



Mid-Atlantic  
Apicultural Research &  
Extension Consortium

Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey  
Pennsylvania, West Virginia  
and the USDA cooperating

## APIARY SITES

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It is entirely conceivable to keep honey bees in virtually any location—honey bees are relatively versatile and can adapt to a wide variety of locations and weather conditions because of their ability to thermoregulate their hive. However, there are several criteria that will help ensure that the placement of your honey bee colonies is ideal for their survival and perpetuation.



## BEE CONSIDERATIONS

When choosing a location for your apiary, you first want to find an area away from traffic and from human or animal disturbance. The area should be in full sunlight, or lightly shaded in the afternoon, with hive entrances preferably having southern or eastern exposure to morning sun. The apiary site should have good air circulation, while also maintaining protection from direct wind. This is especially important for the winter months.

With regards to water, the site should be in relatively close proximity to a source of fresh water for the bees. The water source should not, however, be close enough to the apiary site that flooding could occur, or large enough to reduce forage area. The site should be above flooding level and should have adequate water drainage. Most importantly, the closest water source should *not* be a neighbor's pool!

It is important that the apiary site be in the immediate vicinity of early and plentiful pollen-producing plants. You want your bees to be able to remain relatively close to home while foraging. The plants immediately available to the bees should also be diverse to provide multiple nectar sources. The forage area must provide easy access to pollination crop sites that are free of repeated pesticide applications.

## BEEKEEPER CONSIDERATIONS

You must also think of yourself when choosing an apiary site. Your apiary site must be convenient for you.

A prime colony site would be close to the beekeeper's residence or a friend's location. The site must be accessible by vehicle and should have firm, dry ground all months of the year. The area should also have a quick escape route if ever necessary.

The site should offer sufficient space for expansion of colony numbers and for manipulation of hives, as well as space for building a storage facility for tools and bee equipment if needed. The colonies must also have adequate area for their flight to be directed away from traffic, humans, or animals.

It is ideal for the colonies to be relatively close to extracting equipment and super storage facilities for convenience. The hives should be able to be screened from view, to reduce the likelihood of disturbance or vandalism.

## MAKING A SITE SUITABLE

Not all of the desired and necessary aspects of an apiary site can always be found in a convenient location in nature. Sometimes you may need to make some changes to your chosen site to make it more suitable for your bees. Some locations can be improved through the erection of a fence or the planting of a hedge of trees for protection from direct wind. Fences or rows of trees may also help with providing the bees with flight paths away from livestock or traffic. You may need to become involved with policy decisions, as well, to protect agricultural land used by your bees.

MAAREC, the Mid-Atlantic Apiculture Research and Extension Consortium, is an official activity of five land grant universities and the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The following are cooperating members:

University of Delaware  
Newark, Delaware

University of Maryland  
College Park, Maryland

Rutgers University  
New Brunswick, New Jersey

The Pennsylvania State University  
University Park, Pennsylvania

West Virginia University  
Morgantown, West Virginia

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Participants in MAAREC also include state beekeeper associations, and State Departments of Agriculture from Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

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