



Guidelines for Keeping Bees in Populated Areas

There are approximately 3,000 to 3,500 registered beekeepers in New Jersey. Of these, only about 5 percent can be considered commercial beekeepers having 20 or more colonies of bees. The majority of the registered beekeepers in the state manage only about 1 to 10 colonies.



It is possible to keep honey bees in crowded suburban areas, on tiny city lots or on rooftops in large or small cities without problems. However, keeping bees successfully in a populated area requires a good understanding of basic bee biology, property rights and human psychology. Beekeepers in suburbs and cities need to manage their bees so they do not become a nuisance to their neighbors. By understanding the circumstances under which bees will bother people, beekeepers can take measures to alter circumstances so their bees do not create a problem.

Honey bees can be kept almost anywhere there are flowering plants that produce nectar and pollen. Choose a site for beehives that is discrete, sheltered from winds and partially shaded. Avoid low spots in a yard where cold, damp air accumulates in winter. Be considerate of non-beekeeping neighbors. Place hives so that bee flight paths do not cross sidewalks, playgrounds or other public areas. Provide your bees with a water source in your yard to prevent them from seeking out water at neighbors' swimming pools or water spigots.



The Department has developed the following best management practices for beekeepers to reduce potential conflict with neighboring property owners.

1. There must be no more than three hives of honey bees per lot size of one-quarter acre or less.
2. When a colony is situated less than 10 feet from a property line, the beekeeper must establish a flyway barrier. This should be at least 6 feet tall and extend 10 feet beyond the colony on either side. It can be solid, vegetative or any combination of the two, that forces the bees to cross the property line at a height of 6 feet.
3. All colonies must be located at least 25 feet from a public sidewalk, alley, street or roads.
4. All apiaries must have on site an adequate source of water within 25 feet of the hive(s) at all times (especially between March 1st and October 31st).
5. All bee equipment and hives must be maintained in good condition.
6. All colonies must be kept in moveable frame hives in accordance with N.J.S.A.4: 6-10.
7. All colonies must be inspected by the beekeeper or his delegate no less than three times between March 1 and October 1 of each year.
8. A substantial barrier/ fence must be erected to prevent animals and children from coming into close contact with the hives.