

Urban Bee Keeping at Toronto Botanical Garden



In 2011 the TBG Honeybee Hives were installed in the pollinator garden off the Weston Family Library and classes began the next year. In 2023 the hives were moved to a sunnier spot surrounded by many beautiful pollinator plants. Including in-class and 'in-hive' (hands on) components, this series provides grounding in basic beekeeping. Led by experienced apiarists, students participate in 7 sessions beginning in spring through fall. Once classes are completed students who have successfully completed and attended all seven sessions of the program will receive the TBG Urban Beekeeping Certificate of Completion.

To ensure the program develops students' knowledge based on the same set of skills, TBG does not offer exemptions on pre-requisites for mandatory courses to those with outside experience. All classes must be completed in the year of registration.

TBG Urban Beekeeping Certificate of Completion

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Session 1: Introduction to Bees and Hive Equipment

Learn the importance of bees to the environment and the history of the modern beehive. A hands-on component explores building beehive equipment, exploring protective beekeeping equipment such as suits and gloves, smokers and hive tools and hive checks, and safety protocols.

Session 2: Design and Plant a Pollinator Garden

How does the TBG keep our bees happy? We plant a pollinator garden right on their doorstep! Learn the best plants to provide optimum bee nutrition throughout the growing season. Learn about the special vision that honeybees have that extends into the UV range that helps them locate pollen and nectar. We will explore, *The Ontario Bees Act* and other provincial guidelines governing beekeeping and learn when and how to register hives. Finally, we will explore different reasons for moving hives and how to best relocate established hives.

Session 3: Plan the Season and Check the Spring Hive

Experience a crucial time in the bee-keeping season as the bees wake from their winter slumber. Discover the considerations, pitfalls, and remedial options you will face in spring. Don your beekeeping gear and take your first look into a hive by participating in a hive check.

Session 4: The Summer Hive Check

Learn to handle hive equipment and identify the queen, worker, and drone bees. Check out how the hives' honey stores are coming along. Identify signs of parasites and disease and review organic strategies to deal with them.

Session 5: Honey Harvest

This is stickiest time of the beekeeping season where bees and beekeepers share the bounty. Learn to sort and pull honey and nectar frames, remove wax cappings, extract liquid honey from the honeycomb using an extractor, clean frames, and return spun frames to the hive.

Session 6: Honey and Wax Processing

Test your tastebuds by learning how terroir is interpreted through honey by sampling a variety of honey from near and far. Learn how to process honey so it's ready for sale and render wax to be used in other projects like candles, lip balm, and soap.

Session 7: Putting the Bees to Bed

Wrap up the season by learning how to do a final check for any parasites which may harm the hive during winter, wrap the hives, and ensure your equipment is ready for storage over the cold months. Students will celebrate the year and receive their jar of TBG honey.

*Protective equipment is **not** provided but is required. PPE required includes goatskin beekeeping gloves, beekeeping suit with hood, light coloured bottoms (if you're using jacket with hood), long light coloured socks.*

All classes take place on-site at the Toronto Botanical Garden and the TBG Bee Yard. Please contact programsupport@torontobotanicalgarden.ca if you have additional inquiries.