

Reap Honey's Benefits with Backyard Beekeeping

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Backyard Beekeeping. [Pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com) (2016).

A recent [Nielsen Category Overview](#) ranks honey as the 6th fastest-growing grocery department category in the US, with 2015 sales of \$553.8 million. Although the natural sweetener tastes great, honey's health benefits may be what's driving retail sales. Despite honey's popularity, the tasty condiment may eventually disappear from store shelves. *Global Research* report, [Death and Extinction of the Bees](#) links parasites and pesticides to a one-third drop in the number of honey bees in the US.

Beekeeping offers one way for people to help boost bee populations and get healthy from honey. Read on to find out if keeping the honeypot filled and reaping honey's health benefits is worth the cost and effort of adding bees to your backyard.

Irresistible Flavor of Honey

Honey's full-bodied taste led [Firmenich](#), the world's largest privately-owned fragrance and flavor company, to name 'honey' as the 2015 flavor of the year. Firmenich describes honey as a "full-bodied sweetener that leaves a delicate impression."

Honey's sweetness is equal to that of regular sugar, according to *Food Product Design's* [report](#) on sweeteners. Yet, chef's at [cooks.com](#) recommend [substituting](#) equal amounts of honey for sugar up to one cup. For each additional cup of sugar in recipes, substitute two-thirds to three-fourths cup of honey. Honey's rich flavor is more intense than regular table sugar so it tastes

sweeter. Cooks.com chefs add honey instead of sugar to [protein snacks](#), [meat glazes](#), [breakfast breads](#), and more.

Health Benefits of Honey

[Medical research](#), as reported in a 2008 volume of *The Scientific World Journal*, assessed honey's effects on heart-disease risks in normal-weight and overweight individuals. The 30-day study found that eating around 5 tablespoons of honey per day lowered bad blood fats, like LDL cholesterol and triglycerides, and increased the good blood fat, HDL cholesterol, in both groups. Moreover, honey achieved these health-promoting results without causing the subjects to gain weight.

The same study also showed that honey has a gentler effect on blood sugar levels than regular sugar. When study subjects ate sugar, their blood sugar readings were higher than when they ate the same amount of honey. Higher blood sugar can lead to chronic diseases like [obesity](#) and [diabetes](#).

Another [study](#) in a 2010 volume of the *Journal of Chemical and Pharmaceutical Research*, touted honey's antibacterial, antiviral, and antifungal properties. As a result, the study associates honey with improved wound healing, osteoporosis prevention, and reduction in bone and stomach cancer symptoms.

Backyard Access to Honey

According to [Beethinking.com](#), getting into beekeeping involves five main steps.

Step 1: Get the bees.

Start-up beekeepers have three options for getting bees. They can ask a local beekeeper to catch wild bees for them. They can catch the bees themselves with swarm traps built like this one based on Horizontal Hive.com's [plans](#). Or they can order packaged bees like those sold by [Kelley Beekeeping](#) that arrive via US Mail.



[Horizontal Hive](#) 2016.

Step 2: Choose a hive.

[Beekeeping.com](#) recommends a 'top bar' hive for backyard beekeepers. A top bar hive is simple to set up, easy to access, lightweight, and complete without additional accessories. Hives can be hand-built by watching this YouTube instructional [video](#) or they can be purchased for around \$300 from online beekeeping suppliers like [Beethinking.com](#) or [Brushy Mountain Bee Farm](#).



[Grossman's Hives](#), 2014.

Step 3: Place the hive.

The best site for a bee hive is on level ground that gets early morning sun. The hive site should also be near water and flowering plants and be safe for bees and people.

Step 4: Purchase equipment. For around \$150, backyard beekeepers can outfit themselves with a hat with a veil, a protective jacket, gloves, a hive tool for inspecting colonies, a smoker (to calm bees), and a bee brush to gently move bees. Like the hives equipment is found at online beekeeping supply sites.



beethinking.com, 2016.

Step 5: Start the hive. The best time to start a hive depends on the geographic area. In general, start hives in spring after the last frost and when flowers are in bloom so that bees can collect nectar and pollen.

Call-to-Action for Honey

The honeybee population is declining just as society is beginning to recognize the true value of honey's golden sweetness. Right now, honey is still on shelves of most retail food stores. Yet, the *Global Research* report warns that nearly one third of the honey bee population is gone and one-third of hives have been destroyed. Besides impairing access to honey, declining bee populations also affect other crops. Over 130 vegetables and fruits rely on honey bees for cross-pollination.

It's a good idea to consider setting up backyard bee hives. Not only does the environmentally-friendly initiative improve access to honey's great taste and health benefits, it helps make sure vegetables and fruits remain part of our diets. Sure, backyard beekeeping requires a little effort and a modest financial investment. However, now is a great time to begin planning and purchasing along the way in anticipation of the start of spring.

Come spring, there may be a few more backyard beekeepers than last year, a trend that just might help improve the future of the honey bee. Consider adding bees to your backyard. Full honeypots and improved health are two benefits that make the time and effort of beekeeping worthwhile. Good luck and happy beekeeping!