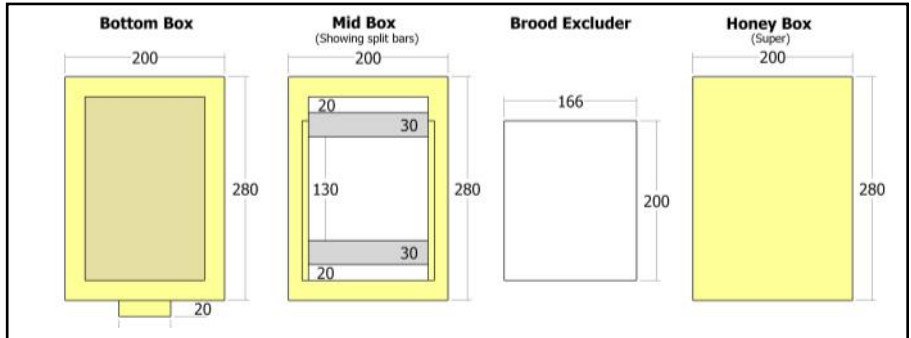
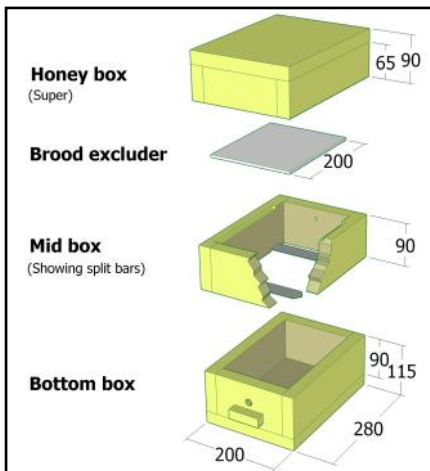




# FRED'S BEE HOTEL

For years we have enjoyed Fred Oertli's "Vaucluse Honey", and now that he has moved to the Northern Beaches, not only will he have to change the name on the label, but even the label itself to reflect his new home surroundings.

Many at the Shed have been amazed by Fred's work on making his bee hotels for his Native Australian Bees. The native bees are very popular because they are "stingless". For a more specialised look into keeping native bees, Fred recommends that you view the many pages on the internet written by Tim Heard, an entomologist, ex-CSIRO research scientist, who has spent his lifetime intimately engaged with these unique creatures.



The majority of beekeepers use the OATH (Original Australian Trigona Hive), or a variant of it. It is the workhorse of Australia's stingless bee industry and has proven ideal in many ways. Its design incorporates a means of splitting the hive, propelling the propagation of countless thousands of new hives. The standard footprint (as per plans above) has the advantage that it allows hives from various sources to be interchangeable.

Fred has varied the suggested timber thickness, in his view, in the coastal regions the standard pine timber purchased from Bunnings is sufficient, but if more than 10km from the coast thicker timber (30mm) ought to be used to offer better insulation against the cold in winter..

The hives are made of 3 boxes, the bottom 2 boxes comprise the hive, and the top box is where the "sugarbags" are hung by the bees. The construction is simple, but the external dimensions of the boxes is vital, both as to ensure that the bees don't get too cold, and to be uniform with other beekeepers so that colonies can be traded.

Each of the 3 boxes Fred has built have the same dimensions on the front, back and sides. The external measurements are:

- front and back = 200mm
- sides = 280mm
- height = 110mm

The bottom box has a base, which is 200mm x 310mm, and the hole for access is 18mm; the top box simply has a lid of 200mm x 280mm, and the middle box has 2 split bars built inside and the brood excluder is also fitted into this middle box.

Fred has also added a front balcony to the base below the entrance (30-50mm) to offer a safe landing pad and a couple of scraps on the sides as handles.



As for handling the colony, keep in mind that native bees produce only little honey compared to European honey bees.

To harvest it, the top box is removed, and the sugar (honey) bags are punctured, and the honey is drained into a container. Fred advises that you make sure the honey flow has stopped before replacing the box to prevent bees from drowning in the hive.