**How I Keep Bees Inside My Home for BVT**

**By Maria Gussak, ND**

When I started Bee Venom Therapy on myself, over 4 years ago, I had great troubles figuring out a nice way to keep the bees at home. Living in an apartment, and then later in an HOA townhouse, I was unable to keep a BeeHive.  I tried bee condos, bee houses, nucs (a smaller hive box) on my balcony or small outdoor space but did not find it sustainable. This article is about the tips and tricks I have found to continue BVT at home, without a hive in the backyard. I plan to use a similar set-up for office stings when I start my future Naturopathic Medicine Clinic, as well.

I order my bees online and have them shipped to me (I use [Allen's Bees](https://www.allenapitherapybees.com/) for Apitherapy Bees). The bees will naturally die in 2-4 weeks and I wanted to offer the bees a good life while they were with me (note: winter bees tend to last a 1.5 weeks for me).  The way I keep them in my home today was the result of many mistakes and tragic bee loss.  I used the following link as a guide when I got started: <https://www.allenapitherapybees.com/lively-bees.html>.

Here are my practical pearls for keeping live bees for Bee Venom Therapy that I would like to share with our Apitherapy community to prolong the vitality and lifespan of at home bees for BVT:

* **I bought 2 mini mesh terrariums for about $12 each:**I purchased two small butterfly terrariums (they look like mini laundry hampers, the one I found and like can be seen @ <https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B074ZKRVZZ/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_search_asin_title?ie=UTF8&psc=1>  ).  They have a zipper enclosure for easy bee retrieval and feeding. I place the plastic side down to protect the area below. I have 2 so that I can have a clean one handy for the next shipment of bees. I clean them with hot water from the sink spray nozzle, a little soap of Hydrogen Peroxide for breaking down bee excrement, if needed). Next, allow it to fully dry before placing newly arrived bees. I do not mix new bees with old bees that I receive.
* With each new box of bees, I place a small plate on the plastic side down with a wetted paper towel (folded in half a few times to fit well on the small plate) and about a teaspoon of honey spread on another piece of wetted paper towel(see picture).  Bees drown in water and get stuck in honey so I make sure to keep this in mind by keeping the honey layer thin so that the bees can walk on the ridges in the paper towel pattern and not drown. I replace the watered paper towel every 3 days or so for fresh water and add honey as needed.
* I cover the mini terrarium in a tea towel and keep them in a cool, darker place (where there is little temperature variation) such as a closet or shelf away from sunlight.  I used to think I was being nice by placing the temporary home by a window and giving them sunlight but I noticed they died quickly thereafter.  I had to remember that bees live in a hive and prefer to be cooler (otherwise they form a beard outside the hive) and in the dark.

A recent trick I did was using comb honey or raw hive materials from the farmer’s market for the bees as a thank you for their service. I got the raw hie materials from a hive I kept that was abandoned and needed cleaning. I scraped all the wax, honey, propolis, etc into jars (after extracting a little honey for my family) and I take about a teaspoon- tablespoon of this mixture and place it on the damp paper towel. It lasts well by adding a fresh paper towel dampened in water nearby to loosen any dried honey for them. I notice that feeding them materials from a real hive has increased their vitality and life span to about 3-3.5 weeks. They also do not drown and are not wet from wet honey like in my previous feeding regimen.

I hope my experience can help any of you that are doing BVT and don’t have a backyard or ability to keep your own bees. I take an empty terrarium with me to place bees in from a local hive one at a time using tweezers (with permission). I modified this bee house trick from a Charle’s Mraz’s suggestion on how he transported bees using a mason jar, a lid with hold (like a feeding lid), a toilet paper tube, and a kleenex with honey and water on it.