

# Getting Started with Bees

by Buddy Marterre

## Equipment:

- ❖ Hive stand, built level, preferably facing South / East, with lots of sun and a windbreak at the back:
    - 8 Cinder blocks
    - 2 4x 4s, at least 6 feet long
  - ❖ 2 hives\*, EACH with:
    - Screened bottom board, inner cover, top, feeder, and entrance reducer (ALL 8 or 10 frame)
    - Brood chambers (assembled or unassembled – also either ONLY 8 or 10 frame)
      - 2 deep (9 1/2" hive bodies) OR 3 mediums (6 5/8" deep - *inappropriately* called supers when they are used for brood – although they are the same piece of equipment)
      - Appropriate depth frames (deep or medium) and wire-reinforced wax foundation (and strongly consider using 1 drone frame per brood chamber)
    - Honey super (assembled or unassembled – also either 8 or 10 frame)
      - Either medium (6 5/8") or shallow (5 11/16")
      - Appropriate depth frames and wax-coated or uncoated plastic or Duragilt, foundation
    - Queen excluder (plastic or metal)
  - ❖ Bee suit (inspector jacket) or veil, gloves, and painter's pants or (white) jeans
  - ❖ Hive tool, bee brush, and a (good, large) smoker
  - ❖ Smoker fuel (cedar chips from pet store), and lighter
  - ❖ Wood glue (TiteBond II or III), nails, primer, exterior paint, ventilation blocks (1/2" thick), and bricks
- \* It is MUCH better to start with two hives than one. If you have a problem with one hive you can use the strong one to 'rescue' the weaker one. It also gives you something to compare to, so that you will recognize a problem with one much quicker than you otherwise would.
- \* Your first decision is hive width. If you plan on expanding your operation much beyond 4 hives, or plan to incorporate used equipment, I suggest the traditional 10 frame hive width. Bees would rather expand upwards than outwards, however, so if you plan to only have a few hives and only use new equipment, many new beekeepers chose the 8 frame width. Also, a 10 frame medium super full of honey weighs 55 pounds (and it may be over 5 feet off the ground!), so many smaller beekeepers chose the 8 frame width. ALL the equipment (bottom boards, brood chambers, honey supers, queen excluders, inner covers, tops, and top feeders) in your operation needs to be the same width!
- \* Brood chamber depth is your next decision. Traditionally, 2 deep brood chambers have been used in our area, but many new beekeepers now use 3 mediums, as well as medium supers. That way all the equipment (particularly the frames and foundation) are the same depth, which greatly facilitates exchanges within and between colonies. The honeycomb of a medium depth frame is exactly 2/3 the depth of deep foundation. And the bare minimum depth of brood chambers for successful over-wintering is one deep and one medium; two mediums are inadequate!
- \* Next decide your foundation type. Bees draw comb on wax foundation easier than plastic, but extractors may cause the wax to break. Therefore I prefer wax-coated plastic or Duragilt foundation for frames in honey supers and I prefer wire-reinforced wax foundation for brood frames. Then calculate how many frames and pieces of foundation of each size you need (example: 32 medium depth frames and foundation for each 8 frame triple medium hive with one medium honey super).

## Local Equipment Suppliers:

BeeAttitudes  
Brushy Mountain Bee Farm  
Harlan and Anthony Reel  
Miller Bee Supply

Darrell Hampton 336-978-6695 and Gerry van Rijsewijk 336-215-1264  
(800) 233-7929 (free shipping with first order)  
(828) 738-3017 (excellent woodenware, very little protective gear)  
(888) 848-5184

A list of equipment suppliers can also be found on the FCBA website: [www.forsythbeekeepers.org](http://www.forsythbeekeepers.org)

## Local Nuc Suppliers:

Alex Flinchum 336-403-6659  
Larry Tate 336-788-4554  
Frank Wyatt 336-635-5821

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Walnut Cove  
Kernersville  
Eden