



# ***Elm Fork Beekeepers Association***

## ***Mentor Program***

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# ***Mentor Program Director***

***If no mentor program director is named, this responsibility falls to the vice-president.***

***Mentor Program Director responsibilities include:***

- 1) Get approval for mentors from EFBA officers.***
- 2) Match possible mentors with mentees.***
- 3) Track applications, dates, and results.***
- 4) Report quarterly to EFBA officers.***

# **The Mentor**

**New beekeepers frequently want some assistance with getting started. While just chatting with an experienced beekeeper can be helpful, experienced Elm Fork Beekeepers are available for mentoring. Good mentors are hard to find; please accept this challenge with honor and energy.**

**Every new beekeeper could benefit from having a more experienced beekeeper's wisdom. Of course, not everyone who keeps bees is a beekeeper. Some are bee-havers, meaning they just have bees. They have not gained experience through many points of learning. Desired mentor qualifications:**

- 1) Has kept bees successfully for at least one full year.**
- 2) Is a member and attends regular Elm Fork Beekeepers Association club meetings. Also the mentor may belong to state bee associations, attend meetings, and attend other classes or conferences.**
- 3) Is well read in beekeeping.**
- 4) Lives near the mentee and/or has email and both have the ability to send and receive email digital pictures of your hives when there are questions.**
- 5) Be available for phone calls from the mentee.**
- 6) Be able to visit the mentees apiary.**
- 7) Is willing to help your mentee for at least one calendar year.**

**It is really nice, when you first start keeping bees, to have someone who can answer what might be called "silly questions". New beekeepers would enjoy beekeeping faster if they spent the first year being tutored by a seasoned and well informed beekeeper, a "MENTOR". A mentor is not expected to "know all the answers" but the mentor can point a new beekeeper in the direction to discover the answers they need.**

**The Elm Fork Beekeepers Association (EFBA) believes the mentoring experience should be pleasant and rewarding for both the mentor and the new beekeeper. We also believe that to be successful, the program should include certain elements intended to guide the new beekeeper through a first year or so of beekeeping.**

**Being a mentor doesn't mean knowing all there is about beekeeping. It's OK to admit not knowing the answer to a question, but be willing to research it. It's probably illuminating to the students to know that no matter how long one keeps bees, there is still more to learn and nobody knows it all.**

**As a mentor you're there for support and guidance. At the same time, realize that eventually the student will adopt practices that work for them, but which may differ from yours. It is not a judgment of the mentor's beekeeping when the student adopts a method that differs from the mentor; it shows they are growing in their confidence.**

**Most of all, try to make yourself available. You'll get calls about all manner of things that seem mysterious or frightening to the new beekeeper. Your calm and wise counsel is what they want.**

**As always, feedback to the mentor coordinator on how to improve the experience for both parties is always welcome.**

**Please include the activities below in your mentoring experience.**

- 1. Keep a journal of instruction. Strongly encourage new beekeepers to keep a journal.**
- 2. Discuss set up of bee yard and location.**
- 3. Discuss set up of hive, stand, and weed control.**
- 4. Discuss necessary clothing, equipment, tools and supplies, including the risks associated with purchasing previously used equipment. Each new beekeeper needs to be responsible for providing their own safety equipment.**

**If the mentor has extra and wants to share, that's great. For those not yet sure whether they will become beekeepers, borrowing protective gear may be a good choice. Alternatively, there are low cost, but effective personal mosquito nets available at stores carrying sporting goods. When worn with a wide brimmed hat, they can work well.**

- 5. Discuss stings, stinger removal, scent masking (smoke or ammonia) as well as signs of trouble, Benadryl and the importance of having access to an epi-pen.**

**(Some physicians will prescribe and some will not.)**

- 6. Discuss methods of obtaining and installing bees. EFBA strongly encourages getting bees from local sources.**
- 7. Encourage a new beekeeper to observe/assist you working in your hive as much as possible. Three or four times during the active season seems a reasonable goal. (If mentoring multiple students, these could be held as field days in your bee yard.)**
- 8. Discuss seasonal issues and maintenance.**
- 9. Demonstrate lighting the smoker, proper use of equipment and how to handle bees. Talk about when it is best to finish the job at hand and when it's best to just close the hive and walk away.**
- 10. Study frames with Student pointing out: queen, workers, drones, eggs, larvae, pupae, brood pattern, pollen and honey.**
- 11. Discuss ventilation, swarming, robbing, feeding, pests and diseases. Encourage integrated pest management techniques.**
- 12. Assist student in installing bees.**
- 13. Visit the new keeper's bee yard with them. Have them demonstrate what they have learned during the mentoring process.**
- 14. Encourage the new beekeeper to participate in EFBA educational events. Participation helps fulfill the EFBA mission of education and helps the new beekeeper learn more about bees and beekeeping through involvement with other beekeepers and the public.**

**Howard Scott wrote an excellent article in the American Bee Journal "The art of good mentoring". This article has information about being a mentor for new beekeepers. A mentor expects the novice to research and learn a lot about beekeeping, a mentor should do a little homework about how to be a good beekeeping mentor. Read the article or other articles about being a mentor, for greater details. Here are some highlights from the article:**

- Don't do the task for the new beekeeper**
- Show then watch the novice do it**
- Rather than making the decisions, let the novice do it**
- Teach the novice to think scientifically**
- Teach the novice to Beethink**
- Become a phone call mentor, and be sure to visit your mentee's bee yard.**

***As a mentor, it is your responsibility to make sure that your mentee display success in the following beekeeping skills:***

- Study a hive of bees, know the parts of a complete Langstroth hive.
- Remove the combs, find the queen.
- Calculate the approximate amount of the brood, drones and honey in a hive.
- Determine the weight of honey in a container.
- Describe protective clothing to help protect you from stings while working your hives.
- Describe first aid for bee stings, signs of allergic reactions and emergency strategy for any and all beekeeping accidents.
- Identify a queen cup in a hive.
- Identify a supersedure or swarm queen cell.
- Describe other types of Honey Bee hives.
- Explain or describe the differences among the drones, workers, eggs, larvae, and pupae at different stages.
- Tell the differences among honey, wax, pollen, and propolis.
- Tell how bees make honey. Tell where wax comes from.
- Explain the part played in the life of the hive by the queen, drones, and the workers.
- Hive a swarm or divide at least one colony. Explain how a hive is made.
- Put foundations in sections or frames. Fill supers with frames or sections.
- Take off filled capped supers from the hive and extract the honey.
- Prepare the honey for market and/ or family consumption.
- Describe other products that can be sold from a bee hive other than honey.
- List five crops and five natural plants pollinated by honeybees in your area.
- Describe several processes for making a queen.
- Sign up as a mentee for 1 year. Join and attend club meetings. Read bee related materials and successfully keep a hive alive for at least 6 months.

***"Practice the above, and you will become a great mentor. More importantly, you will turn out a long line of fine beekeepers. And, that may be one of the greatest satisfactions beekeepers can achieve."***

# **The Mentee**

**Welcome to a hobby that will provide you with a life-long learning endeavor. In exchange for providing the bees a quality home, you will receive the sweetness of honey, and the versatility of beeswax. We are confident that you will find this a satisfying reward for your efforts.**

**Benefits: The list of benefits of keeping bees and their products is countless. For the gardener, you will have a better yield from many of your plants as a result of the increased pollination from the bees. Come fall, there will be honey to harvest. Your natural, unfiltered honey has high levels of antioxidants, which help reduce the incidents of some cancers. Your bees' beeswax can be used for candles, lip balm, skin cream, and many other things. Perhaps the most rewarding is the satisfaction and relaxation that comes with keeping bees. I often find myself enchanted and fascinated by their doings.**

**Challenges: There are also challenges you will face as a beekeeper. Bees have parasitic mites that can, at high levels, cause the colony to die out. There are also bacterial diseases that you may have to address. These should not deter you, but as a beekeeper you need to be aware of them and what the appropriate actions are to keep your bees healthy.**

**If you are ready to start your journey, you have come to the right place. We have knowledgeable members who can help you, and we keep an abundant selection of resources. We are out there working our hives just like you will be. We do and see what local beekeepers are experiencing.**

**Tools of the Trade: Before you can get started, there are some basic tools and equipment you will need:**

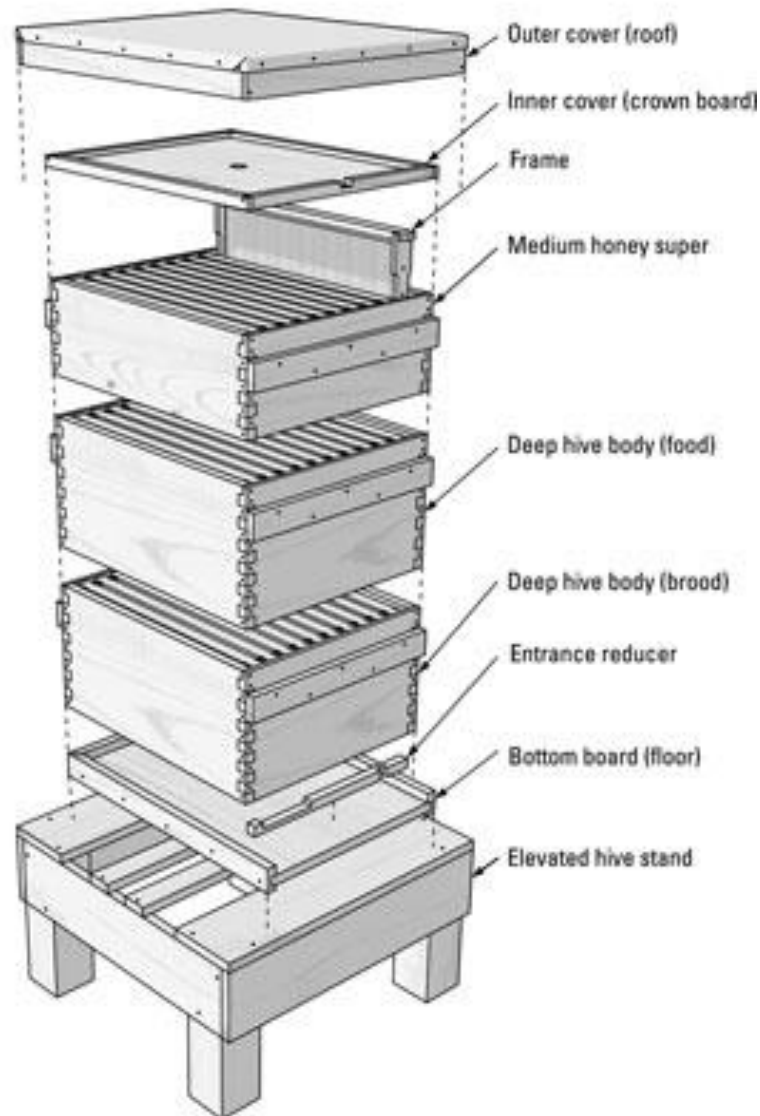
- 1. Protective Clothing to help protect you from stings while working your hives.**
- 2. A hive or hives, depending on your aspirations.**
- 3. Beekeeping tools - you'll find everything you need to be a successful beekeeper on supplier websites or in beekeeping catalogs. There are tools for general hive maintenance, feeding your bees, harvesting and extracting honey and wax, and much more.**
- 4. And, of course, BEES! Bees are most often sold early spring (April and May), but orders may be taken at the beginning of the New Year. Mail order bees may suffer undue stress as they pass through the postal service, contact a local beekeeper or mentor, they will be able to help you find a local source.**



***New vs. Used Equipment: You can buy used hives with the bees already in them, but you may be inheriting someone else's problems. The comb could be infected with foulbrood disease, or the bees could be heavily infested with mites. The bees may be, through the neglect of the previous beekeeper, genetically disposed to swarm, or through lack of requiring, highly defensive. We recommend the beginning beekeeper NOT TO BUY used hives, unless you **have** access to the advice of an experienced (and trusted) beekeeper/mentor. We recommend starting either one or two hives of bees. Two hives will allow for a basis of comparison. And, should one of the hives not perform up to expectation will allow you to borrow frames or combine colonies for winter survival.***

***Basic Equipment: A look through any beekeeping catalog will show an array of equipment and supplies that can be over-whelming to a potential beekeeper. However, the amount of equipment that is actually required during the first year is relatively small. Experience will guide you in subsequent years. The following list includes everything needed to maintain one colony for the entire first season.***

10-Frame Equipment:	or	8-Frame Equipment:	Note:
One 10-frame deep box		Two 8 frame deeps boxes	You can go with all mediums
10 deep frames with foundation		16 deep frames with foundation	Waxed plastic cell preferred
Two 10-frame medium boxes		Three 8-frame medium boxes	For honey supers
Bottom Board (10 frame) w/ entrance reducer		Bottom Board (8 frame) w/ entrance reducer	Solid or screened
Inner cover (10 frame)		Inner cover (8 frame)	
Hive Cover (10 frame)		Hive Cover (8 frame)	Telescoping or garden style
Hive Stand		Hive Stand	Many choices for type or build your own
Queen excluder		Queen excluder	Optional
Syrup feeder (boardman, division or hive top feeder)			
Smoker (and fuel)			
Lighter			
Veil or veiled suit			
Beekeeping gloves			
Hive tool			
Bee Brush			



***There are several alternative hive styles including Top Bar and the Warre hives. For beginners we suggest the basic equipment listed above for ease of management.***

### ***Beekeeping Suppliers:***

- Dadant <http://www.dadant.com/> only one with a warehouse nearby in Paris, TX
- Mann Lake <http://www.mannlakeltd.com/>
- Texas Bee Supply <http://www.texasbeesupply.com/> located nearby in Blue Ridge, TX  
***Mann Lake distributor, limited onsite inventory***
- D&L in Denton, TX on Fort Worth Drive ***limited inventory***
- Atwoods in Gainesville, TX ***limited inventory***

- Walter T. Kelly <https://kelleybees.com/>
- Brushy Mountain <http://www.brushymountainbeefarm.com/>
- Glory Bee <http://beekeeping.glorybee.com/>
- Better Bee <http://www.betterbee.com/>
- And others; search “beekeeping supplies” online

***Some Local Sources of Packages, Hives, Nucs and Queens:***

- Texas Bee Supply; Blue Ridge, TX <http://www.texasbeesupply.com/>
- B. Weaver; Navasota, TX <http://www.beeweaver.com/>
- R. Weaver: Navasota, TX <http://www.rweaver.com/>
- Powell Family Honey: Mead, OK <http://www.powellfamilyhoney.com/>

***Many suppliers are listed on-line and in the following beekeeping Journals***

- American Bee Journal <http://www.americanbeejournal.com/>
- Bee Culture <http://www.beeeculture.com/>
- Bee Source is an excellent blog site: <http://www.beesource.com/>

***Check with the Texas Beekeepers Association for local clubs: <http://texasbeekeepers.org/>***

**Websites:**

- [Elmforkbeekeepers.org](http://Elmforkbeekeepers.org)
- <https://carolinahoneybees.com/essential-oils-honeybees/>
- Barnyard Bees videos
- Scientific Beekeeping – Randy Oliver
- Bee Culture magazine’s website

**Apps:**

- BeeSmart – Pollinator partnership, [pollinator.org](http://pollinator.org), lists plants per ecoregion
- Bee Health – <http://agriculture.alberta.ca/bees> Lists pests and diseases, symptoms list to find possible problems
- Beekeeping – Geek Zeek apps, book on beekeeping
- Apiary book –Creative Software Grup, hive management tool

## Books for Beginners:

- *First Lessons in Beekeeping* - Delaplane
- *Beekeeping for Dummies* – Blackiston
- *The Beekeepers Handbook* – Sammataro & Avitabile
- *The Backyard Beekeeper* – Flottum
- *Beekeeper's Problem Solver* - Tew

# Getting Started:

***Now that you have the equipment and bees, you are on your way to an exciting new hobby, or perhaps someday a successful business. To insure your beekeeping success, we suggest you work with a beekeeping mentor (an established beekeeper) who is willing to share how he or she manages his or her own bees. If you cannot find a mentor, you might consider attending an introductory class on beekeeping. Classes are held at locations throughout the country and locally at our bee meetings.***

***New beekeepers need some assistance with getting started. Just chatting with an experienced beekeeper can be helpful. Elm Fork Beekeepers are available for mentoring. Good mentors are hard to find, please accept your mentor with a humble spirit, a willingness to learn and accept this challenge with honor and energy.***

***Let's visit about being a mentee. Every new beekeeper could benefit from having a more experienced beekeeper to lean on, and learn from. Of course, not everyone who keeps bees is a beekeeper. Some are bee-havers, meaning they just have bees but they have not gained experience through many points of learning.***

***The job of a mentee or novice beekeeper is to LEARN! Read as much as you can, use the internet and its valuable free videos, borrow beginning beekeeper books and watch other beekeepers for small pearls of information that will make you successful. Then, find and ask a mentor beekeeper to help you over the rough spots. What are the characteristics of a mentor beekeeper (you ask)? This is what a mentor should Be:***

- 1) Has kept bees successfully for at least one full year.***
- 2) Attends regular club meetings and/or state association meetings, classes or conferences.***
- 3) Is well read in beekeeping.***
- 4) Lives near you or has email and you both have the ability to send and receive email digital pictures of your hives when there are questions.***
- 5) Is willing to help you for at least one calendar year.***

***It is really nice, when you first start keeping bees, to have someone who can answer what you might call "silly questions". I think that new beekeepers would enjoy beekeeping faster if they spent the first year being tutored by a seasoned and well informed beekeeper, a "MENTOR".***

***Most beekeeping skills and information the mentee can learn alone on the internet, from books in the library, or tapes and books rented or purchased. The internet is a valuable resource, but never as good as a good mentor!***

***!! Keep in mind that mentors have a life and do not abuse their time and energy on questions that you could answer yourself, with a little research on your part!!***

***As a mentee it is your responsibility to make sure that you are willing to learn and that you can display success in the following beekeeping skills to your mentor:***

- Study a hive of bees, know the parts of a complete Langstroth hive.
- Remove the combs, find the queen.
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***"Practice the above, and you will become a great mentee. More importantly, you will turn out to be a fine beekeeper. Always look for the learning "Pearls" that an experienced beekeeper will have.***

***Showing appreciation: In order for this program to be effective it is recommended that after your success in the mentee program you should give a jar of your first honey crop to your mentor.***

***" I can't wait to taste the sweet honey"***

# Mentor Application

Name(print)\_\_\_\_\_

address:\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ TEXAS \_\_\_\_\_

Phone\_\_\_\_\_

Email\_\_\_\_\_

I agree to help the following mentees to the best of my ability according the standards listed and my ability.

\_\_\_\_\_

signature required

To be approved by *EFBA officers* \_\_\_\_\_

Mentee Name	Start Date:	End Date:

# Mentee Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ TEXAS \_\_\_\_\_

Phone(H) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone(C) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to accept and complete to the best of my ability the standards for Beekeeping skills and demonstrate those to my mentor.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mentee signature required

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mentor

Start date: \_\_\_\_\_

End Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentee please answer: What is your goal as a beekeeper? (Pollination, honey, hobby)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Why are you interested in beekeeping?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you now, or have you ever kept bees? \_\_\_\_\_