Yerba Buena Farm Jamaica

Living and Promoting Economically and Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture

Top Bar Beekeeping Internship
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 work 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. Workshops are held at bee farmer association meetings around the island. 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 building hives of different materials, sizes and uses; pollen traps; queen cages; and more. We host a Bee Club based at the local primary school. 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. You will help us manage the hives in our apiaries, and work with us to keep excellent records.

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 interns. We suggest that anyone interested in this internship read Parker Farm’s definition of what it means to be treatment free. You can also have hours of fun reading the bee-related postings on this interesting forum. Resilience is a helpful quality to have in Jamaica, as things do not always work out as you plan, 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 on this project 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.

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

To get a sense of what it is like to be an intern on our farm, please read the blogs kept by some of our interns. Our website’s blog has links to many past interns’ blogs. Click on each intern’s picture below to go to their blog:

Erin Morris
7 Comments

7 thoughts on “Top Bar Beekeeping Internship”

1. Orrett Fagon says:
   February 4, 2015 at 2:01 pm
   I am interested in becoming a bee keeper
   Reply
   Yerba Buena Farm Jamaica says:
   February 4, 2015 at 11:59 pm
   If we can help you in any way, please let us know. verbabuenaja@aol.com or 876-343-1121
   Reply

2. Dusko says:
   May 7, 2015 at 2:24 am
   I see in your slide show that Sam Comfort was there teaching 😊 He sure is the best one you can find. I would love to be able to learn from him directly!
   Reply
   Yerba Buena Farm Jamaica says:
   July 20, 2015 at 11:05 am
   Sam is a creative beekeeper and a really interesting guy. We like and respect him a lot and can't wait for him to come back!
   Reply

3. Kayla Clement says:
   June 16, 2015 at 4:42 pm
   Hello,

   How recently would one have to have graduated college in order to qualify for this internship? I graduated in 2011 – 4 years ago.

   I was also wondering how much the internship costs for participants.

   Thank so much,
   Kayla
   Reply
**Yerba Buena Farm Jamaica says:**
July 20, 2015 at 11:04 am
Hi Kayla,

Oh, we don’t care if someone is in school currently, has never been in school, or graduated 30 years ago. All we care about is that you have a genuine and enthusiastic interest in keeping bees naturally in top bar hives. It helps to be interested in experiencing living in Jamaica, too! The room and board fee is $1,500 per month.

All the best,

Agape

Reply

4. calecia Shirley says:
August 1, 2015 at 8:54 am
Dear Yerba Buena,

Good morning, I am seriously interested in bee rearing, I think you are doing a great job which will positively affect agriculture in Jamaica. I would like to be apart of your mission, I am fully employed however. I do not work on weekends. I am looking forward to hear from you.

Yours Sincerely,

calecia Shirley

Reply