

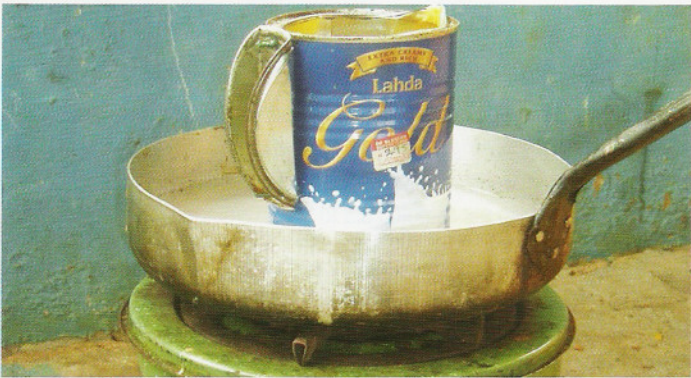
MAKING WAX STARTER STRIPS FOR TOP-BARS

Polly Eaton, UK

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1. Cut off a small amount of beeswax from a cake of wax you have previously moulded when harvesting.

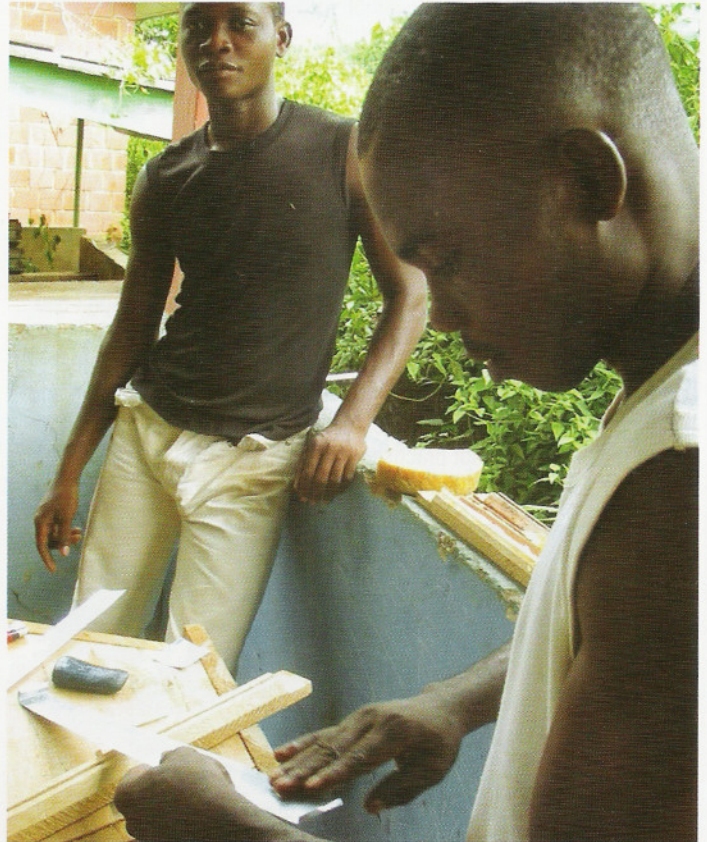


2. Heat the small amount of wax in a container that is standing in water (to avoid burning the wax). When the wax has turned clear it is ready to pour.



3. The wax will be poured into the groove of the top-bar, guided by a strip of zinc. Soap the strip of zinc to prevent the wax from sticking to it.

When using top-bar hives, it is essential that bees are encouraged to build their comb centrally from each top-bar. This makes life very convenient for the beekeeper, as it enables combs to be lifted easily from the hive for inspection, or for harvesting. When bees build across top-bars, it means that the beekeeper needs to separate them and damage some comb, if a top-bar is to be lifted from the hive. To encourage bees to build their comb centrally, a small strip of wax can be placed along the top-bar. Here, Polly Eaton describes the method that was found to work well for beekeepers in Nigeria.



4. Fold the ends of the zinc over tightly to avoid the wax spilling out of the ends. Pour the hot wax into the groove to a depth of about 2 cm.



5. After a few seconds, the wax will cool and harden. When the wax is hard, carefully remove the zinc strip. Slide the zinc gently so that you do not break the thin strip of wax.

You can prepare the wax starter strip for about five bars in each top-bar hive, to act as bait, and to guide the bees to build their comb 'correctly' along each top-bar.