

## Step by Step Beekeeping for Beginners – Check out our website and Gippsland Bees Facebook page

1 **Are you allergic to bee stings?** Less than 2% of the population are allergic to bee stings. If you fall in that category then you are unlikely to keep bees. If you are allergic to bees then immediately seek medical attention and have anti-histamine tablets or spray in your first aid kit. A normal reaction is swelling and itchiness for a few days, as shown by a normal hand and a stung hand in the picture. Be conscious of any escalation or reaction on further stings. Spray pack of 'Sting Goes' relieves a normal reaction to bee stings.



2 **Local beekeeping clubs** have advice and knowledge they are happy to pass on. There is plenty of information on the Internet and YouTube videos, but a local club can advise you with local conditions. Or they might have monthly meetings, newsletters and field days and provide mentoring to explain and show what needs to be done each season.

3 **Register as a beekeeper:** With annual registration comes a registration number that you must brand or permanently mark onto your hives. That gives access to all Departmental publications and Apiary Officers. Five (5) hives or less are free. For more than 5 hives there is a fee: To register go to:

<https://dpi.payments.com.au/BEEKEEPER/>.

4 **Protective Clothing:** Must be worn. All in one suits, **or** hat, veil and gloves are available from Beekeeping Suppliers.

5 **Beekeeping Equipment:** For time-poor people or no wood working skills, pre-built no maintenance plastic hives and all in one plastic frames might suit.

6 If woodworking skills and building and maintenance are no problem, then this hobby is a lot cheaper if you buy flat packs ready to assemble and paint. Frames also come in flat packs.

You also need a lid, bottom board and queen excluder for each hive. Hive mats can be cut out of viny off cuts.



7 **Second Hand Equipment:** Needs a declaration to come with it that its guaranteed disease free.

8 **Beekeeping Tools:** Last for years, so buy good quality. A good quality, double vented smoker for both safety and efficiency. **Ask for our leaflet on instructions for lighting and using a smoker safely.** Beeco Smokers are good quality and reach all safety standards. Also buy a couple of gas lighters with long nozzles from your supermarket to light the smoker. A Hive tool is your main tool for opening and manipulating hives.



9 **Obtaining Bees:** A number of methods are listed below:

**Buy a hive** with bees (ensure they are disease free)

**Catch a swarm** (September to December). The queen's condition, colony temperament, general health and bee condition will need to be monitored.

**Buy a Nucleus** generally 4 frames of bees with brood and a young queen to transfer into your own box.

**Buy packaged bees.** These can come by mail through the normal postage system.

**Split a very strong hive** which helps prevent swarming when taken from a strong hive.

In all cases it is important that the bees don't have disease or Small Hive Beetle when you get them. If the Nucleus comes from the warmer regions of Australia they could already have SHB. Talk to your mentor, club or local beekeeper and follow their advice. Your local club may have a list of people with bees for sale.



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- 10 **Apiary Code of Practice:** Local councils sometimes have specific requirements but broadly the Code of Practice is a good guide. It is made up of good management practises to look after your bees, some points are covered below: Link: <http://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/media/591879/apiary-code-of-practice.pdf>
- 11 **Hive Location:** Ideally hives should face the morning sun. In summer they need shade from the hot afternoon sun and in winter they need full sun. Deciduous trees can provide summer shade and winter sun. Shelter from strong winds. Do not place hives near pathways, instead put behind a hedge, fence or barrier if possible, which causes the bees to fly up.
- 12 **Water access:** Have a clean and constant source of fresh water nearby, in the shade if possible, such as a pond or bird bath with pebbles in it so the bees don't drown. Bees need a few litres of water especially on a hot day.
- 13 **Docile Queens:** Hive Temperament is controlled by the queen and influenced by seasonal conditions. A colony that is defensive and aggressive needs a new docile queen, and her progeny will be quiet bees that are less likely to swarm and easier to work with. Swarms from your hives are your responsibility.
- 14 **Swarm prevention/control:** Talk to your local club, mentor or local beekeeper.
- 15 **Bee Hygiene:** Bees are quite hygienic generally but this can be enhanced by buying hygienic, docile queens.
- 16 **Hygiene:** Keep hives clean by periodically scraping debris from your hives bottom boards, removing brace and burr comb. Clean your hive tool and smoker, bee equipment and your bee equipment shed. Don't leave honey, cappings and wax lying around, as this attracts small hive beetle and robbing bees. Make sure that honey spills, exposed combs and wax are destroyed or covered to prevent robbing by honey bees. The Australian Beekeeping Guide is a **free** PDF Download : <https://rirdc.infoservices.com.au/items/14-098>
- 17 **Hive Maintenance:** Bees need regular and varying colony maintenance and hive inspections as they change each season. Your local beekeeping club, or a beekeeper in your area will be happy to advise you. It's advisable to watch a beekeeper inspecting a hive and explain the main procedures before attempting it yourself. This knowledge can then be put into practice with your own hive. Attend Field days if possible as they demonstrate everything and answer your questions.
- 18 **Pests and Diseases in bees:** This is a large subject area and is covered on our website with lots of other information. The DEPI Website gives you free downloads for all the diseases. For more knowledge look up diseases such as: European Foul Brood (EFB), American Foul Brood (AFB), Chalkbrood etc. Or pests such as Small Hive Beetle, Wax Moth Go to: [www.beeaware.org.au](http://www.beeaware.org.au) for loads more information.
- 19 **Annual Honey Culture Test:** See Ag Note Number: AG1145 Go to the following site to see what to do. <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/honey-bees/honey-culture-tests-to-detect-american-foulbrood> It's a simple process, you are given a container and a form. When you harvest your honey you also fill the container and post it or drop it off at a collection centre with the form. This tests your honey for AFB on a yearly basis, and a negative result means that at that point in time you know your bees are AFB disease free. Cost is around \$25 for the test. There is no obligation to do this test if you have under 5 hives, however it gives you piece of mind. Bee diseases don't have any impact on the quality of your honey for human consumption.
- 20 **Plant bee friendly plants for all seasons in your garden:** Bees forage over a wide range and greatly assist pollination and crop production. Some Grevilleas such as Grevillea Superb flower for about 11 months of the year. Fruit trees and vegetables are pollinated and most flowering plants provide pollen or nectar or both.
- 21 **Harvesting Honey:** Be mindful the bees need honey to sustain them over winter. Only harvest excess honey, leaving at least 8 full frames of honey in the hive for the health of your bees. Local clubs hire the equipment, and provide advice. Enjoy your beekeeping experience, and ask us as many questions as you need.

