

Bee Cautious and Bee Proactive!

Keep them out!

Spring is in the air and plants are beginning to bloom. This means honey bees are working hard and making honey. Honey bees also tend to swarm in the spring time. The Africanized honey bees are known to swarm year round in South Florida. These swarms will be looking for a suitable home. Unless you are a professional bee keeper, you don't want a colony of bees on your property.

Inspect your property. Look for any small hole that a honeybee can enter. Look for any place where bees will be protected from rain and exposure. Look from below ground up to the top of your house. Bees have been found regularly in water meters, under exposed concrete, under mobile homes, in wall voids, soffits, attics, and about any where you can imagine. You should be looking for any hole or crack larger than 1/8 inch that leads to a protected area, bees can occupy. Pay special attention to damaged soffit, attic, and crawlspace vents. Barbecue grills, pipes, empty jugs, hollow frames in equipment, under or in old equipment, and numerous other items in a yard can provide suitable shelter for bees.

Once an opening is found, **plug the entrance the best way possible.** Caulking will work in some instances. Screen vents with hardware cloth, soffit screening or replacement vents. In other places you may have to use filler strips and then caulk any small crack. If you are worried that bees may colonize old items in the yard, you may decide to discard those items.

If you have had bees and had the colony removed, you need to make sure any entrance to that area is plugged. Bees can smell/sense where wax and honey once were and will return to those areas. Make sure you remove all wax, bees, and honey from the old colony. Leaving any of these can cause you more trouble from melting wax, rotting bees, small hive beetle larvae, wax moths, ants, cockroaches. Once clean, repair the area in a timely manner and make sure it is plugged. See the publication "Bee-Proofing for Florida Citizens" found on the EDIS website at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in741>

Stay vigilant. New cracks can appear, your plug may fall out, or you may have missed a spot. All new holes or cracks should be plugged as you find them.

Be aware of your surroundings. Look and listen before you move items that could possibly have bees in them. If you hear a humming or buzzing sound, or see bees coming and going, try to see where the bees are and leave the area. Warn others to stay away and contact a Pest Control Operator to remove or kill the colony. Call your local extension agent for a list of Pest Control Operators trained in honey bee colony eradication and removal. Before you start loud equipment i.e. mower, edger, leaf blower, look around for bees every time. Bees can move into 'their' new home in just a few minutes. They may not be defensive right at first, but once they start building honey comb and the queen lays eggs, they will protect 'their' home. Some information on Africanized honey bees can be found on the EDIS website at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in739>.