

Bee on Your Way

When you hear the buzzing of bees near your home in spring, you may want to shoo them away. Instead, learn the steps to get visiting bees to set up shop elsewhere.

By Stephanie Staton

Photo courtesy USDA/Scott Bauer

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You may have noticed that the buzzing of busy bees is a little louder in your backyard this spring.

Why?

With spring, some bees, such as bumblebees and Honey bees, migrate to warmer climates, bigger abodes and perhaps even “greener pastures,” while others follow a new queen in search of fresh pad to build up a colony or bigger digs than their current abode.

If a colony of bees has set up camp in your yard, tree or even a crack in your basement, hold off on calling the exterminator--buzz a local beekeeper to assess the situation first.

Stay Safe: Do Not Disturb
In no way should you attempt to disturb the bees. Even the most docile bees can become aggressive when they feel threatened.

Do not shoo, shake or throw things at the buzzing mass. Go somewhere safe and look up a local beekeeper or call your local extension agent for advice. They can tell you what to do next and how to identify the recent intruders.

This is especially important as it's nearly impossible for the untrained observer to discern the difference between a European Honey bee and an Africanized cousin.

Buzz Off
The site now inhabited by a seemingly ever-expanding ball of bees may or may not be a permanent housing site for the bees.

Some bees will use a crevice, tree or bush as a temporary “hotel” for the night, vacating within the next day or two to their next location.

However, some females seeking out the perfect home may find a crack in your foundation or a small entrance into your basement all too tempting to pass up.

Scientists are studying not only the preferences of certain types of housing for bees, but also the draw of previously inhabited bee shelters. They believe that the bees release a fluid that's then detected by other bees and draws them to the site.

A Honey of Deal
If the bees are pollinators, you may have saved more than just their lives: a few flowers and fruits may reap the benefit as well.

With the recent increase in colony collapse disorder, fungus and parasite outbreaks, and infections in various Honey bees and bumblebees, one-third of the nation's food supply could be at risk—not to mention your newly planted crops.

About the Author: Stephanie Staton is managing editor for the Popular Farming Series and associate editor for Hobby Farms and Hobby Farm Home.

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