

SPOTLIGHT on Sustainability



Meet Backyard Beekeeper Doug Kramer

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something out of –HONEY!"*

What do you enjoy about beekeeping?

Beekeeping truly is fascinating and once established it is a relatively inexpensive hobby, but not carefree. I currently have six hives and each hive has approximately 60,000 to 70,000 bees at peak. This fun hobby is one that I get something out of...HONEY! Besides, local honey contains pollen that is specific to the area and therefore helps reduce seasonal allergies. Not to mention, bees are currently in a critical state, which is likely a combination of causes such as single plant variety land use, spread of non-native species, disease, chemical usage for the controls of "weeds" and climate change.

Why are bees important for our community?

Honeybees are perhaps the most important pollinator operating in the U.S. agricultural industry. Most flowering plants need the services of natural pollinators, such as honeybees, to do the work. Many of the crops grown in the U.S. require the use of pollinators. Honeybees are such important pollinators that many farmers will pay beekeepers to have hives located on their land. By using honeybees as pollinators, crop yields can be increased by as much as 300 percent. All types of bees pollinate about 40 percent of our crops.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to get started with beekeeping?

I would start by attending a **local beekeeping meeting** and find a mentor in there group that can start showing you the ropes. Most of the beekeepers enjoy talking and sharing their knowledge of bees.

Are there training classes on beekeeping available locally or online?

Lots of information is available on the Web, but be careful not all the information is correct and may not pertain to our local conditions. Beekeeping is slightly different throughout the United States and the world. Your local beekeeping club is the best source of information for getting started and, if you are still interested, the state has a **Master Beekeeping Program** offered through the University of Florida.

