



To start beekeeping, you'll need the following 6 things.

- 1) Equipment
- 2) Bees
- 3) Education
- 4) Community
- 5) A permit
- 6) Mindfulness of others
- 7) Sources and resources

#### 1) Equipment and costs:

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There's a lot of stuff one can buy, but a lot of it isn't really necessary.  
Here's a basic setup that will serve you well:

\$0	2 cinderblocks, scavenged.
\$20	1 screened bottom board (The "Apinovar" design is recommended)
\$20	2 Hive bodies, size "Deep".
\$120	20 "Deep" frames of Drawn comb. [1]
\$20	2 Honey supers, size "Medium"
\$20	20 Medium frames, plastic
\$10	1 feeder pail with lid.
\$20	1 inner hive cover
\$20	1 outer hive cover
\$10	1 hive tool
\$30	1 Bee Jacket
\$30	1 Smoker
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\$320	(Not including shipping)

Most of these items can be ordered from Bee Maid in Edmonton, or Apihex in Calgary. When doing cost-comparison, factor in shipping.

[1] Providing drawn comb to the bees will make a first year honey harvest possible. Without providing comb, the bees will spend most of short nectar flow period building honeycomb - Instead of storing honey. These are obtained from a commercial apiary, as they are not sold by Bee Maid. If you've got more patience than money, 10 frames of drawn comb will work. Not giving any drawn comb to a new

package is inadvisable.

## 2) Bees :

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Bees can be purchased in two formats, known as NUCs and Packages.

NUCleus hives are miniature beehives, and Packages are hiveless colonies in a screened shoebox.

Both have their pros and cons.

I recommend packages for the new beekeeper, as they are readily available, and allow the new beekeeper to get started earlier. Additionally, the installation process provides a learning opportunity. The process of hiving a package is relatively easy, but the thought and planning required builds experience right from the start.

Packages contain the "Italian" strain of honeybees. "Italian" honeybees make the best first bees to have, due to their gentle nature. Local honey producers import these by the thousands in the spring and sell surplus packages to hobbyists. Packages are reserved in February, either through the Calgary Beekeepers association, or directly with an apiary.

Participating in a bulk-purchase through the Calgary Beekeepers Association can both save you a trip and expose you to other beekeepers.

When reserving your package, also reserve the 20 frames of "drawn comb" previously mentioned. These are only available from honey producers, and are not carried by equipment suppliers.

A package of bees will cost around \$230 (2018).

NUCS are available from different suppliers at different times. Consider them a "Plan B" for those who weren't able to reserve a package in Feb.

## 3) Education:

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Courses:

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Alberta Agriculture: The government runs a yearly course in May in Edmonton.

Unfortunately, this is too late in the season to get you started, unless you're otherwise all ready

to go. See the Alberta Apiculture site for more information. Those who skip this necessary step struggle and experience unnecessary challenges.

Calgary Beekeepers Association: Offers a yearly course consisting of 2 days of class time, and 2 field trips. Class time takes place in winter, and field trips in the spring.

#### Books:

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There are so many great beekeeping books, but no single one is enough. I recommend, in the following order:

Beekeeping for Dummies - Covers the basics.

Beekeeping for Idiots - Covers basics, innovations, and "natural" practices.

The Practical Beekeeper by Michael Bush - Best single book out there.

Beekeeper's handbook - Covers techniques.

Beekeeping in Western Canada - Geared towards large-scale, and a bit dated,  
but a useful regional resource.

#### Internet:

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Any question a beginning beekeeper would want to ask has already been asked and answered 1000 times on the internet and can be found by searching google.

Opinions vary greatly, but you'll soon get a feel for what will work for you. Those who use this as their primary resource do so at their peril. It's best use to clarify and round out learnings from other resources.

#### Mentoring:

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The relationships formed at bee meetings will lead to opportunities to visit and assist others. Those who have already taken initiative towards their own education will more likely find such doors opened to them.

Also, the Calgary and District beekeepers association organizes "Saturday at the hive" tours, in which a handful of beekeepers gets to tour an established apiary and ask questions.

#### 4) Community:

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You'll want friends for advice and support. The more experience you can expose yourself to, the more will rub off on you. It can take time to build relationships, but is essential to long term success.

The Calgary Beekeepers Association has been around since at least the 1930s. Members vary from hobbyists to regional honey producers. Members primarily keep Langstroth, but some also keep Warre and Kenyan Top Bar. Styles range from Commercial to Urban. They hold bimonthly formal meetings, and every month in between have a "Bees and beers" meetup. There is also a club mailing list to ask questions on. See [www.calgarybeekeepers.com](http://www.calgarybeekeepers.com) for details.

Also, questions can be asked on online communities. There are many great internet forums to share information and ask questions on. Take regional differences such as climate into account when reading online. See resources section below.

#### 5) A permit:

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Once you purchase your equipment, you need to get a permit from the government of Alberta to keep bees. There is no cost to register, and information is used for the purposes of tracking and disease outbreak notifications.

See "Beekeeper registration form" at:

[https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/prm13239](https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/prm13239)

A note on legality: The city of Calgary does not have jurisdiction over beekeeping.

It's in the interest of all beekeepers to practice beekeeping responsibly, to ensure the city isn't forced to take an interest.

#### 6) A sense of responsibility:

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In the confines of the city, beekeeping can easily affect our neighbors, and other beekeepers.

Consider your neighbors when placing your hives so the flight path doesn't point towards their yard. Keep hives out of direct sight if possible.

Monitor population growth and ensure and give the bees plenty of room so they don't swarm. Swarms can attract unwanted attention and make others uncomfortable.

The Calgary Beekeepers Association has drafted guidelines to help urban beekeepers make responsible choices. Google "Calgary Urban Beekeeping Guidelines".

7) Sources and resources:

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[www.calgarybeekeepers.com](http://www.calgarybeekeepers.com) - Calgary Beekeeper's association

Calgary Beekeepers Association Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Calgary-and-District-Beekeepers-Association/303479772509>

[www.beemaidbeestore.com](http://www.beemaidbeestore.com) - Alberta supplier of equipment, Queens, and Packages.

Apihex Calgary - <https://apihex.ca/>

[www.bcbeekeepers.com/bcbba/bcbba\\_contacts.php](http://www.bcbeekeepers.com/bcbba/bcbba_contacts.php) - Regional sources of Nucs

[www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/prm13239](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/prm13239) - Alberta Apiculture

[www.albertabeekeepers.org](http://www.albertabeekeepers.org) - Alberta Beekeeping Commission.

[www.honeycouncil.ca](http://www.honeycouncil.ca) - National industry association.

[www.beesource.com](http://www.beesource.com) - Online Forum

[www.biobees.com](http://www.biobees.com) - Online forum - Emphasis on Kenyan Top Bar Style.

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Usual Disclaimers Apply

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