

# Breeds/Races of Honeybees



Over **20,000** Species of Bees worldwide! *within these there are 4 different Species of **Honeybees** in the world ...*

**The Little Honeybee (*Apis florea*)** - native to southeast Asia

**The Eastern Honeybee (*Apis cerana*)** - native to eastern Asia as far north as Korea & Japan

~~**The Giant Honeybee (*Apis dorsata*)** - native to southeast Asia~~

**The Western Honeybee (*Apis mellifera*)** - native to Europe, Africa and western Asia

***The Western Honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) - within this groups there are numerous **Subspecies** each with their own traits. Add to that lots of hybrids ... all in search of the perfect bee!***

*There are about 4,000 native species of bees in North America, but honey bees are not native to our part of the world. Honey bees came to the America(s) via the colonists, in the 1600's. Most of the bees brought over the ocean on sailing vessels were the German Bee. The German bee was winter-hardy, but susceptible to brood diseases and as new species were introduced the German bee lost favor. As new diseases were introduced over time, they have nearly wiped out any feral colonies in existence.*

Decide what breed of bees you want in your apiary by what traits are most important to you. What preferences you start with may change over time as you gain experience with beekeeping.

They are compared by:

**Color**

**Gentleness / Aggressiveness**

**Spring Build-up**

**Brood Patterns/On/Off**

**Over-Wintering Ability**

**Prone to Swarming**

**Prone to Robbing**

**Prone to Drifting**

**Propolis Use**

**Comb Building**

**Disease Resistance**

**How Often Need to Requeen**

**(to keep traits as in hybrids)**

**Honey Production**



blue bee of Australia

Regardless of the breed:

All bee colonies take on their own personality. They will not comply to the trait standards 100% of the time. They are in control. Not the beekeeper.

# Common Honey Bee Breeds

## Carniolan

Very gentle. Tan with dark brown/black bands  
Good comb producers. Not prone to rob  
Explosive spring build up may cause swarming  
Shut down brood rearing during dearth  
Winter in small cluster, frugal with winter stores  
Average honey producer



## Italian

Very gentle. Gold and brown bands  
Less prone to swarm. Use less propolis  
May continue laying brood during dearth  
Prone to rob during a dearth and drift easily  
A little less winter hardy than other breeds  
Good honey producers

## Russian

Usually gentle. Light brown to darker brown  
Bred for mite resistance and winter hardiness  
Queen starts brood production very early spring  
Frequently make queen/swarm cells on frames  
Produce lots of propolis. Winter in small cluster  
Average honey producer



## Buckfast

Can be defensive. Tan with dark brown bands  
Good spring build up. Small winter clusters  
Tracheal mite resistant. Good grooming habits  
Winter hardy even in cold wet climates  
Prone to robbing during a dearth  
Very good honey producers



