

Luc Peters with some rooftop hives in Hamilton in August.

TOOL KIT

Humble Bee

Honeybees are extremely important for the ecosystem — about 30 percent of our food relies on their pollination. But they are at risk because of loss of habitat, climate change and pesticides. To help save bee populations, Luc Peters and Dan Douma run Humble Bee, a business that manages and breeds bees across Hamilton.

NO. 1 ➔ WOODEN BOXES AND FRAMES

Since 2013, Peters and Douma have set up over 200 hives with roughly 60,000 bees each — one queen plus workers and drones. The frames help harvest surplus honey.

NO. 2 ➔ SMOKER

Before going into the hive, the two urban beekeepers sometimes use a smoker, which can mask aggressive bee pheromones, to avoid stressing the colony. However, it isn't always needed because their bees are so gentle.

NO. 3 ➔ SPACE

It's better to manage colonies in the city as opposed to the countryside. This is because industrial farming uses pesticides that can be damaging to bees. Humble Bee's hives are in more than 30 locations across Hamilton.

PETERS STARTED HUMBLE BEE IN 2013, AND DOUMA JOINED TWO YEARS LATER.

"BEES HAVE NOT RECOVERED FROM THE MAJOR LOSSES THAT WERE IN THE NEWS QUITE A FEW YEARS AGO NOW," SAYS PETERS.

CANADA HAS ABOUT 7,000 BEEKEEPERS (20 PERCENT ARE HOBBYISTS).

NO. 4 ➔ HIVE TOOL

Also known as a scraper, it's primarily used to easily move the boxes and wooden frames. "I use this every time I open a hive. It's like an extension of my hand," says Peters.

NO. 5 ➔ BEES

Peters and Douma got their first insects from a local beekeeper a decade ago. Today, they proudly raise their own Ontario honeybees.

BY ALBINA RETYUNSKIKH

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANYA CHIBIS