

# Rhode Island Beekeepers Association

Bee School: January – February 2024

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **1. Why should I take a beekeeping class in person – why can't I just learn about it from books or online videos?**

Beekeepers face new challenges each year, in the way of environmental challenges, new diseases, and new parasites. Management practices improve each year and updated management practices become necessary skills as beekeeping moves through the 21<sup>st</sup>-century. The information in many books is already out of date, and the information available on the Internet is uncurated, random, often wrong, and sometimes dangerous. Our teachers know how to sort through the avalanche of information available to new beekeepers and pick out the information and skills they need. They can answer the many questions that will be individual to you and your family and your neighbors and save you from making many mistakes that new beekeepers often make. In addition, your tuition includes the price of a year's membership in RIBA, opening a world of fellow beekeepers, resources, teachers, and timely presentations that will keep you updated on "everything bee".

### **2. What will I learn in the RIBA Beekeeping Classes**

The RIBA courses take a very practical approach to beekeeping. Over five classes totaling 12 ½ hours, your teacher will cover what you need to know about beekeeping to get you started and guide you toward the resources that you will need to improve your skills as you increase your experience as a beekeeper. You will learn about the equipment you need to keep you safe, and to help your bees survive. You will learn where to obtain the equipment and bees you will need, and how to do so safely and securely. You will learn about those aspects of honeybee biology that are of practical value to keep colonies safe and healthy, and about why some beekeepers fail in their first few years. You will acquire the information you need to avoid these failures,

including information about treatments for common diseases and parasites. Finally, you will learn how to get started in honey harvesting, beeswax harvesting and use, and other aspects of hive management.

### **3. Where can I take the RIBA Beekeeping Course**

The courses are given in two locations, first at Rhode Island College, and also at the University of Rhode Island. Classes occur over a five-week period, with each class occurring once per week and lasting two- and one-half hours (with a break in the middle). Evening classes are available and Saturday classes are available, depending on when and where you are able to attend. More information about the timing and location of classes can be found on RIBA's website, <https://ribeeper.org/>

### **4. Why are the beekeeping courses given in the middle of winter?**

In short, so that you can create your colony in the spring 2024, so that it will have all summer to gather the resources it needs to survive the 2024 – 2025 winter. Your new colony will need every day from spring to fall to build its comb, raise its population, forage for nectar and pollen, store honey, and engage in all the other activities required to ensure survival of the colony over the winter of 2024 – 2025. To ensure this, you need to know everything it is possible to learn by April 2024, before you start your colony. This means that the best time for you to take a beekeeping course is during the late winter early spring of 2024. You will have time to order your hive equipment and your bees, and your bees will be delivered in April and May 2024.

### **5. What do I need to take the course?**

Mostly, you need patience and a willingness to learn about an entirely different life form. You need patience, because as soon as you start the course you will want to order your suits and gloves, your wooden hive equipment, and all the other things that you think you need to keep bees. You'll also want to order the bees themselves from the many kinds of honeybees available. So, you will need to be patient and wait for your teacher to discuss all of those issues so you don't make a bad, and potentially expensive, decision, and wind up with the wrong kind of

equipment or wish that you had ordered a different kind of honeybee. Also, you will need a willingness to learn about honeybees – a highly evolved social creature with behavioral and reproductive habits that might lead you to believe that they originated on an entirely different planet. They didn't, as far as we know, but if you have the patience to learn about a different life form, you will be able to get started as a successful beekeeper. Other than that, RIBA supplies the classroom, the teacher, the learning materials, and the book. We even throw in a one-year membership to the Rhode Island beekeepers Association.

## **6. What else do I need to know?**

More information about the course can be found on the RIBA website at <https://ribeekeeper.org/>. The price to take a course is \$100, and for a little extra you can bring another member of your family. Two seasoned members of the Rhode Island Beekeepers Association teach classes. Betty Mencucci has been teaching beekeeping for decades and is an experienced and personable expert in the field. Steve Burke is the president of RIBA and has been teaching the course at the URI location for almost a decade.