



A worker honeybee gathers pollen from clover growing on a City boulevard.

Keeping beekeeping safe in the City of Milwaukee

Importance of Honeybees

The honeybee (*apis mellifera*) is a critical pollinator for flowers, fruits and vegetables. This is of great benefit in the city where pollinating insect populations are usually significantly smaller than in rural areas. Managed colonies of bees help to increase the yields and the quality of a large variety of plants found in backyard gardens, municipal parks, and flowerbeds.

Hives of honeybees are currently established in most every major city in the United States. Beehives are successfully kept in small back yards, on balconies and rooftops in congested urban environments with little, if any, impact to adjacent property owners.

In addition to the benefits of plant pollination, the honey, beeswax, pollen and other hive products are high in nutritional value and are a local, renewable and sustainable resource.

Beekeeping Ordinance

In 2010, the City of Milwaukee passed an ordinance (**Chapter 78-6 Milwaukee Code of Ordinances**) allowing people to keep up to two colonies of honeybees on private property within the City limits. A permit and inspection is required. Permit applications may be obtained from the Department of Neighborhood Services Environmental Section at the address listed in this brochure.

A simple map of the apiary and surrounding area with dimensions must be provided. Neighbors within 200 feet will be notified and given an opportunity to voice any concerns they may have. You might also be required to get written permission from your immediate neighbors, should your hives be within 50 feet of their dwellings or certain structures. Proof of beekeeping competency must be provided.



Honeybee Behavior

Honeybees are naturally gentle and non-aggressive. They may sting if they perceive a threat to their colony, but only as a last resort as the bee will die shortly after depositing its stinger. While foraging for nectar and pollen away from the colony, honeybees are completely docile and only concerned with the tasks they set out to do. In most cases, people living in close proximity of beehives will never know that the honeybees are around.



A typical frame of bees inside a beehive, showing worker bees drawing out wax cells and filling them with honey.

Your Responsibilities

If you plan to keep honeybees in the City of Milwaukee, it is best to talk to your neighbors ahead of time, and explain the behavior and benefits of beekeeping. Be prepared to address their concerns, as your neighbors will have a voice in the permit approval process.

Beekeeping in the city should utilize best practices to avoid creating problems for your neighbors. With some planning, beehives can be safely located in close proximity to homes, gardens and other places where people spend recreational time.

You will be responsible for monitoring your bees on a regular basis for the health of the hive and to ensure that you have not created a nuisance to others.

Limit your beekeeping activities to times when it will not interfere with your neighbors' activities and enjoyment of their property.

Resources for the Beekeeper and the Curious

The state of Wisconsin Department of Agriculture provides a great, free hive inspection service in the Spring and Fall, through Craig Petros, State Apiary Inspector. Call 262-968-5391.

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Additional Bee Keeping Resources

There are also local beekeeping associations and classes available to provide the training, mentoring and resources necessary for the new beekeeper:

University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension offers a Certified Beekeeper Course
414-256-4600
<http://milwaukee.uwex.edu>

Milwaukee Waukesha Beekeeping Association www.mwbeekeepers.org Meets monthly and provides workshops, mentoring, networking, a lending library and other helpful resources.

Wasps & Hornets

Wasps, hornets and yellow jackets are normally bright yellow and black, and are normally aggressive. They are often mistaken for honeybees. They nest in the ground, or above in a grey paper structure. They will sting without provocation, and can sting repeatedly. Wasps and hornets can be eliminated with common wasp sprays, and the use of soapy water in a spray or drench. The City does NOT remove these nests. For problem infestations, contact your local pest management firm.



The beekeeper is installing a colony of honeybees in a new hive.

Permit and General Information:

Milwaukee Department of Neighborhood Services
4001 South 6th Street, 2nd Floor
Milwaukee, WI 53221
414-286-5771

Websites:

<http://mwba1.tripod.com>
<http://mwbeekeepers.org>
www.honey.com
www.lappsbeesupply.com
www.dadant.com
www.bee-culture.com
www.city.milwaukee.gov

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841 N. Broadway Room 104
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(414) 286-2268



Beekeeping in the City of Milwaukee

- Information on keeping hives
- Application process for approval
- Tips on keeping bees
- Resources for beekeepers



Helpful Tips from the
City of Milwaukee
Department of
Neighborhood
Services