

About Our Beehives

85
GREEN



Why do we have beehives?

Bees, native bees and honey bees, provide crucial pollination services for both edible and non-edible plants in our community and our world.

Our honey bee hives are part of our 85 Green initiative: a series of projects designed to promote nutritional literacy and help us learn and grow together toward a more sustainable community.

Most importantly, our hives will serve as a platform for education and conversation about the importance of all bees and other pollinators.

Our two beehives are located on top of Central Library's green roof and visible from the second floor of the library.

What about the honey?

Honey is first and foremost the bees' food supply. It's important that the hives be well established before any honey is harvested. We do not plan on harvesting any honey during the first year of our hives' operation. Depending on the harvest volumes in future years, we may use some of the honey in library programs or we may be able to make honey available to the public in other ways.

Honey bee safety

Ontario honey bees rarely sting. Most stings are from wasps, not honey bees. As wild creatures, honey bees may sting if their hive is attacked or, as a last resort, if they feel threatened.

The flight path of bees from the hive is usually in an upward arc away from the hive. Our two hives are elevated well above people's heads and are out of the path of humans. In fact, there are hundreds of licensed beehives throughout Kitchener, with many in the downtown core. Our two hives will not pose any additional risk to residents.

Who will be looking after the bees?

Beehives require professional management and care. Our hives are regularly inspected and monitored by a local apiarist from *Best for Bees*.



What can I do to help?

Owning and managing your own beehive is not something most people should do, but there are a number of ways you can help support our local bee population:

- Plant pollinator-friendly gardens especially with native flowering plants.
- Plant flowering plants that bloom through all growing seasons.
- Don't use pesticides or insecticides.
- Rake gently (bumblebees hibernate underground).
- Leave bare patches in your yard for tunneling bees to make their home.
- Make water available to birds and insects, such as a bird bath with stones or marbles, to give the bees a place to stand while drinking.

Honey bee facts

The library has many resources on bees, bee keeping, and other pollinators including books, e-books, audiobooks, and DVDs. Know your bees!

- A honey bee's lifespan varies depending on its role in the hive.
- The queen lives for 2-5 years.
- The queen lays up to 2,000 eggs every day.
- The majority of the bees in the hive are female. They are called worker bees.
- Male bees are called drones and cannot sting. The queen will not mate with any drones from her own hive.
- Bees won't fly if it is raining, too cold, or once the sun has gone down.
- There are between 10,000 to 60,000 bees in each hive.
- Honey bees only live 6 weeks to 3 months.
- One hive can make over two hundred pounds of honey, but each year eighty pounds will be left for the bees to eat over the winter.
- Winter survival rates in Ontario can vary from year to year, but on average are around 50%.