

Honeybees

Apis mellifera · Managed hive

DIFFICULTY Moderate

TYPE Insect livestock, kept for honey and pollination

PRODUCTIVE LIFE Colony can persist indefinitely with management



SPACE

1–2 hives per small property, 2–3m clearance around each



DIET

Forages independently — flowering plants within a few km radius



WATER

Provide a shallow water source with landing points nearby



TEMPERAMENT

Generally calm when managed well, defensive if disturbed

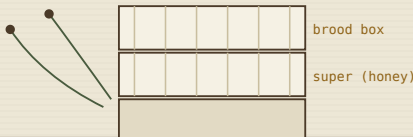


LIFESPAN

Workers weeks; queen 2–3 years; colony ongoing

01 Brood box and super

A managed hive is typically split into a lower brood box, where the queen lays and the colony raises young, and an upper super, where bees store the surplus honey that's harvested.



bees forage, then return to the hive

02 Housing & setup

SHELTER	A standard hive (e.g. Langstroth) sited in a sunny spot sheltered from strong wind, facing away from foot traffic.
FENCING	Not required, though a low screen or hedge near the entrance can direct bee flight paths upward and away from people.
BEDDING	Not applicable — bees manage their own internal hive structure on frames.

04 Health & problems

- **Varroa mite** — a serious, near-universal pest; monitor and treat as part of routine management.
- **Swarming** — colonies split off if overcrowded; manage hive space proactively in spring.
- **Small hive beetle** — a pest in warmer regions; keep colonies strong and hives clean.
- **Colony collapse/queen failure** — requeen if the colony weakens without clear cause.

03 Daily care

- Inspect every 1–2 weeks in the warmer months to check for space, health, and swarming signs.
- Add supers as the colony grows and honey stores build up.
- Provide a nearby water source, especially in hot, dry weather.
- Monitor for pests and disease as part of routine inspections.

05 Production & harvest

HARVEST	Once supers are capped with honey, typically once or twice a year depending on climate and forage.
YIELD	A healthy hive can produce 15–30kg of surplus honey a year in good conditions.
METHOD	Frames are uncapped and spun in an extractor, or pressed for smaller-scale setups.
STORAGE	Honey keeps almost indefinitely in a sealed jar at room temperature.

06 Compatibility & considerations

GOOD WITH

Vegetable gardens and orchards (pollination benefit)

AVOID KEEPING WITH

Areas with heavy pesticide use nearby

High foot-traffic zones directly at the hive entrance

NOTE

Check local council and state biosecurity requirements for hive registration before starting — most Australian states require it.