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Volume 109 • Number 6

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2025

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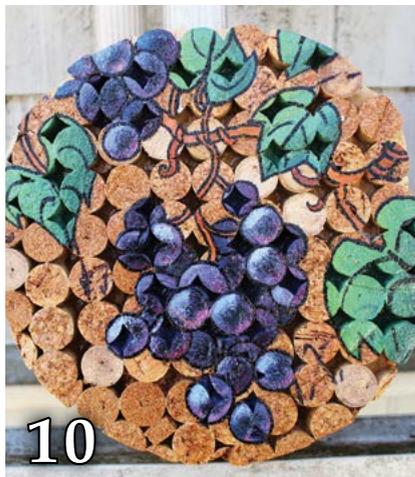
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Our Philosophy

At *Countryside*, our purpose is to inspire self-reliant living on any level.

We acknowledge that the path to self-sufficiency is as unique as the person who accepts the journey.

We strive to strengthen the homesteading movement by sharing the diverse voices and knowledge of today's practitioners.

We teach our readers how to grow and raise their own food; build, fix, and craft with their own hands; and walk as gently on this planet as possible.

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FROM THE EDITOR

THE HOLIDAY SEASON IS upon us again. It seems like we just did this, but I do look forward to eating my favorite turkey parts: the gizzard, liver, heart, and neck. I'm fortunate, as I'm the only one in my family who eats these delicacies, so I don't have to fight over them.

The holiday season is a busy time, with activities such as baking, decorating, and meal prepping. One of my favorite goodies to make this time of year is a Norwegian treat called krumkake. If you're not familiar with krumkake, it's a type of waffle cookie made from a batter that's spooned onto a hot, two-sided, flat iron on the stovetop and cooked for a few minutes while the iron is turned for consistent cooking. When golden brown, the krumkake is removed with a spatula, wrapped around a cone to make a cylindrical shape, and then placed on a cooling rack. Once cooled, they're ready to eat. They can also be filled with whipped cream, jelly, or any other filling of your choice. My mother made these delicious treats every year since I can remember, and after she passed away, I took over her tradition. Each year, I enjoy spending a day making these for my family.

Fun crafts for the season include gingerbread houses and pine cone ornaments. Jenny Underwood shares her methods and the gingerbread dough and icing recipes.

Holly is a type of evergreen plant known for its glossy, spiky leaves and bright red berries. Often

associated with winter and holiday traditions, holly adds a festive touch to decorations and adds brilliant color during the colder, dreary months. Its hardy nature allows it to thrive in various climates, making it a popular choice for gardens and landscapes. Learn more about this jolly plant on page 14.

If you live in a cold climate and are thinking about getting into chicken keeping, you'll want to turn to page 42, where Sherri Talbot discusses what you need to know before investing your time and money. There are certain breeds that've been developed for colder climates, and learning which ones to choose will greatly improve your chances of being a successful chicken keeper.

Take a break here and there to elevate your feet, grab a sweet treat, and enjoy the articles within this issue of *Countryside*. And keep sharing your wonderful captures of your countryside.

Happy Holidays to all!



Ann Tom

Ann Tom
Editor, *Countryside*

HAVE AN IDEA OR STORY TO SHARE, A QUESTION TO ASK, OR PERHAPS AN ANSWER TO A QUESTION? WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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Mice Deterrent

This past autumn, so many others and I complained about the number of mice getting into garages, sheds, homes, etc. After talking to a friend about this problem, he told me to try a simple trick. Take a resealable bag (I used a snack-sized bag) and add about ¼ cup of Gain Fireworks In-wash Scent Booster Beads to the bag. Then, poke small holes in the bag, big enough for the smell to escape but not the beads. Place these great-smelling bags where you think the mice are entering your building.

I tried this trick, and it worked for me. I've not seen any sign of mice in my shed since.

Susan Fisher, Michigan

In Response to September/October 2025 Question of the Month (What are your favorite traditions and/or memories of the season?)

When the holiday approaches, I get my Christmas basket and fill it with folded pieces of paper, on which I write: sugar cookies, hard tack candy, caramel popcorn, almond crackers, and so on, and put them in

the basket. Each week, I draw a folded paper bake it for my family.

Diana Johnson, Ohio

Refrigerators

Greetings from outer Washington state. Refrigerators can be a complicated subject, especially when you wake up at 3:15 a.m. on a Sunday morning to the unusual sound of your refrigerator trying to start again and again.

Buying a complicated refrigerator or freezer for a farm in the boonies can be a real maintenance problem that sometimes can be fixed only by an appliance repair company. Things like crushed ice, water in door, etc. are on that list.

Be sure to install a surge protector on each appliance. You can have dirty power in the boonies and in cities. Most of the people that I know of who've built their house or farm are the ones that want to know how a refrigerator works and how to fix it.

There are places you can go online to get a schematic of your refrigerator and freezer and a list of parts. Each refrigerator usually has a defrost timer, and getting one for a spare is a quick fix when your refrigerator isn't running.

Knowing where the defrost timer is and knowing where you can insert a screwdriver to turn it, start, and test it, can make troubleshooting a lot easier. If you turn it and it clicks and starts running, then the defrost timer is defective and not turning. If it's not turning, then replacing the timer is quick and simple. Turn off the power until you've replaced it.

Here are some simple things that make your refrigerator work better:

- Buy two thermometers: one for the refrigerator part and one for the freezer part. You'll be able to easily check how to adjust your temperature controls.
- Inside the refrigerator, keep food from touching the back of the refrigerator so there's air flow down the back of it to all shelves.
- Be sure to clean the coils every 3 to 6 months. The coils are either inside the back of the refrigerator, under it, or on the back of it. You can vacuum and then blow over the coils to clean them. I put a towel next to the front and use the vacuum on blow to remove the leftover dust into the towel. Keeping the coils clean means they

can dissipate heat quicker and easier. You'll get a feel for how often you should clean the coils.

- If you place a board between the back of the refrigerator and the wall, there'll be an open space for the fan to draw in cooler air to cool the coils.
- The refrigerator should be in an area that's 50 degrees Fahrenheit or warmer. The thermostat in most refrigerators is in the refrigerator part and not in the freezer. If the air outside the refrigerator gets too cold, the refrigerator will stay cold enough not to turn on. If it doesn't turn on, then the freezer will start to warm to the temperature of the refrigerator, and your frozen food will thaw. Putting a refrigerator on an unheated back porch or garage is death to frozen food if that air temperature gets below 50 degrees F.

Now to the subject I started when the refrigerator won't start:

- You need to buy a hard-start kit from a hardware store that's sized for your refrigerator. Supco makes a number of them.



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- Next, you need to unplug the refrigerator.
- On the outside of your compressor (that roundish thing that's usually black that you see when you take the back cover off), is where a number of wires go into a small box on the side of the compressor.
- When you take off the box cover, you'll see a number of hoses and wires. A simple drawing or taking a picture of these will help put things back in place later.

We want to hear from you!

November/December Question of the Month:

I'm the type of person who spends more time outdoors than in. Some of my favorite outdoor activities include fishing, grilling and smoking food, UTVing, gardening, hunting, and camping.

What are some outdoor activities that you enjoy?

Share with me your favorite outdoor adventures.

I'd love to hear them!

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- You'll need a multimeter to test the compressor. If you don't know what a multimeter is, you should probably call a repair service.
- Pull off the components and remember how they were connected. (This is where taking a picture comes in handy).
- There are usually three pins pointing out of the compressor, set in a triangle shape — a common point, and two lower or higher points.
- Put your multimeter on ohms.
- Go from the single common point to each of the other two points.

You should get some resistance reading.

If you get resistance reading between the common point and both other points, then the compressor windings are intact.

You can get your hard-start kit and install it per the instructions. However, if one of them is wide open with no resistance, you have a defective compressor and may have to replace the appliance.

Freezers

The best freezer for the money is a chest freezer. You'll need to clean the coils as in refrigerators. Make sure there's space all around the freezer so it can get cool air. When you open the lid, the cold air doesn't run out into the room as it does in vertical freezers.

When the power goes off, freezers will last up to two days (depending on the weather) before I'll have to turn on the generator.

I keep two freezers out in my detached garage, and they work great. I used to butcher one beef and two pigs every year when my family was growing up. I buy my beef from a local company now that I'm retired.

I filled empty water jugs about 90% and froze them, several at a time, in the cool fall to cool spring so as to not overload the freezer. I have the bottom of both freezers filled with 1-gallon frozen water containers. When the power goes off, the ice helps keep the freezers cold longer.

Notes:

- Common sense helps in troubleshooting.
- You have inputs and outputs.
- Do *not* start cutting wires.
- Write down what you've done as you do it. It'll help you understand what you've done if you need to call a friend or a repair company.

— Dennis Young

Five Commonly Made Canning Mistakes

There's arguably no better way to eat well than by stocking a pantry with canned foods you've grown yourself or those you bought as they came into season. Home canning means you eat well (and affordably!) throughout the year!

While canning has been around for generations, most of us weren't taught in school or by our parents how to safely master this timeless food preservation technique.

We commonly see these five mistakes made by those just getting started. While there's no teacher quite like experience, you'll benefit from learning to avoid these mistakes right off the bat. These tips will protect your family from food safety concerns and help you avoid waste—because when you've invested so much time growing and canning your valuable food, you don't want to have to throw anything out!

Five Mistakes:

1. Using the Wrong Jars

Canning instructions and processing times are precise and specific to home canning jars (not

recycled commercial jars) and the size of the jar—larger jars require longer processing times to kill harmful microorganisms.

2. Sudden Temperature Changes

Glass may crack when subjected to sudden temperature changes. This is why jars should be washed in hot water just before being placed into a canner filled with hot water, and cold liquids shouldn't be poured into hot glass. After processing, allow jars to gradually cool on a towel or board.

3. Using Your Jars in the Freezer

When freezing jars, use only those designed to be freezer safe—wide-mouth jars with straight sides. ("Shouldered" jars will crack as the food expands.) Cool the filled jars gradually before placing them in the freezer. Don't tighten the lids until the contents are fully frozen.

4. Overtightening the Lids

Use only two fingers to tighten your lids. If you tighten them too much, your lids will buckle and fail to seal. We often see this mistake!

5. Using the Wrong Canning Method

There are two commonly used methods for home canning: water-bath canning and high-pressure canning. Any modern canning recipe will clearly tell you which method to use. (Recipes aren't interchangeable between methods.)



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WINE CORK TRIVETS

A Useful Kitchen Product from Discarded Materials

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY DANA BENNER

HAVE YOU EVER thought about what happens to those corks from the thousands of wine bottles opened every day in restaurants? We all hope the bottles get recycled, but what happens to the corks? They usually go in the trash, ending up in our landfills. There has to be a way to reuse these corks.

My wife never seems to have enough trivets, so I figured this would be a great way to recycle some corks. The only problem was that I needed corks. I don't

drink wine but, thankfully, I know people who do. I asked everyone to start saving the corks and, soon, I'd gathered enough to start this project. What follows is how I made my wine cork trivets.

Not All Corks Are the Same

Wine corks come in all sizes, styles, and materials. While true corks are made from the bark of the cork tree, some are made from a synthetic material. The corks I collected were a mixture of both natural and synthetic materials.



Krista Gursky with the finished trivets.

While synthetic corks can be used in many projects and shouldn't be written off, for this project, I found that natural cork was the way to go. Surprisingly, my largest hurdle was putting together enough corks of about the same size and shape. The corks I couldn't use won't be thrown away. Instead, I've put them aside for another project down the road.

A Round Peg in a Square Hole

After experimenting a little, I found it'd be best to make a cork



Frame used to make cork "board."



Organizing and putting corks in place.



Gluing corks into place one-by-one.



Cork "board" almost complete.



Using a handsaw and the frame as a guide to cut the cork.



Using a coping saw to cut the shape of the trivet.

“board.” This would allow me to make the final design for the trivets and make it much easier to cut. I made a 12-inch by 15-inch by 1-inch frame out of scrap lumber to hold all the corks together. As corks are round and the frame was a rectangle, there was no way I was going to get a square edge. Also, there was no way to prevent gaps between the corks, due to their shape. I liked this irregularity, but you may disagree. My setup wasn’t perfect, but it was the best I could do.

The next step was to put the frame on some sort of base. Gluing the corks together is messy, so you’ll want something between the corks and your workstation. I also wanted a solid base under the trivet, so I opted to use a piece of scrap ¼-inch plywood.

It was time to place each cork into the frame. Trying to use corks of the same length will make the job easier in the long run, but it’ll be a tedious



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Krista's artwork on small trivet.



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endeavor — and one that’s almost impossible. There’s no set size for corks, so you’ll need to do the best you can. For this project, I stood each cork on end, with the first cork going in one of the four corners of the frame. Then it was just a matter of gluing each cork to the one before it. I found that Elmer’s glue worked the best for this project.

Once the cork “board” is glued together, a process that’ll take a few days, allow it to dry thoroughly and don’t remove it from the frame. After drying, and while it’s still in the frame, cut the corks to

equal height. Using the frame as a guide, use a handsaw to cut the cork. When you’re finished, the entire board should be one level height. Cork is very delicate, so hand tools are the way to go, as you have more control over them.

Shaping the Trivet

Remove the cork “board” from the frame. I purposely left the ¼-inch plywood attached to give the trivet some stability, but that was just personal preference. From here you can make the trivet any shape you want. I

wanted to keep things simple, so I decided to stick to a round shape. I used a standard-size dinner plate as a template. After making my circle, I found that I had room to make a smaller trivet as well. For this, I used a smaller dessert plate as the template.

I used a coping saw to make the cuts; but you can use a scroll saw if you wish. Don’t use a jigsaw, as it’ll tear the cork apart. Some light sanding with 100-grit sandpaper and you’re done. I like to put a design on my trivets, and this cork trivet was no different. As I’m no artist, I turned to my good friend Krista Gursky, a great artist who specializes in objects found in the natural world. She’s done work for me in the past, drawing and painting the designs for these trivets. I left the artistic ideas up to her and she did a great job. With the artwork complete, I applied a water-based poly to protect the art and to give the trivet a more finished look. Make sure that the poly is fully cured before you put anything hot on it.

I asked everyone to start saving the corks and, soon, I’d gathered enough to start this project.



The artwork of Krista Gursky on the large trivet.

Pride in Keeping Trash Out of the Landfill

Congratulations! There you have it; a wine cork trivet. You’ve successfully made a useful product out of discarded material and all it cost you was some time. More importantly, you’ve kept “trash” out of the landfill. 🌱

DANA BENNER has been writing about all aspects of the outdoors, the environment, and sustainability for over 35 years. His work appears in numerous publications including *Grit*, *Mother Earth News*, *Countryside and Small Stock Journal*, *Backwoods Survival Guide*, and others. He also hosts outdoor programs on HCTV in Hudson, New Hampshire.



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Deck Your Halls with Boughs of Holly

BY MARK HALL



IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR again. The air is cold, snow is falling, and strings of multi-colored lights glow from homes everywhere. Inside each one, long-cherished holiday music plays nonstop, and the smell of freshly baked cookies wafts enticingly from the kitchen. In front of a large picture window stands a dazzling Christmas tree, casting its shimmering radiance in all directions. The entire house is beautifully decorated with lights, ribbons, bows, and, of course, holly.

Holly in Homes Prior to Christmas

Holly has been associated with Christmas decorating for centuries. Ancient Romans decorated their homes with it more than 2,000 years ago. Throughout the celebration known as Saturnalia, the Romans adorned their dwellings with holly branches, in honor of the god Saturn. The festival took place in December, before the winter solstice, and many went on to leave boughs inside the house all

year long. In those days, holly decorations were kept in place out of a desire for good luck.

Claims of Holly's Magical Powers

According to Pliny the Elder (AD 23 to 70), an army and naval commander of the early Roman Empire, holly wielded protective powers over both natural and supernatural entities. An author and naturalist, Pliny wrote in his expansive book, *Natural History*, that a house or a farm would be defended from witches and lightning if holly was planted nearby. Pliny also related a belief passed down through previous generations involving a stick of holly wood being thrown in the direction of an animal. If the projectile fell short of its mark, "the stick will move by itself to the target" by paranormal capabilities. The Romans even believed that holly flowers could make water freeze!

Holly was still thought to be magical after the fall of the Roman Empire. The Celts and the Druids considered holly, an evergreen, to

be symbolic of eternal life. These civilizations accessorized their homes with it, as well, for they also believed in its protective powers.

It's interesting to note that these ancient beliefs weren't entirely without merit. In recent times, science has confirmed that spines on holly leaves act as tiny lightning conductors, sending a lightning strike away from objects near it. This is known as corona discharge.

A Poison or a Medicinal Cure-all?

Holly was also used by ancient societies to treat various illnesses, such as influenza, fever, bronchitis, and whooping cough. Pedanius Dioscorides, the Greek physician, pharmacologist, botanist, author, and "father of pharmacognosy," claimed that holly was also useful in the treatment of wild animal bites, poisons, diarrhea, bladder stones, and skin abnormalities.

Today, holly is still used by some for treatment of digestive disorders, heart disease, fever, cough, and other

health conditions. However, no medicinal use of holly is supported by scientific research. In fact, its berries are poisonous and may be deadly to eat. Also, ingesting the leathery leaves can cause stomach and intestinal problems, such as nausea, diarrhea, and vomiting. It's even conjectured that holly-leaf spines may lacerate the digestive tract, including the inside of the mouth. So, please do *not* eat any part of a holly tree or shrub!



Holly Integrated Into Christmas Decorating

Over the many centuries that followed the fall of Rome, Christianity grew and spread across Europe, bringing with it many changes. During this time, the practice of decorating homes with holly branches was integrated into the Christmas celebration. The spiny leaves

symbolized the crown of thorns on Christ's head, and the red berries represented his blood. Sprigs of holly were even used to garnish the traditional English Christmas dessert, plum pudding.

What Exactly is Holly?

There are more than 570 species of holly. The one long associated

with home decorating is *Ilex aquifolium*, known also as holly, English holly, European holly, common holly, or Christmas holly. It's an evergreen tree or a shrub that's native to parts of Europe, Africa, and Asia. Preferring relatively moist areas, it thrives in denser forests and scrub regions. It tolerates frost

An advertisement for Stromberg's Winter Essentials. The background is a snowy winter scene with bare trees. In the foreground, there are two brown chickens standing on a wooden ramp. To the left of the chickens are three items: a red waterer, a yellow heat lamp, and a silver metal lid. The text 'Winter Essentials' is written in a large, blue, cursive font. Below it, the text 'WINTERIZE. UPGRADE. PROTECT YOUR BIRDS.' is written in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font. The Stromberg's logo, featuring a stylized chicken head and the name 'Stromberg's', is in the top right corner. At the bottom, the phone number '800.720.1134' and the website 'STROMBERGSCHICKENS.COM' are displayed in a blue, sans-serif font.

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and summer drought, and, as a popular ornamental shrub, it permits intensive pruning. Being dioecious, only the female plants have the tiny red berries, or drupes, and require fertilization by nearby male plants.

Decorating with Fresh Holly

You can create stunning holiday decorations with holly branches purchased from nurseries and florists or even cut from your own holly tree or shrub. If removing them yourself, slip on a pair of gloves to avoid painful pricks, and cut several long, thin branches with pruning shears. To keep your clippings looking fresh, leave them in warm water overnight so they can absorb plenty of moisture.

You can create many simple placements with fresh holly, and tables are a great place to begin. Guests are sure to get into the holiday spirit when they sit down at a table adorned with freshly cut holly sprigs, tucked into napkin rings or placed neatly along the edge of festive plates. Now, don't stop there! For even greater ambiance, make a beautiful holiday centerpiece, with a decorative candle setting

surrounded by holly branches. The holly's glossy green leaves and its bright red berries are sure to please.

How about a lovely garland made of fresh holly for your mantelpiece, windowsills, and stairway banister rail? Simply cut a string to the length of garland you wish to make. Starting at one end, attach a small holly sprig onto the string with thin, pliable wire. Then partially overlap with another sprig and attach it to the string in like fashion. Proceed attaching sprigs from one end of the string to the other, being sure to overlap each one as you go. For extra ornamentation, attach pine cones or tie ribbons onto the garland.

What Christmas would be complete without a welcoming wreath to hang on your front door? Fresh holly can certainly make for a beautiful one. First, make a base by weaving together varying lengths of willow, or other flexible wood branches, such as birch, dogwood, chestnut, or maple, and secure with wire. Then shape it into a circle and overlap the ends. Now, begin wiring sprigs of holly to the base, overlapping as you go, and follow the circle.

If a fuller, more balanced look is desired, consider including pine, spruce, or other foliage in addition to the holly. Finally, attach any decorations, such as dried flowers, pine cones, or even tree ornaments.

Who would've guessed that a well-known plant commonly used today for Christmas decorating would have such an incredibly long and storied past?

Have a "holly, jolly Christmas," everyone! And, in case you haven't already, be sure to "haul out the holly and deck the halls again, now!" 

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Egg exposes hole in sock.

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY DANA BENNER

IT WAS ON THANKSGIVING DAY WHEN I told my daughter I was making a darning egg. Like most people, she had no idea what I was talking about. When I explained to her what it was and what it was used for, she asked me, “Why do you need that? Socks are cheap enough that you don’t need to repair them. Just toss them out and buy more.” I then explained to her that was a waste of money and resources, and it was bad for the environment. Once we got past that hurdle, she pulled out her iPhone, looked up darning eggs, and informed me that I could get one for about \$6.00. I shook my head and walked away.



Using TJ Wright Jessmuck to remove bark.



Everything gathered together.



Egg made from tree limb.

It seems that repairing clothes and making what you need, including darning socks and making a darning egg, are things of the past. When I was growing up, repairing clothing was a way of life and, if we needed something, we usually made it. With five kids, our family couldn't afford to continuously buy clothes. My mother taught me how to sew (well enough to get by), and my father taught me how to make the tools we needed with the stuff we had on hand. By stretching the life of my clothing, including my socks, I'm reducing my carbon footprint a little and I'm saving money doing it.

Before I began my project, I knew I wanted something more than the traditional darning egg. My egg would be larger than the eggs of old, as I wanted something I could use to help repair tears in shirt sleeves, as well as holes in socks. Opting to make my own darning egg, out of scrap lumber and using only hand tools, saved me money as well. All I spent was time. My reward was the satisfaction of seeing and using the finished product.

Supplies Needed

The amount of time it'll take you to make the egg depends both on the wood and the tools you're using and the time you want to spend. For this project, I was using pieces of scrap lumber glued together to form a 4-by-4-by-5-inch block, though I've used a 4-inch round tree branch that was about 5 inches long. Both have good and bad points. The scrap lumber piece has edges that need to be rounded off, and the tree branch, while round, has bark that needs to be peeled and knots that must be dealt with. Also, a tree limb is subject to cracking as it continues to dry. It's your choice of which to choose.

There are many tools that can be used to make a darning egg, and I encourage you to use whichever ones you feel the most comfortable

with. For this project, I wanted to stay as "green" as possible, so I used simple hand tools, namely a good, sharp pocketknife; a wood rasp; a cross-cut saw; and a ton of 60-grit sandpaper. To finish the egg, I did a final sanding with 80-grit, then 100-grit sandpaper, and treated it with a mixture of beeswax and citrus. You can easily mix your own, but I like to use Feed-N-Wax by Howard.

Time wasn't an issue for me, and granted, using a lathe or a Dremel tool would've been faster, but that wasn't what I was looking to do. If time is an issue with you, then by all means use power tools.

Making the darning egg this way is a long process and takes a great deal of patience. Using the knife, I carve out the rough shape of the egg. The rasp comes in handy when trying to round the edges of the square block (or take out a

stubborn knot on the tree branch). Once you get the rough shape, it's all about sanding. This is the long tedious part. I started with 60-grit sandpaper to continue with the shaping process. Once the shape was where I wanted it, I went to 80-grit, and then finally 100-grit sandpaper. Softwoods (pine, spruce)

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Pieces of scrap wood ready to be glued together.



The gluing process.



Finished egg.

will go a lot faster than hardwoods (oak, maple). When the sanding was completed, I used Feed-N-Wax, following the instructions on the container.

Putting the Darning Egg to Use

If you've made it this far, congratulations, as the hard part is done. I have a drawer full of socks that need attention. Although I do know how to sew, I'm not good at it. To bone up on my rather rusty skills, I turned to *Make, Sew and Mend*, written by Bernadette Banner. One thing made clear is that darning socks without the egg can be a mess.

When darning socks, the thread that you use is important. Thin, all-purpose thread won't do. You need to use a thicker thread to help keep it from pulling. The stitch used when darning is basically a series of running stitches. The key is to reinforce the surrounding good material before trying to mend the hole. These reinforced areas are where you'll run the stitches to close the hole.

To use the darning egg, you simply drop it into the sock, fat end down. With the egg in the sock, squeeze the sock around it. The hole that needs to be repaired will present itself. Now, it's just a matter of sewing it together, using the stitch and the technique described by the instructions you choose. The trick, if there is one, is to keep the sock tight around the egg while you sew. This'll take practice, but after you do a few of them, you'll get the hang of it.

Anyone Can Do It

I honestly can't tell you how long it took me to make this egg, as I wasn't strictly working on it the entire time. I stopped when I had the "egg" where I wanted it. Precise time wasn't the point on this project. I was looking to show, not only others, but myself, that it could be done. My goal was to make a tool I needed, out of scrap, while having zero impact on the environment, and that's what I accomplished. If I could do it, then there's no reason why you can't. ©



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The Incredible, Versatile Hog Ring

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY PATRICE LEWIS

SOMETIMES IT'S THE LITTLE things in life that turn into big helps. Consider the humble hog ring, for example.

As the name implies, hog rings are metal, open-sided rings with pointed tips used to pierce the nasal septum of hogs to prevent them from rooting. While this was their original function, hog rings have become much, much more.

The two materials most commonly used to make hog rings are steel and aluminum. Steel is stronger, more expensive, and harder to work with than aluminum. Both are ideally designed for outdoor applications where durability is a priority.

For applications requiring great strength or which must withstand a lot of force, steel (galvanized or stainless) is preferred. The composition provides great holding strength even when bent. Sometimes the ends are beveled for easy penetration through various materials. For simpler fastening projects, or projects that don't require massive strength, aluminum is used. This metal is easy to bend and fast to apply.

The rings are compressed using pliers into an O-shape, D-shape, or triangle shape, so whatever is locked within that shape stays together. While regular pliers can be used to close a hog ring, it's a

clumsy and tiring process. Instead, an inexpensive and specialized tool designed to fit the exact shape of a hog ring is preferred. These hog-ring pliers have grooved jaws in which the ring can nestle until it's time to close it around the item(s) to be fastened, and make the job nearly effortless. Different pliers are available for different types of rings.

Hog rings come in various shapes, sizes, and types, depending on their specialized purposes. The most common are C, M, and D (which resemble the letters) and hump. Sizes are based on the length of the base or the widest gap between the prongs, and can range from 1/4 inch to 1 inch. Manufacturers also specify the height, size of the opening, and the wire gauge used to make the ring fastener.

While hog rings performed their original function admirably, it didn't take long for people to discover they were highly useful for other purposes.

Our first exposure to hog rings came when we were puzzling how to fasten chicken wire to field fence when enclosing our garden. The field fence was 4-feet high, and we wanted to raise this height to 8 feet to guard against deer. We strung chicken wire to a high wire that ran the perimeter of the garden and then were tasked with fastening the chicken wire (above) to the field fence (below). Rather than laboriously tie wire at intervals, we went to the feed store and purchased a box of aluminum hump-shaped hog rings and hog-ring pliers.

The resulting task was astoundingly easy, though we used up the box of hog rings within minutes. So, I went back to the feed store and bought 10 more boxes. (The salesclerk asked in some bewilderment, "How many hogs do you have?")

Hog rings provide great holding strength on a variety of objects. They can be pinched tight or loose to hold things securely or loosely, as needed. Besides using them on pigs, here are the most common uses for hog rings:

- Upholstery. Hog rings are used in both automotive and furniture upholstery. For furniture, they're used to attach fabric covers to frames. In automotive upholstery, they're used to attach car-seat covers to seats. In both instances, hog rings ensure the material remains taut and securely in place, which in turn prevents wear and tear on the fabric. In industrial settings (or for big jobs), a pneumatic hog-ring gun is often a preferred option.

- Farm/homestead. Hog rings are ideal for making or repairing wire cages for chickens, rabbits, or small pets. They can be used for building crab or lobster traps. The rings can be used to "stitch" wires or make chain links.



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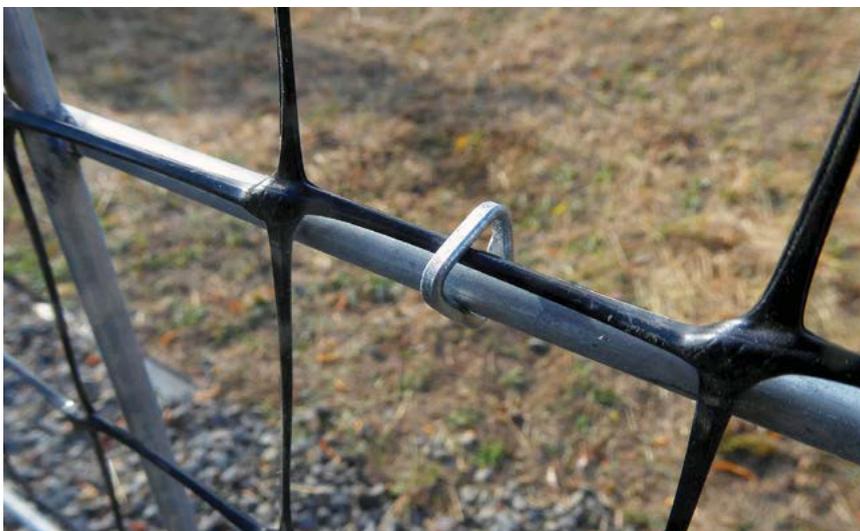
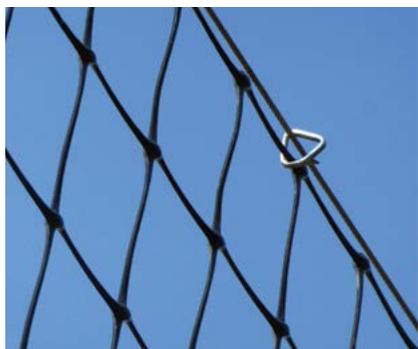
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• Fencing. This is the application we use most frequently. It's amazing how frequently one section of fencing needs to be fastened to another section of fencing. After re-fencing a barbed-wire field with field fence, we used hog rings to fasten new field fence to the original barbed wire strands for reinforcement. We've used hog rings to apply deer netting over



sections of hog panels to prevent smaller animals (rabbits, etc.) from entering the garden. And of course, hog rings are superb for attaching chicken wire to field fencing. In short, whenever two meshed materials need to be fastened together, it's often the hog rings we reach for.

But hog rings aren't limited to these uses. People have used them for attaching warning signs onto fences (including electric fences) or at construction sites. They can be used on bungee cords to make tight knots when fastening kayak deck rigging or trampoline braces. They can be used in heavy-duty packaging (the massive staples that often secure strong cardboard for heavy shipments is a type of hog ring).

For outdoor gear, they make excellent shock cord loops for attaching carabiner clips. For meat processors, they can be used to clamp the ends of summer sausage casings, ground meat bags, or fibrous meat bags. Hog-rings can also be used to close sandbags or other heavy-duty sacks.

It's important to use the right-sized ring and the correct composition for the task at hand. Large rings are too big for clamping sausage casings. Small rings won't perform well when fastening fencing or clamping sandbags.

Steel may be too strong for simple clamping jobs. Aluminum may be too weak when securing boxes for heavy shipments.

Whatever project you have in mind, make sure the rings are the correct size and material. Factors to consider are shape, size, material, finish, tool compatibility, and application.

Removing hog rings isn't difficult, especially aluminum ones. If you plan to reuse the hog ring and if the hog ring is loosely crimped, use a flat-head screwdriver or pliers (not hog-ring pliers!) to pry the ends apart. Keep in mind the structural integrity of the ring will be compromised by prying it open, which in turn may compromise the safety and durability of the project. If you're just interested in undoing the hog-ring connection, use bolt cutters (regular or miniature) to cut the old fasteners. (It's wise to collect and properly discard the hog-ring pieces, lest any livestock accidentally ingest them.)

Once you try hog rings for fencing or other homestead purposes, you'll never go back. Hog rings are a versatile and incredible tool you'll wonder how you ever did without. ©

PATRICE LEWIS is a wife, mother, homesteader, homeschooler, author, blogger, columnist, and speaker. An advocate of simple living and self-sufficiency, she's practiced and written about self-reliance and preparedness for almost 30 years. She's experienced in homestead animal husbandry and small-scale dairy production, food preservation and canning, country relocation, home-based businesses, homeschooling, personal money management, and food self-sufficiency. Follow her website www.PatriceLewis.com or blog www.Rural-Revolution.com.



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Tapping Into Plant Sales for the Backyard Nursery

BY MICHAEL BROWN

“I’LL BE THERE AT 2:00. See you soon.” Those were the closing remarks I’d frequently hear when a potential customer called me, asking about plants at my backyard nursery. Sometimes they’d come when they said, sometimes an hour or two later, and sometimes not at all. Just as frustrating were the customers who came, took up an hour or so of my time asking about plants, and then left with nothing — or perhaps a small plant costing \$5 or \$10.

Eventually, I concluded that this model of selling wasn’t working out for me, and I needed another way to get my plants to customers. I considered several possibilities, and I finally settled on supplying plants to annual plant sales run by a plethora of local organizations in my area.

Advantages of Selling to Plant Sales

You’re usually dealing with one person for your entire sale. Each plant sale generally has one person who’ll be dealing with you and taking your order. These people often remain in this role for years and this makes it easy to nurture the relationship.



You know when your plants will be sold and can plan accordingly. Most plant sales in my area occur in late May and early June. This allows me to plan the propagation and growth of my plants, so they look their best at this time. If I need to pot up bare root plants, I know if there’s enough time for them to fully develop.

After plant sales are over, you don’t have to deal with the public unless you choose to do so. This makes it much easier to plan your workday. I personally found it much

less stressful when I eliminated dealing with individual customers, and if I wanted to take some time off, it didn’t impact my sales.

You can easily fine-tune your plant selection based on feedback from plant sales. When you get to know the clientele of a particular plant sale, you get a better idea of what sells and how to adjust your stock.

Billing and accounting are much easier because you’re dealing with only a few customers. Getting a small number of larger payments makes it easier to track your income.

What Should I Grow?

Most plant sales use wholesale nurseries to supply their stock of plants. I found it difficult to compete with large nurseries on price and quantity, so I focused on exploiting niches of plants that generally weren't offered by the larger nurseries. In my case, I grew a large selection of berry plants (common and uncommon) and native species that could be substituted for non-natives usually sold in garden centers.

If possible, pick plants that are vigorous and fairly easy to grow and propagate, and give the customer a reason to purchase the plant. Perhaps you carry a selection of deer-resistant plants, or maybe plants that do well in shade, etc.

Does Size Matter?

It depends. Every plant sale is different. I've sold to organizations that requested only large, established plants, and I've sold to sales that focus on small, affordable plants. Ideally, the organizers of the sale should give you enough notice about the size of plants they desire. If you aren't sure, stick with plants on the smaller side that are less expensive for the customer.

Plant Quality

The quality of the plants you sell should be excellent. Just because you're a small backyard nursery doesn't mean you can't produce exceptional plants. This not only gives you an edge over larger nurseries that may be selling mediocre plants, it also encourages organizations to expand their supply base to include other smaller growers.

When Should I Contact the Plant Sales?

I usually make my first contact in early December. If the organizers aren't yet ready to order plants, they should let you know when to

get back to them. Earlier is always better. You don't want to contact someone and have them tell you their budget is already spent. If someone doesn't get back to you, follow up with another email or phone call. Sometimes people need a little nudge.

Who Should I Sell To?

Local garden clubs — Many garden clubs in my area have annual plant sales, and some are quite large. Club members and their customers are generally very knowledgeable about plants. Some garden clubs grow at least



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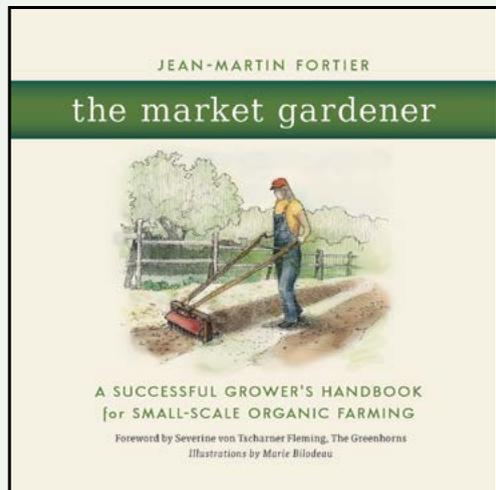
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some of their plants themselves, but generally they purchase from wholesale nurseries. Garden club customers often like unusual and less common plants, so if you have a particular niche, it helps. Also, ask the organizers of the sale what they'd like to get that they can't find at wholesale nurseries. I had a plant sale that asked if I had strawberry plants. I didn't, but they asked early enough so I was able to order bare root plants from a wholesale nursery, pot them up, and have them ready for the sale in late May.

Church and school groups — You might be surprised by the organizations holding plant sales. These sales generally offer the more popular and conventional plants, so if that covers some of the plants you sell, they could be a good market.

Environmental groups — Frequently, organizations associated with environmental issues will have an annual plant sale. This might include botanical gardens, state chapters of national organizations such as the Audubon Society, or state sponsored organizations such as master gardeners or parks commissions.

At the end of the day a backyard nursery should be a satisfying and enjoyable experience (not to forget profitable). Supplying plants to annual plant sales helps check all these boxes. 🌱

MICHAEL BROWN is a retired school librarian and enjoys hanging out with his five grandchildren. He enjoys growing and learning about native species and teaching his next generation about the joys of growing food.



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FORAGING FOR POKEWEED

(Phytolacca americana)

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY WREN EVERETT



Basket of pokeweed shoots.

HERE'S A head-scratcher for you: What do Algonquin language, Elvis Presley, and a canning company in Arkansas have in common? If you answered "pokeweed," then ... well, let's be honest; no one said pokeweed. And that's because this extremely common plant is also extremely misunderstood or totally ignored. That's a problem I've been seeking to correct wherever I

can, because this abundant plant is plentiful good eating for anyone who has the knowledge of how to identify, forage, and prepare it.

Most mentions of pokeweed usually come with dire-sounding warnings about its toxicity, which is why, I imagine, folks who even know how to identify this plant don't even think about it gracing their plate. The fact is, however, those grim descriptions are usually

written by people who've never foraged for or eaten the plant and don't know the first thing about it (save how to cover their rears with liability-avoiding verbiage). The same sort of warnings could apply to nutmeg (which contains a toxic narcotic called myristicin), green tomatoes (which contain more solanine than tomato foliage), or the documented effects of that potentially fatal psychostimulant, caffeine, which you may be consuming while reading this!

Since pokeweed grows in a huge range across the United States, particularly in the disturbed soil that we're usually in proximity to, it's very likely you'll come across it this year. I'd like to equip you with knowledge on how to forage and prepare it, so you can approach this historic plant without fear or ignorance, but welcome instead.

Introducing Pokeweed

Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) is a large perennial plant that's been used as food for hundreds of years. The name is derived from the Algonquin name for "red dye" *poughkone* or *puccon*, which references how pigment can be derived from its deep purply-black berries. Early Americans learned how to safely eat the greens from their native neighbors, ingraining the dish of "polk sallet/poke salad" in country fare lore. As such, Elvis sang about "Polk Salad Annie," a song about a poor country woman. The greens of this plant used to be eaten in such common quantity that it was even commercially canned and sold (though the last run done by Arkansas' Allen Canning Co. was in 2000).

So, let's reintroduce this fast-growing perennial to the modern reader. You've likely seen pokeweed before, but since it so drastically changes form through

the year, you may not realize all those various shapes were the same plant. First, it starts out as a meaty, thick-stemmed, leafy green shoot, emerging in early spring. The leaves are simple and alternate on the stem. In late spring, it starts pushing out racemes of five-petaled, white flowers that quickly turn into green berries that ripen to a dark, staining, purple-black color. By late summer, it's transformed into a massive, red-stemmed, tree-like plant that can reach heights beyond 9-feet tall. Those tall stems die as soon as frost hits, bleaching to a straw color and flopping over once the snow flies. Come spring thaw, those dead stems act as arrows that point to the place where the new spring shoots will reemerge, starting the cycle anew.

Those spring shoots — the thick, succulent stems and upward-pointing leaves attached to it — are the only part of pokeweed that should be foraged as food.

Let's Talk Toxicity

Pokeweed is a toxic plant, but before that alarms you unduly, remember that all plants — including ones you regularly consume (such as the aforementioned nutmeg, green tomatoes, and coffee) contain toxins. As any toxicologist already knows, toxins only matter if they're consumed in a quantity that the body can't handle. Proper pokeweed preparation reduces those toxins to make the dish perfectly and safely palatable.

Folks get poisoned by pokeweed in two ways. They may misguidedly eat the roots or seeds, which contain the greatest amount of toxins and should never be eaten. Or they may misunderstand the name of "Poke salad," (which only ever referred to a historic cooked dish, not the modern raw use of "salad"), and misguidedly



A thick perfect poke shoot still attached to the ground.



A prime pokeweed shoot.



Milky sap in a broken dogbane shoot — NOT POKEWEEED.

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eat the leaves uncooked. Don't eat raw leaves, and don't eat berries or roots, and you're already past the biggest issues with this plant.

By this point, you might be asking yourself, "If this plant is toxic and could sicken me if I don't



Ripening pokeweed berries — this plant is way too mature to eat.

pick and prepare it properly, why bother?" To that, I tell you that this plant is absolutely worth your time for the fact that, with just a little self-education and knowledge, you'll be privy to massive amounts of good food. Few plants offer as much free food for the taking as pokeweed. I can usually fill my foraging basket within 10 minutes during peak poke season — no other plant gives me that volume!

Foraging Pokeweed

Like asparagus, pokeweed is only good to eat when it's in its fast-growing infancy. Mature summer plants, in their monstrous tree form, are unsafe to eat. So, the most important part of foraging for pokeweed is knowing how to identify what botanists call a "meristem" — that is, young and tender new growth.

New growth is easy to spot once you know what to look for — the green stem snaps easily and juicily, a cross-section of the stem is translucently watery and full, and the leaves are still pointing upward and wrinkled from recently unfurling. Growth that's too far gone has full, flat, downward-pointing leaves, a cross section is drier and looks like it's begun to hollow, and the stem that has started to harden and turn whitish or pinkish. If the plant has blooming flowers, it's too far gone.

Sometimes, stems that are maturing will still push out fresh, new growth, particularly if you've been repeatedly harvesting from the same plant. I keep my poke plants producing by continually harvesting their tender meristematic growth, forcing them to keep growing new shoots through much of the late spring and early summer.

Some foraging books will give you a definite measurement of "under 6 inches" when pokeweed is at a so-called "safe" length, but this assumed standard is useless. Plants grow at different heights based on the soil quality, the age and size of their roots, and how much shade they're growing in. I've seen 3-inch pokeweed shoots that were too mature to eat, and I've gathered 17-inch pokeweed shoots that were perfect.

There aren't many pokeweed lookalikes, but it's possible that the novice forager might not know what to look for during their first pokeweed season. The only plant I know that folks might confuse with young pokeweed shoots is young dogbane (*Apocynum cannabinum*). They grow at the same time and in the same areas, and they vaguely resemble each other. Dogbane, however, has opposite leaves (not alternate, like pokeweed) and it exudes a milky latex when snapped (pokeweed doesn't exude anything). If you're

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ever in doubt, remember the most important rule of foraging: If you're not 100% sure of a plant's identity, don't eat it.

Preparing Pokeweed

Pokeweed can't be eaten raw off the plant. (Again, don't let the archaic use of "salad," which is often used in reference to pokeweed, confuse you. "Salad" or "sallet" once only referred to a dish of cooked greens.) Thankfully, the only thing that stands between a living pokeweed plant and a dish of delicious greens is a pot of boiling water.

To render pokeweed safe to eat, it needs to be boiled in two changes of water. Some books will tell you that one boiling is enough, and others tell you to do at least three. I've had consistent success with two changes of water, so that's the one I'm recommending here.

Get your biggest stockpot and fill it with tender pokeweed shoots. Don't pack it tightly — just drop them in until it's full. Cover the shoots with water and bring to a rolling boil. Boil for five minutes. Then drain the water (you'll notice it will have turned a neon, yellow-green color). Fill the pot with water again, bring to a five-minute boil again, drain again. You now have prepared pokeweed, which you can use like you do pretty much any other green.

Flavorwise, prepared pokeweed is surprisingly mild, with an unmistakable flavor that's unlike anything else. After preparing it, I sauté garlic and a cubed carrot in oil, add the pokeweed, and season with salt, black pepper, and a drizzle of vinegar. The carrot's sweet and the vinegar's sour flavors seem to work the best with pokeweed's unique taste. After parboiling, I also sometimes cook it with other wild greens like lamb's quarters (*Chenopodium*

album), dock (*Rumex spp.*), and violet (*Viola sororia*).

Served with toast or corn pones and a fried egg or two, you've got a meal fit for backcountry kings.

Now, with any totally new dish, first try a small amount to see how you react to it. If nothing happens (which is most likely!) you now have met a new plant friend. If you have any sort of burning sensations in the throat and tongue, stomach discomfort, or diarrhea, it's possible that you didn't process the plant long enough or you picked it at too mature a state.

I hope this article can help you potentially make acquaintances with this fascinating and useful plant. It's not just any old weed ... it's pokeweed, and it's got a place in history and in your kitchen if you make room for it. 

WREN EVERETT and her husband quit their teaching jobs in the city and moved back to the land on 12 acres in the Ozarks. There, they are learning to live as modern peasants: off-grid, as self-sufficient as possible, and quite happily.



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BEEHIVE WRAPS FOR THE WINTER

BY PATRICE LEWIS

PREPARED FOR THE winter by “wrapping” them, to keep the hives warm, can make or break the success of an apiary, especially in northern climates.

Incorrectly wrapping a hive can be fatal. Consider the sad experience of one novice beekeeper during his first winter. “I was convinced the bees needed to be protected from cold, wind, rain — everything,” he relates. “I purchased foam insulation and boxed the bees in completely, except for the hive opening at the base. The hives suffered terrible condensation, and it killed the bees.”

The following year, this beekeeper didn’t wrap his hives at all, but merely moved them to a protected location out of the direct weather. The hives made it through winter just fine.

Does this mean wrapping is unnecessary? Yes and no. As with almost anything in the beekeeping world, there are passionate

proponents on both sides of the issue. Many unwrapped hives overwinter just fine. However, a properly installed layer of insulation in cold climates can make things less stressful for the bees during the winter.

As a rule of thumb, many experts recommend wrapping hives if you live in a USDA Zone 5 or lower. The trick is to wrap your hives in such a way that the bees don’t get fooled into thinking it’s spring.

Winter in a Hive

What are conditions like inside a hive during cold weather? Keep in mind that bees are active all winter long (they don’t hibernate) and have one single goal: to keep the queen alive. They do this by heating the interior.

Once the outside temperature drops to about 55 degrees Fahrenheit, the bees start clustering around the queen and vibrate their wings to generate warmth. The

colder the temperature, the tighter the cluster. They don’t heat the entire hive, but only the discrete cluster where they huddle in the middle with the queen. They maintain a temperature of about 96 degrees F at the center of the cluster, and about 41 degrees F at the outer edges. (Below 41 degrees F, bees go into torpor conditions and can’t move.) Inner bees rotate with outer bees so none get too worn out. The cluster itself moves around the hive, eating honey as it goes.

Ventilate, Ventilate, Ventilate

A winter cluster produces moist, humid air that must be vented, which is why a hive should never be completely sealed. Providing an upper entrance facilitates exhausting (venting) the moist air and a route for bees to take “cleansing” flights to rid the hive of excrement.

The critical thing about winterizing hives is ventilation.

You’re not trying to make the hive airtight. Condensation is one of the biggest killers in winter.

To prevent moisture buildup, hives need a ventilation hole for airflow. It seems counterintuitive to have a spot where cold air can get into the hive during winter months, but bees handle cold air better than freezing water dripping on them. Beekeepers must walk a fine line on ventilation. Too much and the bees can’t keep the hive warm; too little and condensation can build up. A little condensation is fine since it gives the bees a source of drinking water, but too much condensation rains ice water on the bees.

Depending on the climate, simply propping open the roof with a shim might result in too much open space. A better

alternative may be to drill a one-inch hole in the top corner of the upper brood box or use an Imirie shim, which is a rectangular wood frame about ¾ of an inch high, with an entrance hole cut into one end.

Types of Wraps

There are many different ways to wrap hives, ranging from cheap to pricey.

- **Hay bales.** These can be stacked around three sides of the hives, leaving the entry side open.
- **Tar paper.** A common sealant used in construction, tar paper is not just cheap, but its black color absorbs the sun’s heat and may raise the temperature inside the hive by a few degrees. Affix the paper to the hive with a staple

gun, and use a utility knife to cut the paper away from ventilation holes at the top and bottom.



Tar paper wrap.



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- **Styrofoam board.** This differs from tar paper in that it works to retain heat within the hive rather than absorbing heat from the outside.
- **A bee cozy.** These are pre-made fiberglass-filled plastic-covered sleeves that fit over the hive box. They're both waterproof and breathable, which helps keep temperatures stable and humidity levels moderate.
- **EZ-On hive wrap.** This is a pre-made wrap of vinyl-coated polyester with insulating foam secured with Velcro. It's considered the easiest wrap to use.
- **Polystyrene hives components.** These are boxes fitted with built-in plastic frame rests and metal latches to hold insulated components, which offer added protection against weather extremes.

- **Thermal reflective bubble wrap.** Cut to size and secured with Velcro, this is an easy do-it-yourself option.

Whatever option you choose, make sure the wrap is snug against the outside surface of the box; otherwise, bees may crawl between the box and the wrap, get stuck, get chilled, and die. It also helps to make sure the boxes are stacked perfectly square, which not only facilitates wrapping but doesn't leave gaps between the box and the insulation, where bees may crawl.

Even if you choose not to wrap the hives, consider insulating the cover assembly, either by inserting a one-inch piece of foam insulating board or by using an insulated telescoping cover. If using fiberglass as insulation, protect it with a screen, so the bees don't attempt to remove it. Hives, just like homes, lose most of the heat through the "attic," so insulating the ceiling offers some protection and helps reduce condensation. A quilt box can also help with condensation.

If your area sees wind in the winter, creating a wind block is important, using an existing wall or stacked hay bales, or placing hives in an open-sided shed or barn.

Snow is an excellent insulator, so snow piled on top of hives may be beneficial, as long as the hive openings are clear enough that bees can come and go.

For those who haven't made up their minds about the need to wrap hives for the winter, consider running an experiment: Wrap some hives, and leave others unwrapped. The success or failure of the two options may convince you whether to wrap during future winters or not.

Bees in the wild are equipped to handle winter, but when we keep them in artificial hives, we may need to give them a little extra help to make it through the coldest months. ©

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FIRST AID FOR HORSES

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY HEATHER SMITH THOMAS

HORSES ARE MORE prone to injuries than cattle and other livestock; they're often flightier, more likely to run into something, and their skin is thinner. Most injuries need prompt and proper care to ensure the best healing and recovery.

When a horse is injured, assess the seriousness of the wound and determine whether you can treat it yourself or need help from a veterinarian. Even with a serious injury, what you do for the horse as you wait for the veterinarian can make a difference.

Horses are very susceptible to tetanus and should *always* be up-to-date on the vaccine in case they receive a wound that breaks the skin.

There are basically five types of wounds: bruises, abrasions, incised wounds, lacerations, and punctures.

A **BRUISE** doesn't break the skin, but a severe blow may damage the muscle underneath. Bleeding under the skin and lymph seeping from the injured tissue creates swelling. Small bruises resorb in a few days, and the swelling disappears. Applying cold water immediately after such an injury

can prevent or reduce swelling: Cold slows down circulation, constricts small blood vessels, and minimizes the bleeding and seepage into the tissues.

A large bruise may need to be drained if there's too much fluid under the skin to resorb. To drain, wash and disinfect the area, then insert a sterile, large-diameter needle into the lower part of the swelling so the fluid can drain. If you're unsure about doing this procedure, have your veterinarian do it.

To prevent a knot from forming on a bruised bone and to reduce pain, a bruised leg can be soaked in cold water or ice water.

An **ABRASION** is scraped skin. It may bleed or ooze a little, since the top layer of skin is removed, and can be slow to heal. Usually, the best treatment is to clean the scraped area and apply a soothing antibiotic ointment to combat infection and keep the area soft (so it doesn't become hard, crusty and cracked) as it heals.

An **INCISED WOUND** is a clean cut. If it's deep, it may bleed excessively. Losing a pint or two of blood isn't serious, and the bleeding cleans the wound. Small vessels usually clot fairly quickly, but if bleeding doesn't stop after a few minutes, or it's spurting profusely, you must stop the flow.

A 1,000-pound horse that loses more than 2 gallons of blood may die.

A cut artery squirts bright red blood with each pump of the heart. A cut vein flows continually and the blood is dark red. (It hasn't yet gone through the lungs to pick up oxygen.) There can be significant loss of blood with injury to a major vein, but blood loss is slower than from a big artery; you have more time to control it.

A pressure bandage may be necessary. Apply the cleanest bandage you can quickly create or access directly over the spurting artery or flowing vein. Towels, shirts, quilted bandages, etc., will work. Your barn's first-aid kit should contain something that could be used to control bleeding, such as clean cloths, gauze sponges, or rolled bandages.

In an emergency, towels, sanitary napkins, disposable baby diapers — any absorbent material — can be used next to the wound, placing something firm against it and then wrapping. Continue wrapping until the bleeding stops. It may take many layers, wrapped fairly tight. Don't use stretchy bandaging unless it's to hold an inner bandage in place, or you may get it too tight. Leave the bandage in place until the veterinarian arrives. Don't use a tourniquet, because it totally blocks the flow of blood to the area

below it. Call your veterinarian if you can’t get serious bleeding stopped within a few minutes.

A **LACERATION** has torn, irregular, and jagged edges. Healing is usually slow because of extensive tissue damage, and there’s more danger of infection. If it’s not an emergency bleeding problem, you can clean the wound and determine if it needs stitches. Don’t medicate a wound until you’ve cleaned it. Plain, warm water or salt water is usually best for cleaning; many antiseptics irritate the tissues. When in doubt, don’t use antiseptics or disinfectants — especially if the horse might need stitches. A disinfectant that burns the tissues will make it impossible for your veterinarian to stitch the wound; it won’t heal properly.

Use a washcloth, gauze sponges, or paper towels to gently scrub a wound and remove any hair, dirt, dried blood, or dead tissue. Continue scrubbing until you’re down to clean, pink flesh, with all dirt and debris removed.

If the injury occurred during the night or out at pasture, it may be hours old, with caked blood and dirt in it. If it’s swollen and painful, you may have to restrain the horse with a twitch, or simply hold a running hose on the wound if the horse will stand still. Cold water will dull the pain and soften and loosen the dirt and dried blood. Then you can usually scrub the area gently and examine the wound as you remove debris. Hair and dirt can disguise a deep wound, making it look superficial.

Don’t worry about new bleeding as you scrub; unless bleeding becomes extensive, finish cleaning the wound before applying any kind of bandage. Once it’s cleaned, decide whether it’s something you can treat yourself or if you should call your veterinarian for stitching or more extensive treatment. A cut over a joint or into a tendon

should have veterinary attention, as should any deep cut on a joint. Without proper treatment, the horse could end up with permanent joint damage. Tendon injuries can be slow to heal, and damage to the coronary band may impair hoof growth.

Wounds over the face or other bony areas may need stitches.



Leg laceration.



Head wound skin peeled off, Casner.



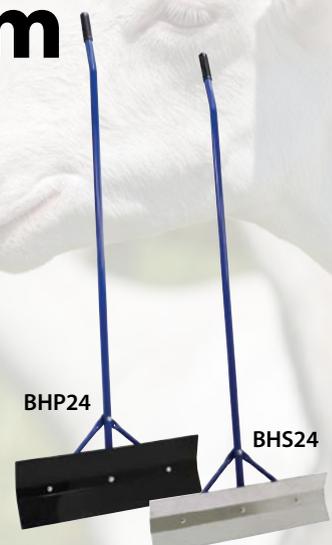
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Fresh cuts heal best if they're kept clean and held together with stitches, and leave less scarring when healed. Wounds in muscle tissue, however, or injuries more than 6 to 8 hours old, usually won't hold stitches well. Deep lacerations usually need to drain, and there may be some sloughing of damaged and dying tissue, so it's better to leave them open.

Deep cuts on the lower legs below the knee or hock may

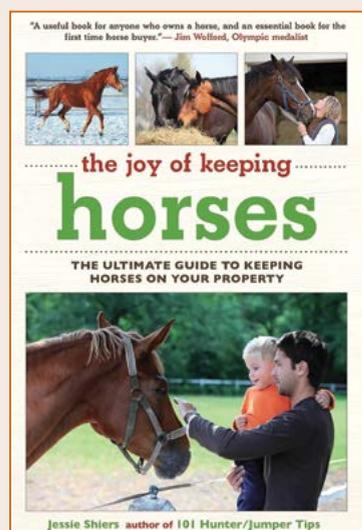
develop proud flesh — a rubbery growth of excessive granulation tissue. Today, there are much better treatments to prevent proud flesh than the traditional caustic medications horsemen used in the past, so consult your veterinarian.

A **PUNCTURE WOUND** must always have prompt attention. It doesn't bleed much and tends to heal first on the outside, leaving a pocket of infection inside that

may later abscess or send infection into the horse's body. To treat a puncture, flush it out with water or a disinfectant recommended by your veterinarian. Put a sterile piece of cotton (soaked in antiseptic) into the hole. This "wick" will allow drainage and keep the hole open, letting the puncture heal from the inside out instead of closing over it to trap infection inside. The cotton dressing should be changed daily until the wound has healed. Your veterinarian can prescribe an antibiotic, and ensure that the horse is up-to-date with the tetanus vaccination.



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SPRAINS AND STRAINS can be minor or severe. A sprain is injury to a ligament — the structure that holds the bones of a joint together. A strain is injury to a tendon or muscle. Tendons attach muscles to bones. In a mild sprain, only a few fibers of ligament are torn, and only a small amount of bleeding occurs within the ligament. It'll heal nicely if the horse is rested. In a moderate or severe sprain, more of the ligament is torn, with more heat, swelling, pain, and lameness, and the horse needs more treatment than just a layoff from work.

A strain from overuse of a muscle or tendon can be anything from a temporary pull to complete disruption of the tendon from its attachment, or rupture of a muscle. Severe strains and sprains require surgery to repair them, but many strains and sprains will heal fine if the horse is rested and the injured part treated to reduce pain and swelling (with cold therapy and/or medications).

For the first 24 to 48 hours, cool the injured area to prevent swelling and reduce inflammation. After the swelling resolves, by the second or third day, heat and liniment can be beneficial. Massaging the area will increase circulation. Never use heat or liniment on a fresh sprain or



It's a lot safer to use rubber tubs or buckets with plastic handles. Horses can get tangled in a metal handle and it won't readily break.

strain, or you'll make it worse. Your veterinarian may want to immobilize the leg with a bandage or cast if the injury is serious.

To cool an injured leg, use water from a hose (if the water is below 50 degrees Fahrenheit) or ice water in a soaking boot. This can be done a couple hours at a time, or throughout the first day, if the injury is severe. The horse should show improvement by the second day. If not, your veterinarian needs to check for bone damage.

FRACTURES require diligent first aid. Most fractures occur below the knee or hock. If a horse won't put weight on a leg, assume a fracture until proven otherwise — or you may jeopardize the horse's future. Do *not* move the animal. Don't give any medication until a veterinarian arrives to examine the horse. Painkillers may mask the problem, and the horse might put weight on the leg, which could turn a simple fracture into a disaster. If the horse will stand quietly, just wait for the veterinarian.

If the leg must be supported, do it carefully. Improperly applied bandaging or splinting can make the situation worse, and trying to bandage a frantic horse can be dangerous. A fracture below the knee or hock will need a heavy support wrap, such as many layers of quilted leg wraps under a firm bandage, or thick towels or pillows wrapped tightly with

bandages to hold them in place. Start low on the leg and work up it with the wrapping. The finished bandage should be at least 10 to 15 inches in diameter.

Don't move the horse unless absolutely necessary. Depending on the type of fracture, the horse may or may not have a chance for recovery, but first aid handling of the injury can be crucial to eventual success or failure.

With an **EYE INJURY**, early detection and treatment may also make a difference between recovery and permanent damage. If it becomes infected, the horse is at risk of losing sight. Put the horse in a barn or shed (out of bright sunlight) until the veterinarian has examined the eye and prescribed treatment. If the horse is rubbing the eye, protect it until the veterinarian arrives by covering the eye with a gauze bandage dampened with sterile saline solution. Use an elastic bandage over the top of the head (between the ears), over the eye, and under the jaw to hold the bandage in place.

If you own a horse, you'll eventually have to deal with an injury in that animal. It's essential that you be prepared for that eventuality, know your limitations, and have the necessary supplies for treatment or to keep the horse comfortable until your veterinarian arrives. ©

HEATHER SMITH THOMAS

ranches with her husband near Salmon, Idaho, raising cattle and a few horses. She has a B.A. in English and history. She has raised and trained horses for 50 years and has been writing freelance articles and books nearly that long, publishing 20 books and more than 9,000 articles for horse and livestock publications. Find Heather online at HeatherSmithThomas.BlogSpot.com.

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CHOOSING COLD-HARDY CHICKENS

BY SHERRI TALBOT



LIVING IN AN AREA of the world with long, cold, wet winters, it's common to see new chicken owners reaching out for help as temperatures drop. As the frosts hit, ice forms, and snow falls, there'll always be the occasional person who realizes too late that they don't know how to help their birds make it through the coldest days.

Most support will be around housing, bedding, proper ventilation, and keeping the runs clean and dry. However, the best advice for new chicken owners should come before they buy their first chick.

Chicken breeds have been developed for specific climates, like any other domesticated animal. The best way to prevent winter mortality is to choose chickens bred for your environment. Learning what characteristics are likely to do best in cold climates will help you and your birds get through winter more easily.

Combs and Wattles

Common places for chickens to develop frostbite are the comb and wattles. Large combs allow chickens to disperse heat in hot weather. In cold weather, the

blood vessels close down to allow the birds to retain body heat. This means the comb cools off, making it especially prone to frostbite. The skin pales, turns gray, then black, and eventually pieces of the comb die and fall off. Especially in roosters, the longer the comb and the wattles, the greater the chance of frostbite and the more severely it can affect the bird. To protect your chickens, choose a breed with a short comb. Some examples are the pea comb style displayed in the Brahma or the rose comb style you can see in the Wyandotte.



Feathers

Waterfowl and wild birds survive below freezing temperatures by fluffing their feathers to trap warm air in the layers. This is why a tropical waterfowl, like the Muscovy, can survive in below-zero temperatures. Birds with the fluffiest feathers do best in the lowest temperatures. The Cochin and Brahma are some of the most obviously protected due to their heavy feathering. Birds such as the Buckeye may seem less shielded but still have some visible insulation. Don't entirely rule out breeds based on their appearance, though! Some can stay well insulated, even though they don't look as heavily feathered as their more famous "floofy" cousins.

Silkies require a mention here because while their unique look makes them an appealing breed, it also makes them unusually bad for cold climates. The fuzzy look of Silkies is caused by the difference in feather shape between them and the average chicken. They lack the barbs

that keep other breeds' feathers neat and smooth, giving them the fluffy look many people like. The inability to pull their feathers in makes them unable to insulate themselves the way other chickens can. This becomes even more detrimental if they get wet, because the wet feathers plaster themselves to the body and freeze. Silkies do best in moderate climates but continue to be sold to areas they aren't bred for.

Legs and Feet

Like the comb and wattles, a chicken's toes can develop frostbite. Chickens lack the protection of many species for walking through ice and snow. While their scales can protect them to a certain extent, you'll often see chickens hunkering down or pulling their feet up into their feathers in an attempt to warm them up in bad weather. Choosing breeds that've retained these

instincts is important to keep them safe in cold temperatures.

Selecting chickens with cold-hardy feet will depend on a lot more than the temperature in your location. Faverolles and other feather-legged breeds do very well in cold, dry temperatures. However, the insulating layer of feathers on their legs and feet — if it gets wet or clotted with ice — can actually make it more difficult for the birds to keep their feet warm and frostbite-free.

Breeding

Some breeds were first developed with cold winters in mind. The Chantecler chicken is possibly the best-known in this category. They were bred in Canada to survive long nights and freezing temperatures. When considering the breed's development, productivity and hardiness in winter were the primary goals selected.



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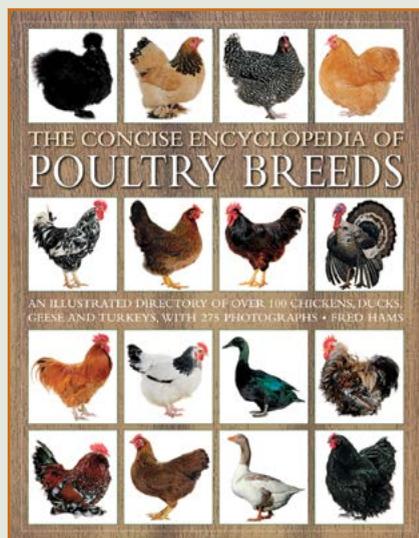
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Some of these traits were covered in the topics we've already discussed:

- The hens have incredibly small combs, and both males and females have tiny wattles to provide additional protection.
- The Chantecler keeps its top feathers close to its body but with a warm layer underneath — almost like the down on a goose — making it one of the most cold-hardy breeds in the world.

However, the breeding stock were also selected for the ability to lay with less daylight and heavy bodies that can withstand the cold. They are described as “no frills” birds, with their ancestry coming from sturdy stock to produce sturdy birds.

Best Chicken Choices

Choosing birds with these cold-resistant traits will decrease the amount of pampering your birds need throughout the winter and increase their likelihood of survival. Choosing breeds with proper insulation, without large combs or wattles, and with good instincts for cold weather will set you on a path to success. Combining these features with a healthy diet, a clean, well-ventilated coop, and sturdy protection from predators will help you and your chickens feel secure through the winter. ©

SHERRI TALBOT is the co-owner and operator of Saffron and Honey Homestead in Windsor, Maine. She raises endangered, heritage-breed livestock and hopes someday to make education and writing on conservation breeding her full-time job. Details can be found at *SaffronandHoneyHomestead.com* or on Facebook at www.Facebook.com/SaffronandHoneyHomestead.



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Knitted socks.

Shetland Wool Week

Part 2

Off to Shetland for Wool Week!

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY CHRISTINE HEINRICHS

CALIFORNIA TO SHETLAND is a long way. It took us two days of travel, across the country, over the Atlantic, then from England to Scotland, and the final leg, to Shetland.

For our first visit, I chose flying from Aberdeen to Lerwick. Loganair, the regional airline, serves Shetland. The planes have tartan paint jobs, and the flight attendants have tartan scarves. Each seat has a different tartan plaid scarf. The flight attendant assured me they're all genuine tartans, identifying Scottish clans. Snacks are Scottish shortbread.

The airport is at Sumbrugh, south of Lerwick, the main city. Visitors take a cab or bus into

town. Visitors are recognizable in our toories (hats with a pompom).

The other route to Shetland is by water, on the ferry. It's a 12-hour trip, which I fretted would make me seasick. Next time, I'll take the ferry. How better to make the transit to this other world called Shetland?

Wool Week visitors are on the ferry, with time to get acquainted and talk about which events we're looking forward to.

The Hub

The Hub is the place to start. Located inside Shetland's Museum, local knitters generously volunteer to help in the Wool Week Hub. The Hub offers a message board to communicate

with other Wool Week attendees, have coffee and tea, or just sit and knit. Marion and Jenny, local Lerwick residents, chatted with us at length, knitting away.

We discussed techniques that I'd never used, such as cutting your work. One had done this to make a shoulder fit better. A pattern I acquired for my next project includes steeking, a technique to bridge an intentional cut.

The pattern is for a cardigan, open in the front but knitted in the round, and then cut up the front on the steek. It allows the stranded knitting to be more even — no turning the work to purl the next row. Tricky, but that's what I came to Wool Week to learn.

Touring Sumbrugh Head Lighthouse

Sumbrugh Head Lighthouse has a visitor center and is a designated nature reserve. It's not directly related to knitting but welcomes visitors to Shetland's natural wonders. They say, "It isn't the ends of the Earth, but you can see it from here."

It's remote only to people. It's home to whales, and summer breeding grounds for many colorful birds. Puffins are especially popular, but they'd raised their chicks for the season by the time we arrived in late September. Fulmars swept past the windows of the café, overlooking the waves far below, just like when it was a set in the television series Shetland.

Minke whales, harbour porpoises, and white-beaked dolphins are regular visitors along the coast. Residents document visits by orcas, many of which they recognize as individuals. We saw seals, probably common or Atlantic grey, on other beaches.

The guide was charming and well-informed about the history and mechanical details of operating a lighthouse. We enjoyed a sunny day at this edge of the world, preparing us to be appreciative visitors at wool activities.

Shetland Library

Back in Lerwick, we strolled to the library, to visit another Shetland set. Fortuitously, it was National Poetry Day, and they were having a special program. We arrived late but heard the last two poems.

As the attendees dispersed from the event, an older man, Roy Cumming, gravitated toward us. He was walking in the direction of our hotel and asked to walk along with us. He told us the story of Tommy the Cat about whom he'd written several poems. Tommy, a large grey cat, didn't want to move when his

owner moved, so he stayed behind and became the cat of several shop owners.

Roy has since shared those poems with me:

The Saga of Thomas the Cat

*The saga or tale of Thomas the cat is a tale that is told
Of an iconic cat that roams around the town of Lerwick
His many adventures that he has as he goes from place
To place in the town. Up and down the lanes to the places
He knows, he's also been seen in the library, a very learned
Cat is oor [our] Thomas as he knows a thing or two as he wanders
Around, a well-kept cat is oor [our] Thomas, a star in the making
Is his thinking.*

Shetland Archives

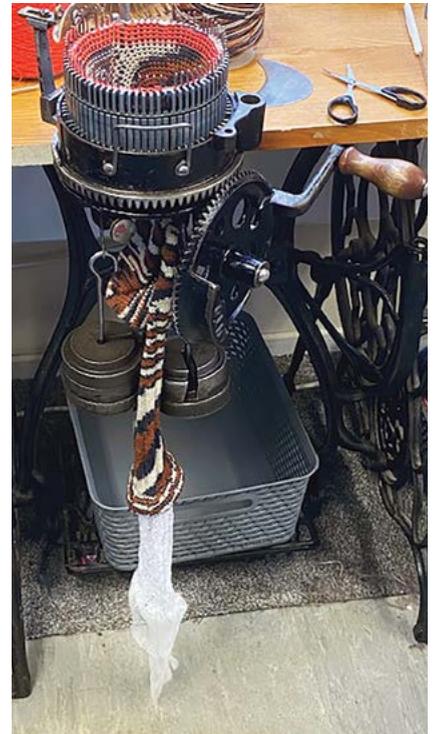
Archives Assistant Angus Johnson showed us the Shetland Archives. The collection is housed in a building specially constructed to protect the documents against fire and flood. (www.ShetlandMuseumandArchives.org.uk/Collections/Archive)

What rich original material! Handwritten records, such as a Sheep Book from 1829, as well as printed ones, such as an agricultural publication from 1814. This documentation is valuable for sheep breeders looking for the history of their breeds.

The Museum displays artworks as well as history. Shetland is well-served by its Museum and Archives.

Lerwick merchants welcome Wool Week tourists, and I made a point to purchase something from every shop we visited. I live in a tourist town myself, and I know how important it is to support these merchants. And I got so many darling tea towels, books, and cards.

Jamieson's of Shetland Yarn is the major wool yarn retailer, and a sponsor of Wool Week. The clerk



Making socks.

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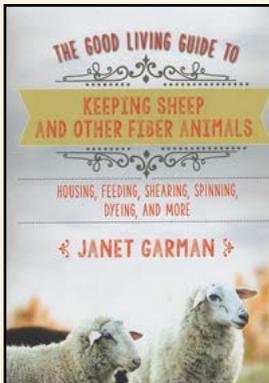
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The Shetland Murmuration is a tapestry that spans a dozen artists and five countries.

👍 MUST READ!

The Good Living Guide to Keeping Sheep and Other Fiber Animals



Fiber crafts — such as knitting, weaving, and crocheting—continue to surge in popularity, with sites like Ravelry (a social media community for the wool obsessed) gaining more than six million members. Artists are seeking quality raw materials in greater numbers. The cottage industry of supplying raw fleece and handcrafted yarns are strong.

The proper care of fiber animals leads to a superior yarn product. Lapses in good care can show up in the fleece. As the demand for quality yarn and fiber grows, more people are becoming concerned with the animals' treatment and care. Give your animals a good home and a happy life, and enjoy superior fleece and yarn products for your homestead or to sell. **Item #9625, \$14.99**

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chuckled with understanding when I told her I was overwhelmed. She was amazingly helpful, suggesting patterns and color variations to suit. They'll make up kits to order. They have many sweaters on display. I decided to order from home rather than purchase onsite.

Touring the Countryside

We hired a taxi to drive us around to events outside Lerwick. Our driver, Asif, prided himself on his local knowledge as a guide. He helped us find events tucked away in small communities.

Wool Week features wool-centered work in studios around the island, and in some cases, on nearby islands. Shetland comprises more than 100 islands.

The Murmuration tapestry is stunning. It was woven by a collaboration of a dozen fiber artists in five countries. Even arranging the group phone calls to plan the work was a challenge, accommodating time zones from America's West Coast to Finland. It took a year to plan and another year to weave and assemble. It's now on tour. Learn more about it on the Murmuration Collaboration Substack, <https://MurmurationCollaboration.Substack.com/p/Reviewing-the-Murmuration-Exhibition> or follow them on Facebook. We stopped at the Original Cake Fridge. It was outside a cafe, and the aroma of baking treats was amazing, so we went in and had snacks. I got the scone of my dreams, with strawberry jam and cream. Absolutely delicious! Gordon had a brownie with hot chocolate, topped with whipped cream and marshmallows. Wonderful.

We visited the Woolly Wyvern Textile Studio, in Walls, on the Westside of Shetland, where owner Megan Davis knits socks

from Shetland wool on a 1920s Auto Knitter Circular Knitting Machine. Knitting the socks on the machine requires delicacy and training, to get the yarn threaded in the machine correctly. She also gives lessons in how to do that. The socks are wonderful. www.WoollyWyvern.co.uk/

Wool Week Forever

I'm subject to romantic fantasies. The mist swirling around this remote island seems to ruffle the veil between the worlds. The horizon shifts between sky and sea; birds sweep across out of nowhere. On the land, sheep provide their keepers with wool, the raw material of life and art. Wool Week celebrates the practical and the creative in this idyllic land. Will I go back, or have I never left? ©

CHRISTINE HEINRICHS writes from her home on California's Central Coast. She keeps a backyard flock of a dozen hens: eight large fowl of various breeds and four Bantams.

Her book, *How to Raise Chickens*, was first published in 2007, just as the local food movement was starting to focus attention on the industrial food system. Backyard chickens became the mascot of local food. The third edition of *How to Raise Chickens* was published in January 2019. *The Backyard Field Guide to Chickens* was published in 2016. Look for them in Tractor Supply stores and online.

She has a B.S. in journalism from the University of Oregon and belongs to several professional journalism and poultry organizations.

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BEULAH VALLEY YULE LOG

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BY NAN HASSEY, WWW.GOAT-O-RAMA.COM



THE SUN GLISTENED like diamonds on top of a freshly fallen foot of snow. The air was crisp and cold. The kind of cold that tingles your nose on its way down and burns your lungs just a little. It was exhilarating! The year was 2013 and it was our first time at the annual Beulah Yule Log Festival. Rooted in Scandinavian tradition, the Yule Log festival honors the end of an old year and the beginning of a new one. It's been held every year in the tiny town of Beulah, Colorado, since 1952 and is one of the oldest continuously celebrated Yule Log festivals in the nation.

Phil and I were excited to attend, and since goats figure prominently in Scandinavian Christmas tradition, we decided to bring two young doelings with us to join the hunt. Nubbin and Petunia were as excited as we were. A special log, identified by a ring tied to one end, was hidden somewhere in the Mountain Park, and the townspeople had gathered to find it. The park is enormous, hilly, and wooded, so it can be quite a hike to find the cleverly hidden Yule Log.

A woodsman, clad in festive green, sounded a bugle and the hunt was on! Townspeople charged off in all directions, plunging here and there through the deep drifts. Nubbin and Petunia took off like bloodhounds on a scent, straining at their leashes. Forty-five minutes later, Phil and

I heard a triumphant shout: "HALUEB!" (Beulah spelled backward), which signified the end of the hunt. Someone had found the Yule Log. The Bugler sounded his horn to call everyone to the spot. Long ropes were attached to the ring on the log, and the winner straddled it while the crowd hauled on the ropes to drag the victor back to the beautiful stone pavilion around which the Yule Log festivities are centered.

At the pavilion, the Yule Log is hoisted onto a cross buck and sawn in two with an old-fashioned crosscut saw. One half is burned on the Yule Fire and the other half is saved to start next year's Yule Fire. The winner is toasted with wassail and the crowd attacks a long table filled with hundreds of homemade cookies provided by local residents. The Yule Log celebration is always preceded by music, festive readings, and a blessing of the animals. The Bunde Girl, a youngster dressed in colorful Swedish garb, carries a sheaf of wheat and seeds to feed the wild birds.



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The annual Yule Log celebration has become a fixture of our household Christmas tradition, and our goats, in turn, have become an honored and expected part of the festivities. After all, a Scandinavian-style Christmas is not complete without goats! In Swedish tradition, Santa Claus is often depicted leading or riding a “Jul Bokken” (Yule Goat) or driving a goat-drawn sleigh. Last year, we hunted at the wrong end of the park, and it took us ages to make our way to where the Yule Log had been discovered. No matter! The bugler kept calling until the goats arrived to help pull.

After the goats help drag the log back, they’re peppered with affection and cookies. People admire their large horns and gentle demeanor. We usually tip their horns with tennis balls and wrap them in festively-colored vet wrap to prevent accidents. We’ve never had a goat hit or poke someone, but we’ve had careless people run

into the horns. It’s a wonderful time for people to learn about goats and discover what beautiful, gentle, and useful creatures they are.

Our goat, Finn, has attended the Yule Log celebration every year since 2015. Last year, a small child approached Phil and asked, “Has Finn been coming to the Yule Log forever?” Phil looked at the kid, who was about 8 years old, and said, “Yes, in your case, he has.”

In addition to the Yule Log celebration, Beulah holds a fabulous parade of lights the evening before. Despite the town’s small size, the parade is always huge. It seems that every resident builds a float and rides or marches in the parade. There are as many people participating in the parade as watching it.

Phil and I bring our goats and carriage, and I drive the team while Phil plays Santa Claus and throws candy. The parade route is long and dark, with just a few houses dotted along the way until we get to the gas station near the corner, where a crowd gathers and cheers beneath the fluorescent lights. Phil and I have driven our goats in many parades over the years, but the Beulah parade stands out as the most fun. If you’re ever in southeast Colorado in December, look up the Beulah Yule Log Festival. You’ll be sure to see us there with our goats! ©

NAN HASSEY and her husband Phil live on 40 acres in Rye, Colorado, where they breed pack and dairy goats. They bought their first pack goat in 2002 and started their own breeding program in 2012. They love Alpine/Nubian crosses and have trained their wethers to pack and to pull carts and carriages in single and team hitches. www.goatorama.com

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Tummy-Warming Soups and Stews

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY RITA HEIKENFELD

FOR THOSE OF YOU looking for a hearty, tummy-warming dish to serve family on a weeknight, try black-eyed pea stew. Sometimes called cow peas or field peas, these “peas” are actually legumes. Distinctive in looks, these legumes have a slightly nutty, earthy flavor. Combined with kielbasa and greens, black-eyed stew goes well with a square or wedge of warm cornbread. Oh, and the cornbread recipes are unusual — spicy, or a cast iron-baked version — you choose!

Of course, I had to include an autumnal pumpkin soup for you. This one’s a bit different, with a hint of curry, turmeric, and ginger.

Sweet potatoes and pears are in season, so let’s combine those

together in a lovely soup with a swirl of maple syrup to add depth and flavor.

Both the spicy pumpkin and sweet potato pear soups are equally at home for a kitchen table supper or served in holiday bowls for a first course.

From my countryside kitchen to yours, my prayer is that you stay warm, well, and grateful this holiday season!

BLACK-EYED PEA STEW

INGREDIENTS

1½ cups dried black-eyed peas or 4 cups canned or frozen peas, thawed

1 tablespoon oil

1 small yellow onion, chopped

8 ounces or so turkey or favorite kielbasa, halved lengthwise, cut into ½ inch slices

4 cups vegetable or chicken broth

Salt to taste

½ teaspoon red pepper flakes

½ teaspoon black pepper

2 bay leaves

Splash of cider vinegar to taste

28 ounces diced tomatoes

10 to 16 ounces kale or mustard greens, chopped

INSTRUCTIONS

If using dried peas, soak overnight, then drain. Or do a quick soak: cover with water, bring to a boil, turn heat off, cover and let sit 1 hour, then drain. You’ll need about 4 cups of soaked peas.

Add oil to pot over medium heat. Add onion and cook until tender.

Add sausage and cook until lightly golden.

Stir in broth, peas, salt, peppers, and bay leaves. Cover and simmer until peas begin to soften. (Dried or frozen, thawed peas take about 45 minutes; canned take less).

Uncover and cook 15 minutes or until stew begins to thicken.

Stir in vinegar, tomatoes, and greens. Simmer 15 minutes or until peas are really tender.

Remove bay leaves.

Serves 6 to 8



Swap it out!

Sub in turkey or chicken sausage for kielbasa.

SPICED PUMPKIN SOUP

INGREDIENTS

4 tablespoons butter

1 medium onion, chopped

2 cloves garlic, minced

¾ teaspoon each: turmeric, ground ginger, and curry powder, or to taste

2 pounds pumpkin, peeled, seeded, and diced

2 cups vegetable broth, or more if needed

Lime juice to taste

½ cup whipping cream or coconut milk, plus more for serving

Salt and pepper to taste



INSTRUCTIONS

Melt butter over medium heat.

Add onion and cook until translucent.

Add garlic, turmeric, ginger, and curry and cook a couple of minutes.

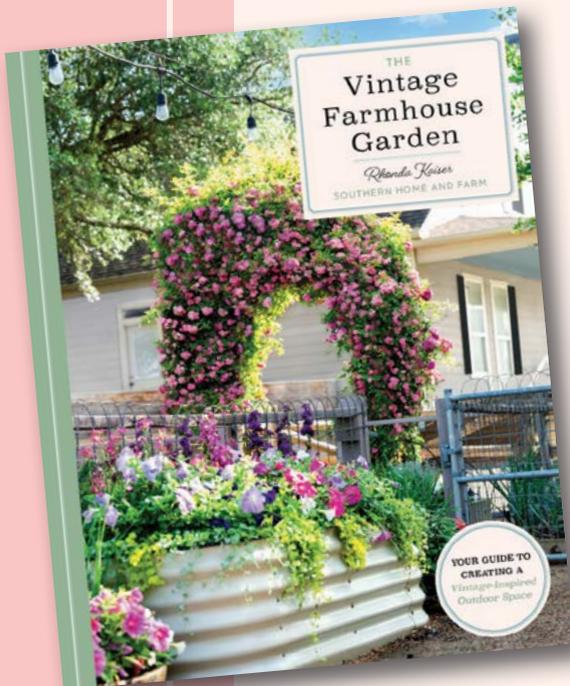
Add pumpkin and broth, bring to a simmer, and cook up to 30 minutes, until pumpkin is completely tender.

In batches, either transfer soup to a blender and process until smooth or use a hand blender and process right in the pot.

Stir in lime juice, cream, and seasonings. Cook until warmed through.

Pass cream for drizzling.

Serves 4.



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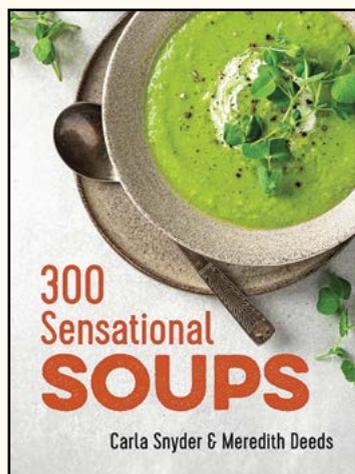
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Soup recipes are trendier than ever and it's no surprise. With the ever-rising costs of food and energy alongside the demand for healthy and delicious meals, a good soup is both cost-effective and nourishing for the soul as well as the stomach. Hot soup is warming on a winter day, while cold soup is equally welcome in the heat of summer.

This edition of *300 Sensational Soups* re-introduces all the same

expertly written and tested recipes, and to meet the new demand, we've updated the cover to increase curb appeal. With these outstanding recipes, you'll discover something delicious for every season. The book begins with a variety of Stock Basics and then moves on to 10 chapters devoted to all types of soup including Split Pea Soup with Pumpernickel Croutons, Beef and Ale Soup, Pumpkin Soup with Ham and Swiss Chard, Yellow Tomato Gazpacho with Cilantro Oil, Coconut Soup with Crispy Wontons, and an entire chapter devoted to toppings and garnishes. This is the ultimate soup book, your one-stop guide for all things savory, simmering, and sensational. **Item #12600, \$24.95**

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SWEET POTATO PEAR SOUP

INGREDIENTS

4 tablespoons butter
1 small onion, diced
1 small carrot, peeled and diced
1 small rib celery, diced
2 large or 3 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and diced
2 pears, peeled and diced
¼ teaspoon or so dried thyme
½ teaspoon sweet paprika or to taste
5 cups vegetable broth, plus extra if needed
⅓ cup or so whipping cream
1 generous tablespoon or so pure maple syrup, or to taste
Juice of one lime or to taste
Salt and pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

Melt butter over medium heat.
Add onion, carrot, and celery and cook a couple of minutes.
Add potatoes, pears, and thyme and cook a couple more minutes.
Stir in paprika and broth. Bring to boil, lower to simmer and cook until potatoes get really soft, about 15 minutes.
Purée until smooth. Return to pot.
Add cream, syrup, and lime juice. Simmer 5 minutes or so.
If soup is too thick, add more broth.
Season to taste.
Serves 6.

Tip

Storing sweet potatoes — skip refrigerator.

- Refrigeration lets sweet potatoes last longer, but they may develop a bitter taste and hard spots in the center.

- Keep sweet potatoes in a cool place away from bright light.
- Wait to wash sweet potatoes until ready to use them. Moisture on the skin may cause molding or rotting.

SPICY CORNBREAD

Don't be put off by the long list of ingredients. This goes together pretty quickly. Delicious, moist cornbread. Don't like it spicy? Leave out cayenne.

INGREDIENTS

- 1½ cups flour
- 1 cup cornmeal
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 cups shredded Mexican blend cheese, divided
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ¼ cup packed light brown sugar
- 1 cup fresh corn (or frozen and thawed)
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 2 large eggs
- ½ cup butter, melted and cooled slightly
- 2 tablespoons coarse or regular sugar (optional)
- Extra butter for top after baking (optional)



INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Spray an 8 by 8-inch or 9 by 9-inch pan.

Whisk flour, cornmeal, baking powder, soda, salt, 1 cup cheese, and cayenne together. Set aside.

In food processor, pulse brown sugar, corn, and buttermilk until combined, about 5 to 6 pulses.

Add eggs and process about 5 seconds longer, so that some corn lumps remain.

Make a well in center of dry ingredients; pour wet ingredients in. Stir to just combine.

Add melted butter and mix gently (batter will be lumpy).

Pour into pan and sprinkle with remaining cheese.

Sprinkle with sugar, if using.

Bake 20 to 25 minutes until a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Don't overbake.

Cut into squares, serve warm topped with more butter.

CAST IRON SKILLET CORNBREAD

INGREDIENTS

- 8- to 9-inch cast iron skillet, greased with melted butter
- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup cornmeal
- ⅔ cup sugar
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 large egg
- 1 cup milk
- ⅓ cup oil
- Butter for top after baking (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.

Whisk together flour, cornmeal, sugar, salt, and baking powder.



Separately, whisk together egg, milk, and oil.

Add egg mixture to flour mixture and stir just until combined. Batter will look lumpy. Don't overmix or cornbread may bake up tough.

Pour into skillet and bake 20 to 25 minutes, until golden brown and a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Don't overbake.

Cut into wedges, serve warm, topped with more butter. ©

RITA HEIKENFELD comes from a family of wise women in tune with nature. She's a certified modern herbalist, culinary educator, author, and national media personality. Most importantly, she's a wife, mom, and grandma. Rita lives on a little patch of heaven overlooking the East Fork River in Clermont County, Ohio. She's a former adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati, where she developed a comprehensive herbal course.

AboutEating.com column:
rita@communitypress.com

'Tis the Season for
Holiday
 Eats and Crafts

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY JENNY UNDERWOOD

THE FALL AND WINTER HOLIDAYS can be some of the most fun times of year to cook delicious, heartwarming foods. They're also a great opportunity to make crafts that can be given as gifts or even sold as a side hustle.

Turkey dressing is one of my favorite ways to use up Thanksgiving leftovers and make a wonderful Christmas dish ahead of time. I double this recipe and freeze the extra one, wrapped in aluminum foil and vacuum-sealed for Christmas dinner. First off, there are a few different ways you can make this dish, but stale or leftover bread of some sort is an absolute must. Gluten-free, sourdough, cornbread, and keto bread all work, and I often do a combination of sourdough and cornbread. I also make a lower-carb variety for my son who has diabetes.



Turkey Dressing

Makes one 9-by-13-inch baking pan of dressing, serves 6 to 8.

2 cups chopped, cooked turkey (chicken or ground sausage can also be used)

4 cups cubed leftover bread

1 to 2 teaspoon Italian seasoning (season to taste)

½ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon black pepper

1 onion, diced

2 stalks celery, diced

1 quart of turkey or chicken broth

2 eggs, beaten

Preheat oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit. Grease a 9-by-13-inch baking pan or casserole dish. In a large mixing bowl combine meat, bread, seasonings, and vegetables and mix well. Add in broth and allow to soak for 15 minutes. Add in beaten eggs. Mixture should be soupy but not thin and watery. If mixture is too thick, add a little more broth or water. Pour into baking pan and cover with aluminum foil. Bake covered for 45 minutes. Remove foil and bake an additional 5 to 10 minutes or until golden. Serve hot or cold. Delicious with cranberry sauce or autumn olive jelly. Can be served for breakfast or a main meal.

To alter this recipe for lower carb and higher protein, replace the bread with a keto bread and use only 2 cups of bread. Increase the meat to 4 cups and the eggs to 4. Follow the above directions with these modifications. Optionally you may add 1 to 2 cups of shredded cheddar cheese to the batter and bake as directed above.

Blackberry Granola

Serves 4 to 6

1 cup olive oil

½ cup maple syrup

1 teaspoon cinnamon

4 cups old-fashioned oats

1 cup blackberries (fresh or frozen)

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. In a large bowl, mix together all wet ingredients and cinnamon. Add oats and coat in wet ingredients mixture. Add berries and stir. Place in 9-by-13-inch baking dish or a large cast iron skillet. Bake for 20 minutes. Remove and stir. Serve hot or cold or even over ice cream. This is a perfect holiday breakfast! It's quick, easy, healthy, and delicious.

The holidays are also the perfect time to make some crafts with the family. Where we live, we have four seasons, so from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, our weather is generally cold. Our crafts range from simple to more complex, and we change them up each year to keep them from getting old.

One super easy craft to make is pine cone Christmas tree ornaments. To do this, first collect pine cones. Pick firm ones that have their scales attached well; don't pick the ones that are coming apart. Cut small pieces of jute twine or ribbon and glue onto the stem end in an oval. Allow to dry. In a small bowl, pour about ½ cup of Elmer's glue. In another bowl, put ½ cup of baking soda (either plain or with glitter in it). You can do multiple colors with several bowls. Roll each pine cone in the glue, then roll in the baking soda. Hang to dry. These will last several years as ornaments if you wrap them in padding when you put up the ornaments.

One of the more elaborate crafts we make is gingerbread houses. These serve a dual purpose: Not only do they make an adorable Christmas village, but after we're done with them, the kids can sprinkle them with birdseed and put them out for the birds to finish off.

These do require a few more supplies, time, and planning. With four kids making these, I plan to spend two days. The first day we make the gingerbread walls and roof and get the platform

set up. The next day we make the icing, mortar the structure together, and decorate it. To create these inexpensively, we make the gingerbread and icing from scratch, and the kids save candy from different events through the year. We don't generally eat candy in our house, so this makes good use of it!

Make your gingerbread dough. This is very stiff and has much more flour than the kind you'd eat. Roll it out on parchment paper and cut the required pieces out. I bought a kit that has cookie cutters in the exact size needed. I highly recommend this! You can alternatively download patterns online and use a sharp knife to cut around them. Bake as directed on parchment-lined cookie sheets. Remove and allow to cool. Our kids like to cut out shapes in the walls and doors and place a piece of hard candy in them while baking, to make "stained glass" windows. (Jolly Ranchers are perfect for this). Royal icing is the preferred mortar. It's an incredibly thick icing made with egg whites and powdered sugar. Prepare to work quickly, as it hardens within minutes.

Prepare a surface for your house by cutting out a cardboard piece (12 inches by 12 inches at least) and covering it with aluminum foil. Begin by gluing your walls to the base with icing, then add the roof. Be liberal with the icing and allow the base to harden before putting on the roof! Decorate with candy, as

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desired. We spread icing all over the roof as “snow.” You may also add gingerbread accessories to the “yard” of the house. Once allowed to harden well, it’ll last for weeks. If you want to get very detailed, add Christmas lights to your house or small battery-powered lights on the inside. Optionally, you can make a “log cabin” house by gluing thin straight pretzel sticks to the house structure with icing.

Gingerbread House

GINGERBREAD HOUSE DOUGH

- ¾ cup milk
- ¾ stick butter (melted) or oil
- 1 cup brown sugar
- ½ cup molasses
- 1 egg
- 5 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon ginger
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon salt



In a large bowl, mix all wet ingredients well. In another bowl, mix dry ingredients. Add dry ingredients to wet and mix well. After rolling out 1/8-inch thick and cutting out shapes, bake at 350 degrees F for 15 to 20 minutes, or until golden.

ROYAL ICING

- 3½ cups powdered sugar
- 3 egg whites
- ½ teaspoon cream of tartar
- Food coloring optional

Beat first 3 ingredients together until stiff. Cover with a damp cloth until you’re ready to use.

Double or triple these recipes for multiple houses. 

JENNY UNDERWOOD is a homeschooling mama to four lively blessings. She makes her home in the rural foothills of the Ozark Mountains with her husband of 20 years. You can find her reading a good book, drinking coffee, and gardening on their little fifth-generation homestead. She blogs at www.inconvenientfamily.com

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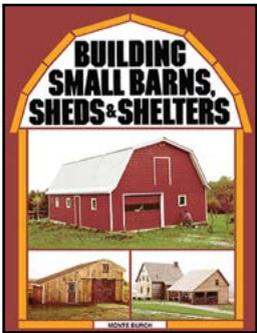
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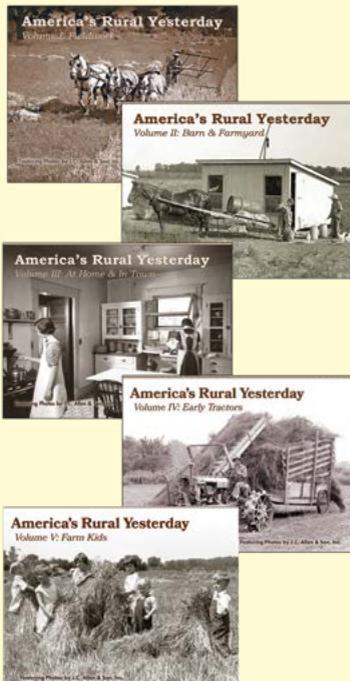


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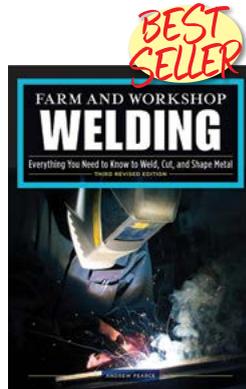
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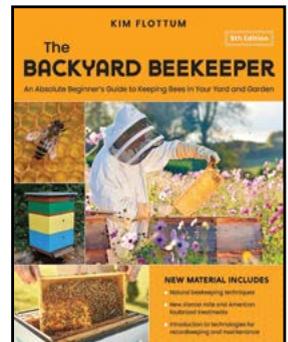
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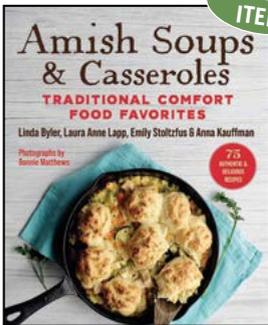
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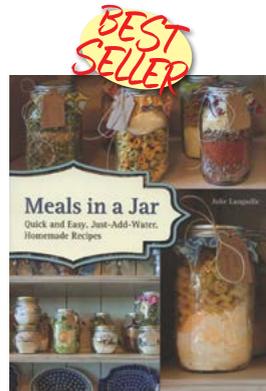
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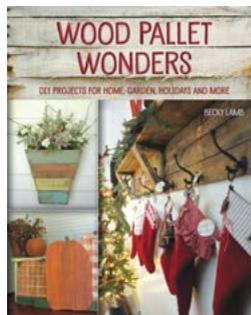
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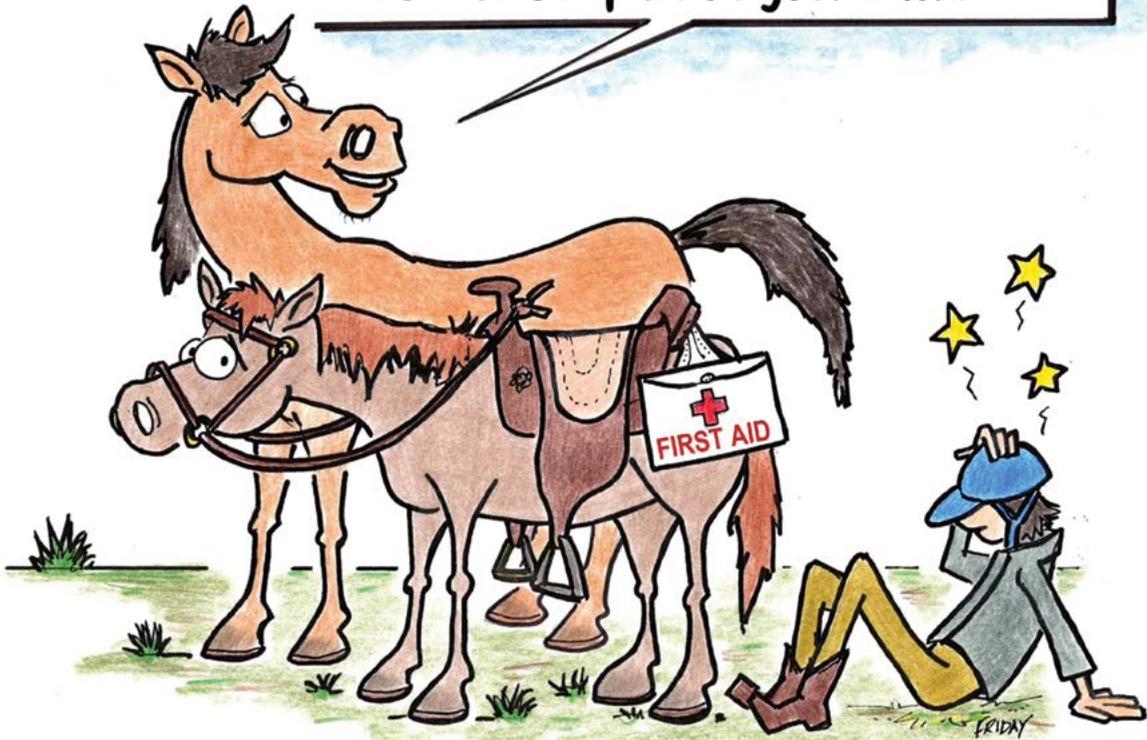
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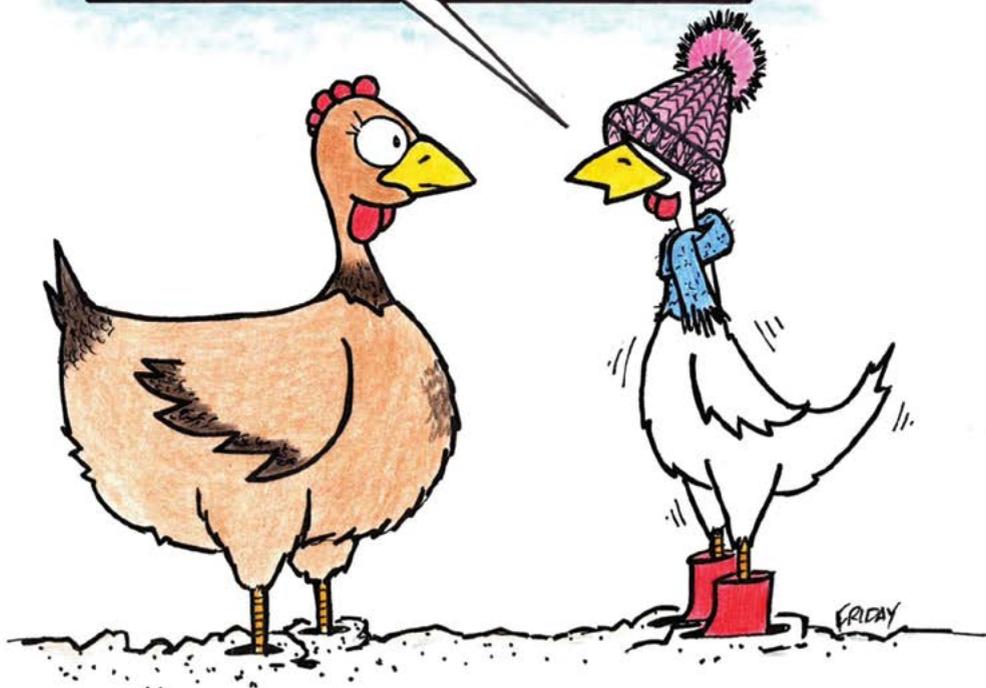
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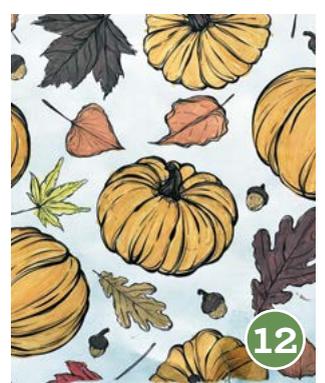
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A colorful selection of art submitted by our readers!

Color the picture on the previous page and your picture could be published in the next issue!



1. Andrew Soria, age 10; **2.** Annabella and Addison Jensen, ages 6 and 9;

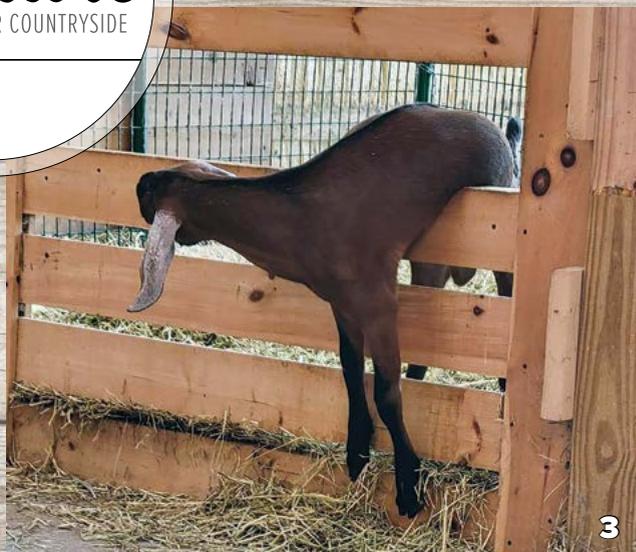
3. Diana Johnson, Ohio; **4.** Fallon, age 10; **5.** Henry Soria, age 12;

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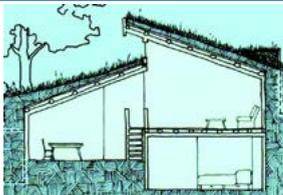


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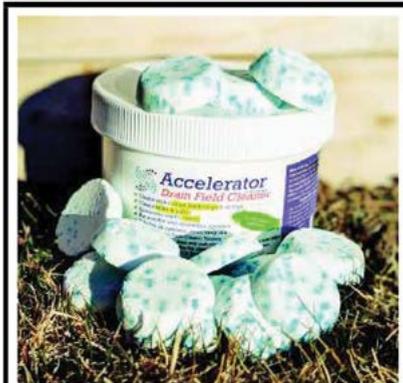
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