

Installing Packaged Bees



Decided where you want to set up your hive(s).

Lots of sunshine, preferably facing S, E, or SE.

Have a level and secure hive stand ready and waiting in place.

Ordered and put together hive equipment and painted parts.

Wondering if you will use all the tools you ordered?

Got your new protective clothing gear ready, tried on and know you look funny!

Decided what type of bees you are interested in ... maybe?

Checked with area beekeepers, extension office or local bee club if you are unsure what breed of bees do best in your area?

Ordered bees sometime in the early or mid part of winter if possible.

Now you read, wait, read, wait and get anxious!

You will be making lots of decisions on an adventure that can successfully be enjoyed many different ways, for many years to come, and it's only the beginning.

The Package

One of the more common means of starting a new beehive is by ordering live honey bees from a commercial vendor.

Packaged bees in a screened box *typically* contain:

- 🐝 About 12,000 live adult workers (approx 3 pounds)
- 🐝 One newly mated Queen Bee inside an inner cage
- 🐝 Inverted can of sugar water



Step 1 - Pick Up Your Bees

- a. Carefully check package for any cracks or tears in the screen before transporting. Hold box on wooden sides.
- b. Inspect the bees to make sure they are alive and in good health (normal to have about one inch of dead bees in the bottom of box).
- c. If there is an excessive amount of dead bees, it may be an indication that they have been overheated during shipping, in which case you should contact your package provider immediately.
- d. Spray bees with 1:1 sugar water as soon as possible.
- e. Protect package from wind or rain when transporting from pickup site.



Step 2 - Store and Feed

- a. Set bees in cool dry place until you are ready to install.
- b. Spray/Mist with 1:1 sugar water as soon as possible.
- c. Repeat sugar-water misting 3-4 times a day if not installing same day as pickup.



- d. This is a good time again to make sure all of your hive equipment is ready.
- e. Assemble all tools and make sure you have all parts of your protective gear ready also.

Step 3 - Prepare to Install

- a. Hive equipment set up, preferably facing E to SE, and plenty of sunshine.
- b. Spray/Mist with 1:1 sugar water again when reaching bee yard.



c. Carry package carefully by holding the wooden sides of the box and set near your new hive, set in a stable place.

d. Have your tools handy - hive tool, pliers, screwdriver, etc.

e. Spray all frames with sugar-water.

f. Leave out 4 frames from side of brood chamber (hive) to create space for bees to be shaken into.

g. (Just a reminder - these 4 frames will go back in the box before you are done closing up hive at the end) now continue ...



Step 4 - Prepare to Install

- a. With the hive tool, remove the wooden panel from the top of package of bees.
- b. Gently remove the tin feeder and queen cage from the hole in the top of the box. ***Hold on to the queen cage tab as you pull out the can and set both down for a moment.***
- c. Place wooden panel back over hole in package temporarily.



- d. It will feel awkward the first few times!

Step 5 - Check the Queen

- a. Gently shake bees from the outside of the queen cage and inspect the queen to ensure that she is still alive and healthy. Place the queen cage in the shade or in your pocket - somewhere safe for a few moments.
- b. Depending on your supplier, your queen may or may not have attendants inside her cage.

The queen cage may or may not have candy or a cork on one side or the other.



Step 6 - Now the Bees

- a. Immediately before installing the bees into the hive, hold the wooden lid in place and firmly knock the package on the ground once to make the bees drop to the bottom of the box

Be sure to hold the wooden lid in place while doing this!

- b. Next, remove the wood panel and quickly invert the package over the hive body. Firmly and vigorously shake the bees into the empty space in the hive. You may have to shake several times.

Don't panic if there are a large number of bees flying around; they will shortly be going into the hive without much problem.



Step 7 - Install the Queen

Here's where there are several ways to prepare queen cage for installation

- a. Remove cork on *candy side* of queen cage and let bees help queen come out slowly as it will take a few days for bees to eat candy making a passage way for Queen to get out.
- b. OR Leave cork in and come back 4-7 days later and release Queen yourself. Generally done by opening end of cage or carefully taking off screen, pull out a frame from hive and let her walk onto it and this way you can see it she is accepted.



- c. Place the queen cage vertically between two frames in the middle of the hive, with the candy end up. The screen on the queen cage should face either the right or the left of the hive and not the comb.

Bees should have access to the screen face of the queen's cage so that they can feed her and receive her scent. You can use electrical tape to help secure the tab on the cage to top of frames.

Step 8 - Almost Done

- a. Gently put back in all frames you had pulled out to begin with and take a last look that queen cage appears secure.
- b. Place the inner cover on the hive gently, so as not to crush many bees. In doing this you may have to wait for the bees to go down into the hive for a short time.
- c. If there are straggler bees in cage, just set it up near the hive entrance and most bees will go in within a day.
- d. Set up a feeder can, or feeder jar with 1:1 sugar/water. It is most important to give plenty of sugar syrup to assist the colony to develop and to check regularly the presence and performance of the queen.



Leave alone for 4-7 days!

Step 8 - Lastly, But Not The End

- a. 4-7 days after installation of bees in the hive, the queen cage needs checked to see that the queen is released from her cage. If bees seem calm around her cage you can now release her if she has not been released by the bees.
- b. Check hive again after a week to 10 days to see if the queen is laying brood. Look for eggs, larva or capped brood.
- c. Shortage of brood, eggs and larvae indicates the queen is failing or absent. If the brood is patchy or unsatisfactory, a new queen may need be introduced or the colony is united with another colony. Sometimes a newly mated Queen takes a few weeks to get the hang of egg laying.
- d. When the bees have drawn 8 foundation frames in the first hive body, a second hive body is added to provide space for expansion. A frame or two of brood and a frame of honey are moved into the second hive body to encourage bees to move up. Add frames as needed.
- e. If the package bees have started with drawn combs, the second hive body of frames may be added four weeks after hiving for the bees to store honey in.



If the bees only knew
how much power over us
they truly do!