JAMAICAN SUSTAINABLE BEEKEEPING INTERNSHIP

Many beekeepers in Jamaica, including our family, are open to exploring natural and sustainable methods of beekeeping, including the use of top bar hives.

Our move from conventional beekeeping to a more natural way to work with bees has been a wonderful journey. With top bar beekeeping, we do not need frames or foundation for the bees to build comb on – we just offer them a top bar with a strip of beeswax as a starting point, and they build comb with the size cell that suits them best. Natural cell size and comb that is harvested with the honey result in healthier bees. If beekeepers also breed queens for pest resistance, it is very possible for us to keep bees without treating our bees with miticides, antibiotics and pesticides.

Top bar hives are affordable to build and don't need expensive equipment to manage. Storage needs are minimal and there is no heavy lifting involved. Little wonder so many beekeepers here are excited about learning more about keeping their own top bar hives!

We share information with other beekeepers around the island through our Sustainable Beekeeping Project. We have worked with the USAID Farmer-to-Farmer program to bring down experts in different fields to teach Jamaican beekeepers skills needed to bring our beekeeping operations to economic and environmental sustainability. Currently, we are focusing on training a motivated group of women who are future natural beekeeping trainers and role models for their local areas.

To learn more about the project, please see this page on our website.

On our farm, you will do everything related to the management of top bar hives, including inspecting all of the colonies in our apiaries. You will help us to build hives of different materials, sizes and uses. We host a Bee Club with local families and children as members. You will help run the Bee Club activities - they meet every two weeks at our farm. If we are in a honey flow during your internship period, you will raise queens and process honey and wax. You will make mead, candles, balms and lotions and more.

By the end of your internship, you should understand what is involved in treatment free, natural beekeeping. You will be comfortable building and managing colonies in top bar hives. You will have experience planning and leading workshops. You will get a sense of the beekeeping environment here in Jamaica. You are welcome to be as active as you wish in our project, which actually supports international development efforts that use apiculture as a poverty reduction tool. Beekeeping can only help people rise above poverty if the hives and the methods are affordable!
We provide all interns with protective gear and lots of support. Total novices are welcome and encouraged. We have a library of beekeeping books at the disposal of the interns. We suggest that anyone interested in this internship read Parker Farm’s definition of what it means to be treatment free and Randy Oliver's site, Scientific Beekeeping.

Resilience is a helpful quality to have in Jamaica, as things do not always work out as planned, and you need to be able to bounce back, adjust and try again without losing your enthusiasm. Self-motivation is essential, as our normal life on our farm will demand our energy, and you need to be able to work independently once given direction.

Interns will be expected to work 40 hours a week. We are a family farm, and cannot afford to support this project financially, so all interns must contribute $1500 per month for their room and three meals a day, along with plenty of snacks and fruit. We will also do our best to introduce the interns to the town and the people who live here in an informal way so that the interns can fully experience life in a rural Jamaican town. We require interns to keep a blog and to write regular posts.

You will also participate in life on our farm. Past interns have gone to the bat cave to collect guano for fertilizer, built a charcoal and sand water filter, gone to the nearby bamboo forest to collect bamboo for a natural building project, built a clay oven, cut guinea grass with machete to cover the ground in the watermelon field, and gone to our hillside farms to gather mango, jackfruit, jelly coconut and other fruits. Our Internships page has a slideshow that shows more of life here as an intern. To apply for this internship, please find the application here.

We are happy to work with any student interested in obtaining academic credit for their experience with us, and with students who need to access funding through their school in order to participate.

To get a sense of what it is like to be an intern on our farm, please read the blog kept by one of our past interns: http://deeleesbees.blogspot.com/. Our website features links to blogs kept by other past interns.

Please contact Agape Adams by email (verbabuenaja@aol.com) or by phone (876-343-1121) for more information.