

BEGINNING BEEKEEPER CASE STUDY



Martha Pinto

Omaha, Nebraska

This is a real-life example of a start-up beekeeper. Read this case study for tips and advice. To learn more about our work with beginning farmers and beekeepers, visit cfra.org/farmers.



Martha began researching beekeeping in 2019 and started keeping bees in 2020. Today, she has two hives.



Martha's sister, an organic farmer, piqued her interest in beekeeping.



Currently, only producing for personal consumption, but would like to sell various honey products in the future.

FIRST STEPS INTO BEEKEEPING WORLD

“ I joined the Omaha Beekeeper Club, which connected me with other beekeepers who gave me advice about where to find a queen bee supplier and how to properly handle bees. They also helped me decide on the best location to place my hive.

I learned how to protect my hive during the winter, as well as how to provide a substitute for pollen during the colder months.

Being around people with extensive experience gave me the confidence I needed to start beekeeping.

”



Martha's winterized bee hive.



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WHAT IS A QUEEN BEE?

A queen bee is the only reproductive female that lives in a colony. Each colony should only have one queen bee. On average, a queen bee lives two to four years.

HIVE STYLE AND EQUIPMENT

“ My hive style is Langstroth.

I have a veil, smoker, and gloves. I typically wear a long-sleeved, flannel shirt, jeans, and boots.

I have been stung twice, and had an allergic reaction. The protective equipment is very important to me. ”



ADVICE FOR OTHERS INTERESTED IN BEEKEEPING

The most important thing is to begin.

The initial investment can be very high, and it would be good idea to have a specific purpose to start your bee hive.

I would have liked to learn with someone that had an established operation to receive advice about what not to do in wintertime because I made a lot of mistakes.

INITIAL CHALLENGES

“ At the beginning, I had some issues with the queen. The first one died and the second one flew away. Finally, the third queen adapted and established the hive.

Fortunately, the individual that sold me the queens replaced each one until the hive was established. ”



CONTINUING EDUCATION

Martha has attended a few Center for Rural Affairs beekeeping classes. She has learned more about marketing, U.S. Department of Agriculture funding options, and budgeting for beekeeping.

FAVORITE ASPECT OF BEEKEEPING

“ I love knowing the origin of the products I am consuming, and feel good about increasing the pollinator population, which is so important to food production.

Planting specific plants is also a favorite aspect. Wild flowers are important to the bee habitat and help to provide food for other wild animals. ”

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