

## Bee People: And the Bugs They Love

**Frank Mortimer**

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Frank Mortimer's *Bee People* is an entertaining introduction to the world of beekeeping, drawn from Mortimer's extensive experience raising bees in suburban New Jersey.

The book's topics will appeal to novices, experts, and the "bee curious" alike, and include bee behavior; the role of the queen, workers, and drones; the cultivation of honey; the equipment needed for, and the seasonal challenges to, beekeeping; and efforts to combat colony collapse disorder.

Mortimer is a playful storyteller, and his text is lively with the challenges and appeal of keeping bees. It notes his surprise when Sunrise Farms—the source for some of his first hives—was not an "idyllic farm with horse-plowed fields," but a couple of picnic benches in a suburban backyard. And joining a local bee club, Mortimer wonders whether he's going to learn "a secret bee handshake" or go through "some sort of insect initiation ceremony," but instead finds stale cookies and a group of eccentric "bee nerds," including the "one-eyed bee guy" who drives a 1959 Cadillac Eldorado painted bright bee yellow with black racing stripes—"bigger than some New York City apartments."

Mortimer's growth as a beekeeper, from an enthusiastic but bumbling beginner whose first hive died to his role as a recognized teacher, writer, and mentor in the beekeeping community, is detailed, too. *Bee People* is as much about beekeepers as it is about bees themselves, and those sketched include the Surgeon, who dons "full head-to-toe bee suits" and approaches his hives "the same way a surgeon walks into the operating room," and the Cowboy, "who doesn't wear any type of veil, usually has forgotten to bring his smoker, and just jumps in without any real plan."

*Bee People* is a compelling memoir that's filled with information about beekeepers and the tiny, fascinating creatures to whom they tend.

KRISTEN RABE (March / April 2021)

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