**HONEY BEES IN THE GARDEN**

When Carolyn Brown supervised at the Commonwealth Garden in 2010, she introduced Keith and Ananda to the idea of keeping honey bees in residence, first and foremost as pollinators, and then, only if there was enough, for honey. It is clear that pollination increased production in the garden the past year, and fortunately for Commonwealth Garden, Mellisa Bouley, who now supervises the garden, is a beekeeper, along with her other gardening skills and knowledge.

There is an abundance of information on the web regarding the keeping of honeybees. For your convenience, we have included an article that we hope will peek your interest to what we believe is an extremely important and valuable hobby, BEEKEEPING 101: WHY RAISE HONEYBEES.

**BEEKEEPING 101: Why Raise Honeybees?**

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Thinking of **raising honeybees**? Here is a [beginner’s guide to beekeeping](http://www.almanac.com/home-pets-family/beekeeping-blog) , starting with the **pros and cons** of having your own apiary!

Starting an apiary is relatively easy; however, there are some things you should consider:

**PROS**

There are many reasons why you would want to raise honeybees.

**Honey** is probably the obvious answer. Who wouldn’t love their own fresh batch of honey to use in recipes. A single bee can produce 1/12 teaspoon of honey in her lifetime (about 6 weeks), and with a colony consisting of thousands of bees, that can add up quickly.

**Wax**is another popular product of bees. Bees convert their food and make it into the wax comb. Wax is used in many ways, including candles and cosmetics. Many creams and lipsticks contain beeswax. You can learn how to [make your own lip balm](http://www.almanac.com/blog/natural-health-home-tips/make-your-own-lip-balm) with this guide.

**Pollination** is a key component of bee life. If you want healthy plants, bees can help. According to the [United States Department of Agriculture](http://www.ars.usda.gov/News/docs.htm?docid=15572), “Bee pollination is responsible for $15 billion in added crop value, particularly for specialty crops such as almonds and other nuts, berries, fruits, and vegetables. About one mouthful in three in the diet directly or indirectly benefits from honeybee pollination.”

**Diligent workers.**There’s a reason we say “busy as a bee.” Bees are constant workers. The nice thing is that it doesn’t take a lot of work on your part to raise bees. Once you get past the initial startup costs, you now have a free labor force that will produce honey and wax that you can later sell. Bees are independent, so there is not a lot of time commitment on your part. Plan for about a half hour each week and for honey collecting twice a year. As long as you are collecting when you should be, not over- or under doing it, than you will have a happy relationship with your little honey-makers for years to come.

**CONS**

There are some downsides to raising honeybees.

**Stings can happen with honeybees.**Check with your doctor first to determine if you are one of the unlucky people who are allergic to bee stings. Even if you are not allergic, stings can still be slightly painful. Luckily, though, most beekeepers develop immunity to the poison over time.

**Cost of supplies.**The initial cost of beekeeping is relatively cheap. You will, however, need to invest in supplies such as a hive, proper clothing, a smoker, extracting equipment, and hive supplies. As of this writing, a single new hive may cost about $110, clothing and gear may cost about $160, and a package of new bees may run $75 to $100. Often you can find starter kits with bees, boxes, and gear for a better combined price.

**The first year**can be a tough one. On top of learning the ins and outs of beekeeping, you may not get a large amount of honey. Learn to be patient with yourself and your bees.

**COMMUNITY**

Be sure to talk to local beekeepers and beekeeping organizations or communities. They often meet at public libraries. It’s always a good idea to go out with an expert a few times before raising your own bees.

There are plenty of [organizations about beekeeping](http://www.beeculture.com/content/whoswho/) available to those willing to look. These organizations are particularly useful for finding swarms (collections of bees) once you’ve become established with your apiary.

Please click on the following link for the entire blog from The Old Farmer’s Almanac, http://www.almanac.com/blog/beekeeping/beekeeping-101-why-raise-honeybees.