



# Bees in Irvine: What to Know

## THE HONEY BEE

The honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) first arrived from Europe in 1622. They pollinated European seeds and sapling that settlers brought to North America. It would be 231 years later before the honey bee reached the West Coast. Today, honey bees are important pollinators for a variety of agricultural crops, like nuts and fruits, and a wide variety of plants that support other wildlife.

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HONEY BEES AND AFRICANIZED BEES

The main differences between Africanized and European honey bees are size and defensive behavior. Africanized bees are slightly smaller than European bees, though the difference is subtle. When disturbed, an Africanized honey bee colony will send more bees to sting and pursue for a longer distance and period of time compared to European honey bees.

While bees are important, not all bees make good neighbors. Africanized bees are often too defensive (sting too much) to be good neighbors. The City does not advise you contact a beekeeper to capture or remove Africanized bees. If you see a defensive swarm on public property, contact the City of Irvine Public Works & Transportation Department at 949-724-7600. Learn more about what to do when encountering bee swarms or wild beehives on the second page of this flier.

# What is a Bee Swarm?

When honey bees and other bee species — including native bees — swarm, they cluster or hang out on a branch, a roof overhang, or other structure that offers some protection. They are very vulnerable. The swarm is a collection of young and older bees and usually one queen. The queen is unable to fly far due to her comparatively short wings. While they are clinging together, scout bees search for a new home for the colony. Once a new location is found, the bees will migrate to establish their new home.

## What to Do if You See a Swarm of Bees or Wild Beehive?

A wild beehive is a beehive that is not managed by a beekeeper and is either left out in the open or in unwanted areas. A swarm of bees are looking for their next home and their primary focus is to surround and protect their queen.

In most cases, a bee swarm does not pose a threat to people. The bees are not defending their colony, but are on the move for a new home. If a swarm or a wild beehive is on public property and in clear view or within the height of a ladder, do not kill the bees; please call the City of Irvine Public Works & Transportation Department at 949-724-7600.

If you see a wild beehive or swarm on private property, and the bees are not affecting the health and safety of the surrounding area, contact a local beekeeping association for an experienced beekeeper to collect a swarm. Several local beekeeping associations will collect the swarm and re-home them within Orange County. If a wild beehive appears threatening, please call the City of Irvine Public Safety Department at 949-724-7200 or contact a pest control company that uses pesticides registered with the California Department of Pesticide Regulation.

## Want to Learn More About Bees?

To learn more about bees, the City recommends joining a local beekeeping association or enrolling in a beekeeping program such as UC Davis' online California Master Beekeeping Program.

For more information, email the Development Assistance Counter at [dac@cityofirvine.org](mailto:dac@cityofirvine.org).

