

Foundationless Frames



It is quite possible to use frames without foundation. This method doesn't suit everybody, but it does suit me. I would advise that beginners use wired foundation and only consider this method when they are more experienced.

Some sort of starter guide is needed for the bees. I use plastic or cardboard strips, plastic works better as the bees can't chew it. Some people use wooden guides – a reversed sharpened top wedge or lolly sticks for example.

Advantages:

1. Cheaper (but cost of bees making wax – takes 6lb honey to make 1lb wax?)
2. Quicker to assemble
3. No wax introduced from other bees – possibly contaminated. Contaminated wax might harm your bees, might reduce drone fertility and might be incorporated into the wax that you eat
4. Easier to handle and store – no fragile foundation

Disadvantages:

1. May not draw evenly despite guide
2. More care required when handling frames that are being drawn

Some people “wire” their frames with nylon fishing line. I no longer bother. Once the comb is attached to the sides and bottom it is strong enough for normal handling, and goes through my extractor with no problems.

It is important that the frames are exactly vertical side to side – use a spirit level on the top of the hive.