

“New And Improved” Top Bar Hive

We recently got a call from long time bee keeper Roland Reed in North Carolina, who says his new Modern Top Bar Hive is a big improvement over traditional top bar hives on the market.

The patented Modern Top Bar Hive is a horizontal/vertical top bar hive designed for beginning beekeepers as well as experienced bee keepers.

“It produces up to 3 times more honey than traditional top bar hives, and lets you use 90 percent of the standard deep super equipment that most bee keepers already have,” says Reed, who has 45 years experience in beekeeping. “You never have to lift more than 9 lbs. once it’s installed, which makes it ideal for both young and old people.

The 76-year-old Reed says over the years he has found many problems with traditional top bar hives.

“They use a freestanding bar with no horizontal or vertical support other than the bar at the top. The problem is that you can’t harvest a lot of honey easily, and every time you cut the comb off the bees have to make that back,” says Reed.

“My system doesn’t force the bees to work horizontally. It reuses drawn frames so bees don’t have to waste 9 lbs. of honey to replace each comb. Honey can be extracted efficiently, and the frames can be easily reused as they’re totally interchangeable within the hive and with any other standard

beekeeping equipment. There’s no need to make new ‘size to fit’ equipment as many people do with traditional top bar hives.”

The structure, shape and layering system of the Modern Top Bar Hive increases the number of bees by allowing more permanent space for brood, or bee larva, says Reed. “By putting a lot of young developing bees onto a single level, you’re allowing the bees to put a lot more honey into other places - not next to where all the brood is, but on top of the brood.”

The Modern Top Bar Hive employs 90 percent of the standard deep super equipment bee keepers may already own, says Reed. That includes deep frames, deep supers, foundation, inner covers, outer covers (telescoping/migratory), drone comb frames, queen excluders, and inside or outside feeders.

“The system comes with a fully integrated undercarriage consisting of a bottom board with a Varroa mite/small hive beetle trap system, a box or brood chamber, a lid which has a special size outer cover, and a series of divider boards, or baffles. You can purchase everything else, including all internal workings, from your local beekeeping supplier,” says Reed.

The mite/beetle double trap system is unique, says Reed. “The insects fall through a grid and land in a bath of cooking oil on a pan, where they can’t fly out and drown in



Modern Top Bar Hive includes a viewing window that lets you see the bees at work.

the oil,” says Reed. “Any insects that don’t fall through are caught in a second trap that contains drone cells. The drone cells attract Varroa mites more than worker cell bees by a 10 to 1 ratio. The trap will significantly reduce the number of mites and beetles all summer long.”

The hive is manufactured with premium quality Cypress wood that lasts five times longer than conventional pine beekeeping equipment, says Reed.

The hives range in price from \$329 for the basic model, which is for beekeepers

who already own the internal hive part (inner covers, frames, foundation, etc.) The Educator version sells for \$645 and includes a fully assembled, color coded hive including a collection super. It has a viewing window to allow beekeepers, children and other interested parties to watch the bees in action without opening the hive. The Producer sells for \$622.

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Bucket Spinner Extracts Honey

Spending hundreds of dollars on a honey extractor for his few hives didn’t make sense to James Noble, so he built his own. It needed to be big enough to hold 2 standard hive frames loaded with honey (about 6 lbs. each). Using a plastic pail and an electric drill to power the spinner, he’s able to extract honey without damaging the delicate comb.

“I’m a hobby beekeeper with just 3 hives. I only need an extractor for a day or two each year,” says Noble.

To make the extractor, Noble needed a chamber, a spinner with a central rod with mounts for the frames, and a way to seat the spinner in the chamber. For the chamber, he selected a food grade 7-gal. pail. It’s slightly taller than a 5-gal. pail, but a similar diameter. He bought a 1 1/2-in. honey gate, available through beekeeping retailers for \$10 to \$12, and installed it over a hole cut near the bottom of the pail.

The frame spinner was made with a 36-in. long, 3/8-in. stainless steel threaded rod and frame holding boards cut from heavy-duty, white plastic cutting board stock.

“I used 3/4-in. thick stock to give the centrifuge some heft, which is helpful so the frames do not completely dominate the weight,” says Noble.

The top board is a 5 by 8-in. rectangle. The bottom board is an 8-in. hexagon. Both boards were center drilled for the rod. Two 1/2-in. sq. holes were cut out of each plate (opposite each other, not across from each other) to accept the tips of frame top bars. The holes are positioned 1 1/4 in. from the edges of the board.

Noble attached a threaded flange with 3 screws over the hole on the top side of the lower plate. Once the rod was threaded through the flange, a washer, lock washer and smooth end cap nut were attached to the end of the rod.

“The bottom board needs to be fixed in place on the rod, but the upper board needs to be easily removed to load and unload frames,” says Noble. “I put a washer, lock washer and wing nut on the rod to match



Using a plastic pail and an electric drill to power a spinner, James Noble is able to extract honey without damaging the comb.



Honey extractor is big enough to hold 2 standard hive frames loaded with honey.

the length of a frame. A second washer, lock washer and wing nut are used to secure the board when frames are in place.”

To stabilize the spinner in the pail, Noble attached a 2-in. diameter circle of cutting board stock to the bottom of the pail. He drilled a hole in the center of the bottom of the pail and through the circle. He countersunk a 1/2-in. diameter hole in the top side of the circle, shallow enough to accept a round nut. He placed a 1-in. rubber O-ring between the circle and the pail’s bottom, securing all three with a short screw and nut.

“I created a stand for the 7-gal. pail, with room underneath it for a 5-gal. pail and honey

filter,” says Noble.

Two vertical 2 by 4’s on either side of the stand extend above the bucket. A removable cross bar with a hole for the spinner rod attaches to the verticals with wing nuts. The cross bar stabilizes the rod.

Once he was done, the honey frames extended out over the top of the bucket’s edge, causing honey to spatter out of the

lifecycle of bees,” he says.

His SwingView™, an 8-frame, wall-mounted shadow box, is the most popular with customers. Mounted on a hinge, it can be moved to view as many as 50,000 bees on both sides of the double hive.

The concept is simple. An enclosed glass frame holds Langstroth-style deep frames with a tube that goes to an outside wall exit.

“They aren’t honey production hives like the outdoor hives,” Launer says. “Observation hives are big enough for the colony to sustain themselves year-round.”

Observation hive owners can watch bees bringing in nectar, the emergence of baby bees in the summer, drone bees getting kicked out in the fall and the winter slowdown.

The only sound from the hive is a slight hum during the summer when the bees are most active, Launer says.

His observation hives include feed pans,

filter,” says Noble.

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Hives Bring Bees Indoors



Wall-mounted Launer observation hive lets you watch bees go about their lives from the comfort of your living room.

screened vents and a debris port. Customers purchase the glass and bees locally. Costs for hives range from a 6-frame TableView™ model for \$675 to the wall-mounted SwingView™ at \$800 to the CircleView™ that rotates 360 degrees for \$805.

The hives are a substantial investment, Launer notes, so he also offers “Do It Yourself plans” in a booklet for \$32. He is pleased that customers from all over the world have purchased the plans.

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