



Volcano Island Honey C...
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Beginning Organic Beekeeping Begins!

by Volcano Island Honey Company on Thursday, July 14, 2011 at 11:21pm

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Jenny Bach of Bee Love Apiaries co-taught the class with Richard Spiegel of Volcano Island Honey Co.

The *Beginning Organic Beekeeping* class taught by Richard Spiegel and Jenny Bach started on Saturday, July 9, 2011, with a new crop of 17 people—all enthusiastic about learning to work with the bees. The class was comprised of backyard gardeners and small farmers, most of who were interested in keeping bees for pollination of trees and vegetables. Many people on Hawai'i Island have reported noticing a decline in macadamia nut and fruit tree production as a result of the loss of wild beehives. Wild hives have begun to decline as a result of the varroa mite bee parasite and other bee pathogens.

Jenny told the class that Honeybees were first brought to Hawaii in 1857 by the Bishop family. After a number of failed attempts, honeybees finally arrived by ship and were first cultivated in Nu'uuanu valley on Oahu.



Richard explains about how to approach the bees in the hive.

With plenty of flowering trees and no varroa mite, beekeepers in Hawaii have enjoyed a bee paradise for many years before the arrival of the devastating mite a few years ago. A [Big Island Beekeepers Association](#) survey found that Hawaii Island Beekeepers have recently lost about 50% of their managed hives.

With the decline in agricultural production and more awareness about the plight of the bees, public interest in bees has skyrocketed. Demand for the class was very high and we have a long waiting list for future classes.

"Bees find their beekeepers," says Jenny.

The students had many different reasons for wanting to take the Beginning Organic Beekeeping class. Aja, a student at the University of Seattle wants to gain more farming skills and perpetuate the movement. Jim got turned on to beekeeping by a friend in New York. Now, living on 16 acres in Hawaii Island he wants to integrate bees into his farm system. Ian has been interested in bees since he did a project in the 7th grade and is glad to finally be pursuing an interest so long ago started.

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Everyone in their new hats and veils.

Caroline said, "Bees... I am fascinated by bees. I am a vegetarian, so fruits and vegetables are important. Bees are a powerful medicine. I recently got to help catch a swarm and that was one of the most inspiring experiences of my life."

Christine, a nursery manager said, "Gardening and bees just go together."

Thanks to a grant from the [Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program](#) everyone received beginning beekeeping equipment. Here the class leans to put on their hats and veils.



This project was funded by a grant from the [Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program](#).

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