. In North Carolina, the mites eliminated almost all of the honey bee colonies in the wild, and drastically reduced the number of colonies kept by beekeepers. Beekeepers have fought back by changing hive management techniques and introducing mite-resistant strains of honey bees. Even so, the number of beekeepers and honey bee colonies is still a small fraction of what it was 30 years ago. Beekeepers today are making a quiet yet indispensable contribution to the wellbeing of their local communities, but more help is needed!



And don't forget honey! Honey is an all-natural food with many beneficial properties. But the preponderance of honey on the world market today is mass produced in China and Argentina. If you want locally produced honey, you will probably have a hard time finding it in your grocery store.

In addition to honey, honey bees provide lots of other products, including wax for making candles, lip balm, etc.; propolis (a resin with purported medicinal properties); pollen (consumed by many people as a health supplement); royal jelly (also consumed as a health supplement) and many others.

Aside from the tangible benefits that beekeeping provides, as a hobby it also incorporates gardening, woodworking, nature study, animal husbandry, marketing, arts-and-crafts, even philosophy! How many other hobbies are that well-rounded?

Who can keep honey bees?

Unless you are one of the small percentage of people who are hypersensitive (extremely allergic) to insect stings, you can probably keep honey bees as a fascinating hobby. Honey bees are kept in suburban backyards, on the roof tops of

apartment buildings, or anywhere that allows them fly freely. You do not have to plant crops or flowers on your property --- honey bees will forage within a three mile radius of their hive, so they gather from plants throughout your community. Unless you live in the middle of thousands of acres of your own land, your property will not be the main source of provisions for your honey bees. In Orange County, the dominant source of flowers visited by honey bees is trees: tulip poplar, black locust, black gum, maple, holly, basswood and so on. No matter where you live, there is an abundance of honey bee plants around you!

What about stings?

Honey bees only sting to defend their hive or if they are physically threatened (e.g., if you step on one). Stinging is the last and final resort for a bee, since she dies as a result. Beekeepers learn how to avoid stings, but they will occasionally get stung. Carpenters sometimes hammer their thumb, chefs burn their fingers, and football players get tackled hard, but they keep on doing what they enjoy. The benefits outstrip the temporary discomfort. Ten thousand North Carolinians keep honey bees, so it must be true!

