

In the Workshop

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Over the next 3 months, we explore how to make a WBC style hive, whether it is for some of your older, perhaps somewhat scruffy National hives or just for the aesthetic pleasure they can bring to beekeepers and visitors alike. First off, we discuss the lifts.

If you ask somebody to draw a beehive, many will try to sketch something along the lines of a WBC style setup. You can make the iconic hive yourself using readily available wood from the timber yard.

Find the right sized wood

The lifts (central sections) of the hive are the central sections of the hive. A hive can have several lifts in place if you are supering up for your bees. The roof and floor design will each fit around the size and shape of your lifts so it is the logical place to start.

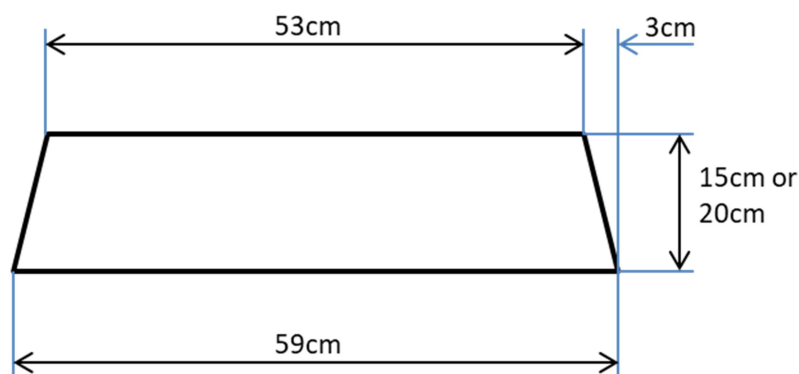
The lifts can be made from 200mm x 25mm (3 lifts required) or 150mm x 25mm (4 lifts required) sawn timber. Don't worry if they only have treated timber available, the wood won't be coming into contact with the brood or the honey. The timber may only be available in 4.8m lengths so bring a saw with you and cut them in half if you are wanting to take them home yourself. Most timber yards will deliver for a very reasonable fee.

WBC style hive. Caption to read – Home-made WBC style hive with 150mm (15cm) lifts.

Cutting the lifts material

To allow you to use the WBC outer hive over a standard (full-sized) National hive and for everything to fit together nicely, there are a few key dimensions to adhere to, starting with the lifts.

The planks need to be cut to 59 cm lengths. This allows you to get 8 lengths from a standard 4.8m long piece of timber, enough to make two complete lifts.

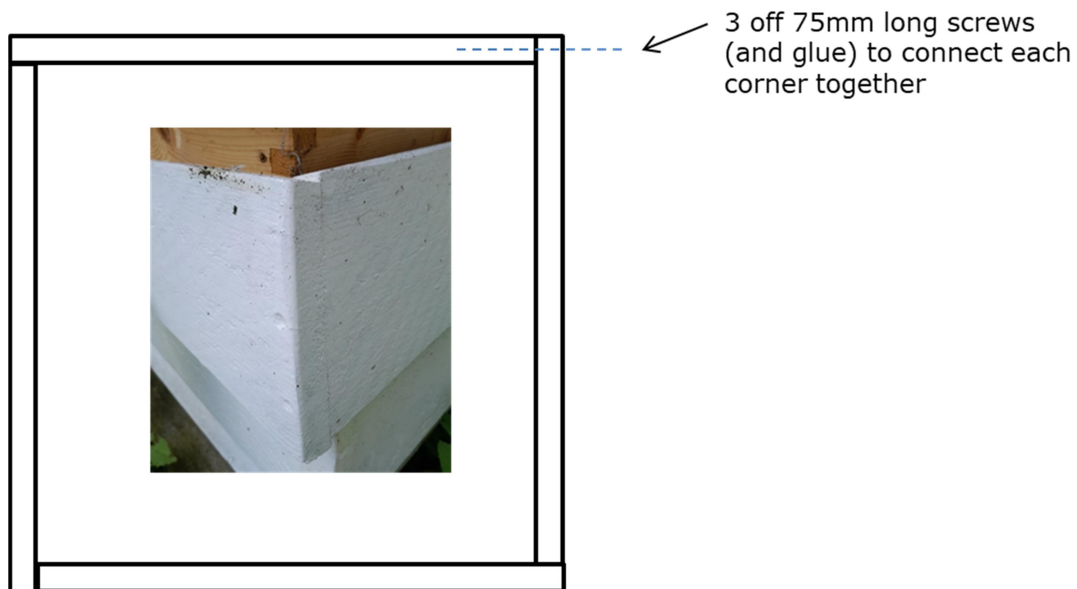


Four pieces of timber required for each lift

To create the angle for each lift, you need to measure in 3cm from each end which takes into account the thickness of the wood and some clearance for the lifts to nest within each other.

Screwing the lift material together

The four pieces will be screwed and glued together for simplicity – maybe a tad away from tradition but you can achieve a strong and stable joint using three 75mm long screws on each corner.

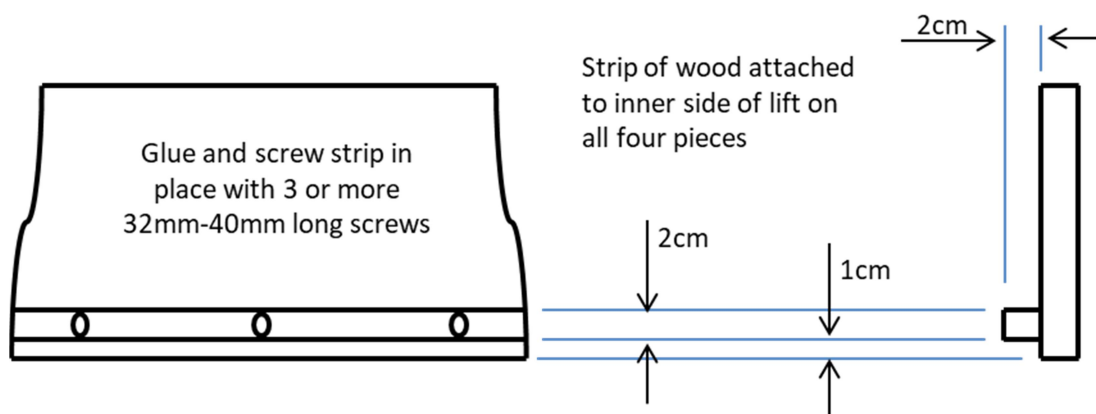


The way the planks are screwed together is important. It will seem fiddly at first to attempt to join the parts together but once you have tried it and got the knack, there's no problems afterwards. Waterproof PVA Glue and some 75mm long screws will give a secure joint.

Once assembled, check that the four sides are sitting flat and square on a level surface.

Strip of wood for the lifts to rest on

To nest each lift together, create a wood strip (22mm x 22mm) from pallet wood and attach it about 1 cm up from the inside base of the lift. The strips don't have to be the full length of each piece of lift wood.



Schematic of how the inner strip is attached

The inner strip can be cut from the timber you have bought but that wood does cost you money. A free alternative is to find some pallet slats that are about the same thickness as the bought wood, then saw them to size.

Strips inside the WBC lifts. Caption to read – Glue and screw the strips inside each lift.

Finishing your lifts

Once the wood has been placed on a flat surface with all sides square, allow time for the glue to dry. You can leave the wood in its sawn condition if you wish. By sanding each side, it does allow you to blend in the edge of one piece with the side of the adjacent piece. If you want to get rid of the screw indentations, you can either apply some filler or mix some fine sawdust with some PVA glue and cover the screw. Again, once dry, just sand it down to blend in.

Run a piece of sandpaper around the bottom edges of each lift. This is where you will handle them when taking them off and placing them back onto the hive.