

Bee Hive in a Bucket

by **Thinkenstein** on May 19, 2010

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Intro: Bee Hive in a Bucket

Bees are having a tough time world-wide. We need bees for our agriculture.

This bee hive is not designed for harvesting honey. This is just a home for bees. Not only the bucket is habitable, but the hollow pipe that supports it in the air can also be colonized.

In past years, bees have been getting scarcer around here. I have had two volunteer bee colonies establish themselves along my ridge this year -- in inconvenient locations. I hope they will find their way to this hive when the time comes for the volunteer hives to divide.

This is just an experiment. The hive was put up today near one of the volunteer hives, and has not yet been colonized.



step 1: Background

Bees have colonized an overturned cut-off drum used to support a supply of rebar off the ground.

Local friends said that just drilling a hole in a bucket and leaving it around would attract bees. In designing this hive, I wanted the entrance high enough off the ground that toads would not be able to leap up and gobble bees at the entrance.

I put the entrance hole in the pipe, a little below the bucket. That way, the bucket protects the entrance from rain.



step 2: The PVC pipe center post

I plugged the bottom of the pipe with a jar lid that fit tightly inside the pipe. If needed, you can heat the end of the pipe to soften it and stretch it over a slightly too-large jar lid. (Sorry, no photo, and the pipe is now set in the ground.) I don't expect much water to get inside, so an open bottom pipe is not needed for drainage. I put the bottom plug in basically to keep ants from tunneling in and accessing the honey comb from below. The small bee entry hole in the pipe is supposed to be easy to defend.

In the upper part of the pipe, I cut holes. One, which goes a little below the bucket is the bee entry hole. The larger holes are for bees to access the bucket area from the inside of the pipe.



Image Notes

1. Bee entrance hole.
2. Hole connects the inside of the pipe to the bucket area.

step 3: The bucket lid

The bucket lid gets a hole cut in it that fits tightly over the central pipe.



step 4: Mounting the bucket

The inverted bucket goes over the top of the pipe and snaps into the bucket lid.

It is loose, resting on the top of the pipe, but it can't fall off. When the bees colonize it, their wax will stick the bucket to the top of the pipe inside the bucket.



step 5: Plant the pipe in the ground

This is just like setting any fence post in the ground. Just dig a hole, set the pipe, and fill the hole. Tamp the dirt with a stick while you fill the hole.

I dug the hole with a digging bar (chisel-like end) and a tuna can to remove the dirt. The hole is as deep as my arm could reach.



step 6: Some more thoughts

If one ever did want to take the bucket off the top, a strong pull should tear any wax comb inside and allow it to slide off the top of the pipe for accessing the bucket and the pipe.

I'm not planning to ever do this, if the colony stays healthy. This is just to have more bees around to pollinate things I have planted. Since the volunteer hives established themselves, there are a lot more bees around. Maybe because of them, my fruit trees look like they are going to be more productive this year than they were last year.

As a design variation, if it was only a bucket that got colonized, the bee hole could be covered and the hive-in-a-bucket could be easily transported to other locations needing bees.

If the bucket gets too hot from the sun, I will put something over it to cover it and help provide shade.

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