

## Top Bar Hive frames

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As I borrowed the good bits from TBH's and went foundationless in my framed hives a few years ago and have never looked back since, I thought on a slack day at work and a pile of off cuts talking to me worth trying frames in my TBH's.



One thing that does annoy my bees and me is cutting the brace comb when the bees attach the combs to the side of the box. They just don't like a tool pushed into the hive to cut the wax as it must catch the legs of the bees and they must know we are damaging their home. With regular inspections, it is possible to wriggle the comb to break the brace, but

sometimes it needs cutting especially if it is hot and the comb heavy with honey as you can break the combs if not careful. Also the brace comb sometimes has honey in it and as the bees start to clean it up replacing combs must inevitably trap bees and that's not good either.

So I decided to make a few simple foundationless frames for my TBH's, well simple for me a joiner of 34 years, also having a few toys to play with helps and in this instance a table saw.



They are simply four pieces of timber, well five if you include the triangular section as a comb guide but that is optional, the top bar, two side bars approx 20mm wide and approx 8mm thick, a bottom block 25mm x 20mm.

The angle of my TBH is 26\* so it was a case of setting the saw to this angle, lowering the blade so as to cut a groove approx 10mm deep and setting two stops on the table saw to create the groove 8mm wide to accommodate the side bars. If all the top bars are the exact same length then once you have set the saw it is possible to cut all the grooves the same.

Next is the sidebars and this is simply a case of cutting to length with the ends cut at 26\*. The same is for the bottom piece of timber. It is a good idea to set out the frame before cutting any timber as you have to allow for bees space and I found by drawing on the side of a follower board the easiest and simplest way to do this.

Once all cut it is a case of gluing and assembling, the block at the bottom are best done first, lay the pieces flat onto a board and either glue and nail or screws will do the job. For the top bar you will need to glue and push the sidebars into the grooves centrally and a nail through the side into the top bar or a screw, make sure the frame is not twisted and then onto the next frame. I then cut some triangular sections for my comb guides.



I made ten to start with and fitted two into my TBH and the one I am looking after. My TBH is going through re-queening following its AS so I dont know how they are getting on with the frames right now but just before the AS they had made good progress on the first frame. The hive I am looking after are loving the frames and so am I, they are on number five now and I am wondering it will be interesting if it was full of frames. They are easy to remove, no brace comb and for now the bees are keeping the combs within the frames and nice and straight. It is possible to rest the frame on the top of the top bars and spin it round for faster inspections.



The bees are as expected not attaching the comb all the way down the frame sides so it is still important I keep the combs vertical. I am thinking that in time, they may attach more comb with fewer gaps or even fill in the whole frame and this will strengthen the comb. I am also thinking about wiring a few frames just to see how that works and may just be able to put these frames through an extractor although I don't look at my TBH's as honey production but just for pleasure and happy for them to have all the honey.



I need to make more frames soon and also expecting the 2<sup>nd</sup> TBH to think about swarming soon and it would be great to AS into a box of foundationless TBH frames..... but then I will be up to three TBH's and only ever wanted one. Well that is beekeeping the world over.

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