

Useful Websites

The Kent Beekeepers' Association (with links to local branches).

www.kentbee.com

The Bromley Beekeepers' Association (dates for next meetings etc).

www.kentbee.com/bromley

The British Beekeeper' Association (help for new beekeepers and discussion forum).

www.britishbee.org.uk

Graham Law beginners frequently asked questions (FAQ) is well worth a visit.

www.beeginners.info

Equipment Manufactures

Thorne (Beehives Ltd) manufacturer of beekeeping equipment.

www.thorne.co.uk

National Bee Supplies.

www.beekeeping.co.uk

Maisemore Apiaries.

www.bees-online.co.uk

BBwear manufacturer of top quality beekeeping clothing.

www.bbwear.co.uk

Beekeeping Magazines

BeeCraft

www.bee-craft.com

BeeKeepers Quarterly

www.bkq.org.uk

Glossary

Brood Body: - The bottom box of a bee hive containing 10 large combs/frames that hold the brood nest, honey stores and pollen.

Supers: - These are smaller boxes each containing 10 combs/frames put on top of the brood body for storing surplus honey to be extracted by the beekeeper.

Queen Excluder: - This device is put between the brood body and the supers to prevent the queen bee laying eggs in the supers.

Bromley Beekeepers' Association

Getting Started in Beekeeping Guide



Why keep bees?

- Increased pollination of trees and plants - producing more food for the larder and wild life
- Help to protect honey bees and the environment
- With skill you can produce a surplus of honey for sale
- Makes an interesting hobby or business

First Step

The best way to get started is to join your local beekeeping association and enrol in a beginner's course or find a local beekeeper who is prepared to act as a mentor. Attend the regular apiary meetings normally held at association apiaries weekly or monthly from spring through to autumn. Beekeepers are very keen to pass on their knowledge and will give advice and support to help encourage you to take the first step.

When you start looking at bees first hand you will need some basic protection from stings, either borrow from the club or purchase a veil or a full bee suit, we recommend beginners wear gloves (Marigolds) and Wellington boots. Even with this protection expect to be stung occasionally.

Can I keep Bees in my Garden?

Where you choose to locate your hives needs careful consideration, even in the smallest of gardens it may be possible to site 1-2 hives, ask an experienced beekeeper to visit your garden and give advice. If your garden is not suitable many allotment societies allow bees but you may have to prove competence in looking after them.

Buying Equipment

It pays in the long term to buy the best equipment you can afford and represents a considerable investment. A complete hive in flat pack (Western Cedar) including floor, stand, brood body, two supers, queen excluder, crown board, roof, frames and wax foundation will cost you over £260, most beekeepers start with one hive but expand to two or more in the second year.

Getting Bees

When your hive is ready and waiting for some bees these are the options:

- Purchase a nucleus (3-5 frames) from a beekeeping supplier, this can cost £150 or more
- Your local beekeeping association may be able to provide you with your first bees
- Ask to go on the swarm collectors listing with your local authority or beekeeping association
- Buy a complete hive from another beekeeper (carries a higher risk of bee diseases), the seller can ask a Bee Inspector to check the hive and issue a full health certificate.

Bromley Beekeepers

We have regular meetings at our branch apiary and a winter lecture programme. We meet at the Kent House Road allotments, opposite Woodbastwick Road, Kent House Road, Sydenham, Kent, SE26 5LJ. Everybody is welcome to attend our meetings. For further details of meetings and events visit our website:

www.kentbee.com/bromley

Steven Turner

Suggested Reading

Title: Practical Manual of Beekeeping

Author: David Cramp.

Description: How to keep bees and develop your full potential as an apiarist (paperback)

Cost: £10.49 from amazon

Title: Bees at the Bottom of the Garden

Author: Alan Campion.

Review: What is one to say of one more slim book for the relative newcomer to beekeeping with one or a few hives, a book moreover that is a revision of one first issued in 1984? Well in this case, I say 'Buy it!' It won't take up too much shelf space or break the bank, but it's on good paper and well illustrated. Most importantly, the book guides you concisely but clearly through the initial stages of becoming a beekeeper and the major hazards of the bee year, from choosing and siting a hive, to facing up to the pile of sticky cappings left after extraction of your first crop, and feeding your bees for winter if you need to. The beautiful illustrations serve partly to complement and clarify the text, and partly to remind you that, while you are far from alone in your mistakes or minor disasters, you are engaged in an inspiring and enjoyable hobby which will prove a source of satisfaction and friendship if you can stick with it.

The revision has been thoroughly done to bring the book up to date, e.g. to cover varroa and provide useful current addresses, without losing the clarity of the original writing. I don't say you will never need another book or that I agree with every word this one contains - given half a chance I will bore anyone with my personal views on hives and the spacing of frames - but if you have one or a few hives and less than years of experience behind you, I don't think you'll regret your purchase. The book has been republished by the author (originally by A & C Black) and is no doubt obtainable from various sources including amazon.

Cost: £12.99 including postage from Northern Bee Books, FREEPOST HX2488, Hebden Bridge, W. Yorks. HX7 5BR.

Malcolm Clarke