
COMPARISON OF

TBH VS. LANGSTROTH HIVES

A VERY IDIOSYNCRATIC VIEW AFTER 4 YEARS OF KEEPING
 BOTH TYPES OF BEEHIVES IN ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO
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★ = The more stars, the better.



CHARACTERISTIC	TOP BAR HIVE	LANGSTROTH	NOTES
Easy on your back	★★★★★	★	A TBH is a dream for anyone with a back problem. I find the height makes it easier to work combs and manipulate the hive.
Hive management	★	★★★★★	To me, TBH requires more time to manage due to frameless combs and non-moveable boxes. If swarm season coincides with a busy month at work, I can just slap on a few Lang boxes to give my girls more room. In a TBH, I don't have this luxury.
Ventilation	★★	★★★	Lang hives make better use of the chimney effect by allowing heat and moisture to rise up and out of the hive if you're using a ventilated top cover.

CHARACTERISTIC	TOP BAR HIVE	LANGSTROTH	NOTES
The naturalness factor	☆☆☆	☆☆	Though we haven't been able to quantify a cell-size advantage to TBHs, there is something so lovely about watching bees hang comb according to their own whims. We've compromised by sprinkling foundationless frames in our Lang hives.
The beauty factor	☆☆☆☆	☆☆	Personally, I find TBHs gorgeous. And if you build a viewing window in your TBH, it offers a unique learning experience for friends and family.
Standardization	☆	☆☆☆☆	Langs make it easy to lend out brood comb to a friend in need on the other side of town. The ubiquity of Langs in the U.S. also makes it easy to order equipment from anywhere and in a rush when you need it.
Cost	☆☆☆☆	☆	I know a guy in town who build his TBHs for \$20 a pop. A Lang set-up for one hive will cost about \$200, plus another \$200-\$500 for extracting equipment.
Harvesting honey	☆☆	☆☆☆	Though I miss the simplicity of crushing comb by hand from a TBH, there's nothing like the ease of harvesting honey from a Lang using a clearing board and extractor.
Moving hives	☆	☆☆☆☆	Langs are far easier to deconstruct and move across town if you happen to have a too-assertive hive in a densely populated part of town. It's also easier to combine weak hives or create splits by simply moving a box full of bees.
Build Your Own	Several options for TBH plans	10-frame Langstroth plans (PDF)	