A beehive is not a difficult woodworking project. It is simpler than many projects presented in woodworking magazines. All hive parts can be made with surplus or scrap lumber lying around in the garage or leftover from a building project. The only major power tool necessary is a table saw with a regular and a dado (groove cutting) blade. Access to a shaper or router table are helpful. If you start with rough lumber a planer is necessary. Small good quality planers are not expensive. Their main drawback is the time it takes to plane large quantities. Many technology instructors at public schools are happy to put students to work planing lumber. Drilling holes in the frame sides and predrilling before nailing are easier with a drill press, but a hand held drill will work.

For the variety of companies manufacturing hives, there is remarkable uniformity. Most parts can be interchanged with a minimum of problems. There are minor differences - some hives outer dimension is 19 7/8" long, others are 20". Some supers are 9 1/2", others are 9 5/8" high. The dimensions in this booklet are based on what I found to be most common in my older equipment. If you have a lot of equipment already you should alter these dimensions to match what you have. Pay particular attention to the depth of the frame rests and the thickness of the frame lugs that fit on the frame rests. Check the inside dimensions of the supers and the exact height. If you use lumber thicker than 3/4" for the supers, you must increase the depth of the finger joints and the outside dimension of sides, fronts, and backs.

Making your own hives saves you money by converting wood scraps into valuable hive components. You receive hours of enjoyment in your basement or garage workshop during the winter when you can't mess with bees in the apiary. There is a great feeling of satisfaction that comes from watching bees flying in and out of a hive you milled and assembled yourself, especially when you open up the hive and find virtually no burr and brace combs gluing the supers together.

Fingerjointing Jig

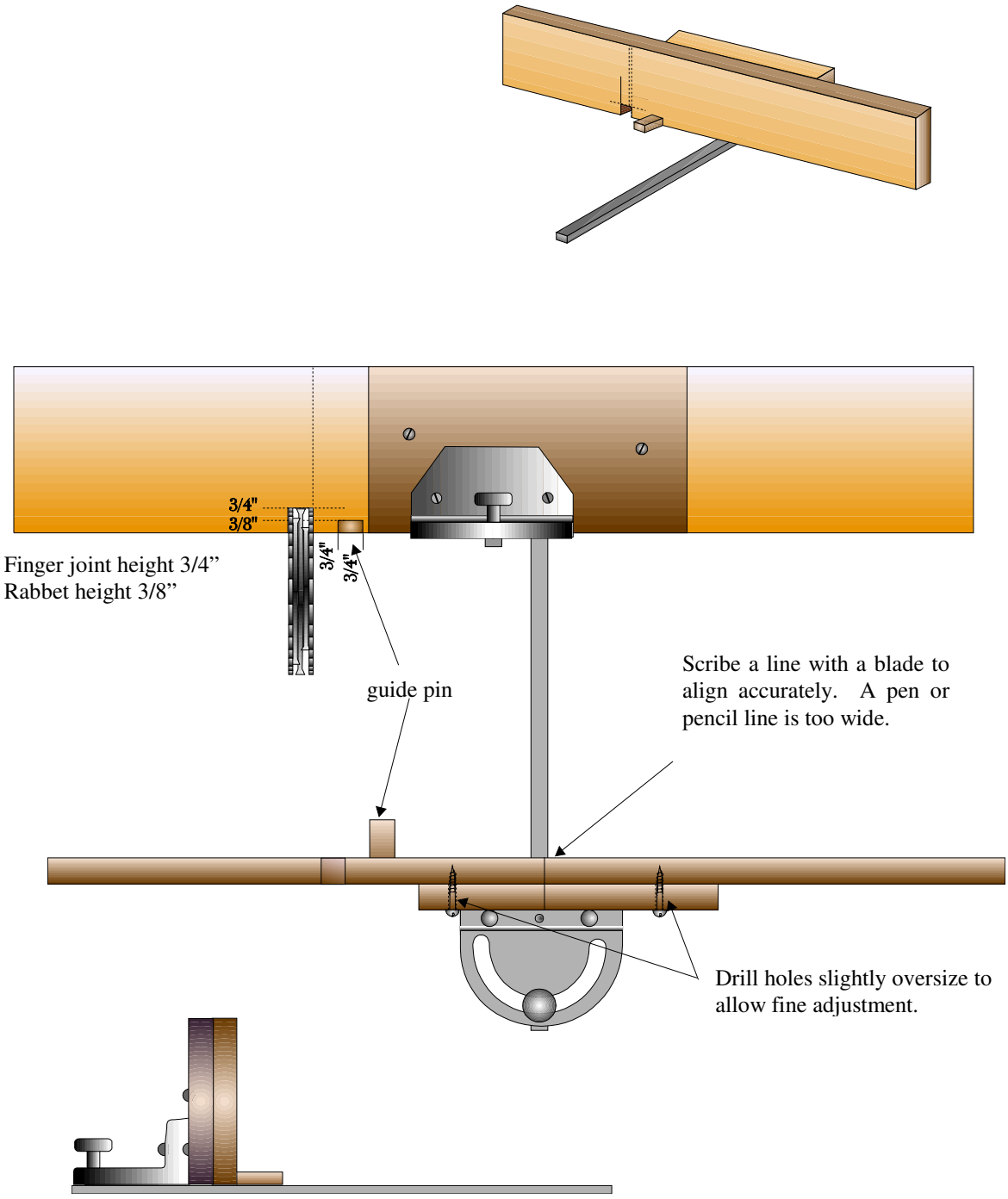
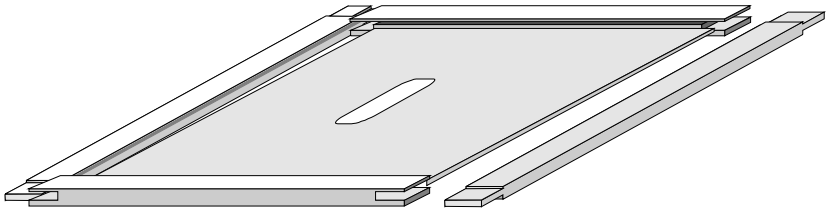


Figure 3

The Inner Cover

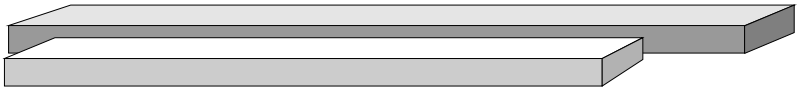
A good inner cover could be made with 1/2” or 3/8” plywood cut to 19 7/8” x 16 1/4”. Nail 1/8” cleats around the periphery on one face and 1/4” cleats on the other side to make the bee space. The plywood won’t sag. The more conventional inner cover is made with masonite which may sag eventually. The purist will make his inner cover out of solid wood. Some people don’t use an inner cover at all.

Inner Cover



2 Pieces 3/4” x 1 1/4” x 19 7/8”

2 Pieces 3/4” x 1 1/4” x 16 1/4”



Front and Back

Dado a 1/8” wide groove x 5/8” deep on all 4 pieces

Cut a groove 3/8” x 1 1/4” flush with the top of the 1/8” groove

Sides

Cut tenons 1 1/4” long and 1/8” from the top, then 1/4” from the bottom. This makes the tenon 3/8” thick.

Cut masonite to dimension. Center hole shape is not critical except for installing a bee escape. The masonite should fit easily into the 1.8” grooves without forcing. Widen grooves if necessary.

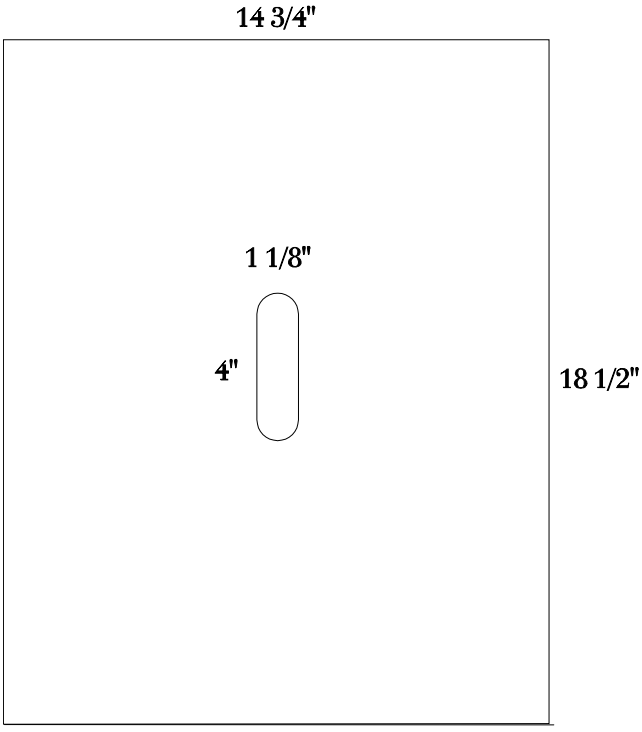


Figure 9

Sources of Supply

If you can't find an inexpensive source of suitable material near you, we do sell lumber by mail. Our specialty is cabinetmaking hardwoods and carving woods. Call or write for a free price list to:

Garreson Lumber Company
7201 Craig Rd.
Bath, NY 14810
phone 607-566-8558
www.garresonlumber.com

For nails, wire and other hardware, there are many mail order bee supply companies. Their catalogs are a great source of information as well as products. Here are just a few. You can find more in any honey bee magazine.

Walter T. Kelley Co.
3107 Elizabethtown Rd.
P.O. Box 240
Clarkson, KY 42726-0240
phone 502-242-2012

Dadant and Sons, Inc.
51 South 2nd St.
Hamilton, IL 62341-1397
phone 217-847-3324

Mann Lake LTD.
501 S. 1st St.
Hackensack, MN 56452
phone 218-675-6688