

How to Get Some Bees
www.sparkybeegirl.com

Order “Package Bees” from a reputable bee supplier

Note: Most large companies treat their bees with anti-biotics and miticides.

Here’s how to install a package: Feed your bees when they arrive. Spray, splash, or sprinkle sugar syrup onto the screen of the package (tipping to the side may be helpful). Bees can be held this way for a few days, but keep them in a cool place. Installation is best done late afternoon, as they are likely to settle in and stay the night. Occasionally a package decides a spot is unfavorable and absconds. Remove the feeding can and bring out the caged queen. Carefully remove the cork from one end, leaving the sugar plug in place (some queen cages require you to put in your own plug of sugar, marshmallow or tissue paper). Hang the cage with the queen between two bars towards the front end of the hive— this can be done with tape or string. Avoid exposing the queen to cold or direct sun. Remove 4 or 5 bars and shake or pour the bees into the box. Next set the shipping box down on top of the hive with the opening facing into the hive. The bees will crawl inside. Once they are all in, close the hive for the evening. Check within 24-48 hours and make sure the queen has made it out of the cage, if not, let her out and remove the cage. Check in one week for satisfactory brood. Regular feeding for a few weeks will ensure comb drawn in your hive.

Catch A Swarm

Finding Swarms: As a novice beekeeper your best bet is to tell your friends and family you are looking for a swarm and describe what to look for. Later you may be part of list-serves or beekeeping association swarm lists. If it is your first time “catching” a swarm, do not try a complicated extraction from a wall or 25 feet up in a tree. Leave this for an experienced beekeeper. Go for a swarm that is hanging out on a low branch. When the swarm leaves the hive, they cluster in a temporary location while scouts go out looking for a new home. The bees will stay clustered there for a while—though not usually more than 24-36 hours, so you need to move fast. Swarming bees are docile, full of honey and don’t have any brood or food to protect. Their MO is to stay with their queen who is in the middle of that clump of bees. Bring a ventilated box to the location. It can be a cardboard box with some screen taped into it, but be forewarned, you do not want to leave them in a temporary structure long, because as soon as they find their home they are going to start building comb like there is no tomorrow. Best to catch a swarm AFTER your nuc or box is ready. If you can easily cut the branch they are on, do so and gently lay the clump in the box and close the box. Otherwise you can also shake or brush the bees into the box—if you can do it in one fell swoop, all the better. There are many swarm catch videos on YouTube. If you have gotten the queen the bees will follow her into the box before too long. If not all the bees have gone in, leave the box sitting for a few hours or i=until dusk. Close the box and transport it to the hive location. Pour or shake your bees into the destination hive at dusk. To ensure they stay, you could leave the hive box closed for 24 hours. If you have painted a bit on beeswax onto your bars or left a bit of old comb inside, they are fairly sure to stay.

Catch a Swarm ~ Bait Box

Position a hive box or Nuc facing south/southeast, with morning sun in an area where bees are present and may be swarming. In nature bees look for high spots, so setting a bait hive on a 1 story roof is recommended. Place a commercially available “swarm catch” pheromone into the box and/or several empty combs.

Take A “Split” aka divide or artificial swarm

Splitting is the process of taking bees, brood and food from an existing hive to make a new colony. This is best done in the spring. Take the queen, 2-3 paddles of brood and 2 paddles of food (5 paddles total) and put them in a new box. Move that box away from the parent hive. The parent colony will start raise a new queen from a young larvae after 24 hours. If all goes well you should see a queen cell within days and brood within 24-27 days.

More risky but can work: Take 2-3 paddles of brood including fresh eggs or young larvae less than 3 days old. 2 paddles of food and shake in some extra bees. If they have the right larvae, the split will raise a new queen.

Take 5 bar splits in March/April. 7 bars splits in May, 8 bar splits in June, 10 bar splits in July. Do not take split later than July. The colony will not have enough time to build up and store food for winter.