

Types of Bee Hives

Types of Bee Hives – Study Notes

1. Overview

Bee hives are man-made structures that provide a safe, climate-controlled home for honeybees and a convenient way for beekeepers to manage colonies. Designs vary in material, size, and internal layout, each with specific advantages for different climates, beekeeping goals, and levels of experience.

2. Classic & Widely Used Hives

Hive Type	Key Features	Typical Materials	Pros	Cons	Common Use
Langstroth (Movable frame)	- Stacked boxes (brood, honey, supers) - Removable frames (10–12 per box) - Standard “bee space” of 3/16 in (9.5 mm)	Wood (pine, cedar, spruce) – often painted or varnished	- Easy inspection & honey extraction - Scalable (add/remove boxes) - Interchangeable parts worldwide	- Requires careful frame handling - Heavy when full of honey	Hobbyists, commercial apiaries, research
	- Single, horizontal box (often 36–48 in long) - Open-ended top bars (no frames) - Bees build natural comb down the bar		- Mimics natural comb building - Simple construction, low cost - Easy to harvest comb	- Lower honey yields - More difficult to manage pests/varroa - Less standardized equipment	
Top Bar Hive (TBH)		Wood (cedar, pine) – often left untreated			

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Warre (Vertical “Crown” Hive)	- Stacked boxes like Langstroth but no frames; uses “bars” - Small “neck” space for bees to move vertically	Wood (often cedar) – often left untreated	- Minimal disturbance (no frame removal) - Good winter insulation - Simple management	- Limited honey production - Requires careful spacing to avoid crowding	Organic/low? intervention beekeeping, hobbyists seeking simplicity
National (British)	- Similar to Langstroth but with smaller brood boxes (9 frames) and larger honey supers (10 frames) “Bee space” same as Langstroth - Larger brood boxes (12 frames) and supers (10 frames)	Wood (often pine)	- Smaller brood area reduces swarming risk - Good for temperate climates	Less common outside the UK; parts not always interchangeable with Langstroth	Traditional UK beekeeping, small?scale operations
Dadant (French)	Same bee? space dimensions	Wood (often pine)	- More space for strong colonies - Easy to scale up	Heavier boxes; may need additional support	Commercial apiaries in Europe, strong colonies

3. Specialty & Modern Hives

Hive Type	Design Highlights	Advantages	Typical Users

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Flow Hive	• Modified Langstroth frames with built-in “flow” comb that can be opened to pour honey without removing frames	• Minimal disturbance during harvest	Beekeepers who want a “hands-off” honey harvest; retail demo hives
		• Attractive to beginners & hobbyists	
Modular/Hybrid Hives	• Combines Langstroth boxes with interchangeable components (e.g.,		