

How to Harvest Beeswax



Refined beeswax from Malawi



Ugandan beeswax products, provided by Hives Save Lives Africa

Beeswax is a valuable commodity that can be used to make a variety of products. It should not be thrown away.



Keep wax from comb harvested for honey separate from the dark or old combs that have contained bee brood (the young bee larvae before they hatch).



Clean comb from harvested honey makes the best wax.



Wash the crushed honeycombs in water until they are free of dirt and honey. Put them into a suitable cloth sack and tie with string. Heat a good quantity of water in an old cooking pot. Put in the sack of honeycomb and push it down under the water.



**push the sack
under the water**

cloth sack

**cooking pot
containing hot
water**

Keep heating the water gently. It should not boil. Keep pressing the bag until all the comb has melted. The melted wax will run through the mesh and rise to the surface of the water.

**squeeze
the sack
to remove
the wax**

**the wax
runs out of
the sack
into the
water**



Squeeze the last wax out of the bag between two sticks with a rolling movement. Take care, the bag is hot. The wax will go solid on the surface of the water as it cools.

The solid wax should be processed again to remove remaining dirt:



Break the dirty wax into small pieces.



Melt the wax in a pan placed inside a second pan of boiling water.



**outer pan
containing
water**

fire

**inner pan
containing
wax**



boiling water

melting wax

Heat until all the wax is melted. You can see the dirt from the wax on the bottom of the pan in this picture.

**debris
in
bottom
of pan**



Pour the melted wax through straining material to remove the dirt. Clean tee shirt material is ideal.



A plastic mould will make a pleasing or useful shape. Smear the mould with soap to stop the wax sticking as it hardens.



**smearing
the inside
of the
mould
with soap
prevents
wax
sticking**

The wax cools in the mould and can be removed when it is solid. The dirt is left behind on the cloth. The cloth can be cleaned and used again.



Clean everything afterwards

Wax for sale in ½ and 1kg blocks. (refined by NHPC, Malawi)



OTHER METHODS OF COLLECTING WAX

- Solar wax extractor:** The heat of the sun can be used to melt wax. The wax is put into a filtering bag and placed on a metal tray in an insulated box under a glass cover and set in the sun. A metal lip directs the melting wax into a container. Care has to be taken not to allow the wax to overheat and blacken or burn.



wooden box
made of scrap
materials

tin sheet to
collect heat

glass or
polythene
cover to
increase
sun's heat

cloth filtering
bag
containing
wax

metal lip
directs
melting wax
into container

wax
collecting in
container

2. **Steam wax extractor:** Wax can also be cleaned using steam. A sack of wax cappings or comb is hung above a metal container floating on boiling water. Melting wax drips from the bag to collect in the container. Take care the water does not boil dry.



