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BASIC BEEKEEPING
LESSON ONE

Welcome To Your First Lesson In Beekeeping

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Beekeepers, for the most part, still use hives designed by Rev. L. L. Langstroth in the early 1850s. Prior to this, beehives were kept in what looked like up-side-down baskets known as skeps. With skeps, the comb along with the total hive was destroyed when honey was harvested.

Langstroth is credited with the removable frame hive and with identifying what is known as bee space. In other words, he invented the ability to remove the frames of comb and place them back in the hive without damage to the colony or comb. Langstroth also discovered what is known now as "bee space" and is generally thought to be between 1/4"- 3/8". Anything less, they will add their glue known as propolis. Anything greater than 3/8" they will build comb.
Almost all hive boxes today are modeled after Rev. L. L. Langstroth's design with slight modifications over the years.

A typical hive consists of the following pieces, starting at the bottom and working up:

The Hive Stand
The Bottom Board
The Hive Bodies
The Medium or Small Honey Supers
The Inner Cover
The Top Cover

Today, let me explain the hive stand and the bottom board. The hive stand makes up the very

bottom of the hive. However, many beekeepers do not find the hive stand necessary. I personally do not bother with hive stands. They appear impressive because they have a ramp leading up to the entrance. And, some people feel this helps the bees walk into the hive.

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These lessons are produced by Long Lane Honey Bee Farms located near Fairmount, Illinois and originated as a beekeeping blog known as http://basicbeekeeping.blogspot.com

Long Lane Honey Bee Farms manufactures and sells beekeeping equipment, package bees, hive kits, beekeeping supplies, queens and nucs. We'd love your business! 217-427-2678

However, I have watched the bees land, and they really don't land on the ramp nor walk up all that much. Bees prefer to fly, not climb. In the natural, they don't have ramps. I would recommend not using a hive stand to reduce cost and it makes it easier should you need to move your hive.

So, in my opinion the first piece of equipment you need is the bottom board. But before we place our bottom board, we have to consider where to place the hive, the direction the hive faces and how much to elevate the hive off the moist ground. I like to use wood pallets that I can obtain free from local factories. Usually one pallet is enough, but sometimes I'll place two pallets on top of each other to elevate the hive around 5-6" off the ground.

Then, I place my bottom board on the pallet. Pallets work well, but so do concrete blocks or any structure that will elevate the hive off the ground. You want the hive elevated for two reasons: To make it less stressful on your back and to raise the hive above the moisture in the ground. Bottom boards do draw moisture and so will be the first item to deteriorate over time. So, keeping the bottom board dry will help then last longer. Plus, it also means less moisture in the hive. Elevating the hive makes it easier on your back. But, do remember that eventually you'll have lots of supers, and if you elevate the first hive body to a comfortable range, you may soon find you need a ladder when you place 5 or 6 supers on. 5-6" is a good range of elevation.

Which direction? Which direction should the hive face. It really doesn't matter. We typically try to avoid the North so that cold winter wind will not blow into the front. And we typically try to face the hive Easterly so that the early morning sunrise will get the bees out working faster.
Shade or Sun? AVOID SHADE!! Get your hive in total sunlight. This is extremely important. They can keep the hive cool. Don't worry about the heat. Shade can attract pests such as Small Hive Beetle, ants and wax moths. Place the hive in direct sunlight. If you cannot avoid the shade, try to place the hive where it will receive the most sunlight.
Let's talk about bottom boards. There are many different variation of bottom boards. In the past there was only a standard solid bottom board. Now, with the introduction of mites, we have found that screen bottom boards help reduce mite populations and the screen also improves overall hive ventilation. A screen bottom board is part of what is known as IPM. Integrated Pest Management.

There are many different types of screen bottom boards. Some are simple and some have various slots and grooves to insert sticky boards or winter panels. Get the simple screen bottom board! If you want to slide in a white board or sticky board to count your mites, you can place it under the screen. And you can make your own sticky board using vasoline. If you need to restrict the air flow when applying a medication, you can slide in a small piece of cardboard or metal.

We have put much time in designing our bottom board manufacturing to produce a simple, yet very effect screen bottom board.

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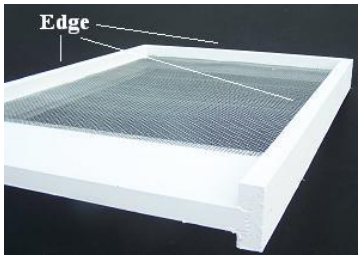
Our bottom boards come completely assembled with an entrance reducer cleat. Our bottom boards are designed for a 3/4" opening in the front of the hive. However, with a slight modification, the bottom board can be flipped over and a smaller opening can be used. It is not advised and if reversed, an additional piece must be added to the back of the bottom board.



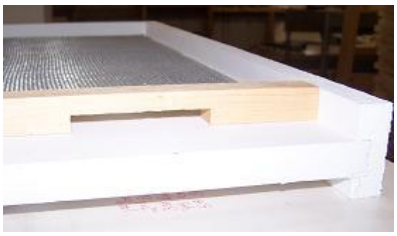
Sometimes new beekeepers ask which way the bottom board goes. When the bottom board is in the correct position, the screen is up. You can see the staples going into the screen. Also, the top of the bottom board has three edges.

Our bottom boards are made very strong, routed in such a way to lock sections together and are glued with exterior glue.

Finally, the bottom board's entrance is determined by the placement of what is called the entrance reducer cleat. It is a 3/4" x 3/4" piece of wood with two different sized openings. The cleat can be turned so that only one of the openings is used at a time.

In this picture, you can see the smallest setting of the entrance cleat. When would you use this small setting? 1) When installing your package of bees. They can still come and go, but it keeps them from wanting to fly away until they nest. 2) In the winter, when you are trying to keep mice out of your hive. 3) When the hive is being robbed by another hive. There is less entrance to protect.

The next picture shows the larger opening on the entrance cleat. When would you use this setting? Anytime you need a larger opening, but don't want to open it up all the way. This could also be used for all three reasons above.



Though the pictures shows the opening facing down, please remember to have the opening facing UP! When bees die during the winter, if the opening is down, then dead bees will fill up the opening. However, if the opening is facing up the bees can still fly out over the dead bees which you can clean out later on a warm day if the bees do not clean things up first.

Once your hive is more than a few weeks old and is not being robbed and the weather is warm the entrance cleat should be removed and stored in a place where you can easily find it for future needs.

This ends lesson one. You've learned about hive location, placement and the bottom board. In our next lesson we'll discuss the next section of the hive, the deep hive body.