

How to Set up a Good Apiary



A good bush apiary in Malawi

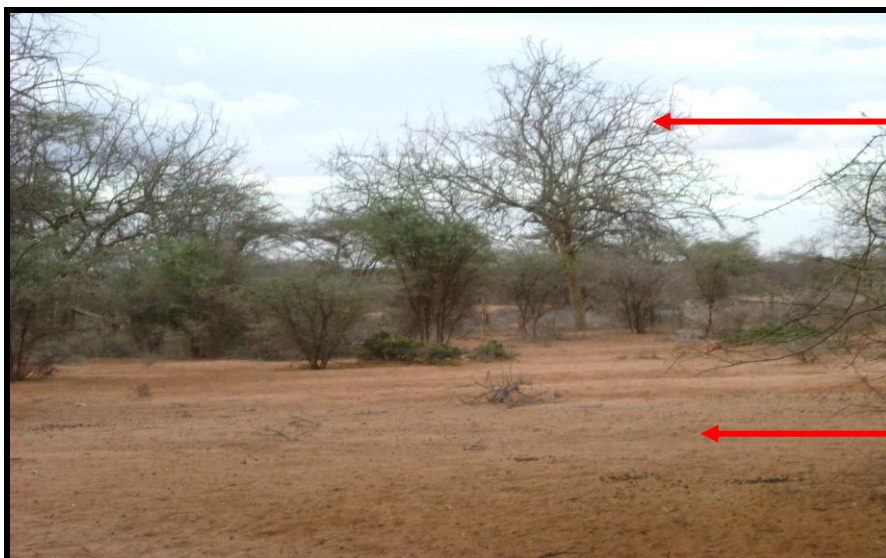
Good honey starts with a good apiary. An apiary is a place where small groups of beehives are kept.



These steps are needed to start a good apiary:

1. Choose a site:

- **That is easy to go to;**
- **Away from people and noise, and safe from thieves;**
- **Near a place where bees can find water;**
- **Near flowers, and trees that produce flowers;**
- **Protected from strong sun and winds;**
- **It can be a place that is not useful for other activities such as crop farming.**



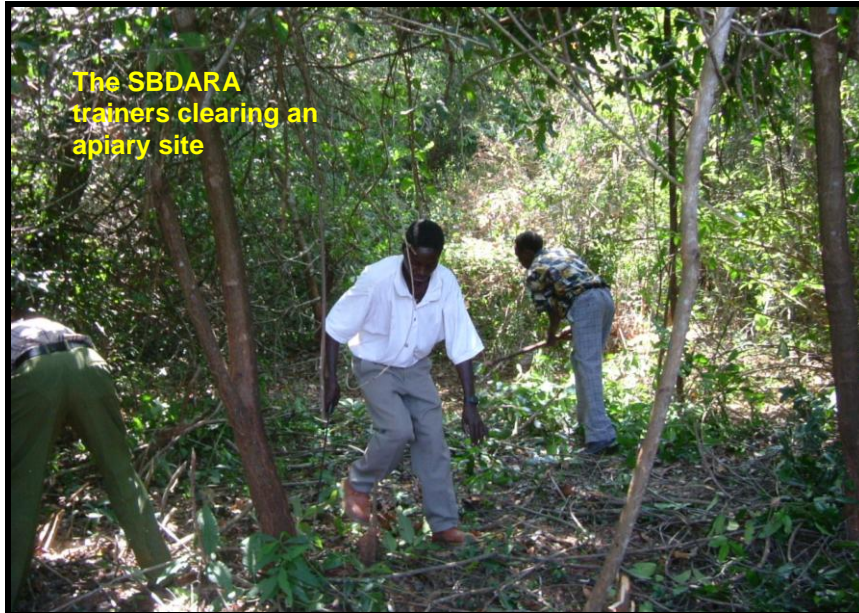
**plenty of trees
for shade and
for hanging
hives**

**acacia trees
are good bee
plants**

**poor soil is not
good for other
uses**

2. Prepare the apiary site by:

- Clearing obstacles and vegetation around hives to allow easy movement;
- Protecting against unwanted visitors such as thieves and large animals;
- Planting nectar-producing plants to provide forage.



The SBDARA trainers clearing an apiary site

Clearing the ground will also help to remove pests, such as beetles, toads and lizards.

3. Place the hives:

- So that they are level;
- Some people use stands. Others hang hives using wires;
- Stands should be at least one metre high;
- They must be made of strong wood, so they will last;
- Live stands will not rot - use types of wood that will grow easily into new plants when stuck in the ground;
- The legs of stands must be covered with grease or put in tins of oil so ants cannot climb into the hive.



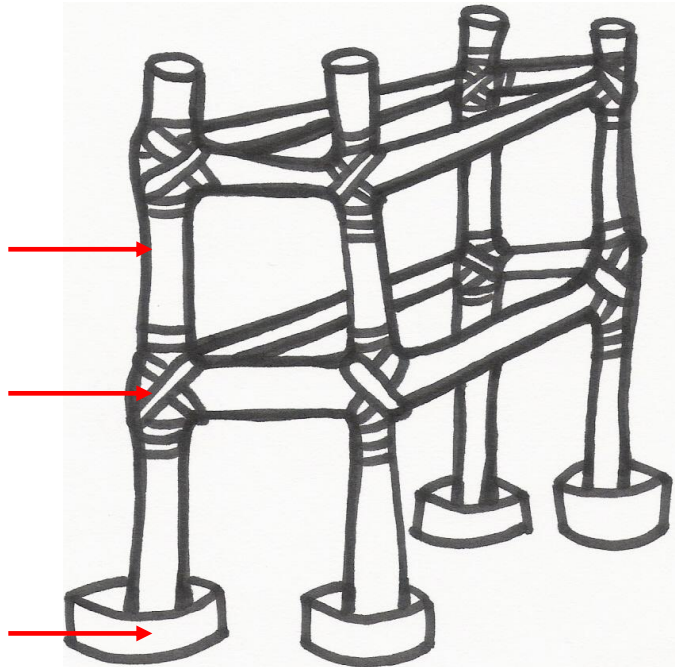
Stand 1 m off the ground – notice it is as high as the man's elbow

A simple hive stand:

use straight wood cut from local trees

fix together with rope or string

put stand feet into tins of oil to stop ants from climbing up



- Use hanging wires if honey badgers are a danger;
- The hanging wires must allow the hive to tip easily to prevent raiding animals;
- The wires need to be well greased to keep ants away;
- Hang hives at least 1 metre from the ground.



Notice how the wires are twisted to make a single strand to defend the hive against honey badgers.

- Leave enough space between hives to make it easy to work without disturbing bees in other hives;
- Make sure the hive entrances face away from footpaths;
- Limit the number of hives in an apiary to 10.



4. To attract bees into the hives, a "bait" is used:

- The hives need to be clean and to contain a good bait to attract honeybees to live there;
- Use plenty of bees wax around the inside of the hive and at the entrance;
- A top bar with a fresh bees wax starter strip is excellent for attracting bees. Bees also like comb containing brood very much;
- The bees like some leaves, especially if they smell of lemon and these are sometimes used as extra baits. Other baits that sometimes succeed are local wine or beer, cassava or maize flour, or banana skins.



5. Inspect hives regularly to check if bees have moved into them:

- **If there are no bees check hives are clean and dry and that no pests, such as ants, rats and spiders, have moved in;**
- **Add more wax bait if needed;**
- **The best time to colonise hives is when bees are swarming or migrating;**
- **Discuss with experienced local beekeepers when the best colonising times will be.**

6. Keep the apiary clean and protected by:

- **Clearing grass and other vegetation away from the hives;**
- **If possible, plant live fences of good bee plants around the apiary.**



This apiary has failed because there are no trees to give shade or food for the bees. None of the beehives were colonised. No trees, no bees – no honey, no money.

