

Green Section Record

REGIONAL UPDATE

October 5, 2018



Selecting a site for beehives is a big decision. At the Lake Marion Golf Course, beehives are visible to the golfers but well away from play.

FIVE TIPS FOR BEEKEEPING SUCCESS

BY PATRICK O'BRIEN | AGRONOMIST, SOUTHEAST REGION

Golf course superintendents can be proactive environmental stewards in their community by encouraging pollinators on golf courses. Approximately four years ago, Gene Scarborough, superintendent at the Santee Cooper Resort in Santee, South Carolina, started keeping honey bees on the Lake Marion Golf Course.

Scarborough had a keen interest in learning about these fascinating pollinators, their needs, their forage plants, their life cycle, the challenges they face, and the products of the hive including their yummy honey.

Based on his experience, Scarborough offers the following recommendations to other superintendents who may want to become beekeepers:

- 1. Visit or join a local beekeeping club.** Beekeeping clubs provide excellent opportunities to learn from other beekeepers. You will find that even among experienced beekeepers, there are differing opinions about what works best. Beekeeping clubs also provide a venue for new beekeepers to share their challenges and seek advice. A network of experienced and new beekeepers will help you along the way.

2. Take a class offered through your local, regional or state beekeeping association.

Classes will help you learn the daily, seasonal and annual beekeeping tasks. Many beekeeping associations offer classes on everything from promoting pollinators and producing honey to managing pests and diseases that affect honeybees. Taking a few classes before fully committing to beekeeping also is a great way to get your feet wet without investing a lot of time and money.

3. Try to keep hives in areas that are visible but certainly not close to play.

At the Santee Cooper Resort, the bee yard is positioned in a naturalized area 100 yards behind an elevated green and 150 yards left of a fairway.

4. Invest in professional protective equipment – e.g., veil, gloves, jacket and/or beekeeping suit.

Many beekeeping supply companies offer starter kits that include most of the basic equipment that you will need. Depending on your short, medium, and long-range plans, you may also want to consider investing in more substantial items such as an extractor to get honey out of hive frames, freezers to store frames, hive supers to assist in insect pest eradication, or possibly a honey house.

5. Be prepared to answer questions from your employees, golfers and other beekeepers.

Many people are afraid of honeybees. People often confuse them with other aggressive stinging insects like yellow jackets. As a beekeeper, you will have plenty of opportunities to educate people on the benefits of pollinators and the fascinating life of the honeybee.

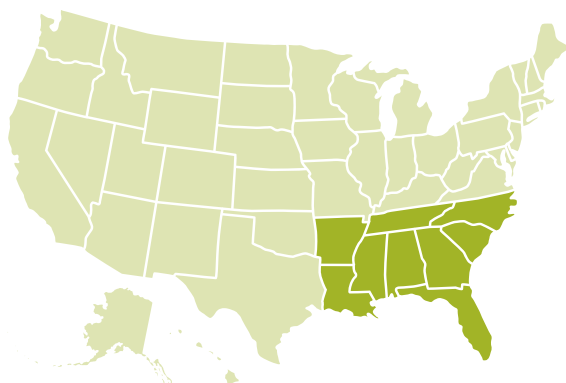
Beekeeping is a hobby that provides opportunities for education, entertainment and the sweet taste of the honey. Products of the hive, including honey and wax, can provide income for your facility or maintenance operation. Finally, keeping bees at a golf course is another way to showcase the golf industry's concern for and care of the environment.

Special thanks to Gene Scarborough and Susan Reed Campbell at the Santee Cooper Resort for their assistance in the preparation of this article.



For information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service Contact the Green Section Staff.

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