

# **Stahlman Beekeeping**

## **Notes for 2022**

### **Hive Stands and Locations**



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New ideas pop up every year from electric smokers to Flow hives. For new beekeepers or experienced beekeepers, the task to keep bees boils down to where do you put them?

Many beekeepers are content to keep bee hives in their own back yard. This may be fine as long as you don't live near a swimming pool or a playground.

**Some issues I would like to suggest about keeping bees in your own backyard:**

- How many other individuals are keeping bees near your location?
- Can you imagine any problems that could arise?

There are more issues I could discuss but these two will provide a person with something to consider.

**1) How do you find out how great the bee density is around your hive location?**

Honey bees normally fly to near-by nectar, pollen and water sources. They will travel much further if necessary – Some say 5 miles.

The quick test I use is to place honey in a small container. It only takes a few drops of honey to attract honeybees. Honeybees can be attracted to old comb, bee equipment and lures. This is called a "feeding station".

If bees are attracted to the feeding station I know bees are close by. If one bee shows up, others are sure to follow. If they come in large numbers, I can assume a number of colonies are near.

A number of honeybees would indicate that any hive I place in my backyard will require various management techniques to prevent problems the bees may face. (Robbing, starving for lack of food, possible spread of disease, reduced honey crop are a few issues that may affect the hive.)

Frequent hive inspections are suggested to understand what is happening in a hive. A hive may indicate certain conditions well before real problems start. A beekeeper can work on solutions to solve some of these problems such as robbing.

2) Here are some problems that could arise:

What are the attitudes of neighbors toward bees? The fear of honey bees or stinging insects is called Cnidophobia. Those with this phobia often overreact to what some consider a nuisance in the neighborhood. Some neighborhoods label honeybees as a health threat! **Be sure you can keep bees in your backyard!** Some HOA's forbid livestock to be kept by home owners. Both chickens and honeybees are considered livestock. Some cities have ordinances regarding the keeping of animals. Honey bees are in the animal family. Many individuals keeping bees fail to find out what is allowed and what is not allowed. They only discover they can be forced to move the bees when a neighbor complains.

Even if a law allows bees in the backyard, there is a limit to how many hives can be kept before they become a nuisance.

Honeybees poop! Will you be responsible for cleaning the neighbor's car if your bees poop on it? What about a dealership with new and used cars?

Bees are attracted to water! Does a neighbor have a hot tub or does a near-by school have a playground where water might stand?

What about neighbor bees robbing your hives? This is a major problem for many new beekeepers adding more colonies of bees to the neighborhood.

What about neighbor bees spreading disease to your hive or your bees spreading a disease? Current research is indicating that this is a real problem.

What about the over population of bees around your backyard? Each hive in the area is competing for the nectar/pollen sources available. Thus, if a lot of bees are in the neighborhood, each hive has to share what is available in the area. The result – each hive gets less honey and survival becomes an issue.

Author's note: Various bee yards I have operated have given me problems of one kind or other. Each is different – most were minor but some major.

Let me share just one: I was asked to place bees on a farm. The farmer was delighted to get the bees. A few days following the placement of the bees, the farmer called me. "You have to move the bees!" It seems his neighbor farmer was raising pigs! That farmer used molasses in his hog

feeders and the bees took over the feeders -- something like a neighbor's problem with hummingbird feeders.

I have moved bees a number of times because of complaints. I found it easier to deal with people rather than fight with them. If issues arise which you cannot handle, the easy solution is to sell your bees or find another location to keep them. Lawyers get very expensive!

I was with my friend just the other day. Someone asked us about our beekeeping "hobby". The question: "Are the bees dying?"

We both have to replace bees from time to time. Yes, some die!

But not all. My friend replied, "Bees reproduce themselves quickly. One hive can quickly become three or four."



### **My back yard in 1993.**

I have been guilty of putting too many hives in my own backyard! I was looking at old photographs of my bee yards. This one caught my eye. This was my backyard apiary in 1993. I was feeding all the hives shown in this picture to keep them alive.

Beekeeping becomes addictive.

Fortunately I had no close neighbors.

### **Hive Stands**

If you check the photo above, you will note that I used pallets set on the ground to support my hives.

The bottom board of a hive is usually the first piece of beekeeping equipment to fail. It is likely to rot within a year of two if placed directly on the ground. Pine wood does not hold up well when in contact with wet ground. Treated lumber will last longer but it is not the answer to the problem of rotting wood.

What follows are a number of pictures of the ways beekeepers have placed hives.



**All of these hives sit on something! Cement blocks, tree stumps, platforms, and rails. Some are very unstable. A single support as shown can either cause a hive to fall off or lean at some point. Once weight shifts on a hive stand, the single support system results in a hive crashing to the ground. Cement blocks can sink into the ground – causing again an unstable hive support. The most secure is a platform of some sort.**

Some points:

- Hives higher off the ground can be unstable if the hive stand is not build to avoid the gradual settling of the stand.
- Common hive stands include cement blocks, beams placed on the ground and structures.
- 4 x 4 treated post are great to support a platform which offers great stability. The platform can be built to any length. Untreated lumber placed in the ground will not last more than several seasons.
- The height of a hive stand should not be too high. Honey supers are heavy and climbing a ladder to remove one is risky business. A popular distance above the ground for a hive is 16 to 20 Inches.
- Hive stands set in concrete have a permanent nature to them. Thus a temporary hive stand may be used until a permanent location is determined.

My biggest Mistake!

**THE EASY BEE RIG**

A New Reality for Moving Hives, Working Colonies  
and Harvesting Honey



Booms or forklifts move colonies into position. Easily moved, solid structure, solid parts.



Honey supers sit on the upper platform for easy placement and harvesting. Lift is below supers.



All season long, brood chambers can be worked without moving honey supers by sliding them out on the rails.

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- Tests show that Brood Inspection time *DECREASES* by a factor of 10, and Honey Harvesting time *DECREASES* by a factor of 4! Labor costs in general *DECREASE* by \$400 for every 4 colonies run.
- Rig Price is \$300 at International Port. Web page has many details, ([www.bee-guard.co.il](http://www.bee-guard.co.il)); FAX 972-7-6810044 or phone 972-7-6810055 – Israel.

Discounts offered to October 31, 1998. Delivery starts January 1999.

**[www.bee-guard.co.il](http://www.bee-guard.co.il)**

BEE CULTURE

Over the years I have used many different kinds of hive stands including one very expensive hive stand. It is a rather long story, but I was asked by a friend to pick up 4 hive stands sold at the American Beekeeping Federation meeting in Knoxville, Tn. in 1999.

“The Easy Bee Rig” was being promoted as a solution to the time consuming task of removing supers to inspect the brood chamber of a hive. It was built of steel. I was offered one at a huge discount. I bit!

It was advertised -- a solid structure. It was! Long story short – the stand had to be set on concrete and it required something like a forklift to move it. Maybe something with a boom!

Moving it was a pain – it took up too much space on a trailer. No hand lifting for this thing. It had drawers that could be pulled out to inspect the brood chamber. The supers above remained on the hive stand. If this stand was set on soil, it would sink right into the ground several inches. It was that heavy.

The idea of inspecting a hive by pulling out a drawer was interesting. It would save a lot of lifting and require less labor. I look back on this as my “stupid mistake!” No bear could move this thing, thus I can see why it would have worked in bear country – Okay maybe not. I finally sold it for scrap steel in 2012. By that time the drawers were rusted so the rollers would not roll and the only way to get hive boxes out of it was get someone with a welding torch!

Next week’s article will cover “out-yards” and moving bees. Commercial beekeepers moving large numbers of hives use pallets and skid loaders to handle bees. I am not going there! The equipment, time and labor are all factors which hobby and some side-line beekeeper do not have to deal with.



Bee hives used by commercial beekeepers require a different type of bottom board and hive support.

Pallets are designed to hold 2 to 6 hives. They require equipment such as shown here to pick up and move hives often during a bee season.