

Honey Bee Etiquette

Jennifer Lund, Maine State Apiarist
Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
Division of Animal and Plant Health
Email: jennifer.lund@maine.gov

1. Comply with all homeowner association, local, state, and federal ordinances, regulations, and laws pertaining to beekeeping. Register your hives with the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry.
2. Place hives away from property lines and occupied buildings. Hive entrances should be situated so bees fly across your property, not your neighbors. If this is impossible, use barriers (hedges, shrubs, or fencing) to redirect/elevate the bees' flight pattern.
3. Locate hives away from roads and areas frequented by pedestrian traffic (i.e. schools, recreation areas, picnic grounds, etc.). Do not situate hives on or next to utility rights-of-way (power lines, pipelines or underground cables). Keep apiaries away from animals that are tethered, kenneled, or otherwise prevented from escaping a stinging incident.
4. In populated areas, use fences and hedges to conceal hives. Paint your hives neutral colors so they blend in with their surroundings.
5. Avoid working or disturbing colonies when neighbors or the public are participating in outside activities or using machinery near your apiary. Inspect colonies when conditions are favorable (sunny, warm, good honey flow, etc.) and perform hive manipulations as quickly as possible with minimal disturbance. Smoke should be used when working bees.
6. Maintain gentle colonies. Do not tolerate colonies exhibiting excessively defensive behavior. If hives become defensive, determine the cause and fix the problem. If necessary re-queen with gentle stock and destroy the drone brood.
7. Manage hives for swarm prevention using brood chamber manipulation, splitting strong hives, supering for honey storage, and replacing old or failing queens.
8. Provide a water source so the bees don't visit neighborhood swimming pools, hot tubs, birdbaths, livestock/pet water sources, etc. Set up the water source early in the year and replenish it on a regular basis. Adding salt or sugar can aid in the training process.
9. Sweeten neighbor relationships by gifting honey or pair of beeswax candles yearly.
10. Share your enthusiasm and knowledge of beekeeping with the community. Negative feelings about bees can often be reversed by a little education and enthusiasm.