

# MENTOR PROGRAM



## A GUIDE TO BEE MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS



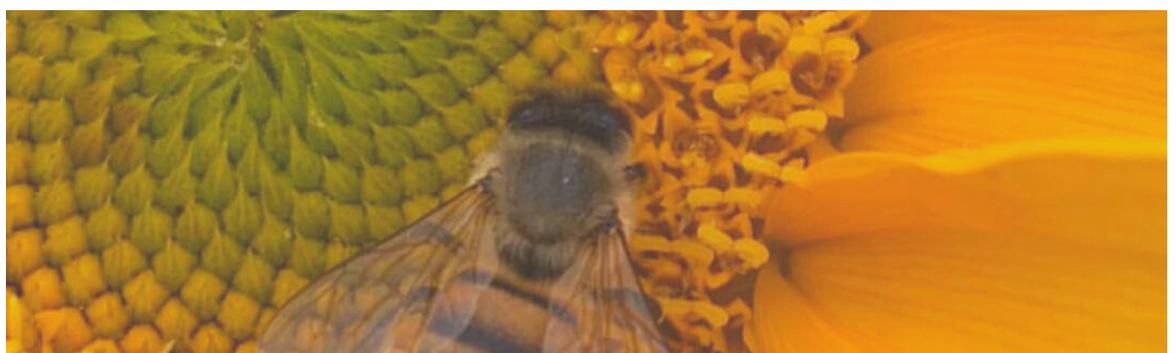
**TEXAS**  
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# GETTING STARTED:

Forming a mentorship program is a great way to promote better beekeeping through hands-on experience. Talking through issues and sharing knowledge often makes the mentor and the mentee better beekeepers. Here are some things to consider as you form your mentorship program.

- Know your resources -
  - How many experienced beekeepers do you have available to help?
  - How many newer beekeepers need help?
  - Is there a good location for you to meet as a larger group?
- Depending on the needs, you can determine whether having guided group "field trips" or 1-on-1 mentor opportunities makes more sense for your group.
- Defining the parties:
  - Mentor: someone with experience to share
  - Mentee: someone looking to learn from the experience of others
- Mentor requirements (suggestions):
  - 1+ years of experience
  - Well read in beekeeping techniques & bee biology
  - Available to host mentees in their bee yard
  - Willing to help mentees with issues in the mentee bee yard
- As a bee club or program, you may also consider the following when setting up a mentorship program:
  - Providing supplemental information for mentees and mentors at regular bee meetings or through email updates - this may include suggestions for setting up an apiary, what to look for you in your hive, etc.
  - Group meet-ups for in-hive experiences. This could include honey harvesting,
- Have a mentor coordinator or youth program director to help facilitate the group and provide supplemental information. This is also helpful so that if a mentee or mentor are having issues with their mentorship partner they can seek help from the coordinator.



# MENTEE EXPECTATIONS

To have a successful mentorship program, the mentors and the mentees must be committed to the process. We've outlined some suggestions for setting the expectations of the mentee for the best results as well.

- Mentee will:
  - Visit mentor yard to work bees throughout the season
  - Document their hive inspections when mentor is unavailable to accompany (using notes, photos, video, etc.)
  - Use reputable sources to gain more bee knowledge throughout the mentorship program
  - Will attend club meetings with regularity
  - Share knowledge with new beekeepers and join the mentorship program as a mentor once successfully completing the program

# WORKING BEES

When you go to work bees with mentees, be sure to give them the opportunity to handle the frames, use their hive tool, use the smoker, etc. Working bees with a mentor allows the mentee a chance to try their techniques, ask questions, and try new things.

- 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 think like a bee
- Become a phone call mentor, and be sure to visit your mentee's bee yard.

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

-Howard Scott, American Bee Journal



# EDUCATIONAL OUTLINE

Building a curriculum or a checklist can help make sure mentors and mentees have a better idea of what to cover within the beekeeping season. Most students won't know what questions to ask, so it's important that mentors guide the mentee with proper instruction and resources. Here are some suggested topics to cover for beginner beekeepers:

- **Protective gear & personal equipment needed:** Veil, suit, jacket, boots, smoker, gloves, hive tool
- **Setting up your apiary:** Hive placement, pest & weed control, hive stands, installing bees in your apiary
- **Working bees with the mentor:** Shoot for a few times throughout the season with hands-on experience
- **Lighting a smoker:** smoker fuel, techniques, tips and tricks
- **Handling stings:** How to remove a stinger, watching for allergic reactions, seeking medical advice
- **Provide resources:** In this digital age, there are so many great videos and helpful tools available to help supplement the in-person training and better educate our beekeepers.
- **Space management:** How and when to add or remove space
- **Nutrition:** How and when to feed bees
- **Building bee equipment:** how to build frames, boxes, etc.
- **Bee biology:** understanding the natural cycles of growth and decline in bees, swarming, bee communication,
- **Requeening & queen management:** when to requeen, how, and knowledge of how to raise your own queens



# MENTORSHIP DIRECTOR

If you're building a formal program within your organization, having a mentorship director is a must. You can assign this task to a sitting director or officer, or you could appoint/elect a new position. Here are some suggested responsibilities:

- Receive and review mentor and mentee applications
- Review mentor applications and approve mentors (by committee or however is best for your club)
- Match mentors and mentees using location, hive type, knowledge, and personality to the best of their ability
- Keep track of progress, check-in, and make adjustments as needed
- Report progress to the board or club



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