

GRABC 2026 Mentoring Program Topics

Pre-Beekeeping & Initial Setup

- **Locating the Apiary:** Proper hive placement (sunlight, wind protection, water sources, ease of access).
- **Safety & Protective Gear:** Correct usage of veils, suits, jackets, gloves, and boots.
- **Equipment & Tools:** Introduction to hive types (Langstroth, horizontal, Flow hive), assembling frames, foundation types, and using the hive tool.
- **The Smoker:** Techniques for lighting, fuel selection, and proper usage to calm bees.
- **Acquiring Bees:** Ordering bees, and the differences between installing packages versus nucs.

2. Basic Bee Biology & Behavior

- **Colony Structure:** Identifying the queen, worker bees, and drones.
- **Life Cycles:** Understanding the development stages (egg, larva, pupa) for all three castes.
- **Forage & Nutrition:** What plants to encourage for nectar and pollen in the local area.
- **Bee Communication:** Understanding foraging behavior and scenting.

The Waggle dance

3. Hive Management & Inspections

- **Routine Inspections:** How to safely and efficiently inspect a hive without overly distressing the bees.
- **The "FEDSS" Method:** A commonly taught acronym for inspections: Food, Eggs, Disease, Space, Swarm cells.
- **Finding the Queen:** Recognizing the queen and understanding her role.
- **Space Management:** When and how to add or remove supers, and how to manage colony growth.
- **Record Keeping:** Maintaining a hive journal to track colony health and progress.

4. Seasonal & Technical Management

- **Spring/Summer Management:** Swarm control (recognizing queen cells, making splits or nucs) and early season colony building.
- **Fall/Winter Preparation:** Ensuring the colony has sufficient stores, proper weight, insulation, and moisture control.
- **Requeening:** Techniques for replacing a queen when necessary.
- **Installing/Handling:** Installing packages, nucs, or capturing swarms.

5. Pest & Disease Management

- **Varroa Mite Control:** Monitoring (alcohol wash) and implementing a treatment strategy.
- **Disease Identification:** Spotting signs of American Foulbrood, European Foulbrood, Chalkbrood, Nosema, and virus damage.
- **Hive Invaders:** Managing Wax Moths, Small Hive Beetles, Mice and more.

6. Honey Harvesting & Post-Harvest

- **Honey Ripeness:** Testing frames for readiness (capping).
- **Extraction Techniques:** Methods like uncapping, centrifuging, or crush and strain.
- **Processing & Hygiene:** Filtering, bottling, and proper storage of honey.
- **Wax Rendering:** How to process and store beeswax.

7. Philosophy & Community

- **Mentorship Expectations:** Setting boundaries for communication and frequency of visits.
- **Joining a Club:** Encouraging participation in local bee associations for continued education.
- **"Bee-haver" vs. "Beekeeper":** Proactive, informed management is required for long-term success.