

Snoqualmie Valley Beekeepers Mentor Program

June 1, 2013

DRAFT, pending approval by SVB board

Beekeeping is a fascinating and complex undertaking that requires more knowledge than new beekeepers may realize. Some new beekeepers have prepared themselves as much as they can for their new endeavor; others have not. The purpose of these guidelines is to establish what new beekeepers and their mentors may expect from each other.

What is the mentor program?

Each April, the SVB Mentor Program Manager provides new beekeepers with the name of a more experienced beekeeper to help them navigate their first year.

What do I need to do to get a mentor?

Before you sign up for the SVB mentor program, we expect that:

- you are a paid member of SVB
- you have taken a comprehensive (4-8 hour) beekeeping course
- you have read at least one of the basic beekeeping books on the resource list below.

Once you have these basic foundations of beekeeping, contact the Mentor Program Manager (mentor@snoqualmievalleybeekeepers.org) to add your name to the program list. Mentors are available to SVB members on a first-come, first-served basis. We will try to accommodate everyone.

What can I expect from my mentor?

1. Your mentor can help you to:
 - make decisions by sharing experiences and pointing you toward reliable sources of information.
 - sort through the various options and conflicting advice offered in books and online and by other beekeepers to help you find the best solutions for your situation and management style.
2. Mentors strive to respond to your concerns within 24 hours.

If your mentor does not meet these expectations, contact the Mentor Program Manager.

What can I *not* expect from my mentor?

Beekeeping is enormously time-consuming, and so is advising about beekeeping. Please keep in mind that mentors will be heavily involved with colony management of their own. For these reasons:

1. Don't expect your mentor to be an on-call reference for basic information that you can find elsewhere.
2. Don't expect your mentor to assist with colony inspections. Do ask to attend your mentor's own colony inspections as often as you can arrange it.
3. Don't expect your mentor to anticipate your problems, questions, or issues. Your communications will initiate interactions with your mentor.

If you need or want a more assistance, consider arranging for a paid consultation with either your mentor or another professional beekeeper who provides this sort of service. We can suggest resources for this.

What does my mentor expect from me?

The level of support that your mentor offers will depend on your level of preparation and willingness to self-learn. We expect you to be inexperienced! However, we also expect you to educate yourself as well as you can. Therefore, your mentor expects that:

- you understand the basics of beekeeping (see Resource List)
- you have independently researched your concerns before asking for assistance, and you can document where you got your information
- you will respect your mentor's time

What next?

We hope you will have a stimulating, fun, and satisfying year of beekeeping. And we hope that next year we can add you to the list of people willing to mentor someone else!

New Beekeeper Resource List

Before signing up for the SVB Mentor Program, please study at least one of the basic books listed below. Your mentor will ask you what background reading you have done. It's a good idea to read more than one, because each book offers something that the others don't. We also recommend that you explore the beekeeping forums listed below. They are great sources of information for the kinds of questions that you will have.

Basic Books

The Backyard Beekeeper, Revised and Updated (Kim Flottum, 2010)

The Beekeeper's Handbook, 4th edition (Diane Sammataro & Alphonse Avitabile, 2011)

Beekeeping for Dummies, 2nd edition (Howland Blackiston, 2009)

Washington State Master Beekeepers Apprentice Booklet (WASBA 2011), available through SVB member Bob Combs.

We highly recommend that first-year beekeepers aim to take the Washington State Beekeepers Association Apprentice exam in their first season.

Supplementary Resources

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Beekeeping (Dean Stiglitz & Laurie Herboldsheimer, 2010)

Beginning handbook for keeping bees without chemical treatments. This book offers excellent guidelines, but it is not a stand-alone handbook on basic beekeeping.

Bush Bees (Michael Bush): <http://www.bushfarms.com/bees.htm>

This is by far the best source of information for keeping bees without chemical treatments. All of the information on this website is also available in Michael Bush's book, *The Practical Beekeeper*, but because the book lacks an index and is poorly organized, it is easier to use the website.

Michael Bush advocates using 8-frame medium Langstroth equipment—something to consider if you aren't already committed to something else.

Forums

Washington State Beekeeper's Forum: <http://wabeekeepersforum.proboards.com/>

Bee Source: <http://www.beesource.com/>