

The magazine of modern homesteading

COUNTRYSIDE

& Small Stock Journal

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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2025

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SAWMILLING ON
THE HOMESTEAD

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INSTRUCTIONS
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WILD ONES

Homestead

BY MICHELLE AND DAN



I AM COUNTRYSIDE





HOMESTEADING HASN'T ALWAYS BEEN the way of life I followed, but it was always the dream. Growing up in a small town, my mother grew a big garden, canned, foraged, and hunted — skills she learned from her parents and passed down to me. Skills that I'm now sharing and passing down to my children.

My grandparents were the real deal, salt-of-the-earth-type homesteaders: building their homes themselves from recycled materials, heating their house with wood, growing as much as they possibly could, and cooking on a woodburning stove. When I think 'homesteaders,' they're who I think of. I doubt I'll ever reach that level of self-sufficiency, but it sure is exhilarating chasing that goal. Exhilarating and exhausting, but absolutely worth it.

I guess you could say that's where I learned to love the hard work of having a more self-sufficient lifestyle. I grew up seeing firsthand how rewarding it can be to pour your energy into doing things for yourself.

As a teenager, I found my calling with horses, and I spent all my time and energy focused on learning to be the best horsewoman I could possibly be.

The big 'goal' in life was always to have a quiet place to live, with enough land to grow as much food as I possibly could, space to raise some livestock, and plenty of time to enjoy my horses.

Fast-forward through the years of being young and experiencing the world, and today I'm living my dream. All while continuing to push the boundaries of how self-sufficient I can be.

My husband, Dan, and I have over 60 acres in the driftless region of Wisconsin. We raise chickens and cows, have several different gardens, and an orchard. We also enjoy hunting, fishing, foraging, hide-tanning, making maple syrup, and of course, spending lots of time with the horses.

My husband spent his life farming this region and has expertise in many areas that I fall short on. Having a partner who not only enjoys the same lifestyle, but brings his own set of skills and experience to the table, makes all the difference in day-to-day life.

While homesteading keeps us constantly busy, it's never boring. Everything we do tends to have its own 'season' and just when we start getting overwhelmed or bored with one thing, that season ends and it's on to the next.

Our biggest project now is building our new home. We wanted a house that felt like an old log cabin, without all the log cabin maintenance.

We spent several years planning how to accomplish this, what materials to use, and figuring out how to stay on a very tight budget. This is where my

husband and his jack-of-all-trades skill set comes in handy. He's done a lot of the work on our new home, with me helping when and how I can, and hiring contractors where required.

We were lucky enough to have found two different buildings that needed to be torn down. One, a neighbor's barn, and the other, an old hand-hewn log cabin that had been built by a civil war veteran. We managed to salvage wood from both of those buildings, and have been using it inside our home, along with wood that we've milled on our sawmill.

The inside is full of gorgeous wood from the 1800s, bringing all the character and cabin vibes. For the outside, we went with a simple, yet sturdy, agricultural steel, which requires minimal maintenance.

Other than the new house build, we currently have three cows and calves. They're Angus and Holstein, and we're raising them for beef; though I've also been enjoying milking my lovely angel of a cow, Tulip. Her calf has 24/7 access to her, and I just wander out to the pasture with my buckets and milk her while she's loose. The amount I get from her varies from day to day, especially as she'll let the other calves nurse off her as well, but usually, I end up with about a half a gallon a day, which is plenty for our needs.

We finally wrapped up planting for the year. I have a potager-style garden in the backyard, where I grow the bulk of my flowers, tomatoes, garlic, green beans, carrots, herbs, and other things that I prefer to keep close at hand.

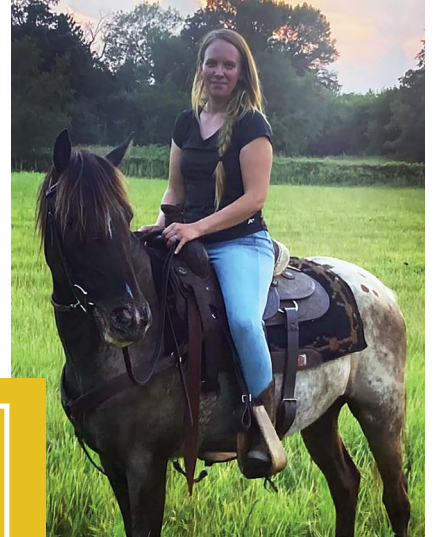
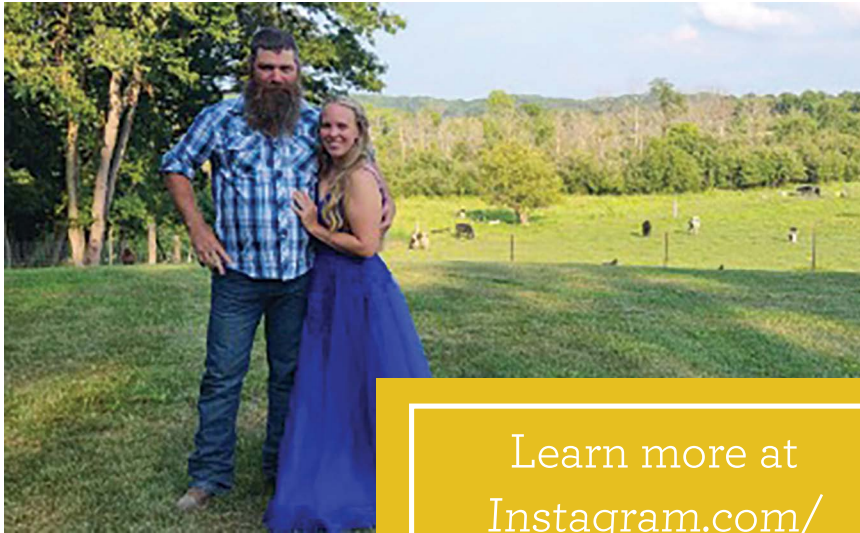
In our market-style garden, we plant sweet corn, melons, summer and winter squash, hot peppers, and sweet potatoes. I'm looking forward to filling our new root cellar with all the delicious homegrown produce this year.

Our flock of chickens also benefits from the garden; they get any extra produce or kitchen scraps. At this point, we keep a few roosters and about 50 laying hens. In the future, we plan to raise meat chickens as well.

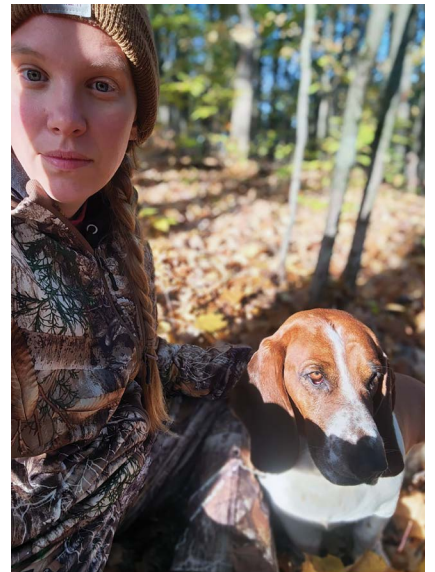
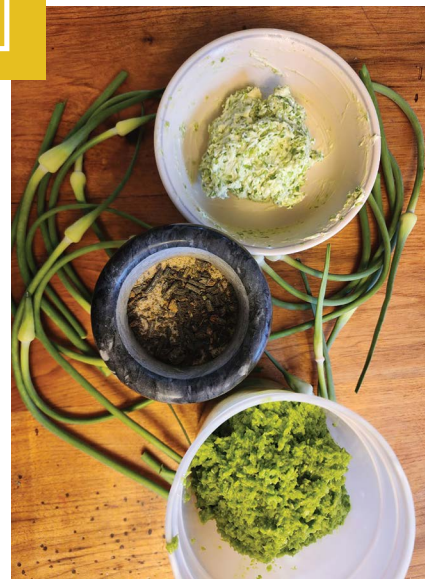
Hunting, fishing, and trapping of nuisance critters tends to take up what 'free' time we have, and I enjoy tanning the hides from the animals we get, to use as much from them as possible.

As for the horses, we currently have two: my sweet, old gal Abby, who takes the best care of the kiddos and will stand for cookies and scratches all day long, and my young Spanish mustang, Scout, who I'm enjoying training and taking along on all the adventures.

At the end of the day, I'm just a horsewoman, chasing down my dreams of homesteading and self-sufficiency one day at a time. 🌿



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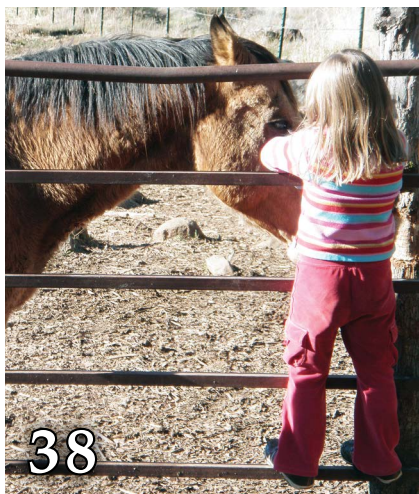
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Strolling into the
sunset at Wild Ones
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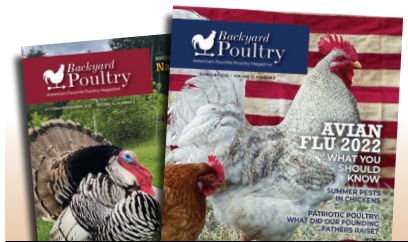
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Our Philosophy

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

Time to Wind Down

WINDING DOWN AFTER A BUSY, HOT summer is bittersweet for me. I love the fall colors and the excitement of deer hunting, but once the colorful leaves have fallen off the trees, we're left with dull, brown scenery until the glistening snow falls to make the outdoors look pretty again.

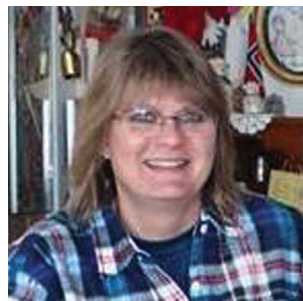
Now, what makes the indoors look pretty? Jars of freshly canned food lined up in the kitchen pantry. Canning meat is a great way to preserve it for long-term storage. However, care must be taken when canning it, just as with any other food. In this issue, preserving guru Angi Schneider explains how to can meat. She includes instructions and recipes for canning beef pot roast, beef in wine sauce, and eye of round steak with onion gravy. Once you learn to can meat along with your garden goodies, you're on your way to storing delicious, homemade food to enjoy all winter long. And on busy nights, what's better than opening a jar or two of homemade food that you only have to warm up to eat?

While I'm on the subject of food (one of my favorite subjects), I'd like to mention an article by Rita Heikenfeld on making back-to-school snacks for kids. I remember how hungry I was when I got home from school way back when. My mother always had a small snack for us kids to hold us over while she prepared supper. Rita shares several

snacks, including various trail mixes, tortilla rollups, and more!

One food I do enjoy as a snack is a fresh garden tomato, and one that I'd never heard of is the "Reisetomate" tomato. When Mark Hall contacted me to write an article about this unique variety, I was intrigued to know more after he described it to me. I encourage you to check out this "tomato on the go" on page 32.

If you ever find yourself with some spare time, I ask you to look through your photos and share any that you'd like to see in our "Capture Your Countryside" section. When you find some, you may email them to editor@countrysidemag.com. I'd love to see them and share with the *Countryside* community!



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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Country Conversation & Feedback

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Strawberry Cream Pie

I have a strawberry pie recipe I want to share with you and the readers.

INGREDIENTS

1 baked pie shell
1 cup sugar
3 tablespoons cornstarch
2 pints fresh strawberries, washed and hulled (1 pint will need to be sliced)
3 tablespoons strawberry gelatin
4 ounces soft cream cheese
Whipped topping

DIRECTIONS

Add sugar and cornstarch to saucepan. Use a potato masher to mash 1 pint of the strawberries (you need 1½ cups; if there's not enough, add enough water to get 1½ cups). Add to sugar and cornstarch and stir to thicken. When thick, remove from heat and add strawberry gelatin. Mix well.

In a bowl, add the cream cheese and 1 tablespoon strawberry sauce and mix well. Spoon cream cheese on bottom of crust. Cover cream cheese layer with remaining sliced strawberries. Pour sauce on top

and refrigerate for 3 hours or until chilled. Top with whipped topping.

Diana Johnson, Ohio



Editor's Note

In the "Cloud Seeding" article (July/August 2025), the list of resources was incorrect. Below you'll find the correct resources used for that article.

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Zesty Grilled Corn

I've been making this recipe for many years and never tire of it.



INGREDIENTS

1/3 cup butter
2 tablespoons prepared mustard
2 tablespoons prepared horseradish
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1/2 teaspoon lemon-pepper seasoning
6 ears corn, husked

DIRECTIONS

~ In a small saucepan, melt butter. Add mustard, horseradish, Worcestershire, and lemon-pepper seasoning.
~ Place each ear in a sheet of heavy-duty aluminum foil.
~ Drizzle each ear with butter mixture.
~ Fold foil around corn, but not too tight.
~ Cook over medium coals (or medium setting on gas grill) for 15 to 20 minutes.

Carefully remove corn from foil and enjoy!

Maria G., Georgia

We want to hear from you!

September/October Question of the Month:

With the holiday season just around the corner, I thought it'd be fitting to ask a holiday-themed question:

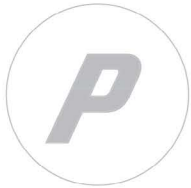
What are your favorite traditions and/or memories of the season?

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SAWMILLING ON THE HOMESTEAD

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY JENNY UNDERWOOD

THERE SEEMS TO BE AN unlimited amount of building projects on a homestead or farm, and ours is no different. Since we own mostly wooded acres, we decided a portable personal sawmill from Woodland Mills was a perfect choice for us. We purchased the manual model 126 and the optional trailer (which I highly

recommend). This comes, unassembled, right to your house. You'll need some tools to complete the setup, but everything else is included. Before you order your mill, decide how much of the work you're willing to do yourself, whether you plan to move it frequently or set up somewhere permanently, and the size of logs you need to cut.

Assembling the Sawmill

First, you'll need a tractor with a bucket, or something capable of lifting the parts around, as they're in large, extremely heavy metal crates. The saw head itself weighs several hundred pounds. The mill comes with detailed directions for assembling everything, so be sure to read it carefully and watch a few videos on assembly. A word of advice here: Now would be a great time to have several strong people to help.

Lay everything out and go through your list of parts. Make certain you have every single piece before beginning. The instructions will tell you exactly what bolt goes where; follow this to the letter or you'll have to go back and undo work.

Pick a flat spot to assemble all your parts. In our case, we were building the trailer first, so we used our driveway. Make sure it's out of the way, because this can take a while. Take your time and make sure it's perfectly joined together. Speaking from experience, never assume you know what comes next as this will waste time when you have to undo it.

A Word About Safety

In my experience, these mills are incredibly safe and user-friendly. That being said, you're dealing with a very powerful cutting machine. Wear ear and



eye protection. Wear sturdy shoes. Always check the fluids in the sawmill before operating. Keep extra blades on hand. Take your time and don't allow unsupervised people around it while it's running.

Learning to Use It

Once everything is assembled and you have your saw head installed, it's time to cut your boards. This is definitely a learning curve, and your first boards may look anything but professional. Take heart; you'll quickly get the hang of it. Get some logs that you can practice on first; don't start with your high-grade logs you're planning to make into a fireplace mantle!

If you're using your own logs, it's a good idea to cut them several weeks or months in advance and haul them close to where you're planning to mill them. Cut the logs

into lengths you and your mill can handle. Some woods are extremely difficult to saw (such as Osage Orange), so it's wise to start with a wood that works more easily (pine is a great choice). Try to choose trees that aren't full of knots and are relatively straight.

You'll need a way to load the logs onto the rails. We use a tractor bucket with a chain wrapped around the logs to set them up on the rails. Alternatively, you can build or buy a ramp and use a cant hook to move the logs up. After loading your logs, snug up the movable wedges to hold the log in place. Some people replace the metal wedges with wooden wedges. This is hugely beneficial if you forget to lower them as you saw and accidentally saw into one. It'll be necessary to turn the log over as you're squaring it up, so a cant hook comes in very handy!

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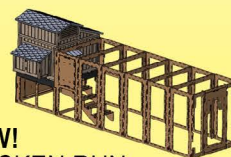
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End view of running the sawmill.

Time to Start Sawing

Start by squaring up the log. Take off an even amount on four sides to make a square log. These are scrap pieces known as slabs. A side note: Many people use these in outdoor wood furnaces for fuel, or you could use them in a firepit. You'll have lots of these, so have a plan for all your scraps. Next, you need to decide what size boards you'd like. To practice, you can start just cutting boards the entire width of the log. Then you may turn these on their sides and cut into smaller boards. With practice, you can learn to get the greatest amount of useable lumber from each log. Smaller diameter logs can even be used to make posts, such as 4-by-4s and 6-by-6s. One of the wonderful things about milling your own lumber is you have the option to make custom sizes. Some people draw out the diagrams on the end of the log of the cuts they want to make. There are lasers available to make sure your logs are evenly cut, but the sawmill itself comes with a moveable, marked cutting gauge.

After cutting, these boards will need to be dried. If you're like us and don't have a kiln or roofed lumber storage shed, you can stack one level of boards off the ground on slats. Then lay several

slats crosswise over these boards and start another level, repeating until you're done. These can be tarped and allowed to dry. If the type of wood is prone to warping (think sweetgum) you may place heavy beams over the top of the stack and place ratchet straps tightly around both ends until they're dried. Optionally, you can build your outbuildings with green lumber, but expect the boards to move some as they dry.

Keep It in Good Shape

Be careful to keep your sawmill well-maintained. Keep the fluids at appropriate levels and change as needed. Keep your blades sharpened. Don't allow sawdust to build up around your workstation. Always level your machine before sawing. To help preserve your sawmill head, there's a special cover you can put over it. It's also best to put a lock on the trailer hitch to help prevent theft!

In my opinion, a portable sawmill is one of the most useful pieces of equipment you can have around. We've already built a woodshed and have plans for another woodshed, a small cabin, garden sheds, an outdoor kitchen, and a greenhouse, in the near future. This is an excellent way to make use of your timberland, save money, and use high-quality materials, for a fraction of the cost of purchasing from the store. It's just one more step on our path to greater self-sustainability. 



Stacking the lumber.

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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Maintaining Your Equipment

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY JENNY UNDERWOOD

I SAW A SIGN ONE DAY that read “There’s life, there’s death, in-between there’s maintenance.” While that might not sound too cheerful, it’s definitely a fact that maintenance is an important part of life. This especially applies when you have equipment! Maintenance may seem like a pain but, honestly, it

adds so many years of service to your equipment and helps prevent unnecessary breakdowns. While it’s possible to hire someone to maintain your equipment, it’s often a necessity in this lifestyle to learn to do as many things yourself as you can.

If you aren’t sure how to do certain things, look up DIY videos

or purchase manuals for your particular models. Some things are best learned hands-on, so if you have a friend or someone in the community who’s a pro at that kind of thing, offer to help and watch them, or have them walk you through the project.

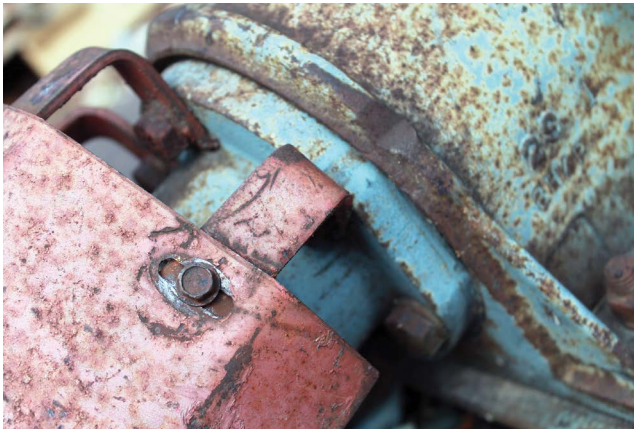
Everything requires maintenance at some point, and one consideration when you purchase equipment should be how much it’ll require and how expensive it’ll be to do. If an item’s maintenance is prohibitively expensive or overly complicated, research other options. Also, some brands have replacement parts that are difficult to find. Avoid these if possible. Buy the best quality parts you can afford and remember to get the correct part for the job. It’s a waste of time trying to cobble



Check and replace filters as needed.



Check hydraulic hoses on equipment.



Check gear boxes.



Grease joints.

something together. Some of the most common things you'll need to do are oil changes, cleaning, carburetor cleaning, repair or replacement, blade sharpening, new tires, greasing, and winterizing.

I recommend keeping a notebook with each piece of equipment listed and any parts that can be replaced, along with the part number. Set up times for regular maintenance and add them to your calendar. If some parts are prone to wearing out, such as belts or chains, have extras on hand. Check the equipment regularly before you use it. There's nothing more frustrating than getting started on a job only to realize you needed to sharpen your blade first!

To do equipment maintenance properly, you'll need tools, such as

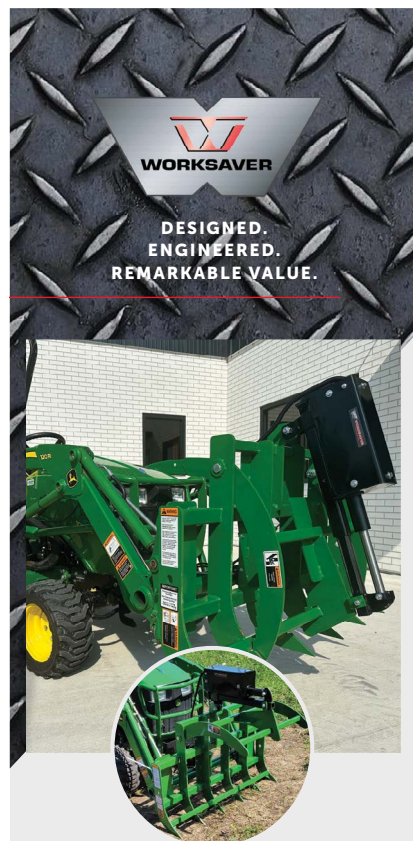
a set of wrenches, funnels, waste containers, sharpeners, specialized files (for chainsaws), and grease guns. You'll also need a way to properly dispose of any waste oil or fuel. Wear eye protection and disposable gloves when changing any fluids. Always change your fluids when the equipment is cooled and turned off. Never attempt to do any maintenance while it's running! Store your equipment after it's clean and dry. Check and replace or fill all gearboxes.

Some pieces of equipment should be serviced after a certain number of hours, and some should be serviced at the beginning or end of seasons. For example, a lawnmower may need the oil changed and filters replaced every certain number of hours used, but a rarely used woodchipper might just need to

If your equipment requires mixed fuel, be sure to mark your fuel containers with the appropriate labels, as you can ruin an engine by running the wrong fuel in it.



Check fluids regularly.



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have fuel stabilizer added every fall and the system drained and fresh fuel added each spring.

Run quality fuel and oil in all your equipment. My husband will only use ethanol-free gas, to help prevent the carburetor from gumming up. If your equipment requires mixed fuel, be sure to mark your fuel containers with the appropriate labels, as you can ruin an engine by running the wrong fuel in it.

All equipment without a sealed bearing will need a check to ensure that these are greased and packed well before operating. These might include disc hubs and trailer hub bearings.

Small engines can require carburetor cleaning and fuel stabilizer added in the late fall.

Tillers need tine cleaning and sharpening, and the underside

of the tiller regularly cleaned of dirt or vegetation. It always pays to keep equipment under a protective cover; so if you don't have a building to put it in, at least cover it with a tarp.

Lawnmowers will need blades cleaned, sharpened, and periodically replaced; fuel filters regularly changed; tires kept properly inflated; and belts replaced. To sharpen your blades, remove them from the lawnmower and use a grinder or file to sharpen them. If they're too worn, you'll need to replace them with new ones. We replace ours every couple of years.

Wood splitters need hydraulic fluid, hydraulic hoses checked (and rarely replaced), carburetor maintenance, and tires kept in good shape.

Chainsaws require sharpening with specialized files to maintain optimal cutting. This is a more skilled job, so have a knowledgeable person teach you or practice on old chains before attempting this on your good chain.

To change the oil in your equipment, gather the new oil (check your manual for the required amount and specific weight), a new oil filter, a funnel, and a container to drain the old oil into. Drain the old oil, change the filter, add new oil, and pour the old oil back into the new jugs. Dispose of this used oil in a safe manner; do not pour it out!

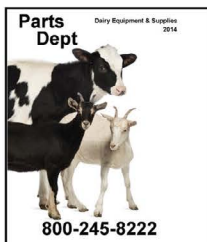
Homestead and farm equipment can be an expensive investment. Keeping it clean and maintained will help add years of service and make your work around the homestead much more enjoyable and productive. ©



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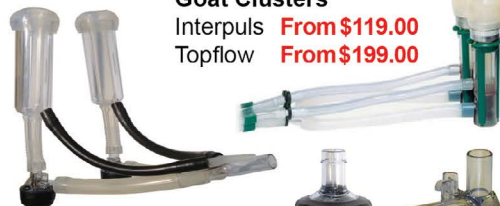
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No, or Low-Cost, ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY FIXES

BY DANA BENNER



Dana taking apart wheelbarrow. Photo by Stan Beck.

LET'S FACE IT; WE LIVE IN A throwaway society. Things aren't meant to last as long as they used to, and manufacturers don't want you to fix them. Manufacturers are counting on you to just throw in the towel and purchase a new product. While we can't fix everything ourselves, there are some fixes we can do that'll help both the environment and our wallets at the same time.

What Can We Do?

Things usually break at times when it's not possible to run to the store. When you can go to the store, you often can't find what you need, or the cost is way out of your budget. Many times, we can fix things at no cost if we just try. How many of us have coffee cans full of nuts, bolts, washers, and screws? What about lumber of various sizes, as well as scrap sheet metal? With those items, we can fix just about anything.

Wheelbarrow Handles

After years of use, the wooden handles on my wheelbarrow finally gave out. I went to the local supply store and nearly dropped dead when I saw the price for replacement handles. Instead of giving in, I found two discarded 2-by-4 boards and, using the old handles as a template, I took my drawknife and made my own. The bolts holding it all together needed to be replaced, so I reached into that coffee can I mentioned earlier and found all the nuts, bolts, and washers I needed. By using recycled lumber and hardware, I was able to get the job done at no cost to me.

Necessity is the Mother of Invention

When I got my new canoe, it opened the door to areas previously inaccessible to me. Traveling to remote areas often meant lugging the canoe and gear

down some less-than-ideal trails. Though the canoe is light, I often had to make multiple trips to get all my gear to the launch site. I needed a way to transport my canoe, my gear, and my daily catch back and forth to my truck in a more efficient manner. I needed a wheeled canoe carrier of some sort.

My friend found an old bicycle trailer that'd been used to haul kids behind a bicycle. It was being thrown away, so he picked it up and showed it to me.



Bicycle kid hauler with the seat removed. It was in great shape and free.

That's when the proverbial light went on in my head. Essentially, it's nothing more than a tubular frame with bicycle wheels. The width was perfect, giving the canoe room to rest without rubbing on the wheels. It required just a little work to make it do the job.

Once the seat and the tow arm were removed, I found that there wasn't much work left to be done. Another friend had some of those foam "swimming noodles" that he was throwing away. I grabbed them, cut them down to size, and used them to cover the metal parts of the frame that would touch the canoe. The canoe slid easily up and onto the noodles and, with a few tie-downs, rested securely in place. The perfect tool for the job. At the end of the day, this project solved my problem and kept a bunch of junk out of the landfill. The total cost to me was zero.

I needed a water catchment system, but the prices made me think twice. In reality, you can make one for little or no cost. There really isn't much to them: a container, some plumbing, and a way to get the water into the container and out to the garden.

The container issue was solved when my friend found me a Biograde-plastic pickle barrel that was being thrown away. Water to the barrel would be achieved by some reworking of the gutters on my

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Wheelbarrow before taking it apart. It was in rough shape.



Canoe up on carrier.



Old drawknife. A must-have tool for fixing things.

house. Water transfer to the garden would be made with spare plumbing parts and a garden hose. While this project took a little effort, it was made entirely from discarded materials.

Around the Home

What do you do when your washer, dryer, oven, or any other appliance breaks? While common sense says “fix it,” more often than not, we either call a repairperson or purchase a new one. Don’t do it! With a little thought and effort, you can probably do the fix yourself and save yourself hundreds of dollars in the process.


Recently, I had a burner go out on our electric stove. Using a voltmeter, I found that the stove problem was a faulty connector. The thing about connectors is that they aren’t all the same. Finding the right one for the job is the trick. Luckily, in my can of spare electrical parts, I found one that would work, complete with new/old wiring. I had the job completed in one day.

Finding the Materials

The materials for doing these and other projects are all around us. People are constantly throwing away lumber, metal, and other useable materials. Before I throw anything away, I try to find alternative uses for it. Repurposing saves me money.

Construction areas and the dump are great sources for scrap lumber and even plumbing and electrical parts. No matter where you collect your materials, make sure you get permission to take them. There are many opportunities to collect needed materials, but no 2-by-4 is worth getting into trouble.

Put on Your Thinking Cap

Thinking outside the box has always been the name of the game if you want to live this lifestyle, but in this day and age, it’s become even more important. Prices for everything continue to rise, so any way you can save some money is a good thing. Fixing what you have, with what you have or can easily obtain, not only will solve the issue at hand, but will save you money and the environment at the same time. 

DANA BENNER has been writing about all aspects of the outdoors, homesteading, gardening, and history for over 35 years with his work appearing in regional, national, and international publications, both in print and online.



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How to Can Meat

INSTRUCTIONS AND RECIPES

BY ANGI SCHNEIDER

QUALITY MATTERS when you're pressure canning meat, just as it does when you're canning vegetables. You should choose only first-rate meat for home canning.

If you're processing your own animals, make sure you're using sanitary slaughtering procedures. Home-processed meat should be chilled at 40 degrees Fahrenheit as soon as possible, and beef should be aged 3 to 10 days. Home-processed pork doesn't need to be aged.

If the meat can't be canned within a few days of aging, slaughtering, or being purchased, it should be frozen. It can still be canned later; but be sure to allow enough time to thaw it first. Keep beef and pork cold until you're ready to can.

Because the pressure canning process tenderizes it, tough cuts of canned meat, such as brisket, end up tender without long, slow cooking.

Basic Tips for How to Can Meat

Before canning, trim off gristle, bruised spots, and visible fat. The finished jars will always contain some fat; you want to avoid an excessive amount. I've found that pressure canning tends to make meats a little drier than those that've been cooked fresh. This is especially true for lean cuts, such as flank steak. The National Center for Home Food Preservation's (NCHFP) canning guidelines allow you to brown lean meat in a small amount of fat before canning. But don't add much, because fat can climb up the sides of jars during processing and prevent the lids from sealing properly. My favorite meat to process at home is brisket because it's marbled throughout, which makes the meat less dry when canned.

Beef and pork strips, cubes, and chunks can be canned by packing them into jars raw (as with the Pot Roast in a Jar recipe,

opposite), or with the hot-pack method (see the recipes for Beef in Wine Sauce and Eye of Round Steak with Onion Gravy).

If you want to have a lively discussion among a group of canners, just ask if sausage, bacon, ham, and other cured meats are safe to can. You'll get answers that range from, "I do it all the time and no one has ever died," to "Absolutely not! You'll kill someone."

The truth lies somewhere between these extremes. The curing process makes meat denser and, therefore, harder for the heat from pressure canning to penetrate. I err on the side of safety and don't can entire jars of cured meat.

However, some tested recipes have cured meat as ingredients, for example, the bacon in my Beef in Wine Sauce recipe.

Breakfast sausage, which is an uncured sausage, is safe to can. So are uncured link or cased sausages, but they're difficult to find unless

you make your own. The texture of canned uncured links is a little moister than that of grilled or pan-fried, but the flavor is still great.

Here are three of my favorite recipes for pressure canning meat. For more advice and recipes, see the NCHFP website (<https://nchfp.uga.edu/>).

Canning Beef Pot Roast

A cut-with-your-fork pot roast usually must be cooked long and slow, which is why it's typically reserved for Sunday dinner. But you can enjoy tender pot roast anytime with this canning recipe.

Yields 4 one-quart jars.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups beef broth
- 1 cup red wine
- 3 pounds chuck roast, cubed
- 1 cup chopped onions
- 2 cups peeled and sliced carrots
- 3 cups peeled and diced potatoes
- 4 cloves garlic
- 2 teaspoons dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 teaspoons non-iodized salt
- 4 bay leaves



INSTRUCTIONS

1. You'll need four clean, 1-quart jars. Pour a few inches of water into your pressure canner, or whatever amount the manufacturer specifies. Heat the jars inside the canner on the stovetop over low heat. The water should be about 140 degrees Fahrenheit for this raw-pack recipe.

2. In a medium stockpot, combine the broth and wine, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to a simmer to keep the liquid hot while you prepare the beef and vegetables.

3. Remove the preheated jars from the canner and place them on a towel to prevent contact with your cold countertop. Pack $\frac{3}{4}$ pound of cubed raw meat into each prepared jar. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup onions, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup carrots, and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup potatoes to each jar.

4. Next, add 1 clove garlic, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon thyme, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon pepper, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt, and 1 bay leaf to each jar.

5. Remove the stockpot from the heat and carefully ladle hot liquid into each jar until you have 1-inch of headspace remaining.

6. Remove any bubbles with a clean knife or bubble removal tool, and recheck the headspace. If you're short on liquid, top off the jars with hot water or broth.

7. Wipe the jar rims with a clean, damp cloth. Secure the lids on the jars by screwing on the canning rings, and load the filled jars into the pressure canner.

8. Process the jars at 10 psi for 90 minutes, adjusting for altitude if necessary per the manufacturer's instructions.

9. After processing, turn off the heat and allow the canner to depressurize naturally, then remove the jars and let them cool on the counter for at least 12 hours. Check the lids to make sure they've sealed and remove the rings to prevent rust. Store properly sealed jars for up to 1 year. Eat the contents of any unsealed jars immediately.

10. To serve: In a medium stockpot, bring the contents of a jar to a boil over medium heat. Reduce heat and thicken with 1 tablespoon of all-purpose flour per quart jar of meat, if desired. Stir constantly after adding the flour, being careful not to break up the vegetables. Remove bay leaf before serving.

Canning Beef in Wine Sauce

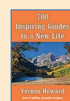
If you've ever made Julia Child's boeuf bourguignon, you'll know it takes all day and requires a bunch of pots to make one meal. This recipe is my attempt to get additional, equally delicious meals for my time. The meat tenderizes and the flavors deepen nicely while under pressure — and no one will know you didn't spend all day in the kitchen.

Yields 7 one-quart jars.

INGREDIENTS

- $\frac{1}{4}$ pound bacon, chopped
- 4 pounds chuck or round steak, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 4 cups chopped onions
- 6 cups peeled and sliced carrots
- 2 pounds sliced mushrooms
- 14 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
- 2 cups dry red wine
- 1 quart water

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INSTRUCTIONS

1. You'll need seven clean, 1-quart jars. Pour a few inches of water into your pressure canner, or whatever amount is specified by the manufacturer. Heat the jars inside the canner on the stovetop over low heat. The water should be about 180 degrees F for this hot-pack recipe.

2. In a large stockpot over medium-high heat, fry the bacon until crispy. Remove the bacon with a slotted spoon, but reserve the bacon grease in the pot. Sear the beef cubes in the bacon grease. Stir the meat to make sure all edges get browned. If you need to work in batches, keep the seared meat warm by placing it inside a lidded container.

3. Add the onions, carrots, mushrooms, and garlic to the stockpot. Return the bacon to the pot, and pour in the wine and water. Bring the mixture to a boil, and then turn the heat down to simmer for 5 minutes.

4. Remove the stockpot from the heat. Divide the mixture evenly among the jars, using a slotted spoon to place the solids inside the jars first. Carefully ladle the hot broth into the jars, leaving 1 inch headspace.

5. Remove any bubbles with a clean knife or bubble removal tool, and recheck the headspace. If you're short on liquid, top off the jars with boiling water.

6. Wipe the jar rims with a clean, damp cloth. Secure the lids on the jars by screwing on the canning rings, and load the filled jars into the pressure canner.

7. Process the filled jars at 10 psi for 90 minutes, adjusting for altitude if necessary per the manufacturer's instructions.

8. After processing, turn off the heat and allow the canner to depressurize naturally, then remove the jars and let them cool on the counter for at least 12 hours. Check the lids to make sure they've sealed and remove the rings to prevent rust. Store properly sealed jars for up to 1 year. Eat the contents of any unsealed jars immediately.

9. To serve: In a medium stockpot, heat the contents of a jar over medium heat for 10 minutes, or until bubbling. Thicken with 1 teaspoon of cornstarch, if desired, and simmer for 5 to 7 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the meat and vegetables are heated. Serve over a bed of egg noodles, rice, or mashed potatoes.

Canning Eye of Round Steak with Onion Gravy

This super-affordable cut has less flavor and tenderness than more expensive cuts of beef. Pressure canning eye of round steak with onions and beef broth makes it flavorful and tender.

Yields 4 one-pint or 2 one-quart wide-mouth jars.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups beef broth
- 1 teaspoon non-iodized salt
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 2 pounds eye of round steaks
- 4 cups chopped onions

INSTRUCTIONS

1. You'll need four 1-pint or two 1-quart jars, preferably wide-mouth. Pour a few inches of water into your pressure canner, or whatever amount is specified by the manufacturer. Heat the jars inside the canner on the stovetop. The water should be about 180 degrees Fahrenheit.

2. In a medium stockpot, bring the broth and salt to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer to keep the broth hot while you prepare the meat.

3. In a large skillet over medium-high, heat the oil and then sear each steak for 2 to 3 minutes per side; thin steaks will only need to be seared for 1 to 2 minutes per side. You'll need to work in batches. To keep the seared steaks warm, stack them in a lidded baking dish or a Dutch oven.

4. Next, bring the broth back to a boil while you divide the prepared steaks and


chopped onions between the jars. I like to lay the jars on their sides, stack the steaks inside, and then place the onions on top.

5. Remove the broth from the heat, and carefully ladle the liquid into the jars, leaving 1 inch headspace. Remove any bubbles with a clean knife or a bubble removal tool and recheck the headspace. If you're short on liquid, top off the jars with boiling water.

6. Wipe the jar rims with a clean, damp cloth. Secure the lids on the jars by screwing on the canning rings, and load the filled jars into the pressure canner.

7. Process the filled jars at 10 psi for 75 minutes for 1-pint jars, or 90 minutes for 1-quart jars, adjusting for altitude if necessary per the manufacturer's instructions.

8. After processing, turn off the heat and allow the canner to depressurize naturally, then remove the jars and let them cool on the counter for at least 12 hours. Check the seals to make sure they've sealed and remove the rings to prevent rust. Store properly sealed jars for up to 1 year. Eat the contents of any unsealed jars immediately.

9. To serve: In a medium stockpot over medium heat, first warm up only the liquid contents of a jar until bubbling. Then, use tongs to gently remove the steaks from the jar and place them into the pot. Add ¼ cup half-and-half, and thicken with 1 teaspoon flour, if desired. Simmer for 5 to 7 minutes more. Serve over a bed of egg noodles or rice. 

Additional Resources

- Preserve mincemeat filling with your pressure canner!
- Learn how to can venison!

ANGIE SCHNEIDER is a cook and freelance writer whose books include *The Ultimate Guide to Preserving Vegetables*. This is an excerpt from her latest book, *Pressure Canning for Beginners and Beyond*, Page Street Publishing (2021).

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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Growing Schisandra

BY MICHAEL BROWN

Schisandra (Schisandra chinensis) is a deciduous, perennial, woody vine native to the Far East, including Russia, China, Japan, and Korea. It has a place in the garden or small farm where it can be used for its medicinal properties.

Benefits

Schisandra is used in traditional Chinese medicine and is considered an adaptogen, which reduces mental and physical stress. It's also used for increasing energy levels. The berries can be eaten raw or dried, and are also incorporated into teas and tinctures.

The website of the well-regarded Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center has this to say about schisandra: "Scientists don't know how schisandra works, but lab experiments have begun to identify some possible effects. Schisandra has antioxidant activity and appears to protect the liver and nervous system. Other animal studies suggest it may improve mental and physical functioning. Only a small number of studies have been conducted in humans and are too limited to draw any conclusions."

Growing Requirements

Schisandra is generally an undemanding plant to grow, if you answer its basic needs. The plants grow best in climate zones 3 to 7. If you're growing it in zone 8, it should be kept out of full sun, with southern exposures that may encourage early growth before danger of frost is over. Because schisandra does best in partial shade, it can be grown in areas that may not be suitable for plants that require more direct sunlight. Rich, deep soil is preferred, and since it isn't very drought-tolerant, make sure you apply ample compost or mulch to help preserve moisture. Schisandra is a vigorous climber. Make sure you have a sturdy support in place before planting. My schisandra easily topped its 8-foot support fencing within two years of planting.

Pruning

There's very little written information about pruning schisandra. My experience is that it needs to be pruned in the fall to control height and make the plant more manageable.

Cultivars

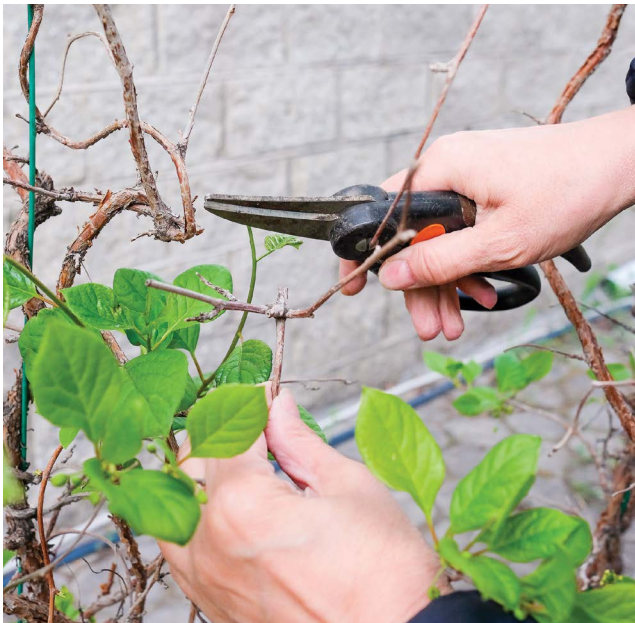
Online sources for schisandra describe the plant as dioecious (separate male and female plants) and monoecious (both male and female flowers on the same plant), so obviously there's a bit of debate. All sources hedge their bets by suggesting planting multiple plants to increase fruit production. To avoid this confusion, use the 'Eastern Prince' cultivar, which is consistently advertised as self-fertile and has reliably produced fruit for me. If you want to maximize your schisandra potential, purchase some plants from multiple nurseries to trial which do best for you.

Propagation

Schisandra can be grown from seed, cuttings, or by layering. I personally have never propagated schisandra from seed. The literature isn't entirely

clear regarding the best method for sprouting seeds, though they all agree that germination can be erratic and slow.

To propagate a relatively small number of plants, layering is the easiest method. Lay down one of the long vines in late spring or early summer and cover part of it with soil. Anchor that spot with a rock so contact with the soil is continuous and, after a few weeks, check for new root growth. When you feel the roots are sufficiently developed, cut off the vine below the roots and replant it. At the same time, prune back the softer new growth so there's less vegetation for the roots to support.



For a larger number of plants, consider taking cuttings in mid-summer. Take wood that has hardened to some extent, but isn't woody. It should have some flexibility but not be too fragile. I like to keep three leaf nodes on the cutting and look for cuttings where the nodes aren't overly spread out. Take cuttings from vines that you think you'd probably prune away later in the season. Schisandra can be an aggressive grower, so this shouldn't be a problem. Place cuttings in light potting soil out of direct sunlight and keep them moist. When new top growth appears, start to check for root formation.

Harvesting

Schisandra berries ripen in late summer or early fall, depending on the location. The berries will hang in small clusters and should be a dark red color. After picking, they can be processed fresh, frozen, or dried. I found it easiest to rinse the clusters, separate the small berries, and freeze them.

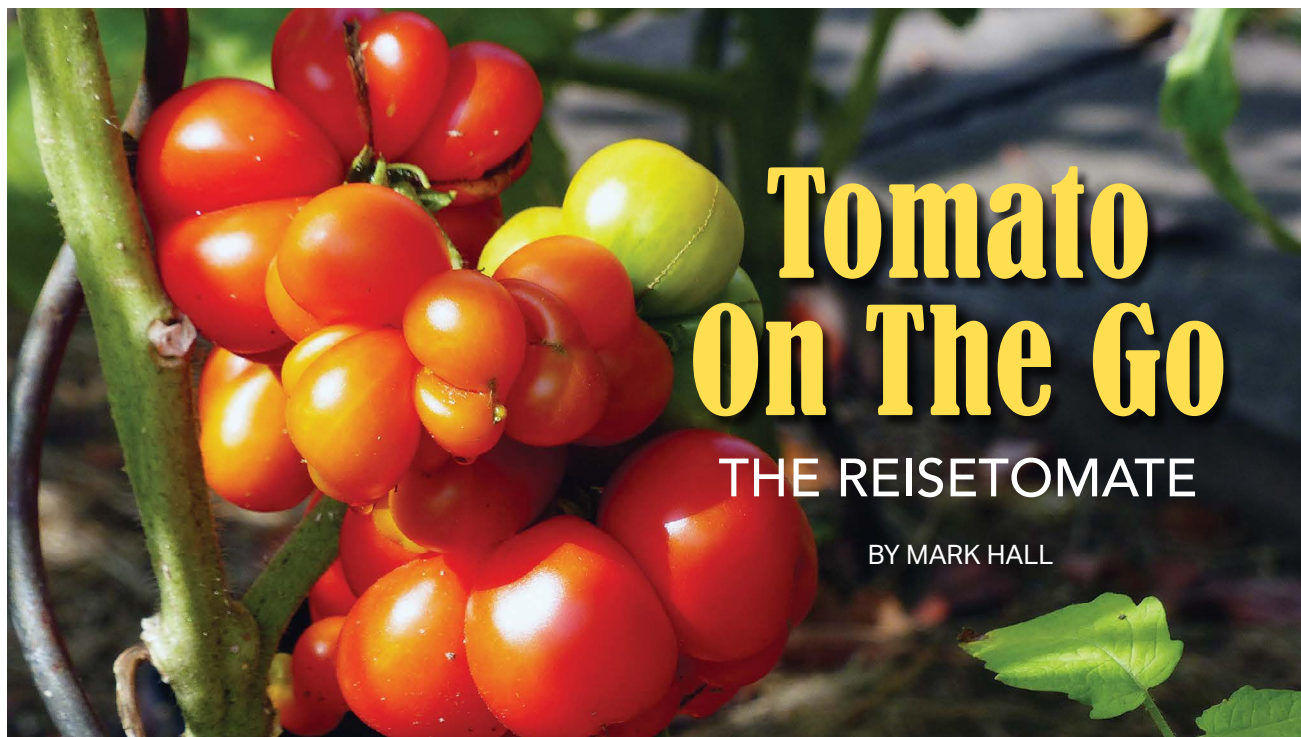
Income from Schisandra

Schisandra can be grown for home use or to add to your farm income, although I wouldn't consider it a main crop.

Schisandra can be propagated and sold as nursery plants. This would probably work best in conjunction with other medicinal perennials, such as aronia and elderberry, so you can tap into the market of people interested in health-related plants. The supply of schisandra plants is limited and the price for plants is high. This invites the opportunity of growing schisandra for resale, both mail order and for local sales. Local sales may need to be supported by some education, since most people aren't familiar with schisandra.

The best market for modest crops of berries would be herbalists, or other end users who will use the berries to create value-added products. The strong point of these berries is their health attributes. Of course, everyone has their own preferences, but I'd say the berries are an acquired taste. I have yet to find someone who finds the taste of schisandra berries particularly appealing, so it wouldn't be a dessert berry to serve as a snack. 🍷

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.



Tomato On The Go

THE REISETOMATE

BY MARK HALL

PICTURE THIS: You've been weeding the garden all morning. You're hot, you're sweaty, and you've developed quite an appetite. In fact, you're starving! You'd planned to accomplish several more chores before lunch, but now your energy has been sapped. If only there was a refreshing snack nearby to give you a needed boost!

Oh, there is, you remember as you wipe your brow. Relieved, you casually stroll to the far end of the garden where you approach your new heirloom tomato plant,

called 'Reisetomate.' Peculiar in appearance, each bright red fruit looks like a haphazard fusion of small, swollen chunks. Carefully, you pluck and hold onto the ripest of these squat, lumpy fruits in one hand, while grasping one of its several bulbous sections, or lobes, with the other hand. A tiny twist and a gentle tug tears the little cherry tomato-sized lobe free from the contorted conglomerate. For the first time, you bite into it, and a burst of delicious tangy flavor floods your taste buds. Greedily, you eat several more lobes until

you're refreshed and ready to get back to your work.

However, there's one problem. What do you do with the rest of the tomato in your hand? Won't the remaining lobes spoil? The answers to these questions further separate this variety from other cultivars and give this tomato its name.

The 'Reisetomate' tomato has the truly unique ability to be consumed over an extended period of time. This is because each lobe has its own seeds, its own core, and its own flesh. Most importantly, it also has its own thick skin, which heals right away when the union is pulled apart, effectively extending the tomato's usability. So, you can eat one or more lobes and carry the remainder with you until you're hungry for another one.

For centuries, this variety has been considered an excellent food source for people who are journeying in various parts of the world. In fact, 'Reisetomate' is a German term meaning "traveler's tomato" (not to be confused with the more basic Arkansas Traveler



tomato). ‘Reisetomate’ is believed to have originated in Peru, before spreading across Central America. After further advance into Mexico, it’s believed that European explorers brought it to their home continent in the 15th and 16th centuries. The tomato was also said to have been brought along as a snack by those traveling the long Trans-Siberian Railway across Russia.

Scientifically named *Solanum lycopersicum*, the ‘Reisetomate’ tomato is a member of the *Solanaceae*, or nightshade family, which includes other vegetables such as potatoes and peppers. Not widely known, this fascinating tomato is a rare heirloom grown mostly at home. Sold only through a few fresh markets, you may want to purchase seeds online or connect with farmers and other gardeners at local seed swaps. You never know what seeds you might find there, along with some expert advice concerning them.

Plant six-week starters in deep, rich, well-drained soil and in full sun. Alternatively, seeds can be started outside when all frosts have passed and when soil temperatures measure at least 60 degrees Fahrenheit. To help seedlings acclimate to harsher conditions, and to improve the odds of avoiding stunted growth and leaf decay, gradually increase their sunlight exposure and duration. You’ll want to water up to 1½ inches per week and layer dark mulch around roots to increase early development, in cooler areas. Finally, harvest mid-summer through early fall (about 70 to 85 days to maturity) when the tomatoes grow plump and turn red in color. Also, be careful not to overfeed with nitrogen-rich plant food or your yield will plummet. Oh, and make sure you save some of the seeds for next year! Simply clean and thoroughly dry the seeds before storing them in an airtight container.

This tomato provides a surprising degree of versatility as a food source. Besides the ability to be eaten as a bite-sized snack, this “traveler” can be used to flavor dips, sauces, and salads, including the Caprese salad. This elegant Italian platter features numerous layers of sliced tomatoes, basil, and mozzarella, complimented by a host of seasonings. The amazing tomato also goes well with various fruits, vegetables, and meats, such as beef, pork, and poultry.

There can be no doubt that traveler tomato is the perfect nickname for the ‘Reisetomate’ tomato plant. It’s so handy for a person who’s traveling to simply tear off one or more little chunks and conveniently save the rest for later! You could benefit similarly, while doing your chores, if you had one of these fantastic tomato plants. Put this rare and special variety on your garden planning list for next year and begin searching for it early so that you’re not playing ketchup at the last minute! 🍅

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MARK M. HALL lives with his wife, their three daughters, and numerous pets on a four-acre slice of paradise in rural Ohio. Mark is a veteran small-scale chicken farmer and an avid observer of nature. As a freelance writer, he endeavors to share his life experiences in a manner that is both informative and entertaining.

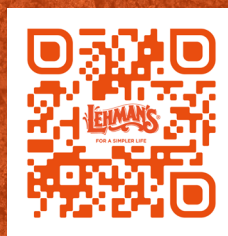


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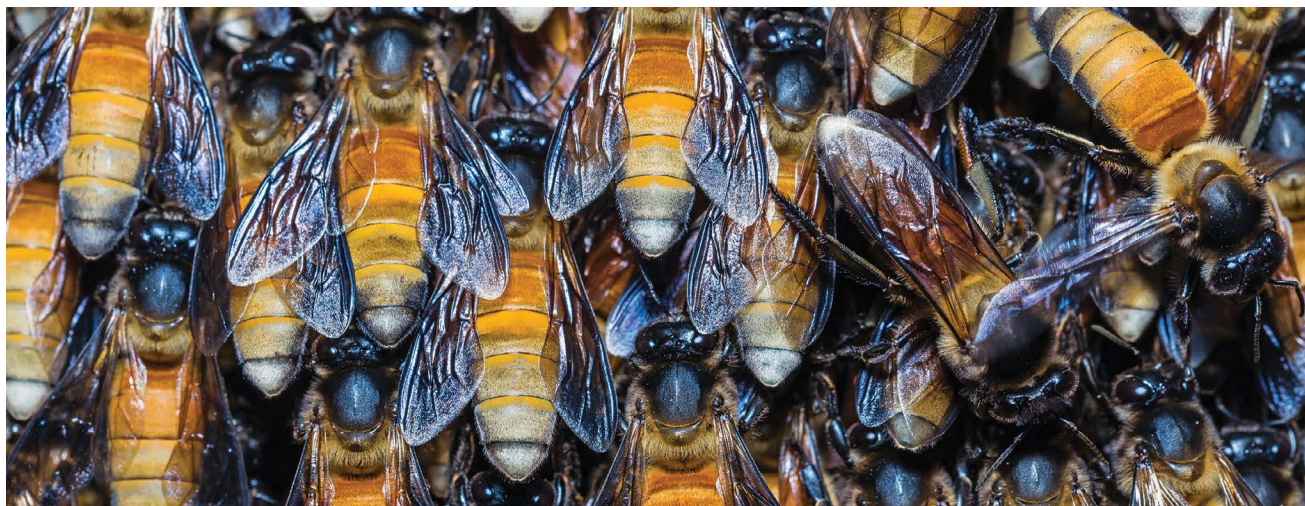
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Shimmering Behavior in Giant Honeybees

BY PATRICE LEWIS

GIANT HONEYBEES (*Apis dorsata*) are a species of large, tropical, undomesticated honeybee, native to Southeast Asia. They're known for building nests in exposed places high off the ground, including tree limbs, cliff overhangs, and building

eaves. Nests typically take the form of a single vertical comb in a semicircular shape up to 5 feet across, and are covered in a dense mass of up to 100,000 bees in multiple layers.

Because these nests are out in the open, the bees have developed aggressive defense strategies and

won't hesitate to attack anything that disturbs the nest. Despite this, Indigenous people have harvested honey and wax from giant honeybees for centuries, possibly millennia. Some nests can yield up to 100 pounds of honey.

Typical non-human predators of giant honeybees include wasps, hornets, and birds. Giant honeybees don't hesitate to sting, as a defense mechanism. They also form "heat balls" as a defense against wasps and hornets, in which they mob the predator, heat their thoraxes with flight muscles, and achieve a temperature inside the ball of 113 degrees Fahrenheit, which is lethal to their attackers.

Giant honeybees also use an astounding additional tactic to repel wasps and hornets called "shimmering." Imagine, if you will, an "audience wave" in a crowded stadium in which thousands of people throw up their arms with timed coordination to create a



wave effect across the stadium. This is comparable to what giant honeybees do, in fractions of a second, across the width of their nests. The result is strobe-like, darker lines that can take any number of intriguing patterns. Even moving spirals have been observed. It seems incredible that such effects can happen in nature.


Shimmering is done by the outer layer of bees, which will thrust their abdomens upward at a 90-degree angle and shake them in synchrony with neighboring bees, creating a ripple effect across the face of the nest.

"Shimmering starts at distinct spots on the nest surface and then spreads across the nest within a split second. Whereby hundreds of individual bees flip their abdomens upward," note the authors of "Social Waves in Giant Honeybees Repel Hornets," published in PLOS One. The behavior is mesmerizing to watch.

This shimmering behavior serves a critical function: Predatory wasps that attempt to snatch a single bee from the nest become confused and leave the nest alone.

To determine how the shimmering effect works to repel predators, scientists filmed hundreds of wasp-bee interactions with high-speed film, then analyzed the footage, frame by frame. The results showed how the rate of the bees' shimmering is modulated by the hornets' flight speed and proximity, which in turn creates a "shelter zone" of around 20 inches that prevents the predatory wasp or hornet from plucking bees directly off the nest's surface. Shimmering is a key defense strategy that supports the giant honeybee's open-nest lifestyle.

The behavior can be described



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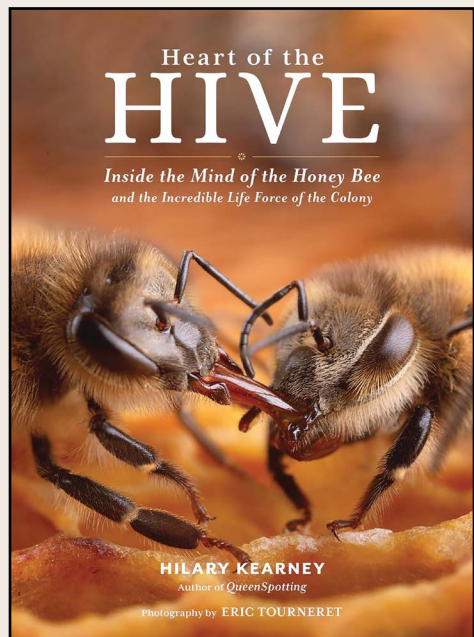
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as “big-scale” shapes and “small-scale” shapes. Big-scale shimmering repels wasps within a specific range of the nest. Small-scale shimmering prevents wasps from preying on specific bees, by generating visual confusion.

Shimmering is a form of defense that doesn’t require contact with the predator, which minimizes risk to defending bees. While shimmering is particularly effective against wasps and hornets, it also acts as an impressive deterrent to birds or even mammals (including humans). As fascinating as the behavior is to see, it’s the colony’s equivalent of shouting “Keep away or we’ll attack!”

Wasps and hornets are attracted to honeybee nests for their rich resources (protein and sugar). However, in thousands of observed episodes across several honeybee colonies, not a single case of a successful hunt (wasp catching a bee on the nest surface) was observed. Clearly, shimmering works.

But wasps have another predatory tactic, namely attempting to catch unprotected foraging bees while they’re away from the shelter zone of the nest. In this case, the solitary bees’ defensive tactic is to dodge and fly away with maximum speed or land as fast as possible on the nest. When the pursued bee is within a short range of the nest, the shimmering behavior of the colony works to repel the wasp. The wasps’ hunting success with this strategy is about 3%, meaning they succeed in catching the occasional solitary bee. This rate isn’t much of a loss to the bee colony, but represents a benefit for the wasp ... which is why the wasps keep coming back.

Studies under simulated conditions have shown that shimmering behavior is


strongest when bees see a dark object moving against a light background, i.e., a wasp or hornet under daylight conditions. When the contrast was flipped — when the bees were shown a light object against a black backdrop — shimmering wasn't triggered. This suggests that either the predators aren't as active at night, or the bees engage in different defensive behaviors during low-light conditions.

Avian predators (birds) don't elicit shimmering. Instead, the bees will engage in mass-stinging behavior if attacked by birds. In fact, controlled studies have shown that shimmering isn't triggered by anything above a certain size threshold (over 4 centimeters in diameter), suggesting that it's limited to wasps and hornets, but not birds or other predators.

How does shimmering happen? How can bees communicate with each other the need to shimmer? The behavior is triggered close to the periphery of the mouth zone of the nest, suggesting that specialized bees in each colony initiate shimmering. In addition to flipping their abdomens up and shaking them synchronously, the behavior may be accompanied by stroking of the wings of neighboring bees, which is thought to transmit the signal to nearby workers to also adopt the posture, thus creating the visible ripple effect across the face of the comb.

Why do giant honeybees shimmer at all? While it's clear that shimmering is a less-risky defensive strategy for the bees (because there's no physical contact with the predators), why don't the wasps or hornets just ignore the behavior and pluck bees off the nest surface? At this point, that question can't be answered. Scientists have only been able to determine that wasps

and hornets can't seem to ignore or habituate to shimmering of the bees. As a first line of defense against predators, shimmering has proven to be effective.

Scientists are only scratching the surface of this coordinated behavior. But shimmering is yet another example of extraordinary animal communication, specifically how one species (giant honeybees) can communicate a warning to another species (wasps or hornets) that they'll defend themselves. Nature is amazing. 

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- <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/IN1119>

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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HOW TO INTERPRET ANIMAL BODY LANGUAGE

BY BETH GREENWOOD

WHEN A SASSY COLT is annoying mom and she pins her ears back, the smart colt knows he's gone too far. If he ignores the warning sign, he'll be nipped to ensure better behavior. Our

knowledge of animal body language can help make our animals easier to handle and keep us safer. Although most animals communicate vocally, posture and movement are important as well. For example, a

cow or horse will stand stiff-legged and head up, staring fixedly in one direction, and will also utter a loud snort to draw the herd's attention to a possible threat.

Dominance Matters

All social animals operate on the principle of dominance. The term "pecking order" is both accurate and descriptive for more than chickens. The alpha mare and the alpha cow get first choice at the hay or water. They enforce that dominance by laying an ear back or crowding their juniors aside. If necessary, they charge, butt, bite, or kick. If you enter their territory, they may try to dominate you, too. Your task is to pick up the subtle signs, identify a problem, and take action to train the behavior you want. This dominance will help when you need to deal with a problem, such as illness or injury.



Horses

Ears are the number one indicator of a horse's mood. Ears forward means the animal is alert and interested, or listening to something specific. One ear each direction signals an attention split — perhaps the trail forward, as well as the rider's voice behind. Ears back but not flat can signal nervousness, confusion, or sometimes pain. A relaxed horse's ears will often flop to each side; so will those of one that's exhausted. A twitching tail can signal pain, frustration, or anger. Combinations of these signs add to the meaning. A cocked foot with floppy ears means full relaxation. Ears pinned and a cocked foot means a kick is likely. Ears pinned flat to the head mean anger and aggression.

Cows

A cow's tail will often give you a quick message about her feelings. When the tail is hanging straight down, the cow's relaxed and comfortable. Cows that are sick, cold, or scared tend to clamp the tail tightly between the hind legs. A cow that's stressed or frightened may also swish her tail irritably. Like horses, cows signal emotions and interest with their ears. Ear positions have similar meanings in both the bovine and equine world. Aggressive behavior in a cow or bull typically starts with a head-up, fixed-gaze position. The animal may turn sideways to intimidate you with its size. The next step is often pawing dirt, head slinging, and sometimes bellowing. If you're smart, you'll already have gotten out of the corral by then!

Goats and Sheep

These two species tend to display similar behaviors. Interpret their ear positions as you would those of cows and horses. Many goat owners will also tell you that goats have very expressive faces, and as you

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get to know each individual, you'll be able to translate quite well. Tail-wagging is a behavior common to both kids and lambs, especially when nursing. Although generally seen as a sign of pleasure, tail-wagging may also occur in times of agitation or fright. Adult goats wag their tails for the same reasons, and so do some adult sheep. Does and ewes may also display tail activity when in heat or if they have a vaginal infection. It's a little more difficult to tell with adult sheep, however, because most adults have docked tails. While both sheep and goats will butt each other, their aggressive warning signs are different. A goat will glare, tilt their ears back (the hair along their spine will stand up), then rear, and finally charge. Sheep will typically stomp or paw, then charge or run away.

Poultry

Although I'm primarily talking about chickens in this section, ducks, geese, turkeys, and guinea fowl display similar behaviors. A bird's ears and feet don't give you emotional indications. A happy, healthy bird is a busy bird. It'll be puttering around the pen, scratching here and there, grabbing a bite to eat, or taking a quick bath (dust or water). A drooping carriage, dull eyes, ungroomed feathers, or low energy indicate poor health or injury. A bird that seems excessively flighty or wants a lot of distance from other flock members could be the target of aggressive behavior from another bird.

You'll generally get the most information from birds by listening to them talk. Happy birds (especially hens) will sing or croon to themselves. Geese warble and murmur; goslings whistle softly. Turkey hens and toms "took" to each other, and both will also gobble. Roosters, bless their early-



morning little hearts, are prone to crowing, but they also croon and have a particular sound that means “food.” A silent rooster may be sick or hurting. And, of course, no other bird announces a newly-laid egg with the same vociferous boisterousness of a chicken.

A loud shriek is typically a sign that a chicken has spotted an aerial predator. Geese will also shriek in this situation. I’ve never heard a turkey or guinea fowl shriek, but ducks will shout repeated strings of quacks at the tops of their voices. I’m not exactly sure what to call the noise an agitated guinea makes, but if one starts it, they all take it up. Some people use them in place of watchdogs for that reason. Most threats to people come from the males. A rooster will usually drop one wing and circle before leaping on you with his spurs, or mating a hen. A gander, drake, or tom puffs up and stands his ground, then either charges or runs. And the female of any species will be defensive of her babies.

Parting Thoughts

The most important thing I can tell you about interpreting animal body language is that you need to spend plenty of time with your animals and birds. Do more than provide food and water — stand and observe their behaviors for 15 or 20 minutes. A sudden change in habits will be quickly apparent. Bullying behavior will also surface. I’m a firm believer that aggressive animals and poultry should be culled to prevent injuries to peers or people.

A final word: Always supervise children’s animal interactions, no matter how well-trained or gentle the animal is. Remember, small children are neither as strong as you nor as alert for danger. Many are at eye-level with farm poultry — don’t put them at risk! ©

BETH GREENWOOD is an RN who has also been a ranch wife for over 50 years. She raised Quarter Horses for many years, and has also raised/managed cows, sheep, pigs, and poultry. She lives with her extended family on a large ranch in far northern California. You'll usually find her in the garden, ignoring the housework!



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Feeding Chickens Beneficial Weeds

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS
BY ERIN SNYDER

BACKYARD CHICKEN keepers have fed their flocks herbs, vegetables, and fruit grown in their backyards for decades. But weeds are an often overlooked part of a chicken's diet. Many weeds have as many health benefits as vegetables and herbs to improve our flocks' overall health. Another plus for the flock owner is that weeds are always free.

Greens comprise one-third of our flock's diet, and feeding beneficial weeds as part of their daily diet is an excellent way to help ensure they're consuming a balanced diet. So, if you want to learn how to boost your hens' overall health and save money on feed costs by using beneficial weeds, keep reading to learn more.

Safety First

Many weeds are safe for chickens, but some plants are toxic. Feeding toxic plants may result in sickness or death. Before feeding chickens any weeds, be sure they're safe and non-toxic for your flock to enjoy. Some toxic weeds include (but aren't limited to) amaryllis, baneberry, bleeding

heart, bracken fern, buttercup, cow cockle, elderberry, foxglove, horsetail, ivy, jimson weed, lamb's quarter, lobelia, milkweed, pigweed, poison ivy, poison oak, poison sumac, pokeweed, privet, ragwort, Saint John's wort, skunk

cabbage, vetch, virginia creeper, wisteria, and wolfsbane.

Another necessary precaution when feeding chickens weeds is to avoid any that may have been exposed to or sprayed with harmful substances. Never feed plants that



Dandelions are one of the first plants to pop up in the spring.

have been sprayed with pesticides or other chemicals. Keeping your lawn and gardens free from pesticides and other chemicals is the safest way to ensure plenty of weeds for your flock to nibble on without harming them.

Never feed chickens weeds growing along roadsides or high-trafficked areas, as these may contain harmful chemicals.

DANDELIONS

(*Taraxacum officinale*)

Dandelions are a springtime powerhouse and have many health benefits. One of the first plants to pop up in the spring, dandelions are considered antiparasitic and anti-inflammatory, and are believed to help with cancer.

This nutritious plant contains vitamins A, B, C, D, E, and K. It's also a good source of calcium, folate, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, and zinc. High in protein, this weed can be safely fed to chicks and adults alike.

Dandelions also help improve digestion, boost the immune system, and help to cleanse the blood. They've also been fed to broilers to enhance growth by improving intestinal barrier function.

Did you know? The entire plant (leaves, flowers, and roots) is edible and can be eaten by chickens or steeped into a tea for your flock to enjoy.

Dandelions grow best in Zones 3 to 10.

YARROW

(*Achillea millefolium*)

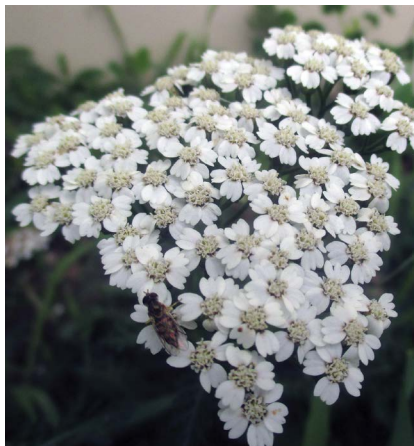
Yarrow is one of the most beneficial respiratory weeds and overall best herbs for backyard flocks. It can help keep your birds' airways, nasal passages, and eyes clear. Yarrow leaves and flowers are edible, and are one of my flock's favorite weeds.

Yarrow is also considered to be antibacterial, antiseptic, and

antimicrobial. It's also high in antioxidants, supporting a healthy immune system.

High in vitamins and minerals, yarrow is a good source of vitamins A and C, calcium, flavonoids, magnesium, niacin, phosphorus, potassium, and zinc.

Yarrow grows in Zones 3 to 10.



Yarrow flowers are edible for chickens and offer many health benefits.

CHICKWEED

(*Stellaria media*)

Appropriately named, chickweed is one of a chicken's favorite weeds, and for good reason. Chickweed is a rich source of essential vitamins (A, B, C, and D) and minerals (calcium, potassium, and iron). These nutrients help chickens thrive and live healthy, happy



Yarrow can be eaten fresh or hung in the coop to dry.

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lives. Let's examine how some of these vitamins and minerals improve the health of a backyard chicken flock.



Chickweed is extremely cold-hardy and will even grow through a mild winter.

Calcium and Vitamin D

Chickweed's high calcium content promotes strong eggshells and bone formation. The plant's vitamin D works alongside the calcium to maximize the absorption of calcium. Laying hens need this essential duo throughout the egg-laying process, from forming strong eggshells to ensuring proper muscle contraction to help the egg pass through the body and avoid an egg-bound hen.

Potassium

Potassium is another essential mineral needed to lay healthy eggs. Potassium helps regulate the nervous system, ensuring the hen's muscles contract while eggs pass through the reproductive tract.

Vitamin B and Protein

Chickweed is an excellent vitamin B and protein source. These two nutrients promote feather development and growth, making chickweed an excellent choice for growing chicks and molting hens.

Vitamin A and C

Vitamin A helps keep chickens' eyes in tip-top condition. With clear vision, chickens can spot a tasty insect in the grass or a hungry hawk in the sky. This vitamin also

supports healthy immune and reproductive systems. Vitamin C contains antioxidants that support a healthy immune system and reduce stress.

Chickweed grows best in Zones 4 to 11

PLANTAIN (*Plantago spp.*)

Plantain comes in broad-leaf and narrow-leaf varieties, but all varieties are edible for chickens. This weed is a favorite among backyard flock owners, and it's easy to see why. Plantain aids digestive health and improves the upper respiratory tract. It's also considered to be antiviral, anticoccidial (note that this effect was observed after the birds were fed plantain extract, not just a few raw leaves), and may suppress the growth of tumors. With these health benefits, it's no wonder chicken owners turn to plantain again and again.

Plantain is highly nutritious and an excellent source of vitamins A and C, which support healthy reproductive and immune systems. It's also high in calcium.

This hardy weed grows in Zones 3 to 11 and is often found in high foot-trafficked areas.

VIOLETS (*Viola sororia*)

Violets may appear small and dainty, but these fragile flowers offer many health benefits for chickens. Violets aid the lymphatic system and may reduce the chance of certain kinds of cancer.

Violets are high in vitamin C and antioxidants and are also calming and help relieve stress in the flock.

Only the common blue variety of violet should be fed, as other varieties may be toxic.

Violets grow best in Zones 3 to 9.



Violets offer many health benefits for backyard poultry.

WEEDS FOR ALL SEASONS

As we all know, weeds are very hardy. Depending on your climate, beneficial weeds can be fed during the warm growing season or all year round.

Spring Weeds: Chickweed, dandelions, violets.

Summer Weeds: Dandelions, plantain, yarrow.

Autumn Weeds: Chickweed, dandelions (small blooms and leaves), plantain, yarrow (leaves, no blooms).

Winter Weeds: Chickweed and dandelions (mild winters only).

Weeds benefit our flocks in many ways. While this article only lists a few weeds that are edible for backyard flocks, other edible weeds may be abundant near you. Before feeding hens weeds, always identify the weed to ensure it's nontoxic to your flock. Watching what weeds your flock nibbles on while free-ranging is one of the best ways to learn what weeds are edible and which ones are your flock's favorites. 🌱

ERIN SNYDER and her family have raised chickens and ducks for nearly two decades. She's passionate about all things poultry but is especially interested in poultry nutrition, predator protection, egg-laying disorders, and helping chickens live their best lives well into their golden years. You can follow her chicken adventures on her newly hatched Instagram page: www.instagram.com/TheHenHouseHygge/

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Shetland Wool Week

Part 1

Getting Ready for Wool Week!

BY CHRISTINE HEINRICH

IDON'T REMEMBER HOW I heard about it, but somehow Shetland Wool Week (www.ShetlandWoolWeek.com/) showed up for me in 2024. It's held at the end of September through the beginning of October each year. In 2025, it's September 28 through October 4.

Maybe it was when I was researching floating offshore wind projects. The only functioning floating offshore wind project, Hywind, is offshore from Aberdeen, Scotland, between the mainland and the islands. It's an example of what's proposed off the U.S. west coast, due west of where I live in Cambria, on California's central coast.

My wanderlust was powering up. I could go! I could already see myself, wild wind in my hair, gazing out over the North Sea where magical seals come ashore and become human.

I had plenty of time to plan. My husband, who married me for ideas like this, was ready to make the travel arrangements.

Knit Your Beanie

One of the charming aspects is that everyone attending, all these knitters, makes the same hat to wear at Wool Week. The 2023 pattern was called Buggifloer Beanie. In 2024, it was the Islesburgh Toorie. For 2025, it's the Aal Ower Toorie (www.ShetlandWoolWeek.com/Knitting-Pattern/), designed by the Shetland Guild of Spinners, Knitters, Weavers, and Dyers.

It's color-strand knitting. For those of us outside the Shetland shopping area, wool merchants there offer kits.

Perfect. I ordered a kit, only three colors. I'm a good knitter, but haven't knitted colors in years. I'd ease into it.

By Row 2, I was at a full stop. I was going to need help. I'm sure they allow knitters to attend without a beanie, but that seemed like giving up too easily. I'd be embarrassed to show up and say,

Not So Fast

By Row 2, I was at a full stop. I was going to need help. I'm sure they allow knitters to attend without a beanie, but that seemed like giving up too easily. I'd be embarrassed to show up and say,



"Well, I couldn't get this done."
Surely, an experienced knitter such as I could do it.

I went to my local yarn shop, Ball & Skein, in Cambria. I showed Katie the kit. She gave me some pointers, and then suggested the upcoming color strand knitting class. I signed up.

Joining a Class

We met for the first of two classes the following week. Four other experienced knitters brought similar frustrations to the group. Good to know I'm not the only one having this problem!

In a group of women with good skills, they were all funny and



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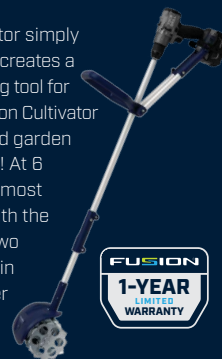


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humble. We shared confusions over twisted yarn and keeping colors straight; ways to fix mistakes; and admitted we

sometimes rip out hours of work to correct a mistake made early on.

We settled down to silence as we took up our needles. Stranded-

colorwork knitting classes are the quietest. Everyone is too focused to chat.

Beanies For All Places

Annie Groeninger, the instructor who owns the shop, has knitted beanies for locations across California (<https://Cambriayarn.com/Collections/Knitting-California-Beanie-Kits-1>). What a great idea! Perhaps I should create one for Piedras Blancas and the local elephant seal rookery.

Learning to separate my balls of yarn, one on each side, helped avoid twisting the yarn. It immediately helped me start Row 3.

Reading a Chart Pattern

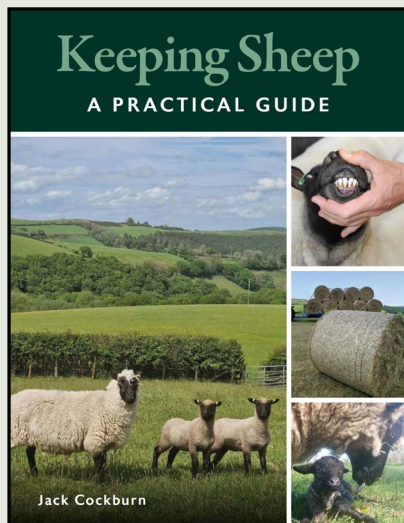
Getting some momentum on knitting helped me in reading the chart. Charts are read from right to left. Keep track of what row you're on with removable tape or by taking a photo on your phone and enlarging it.

Learning how to catch the floats, the yarn that hangs behind when another color is being knitted, was the second big advance. Annie advises every three stitches. That became my rule.

At home, it worked fine, except for the cat. He noticed how closely I was paying attention to the chart, which made it the preferred place for him to sleep. Batting the yarn ball was also entertaining. After the trouble I'd had keeping strands straight, his interference was too much. I put him outside so that I could work.

Progress

I committed myself to knitting a few rows a day. That way, the project would make progress. It worked. For that first hat, I used only two colors, but I completed the beanie. It came out a bit large,



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a common problem. A button and a tuck might help that.

With yarn left, I started a second beanie. I used all three colors for this one.

2024 Pattern

The 2024 pattern, the Islesburgh Toorie (www.ShetlandWoolWeek.com/Knitting-Pattern/), was designed by the Doull family, SWW Patrons for 2024. It features the distinctive rams' horns of the Shetland sheep. A Facebook Knit-A-Long group (www.Facebook.com/Groups/IslesburghToorieKal) formed for support.

I gained confidence knitting the first beanie. I used five colors for the Toorie, adding gold for the rams' horns.

I could attend Wool Week with my toorie-clad head held high!

This year, I'm an experienced knitter, ready to offer advice to newcomers. My Aal Ower Toorie kit is on my needles, but I won't use the full eight colors. That's for the next hat.

Wool Week Events

Wool Week offers hundreds of events. For the most ambitious, getting tickets is as competitive as getting tickets to a Taylor Swift concert. When ticket sales started, people posted reports of being on hold for hours.

I was so excited to attend that I didn't need to get one of the most crowded events. I was thrilled to get a tour of Sumbrugh Head Lighthouse and a tour behind the scenes at the Shetland Archives, seeing unique and unusual documents from Shetland's past. Many events are available without tickets.

That left plenty of time to visit with other knitters, enjoy the open studios, pick up a class or tour from some other knitter, and — dare I say it — shop for yarn! 🇬🇧

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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FROM THIS SIDE OF THE RING

Forward Into Fall

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS
BY JON KAIN

See good results in the ring tomorrow
with purposeful breeding today!

WITH THE DOG DAYS of summer behind us, we're all looking ahead to the upcoming breeding season, and some have already started. One question I always get from

newer breeders is, "How do I move forward in placements in the show ring?"

It's a good question with a multifaceted answer. Assuming feed and husbandry are up to par,

focus on what buck will be used for breeding. Good husbandry and feed only go so far. What's the saying? "You can put lipstick on a pig, but it's still a pig." In this case, you can make your goats look their best, but if they're consistently in the bottom third of the class, then it's time to look at your herd sires.

Really look at your bucks and pick them apart. How are they on their feet and legs? Are they dairy enough? How's that topline look? Is their rump wide enough? List what you like and don't like about your buck. Then look at his dam and his sire's dam (if you have access to pictures of them) and scrutinize them, too. If you're at the bottom of the class at shows, especially with your junior does, it's time to get yourself a new herd sire.

It's quite late in the year to look for a new buck, but you can find them if you look. Sometimes, breeders will hold onto a junior buck to use on some of their goats and then sell him, not because he isn't good quality but because they don't want to feed



S Maple Farm HTF Sentinel is another buck from a first freshener. His dam has a very productive udder, and his sire brings the width and power we're looking for.



One of our past bucks, CH Ober-Boerd Vosegus *B VEE88. His dam was Best Udder at the '22 National Show, but he was purchased when she was a first freshener. I chose him because of his dam's wonderful general appearance and well-attached udder. His daughters, one of which was our first home-bred finished champion, have excelled in our herd.

him through winter, or he's too closely related to the rest of the herd. Some breeders will have bucks they didn't list earlier in the season. Sometimes, a buck is used and needs to move on afterward because he's worked himself out of a job.

The best way I've found bucks in the past is by talking to breeders I admire with the genetics I want in my herd. Other times, I follow their farm page on social media — especially Facebook — and find a buck that way. If you're going into fall and can't find a good quality buck to buy, don't settle just to get them bred! Take the time and find something of value that can add to your herd.

So, what's a good buck? A good buck either has data behind him from the ADGA performance programs or daughters that have freshened and are productive in the milk pail or the show ring. A good buck can be a young buck with a good general appearance, a dam with a great udder and consistency behind her, and a sire with good udders and consistency behind him. A good buck will cost more than an average or below-average buck. He should be an investment, since he's quite literally half your herd.

Lastly, I like my bucks to look good. I don't want a buck that

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needs to be posed just so because otherwise, he looks hideous. I have a hard enough time finding my good side when taking pictures, let alone my buck's. He needs to be powerful and stand on good feet and legs. He must have a strong back and correct front-end assembly (shoulders, elbow, legs) set correctly under his withers. I want him to be wide throughout and have good body depth when

mature. He doesn't need to be a showstopper, but he should check a majority of those boxes. With that said, his ancestors, especially those closely related to him, need to have great udders and general appearance and production of milk behind them as well.

Once you get a buck or two like that and breed them to everything and then breed their daughters to good bucks, you'll find yourself moving forward in the show ring. So, breed with a purpose. Don't breed a goat to just any buck and expect success because that won't happen consistently, if at all. ©



JOHN KAIN lives and breathes goats, literally. By day, he's a superintendent of a goat and cow dairy. By "night," he and his family raise a small herd of Oberhasli goats while chasing his 3-year-old daughter or talking about goats on his podcast, Ringside: An American Dairy Goat Podcast.

RAISING AN ORPHAN CALF

BY HEATHER SMITH THOMAS



IF YOU HAVE CATTLE, sooner or later you may be faced with an orphan to raise. Strange things sometimes happen to a mama cow, often unexpectedly. For instance, this spring in our valley in eastern Idaho, a rancher suddenly lost six cows, and the veterinarian diagnosed the problem as redwater — a clostridial disease related to blackleg, malignant edema, and other toxin-forming clostridial diseases that can kill cattle within a few hours. This disease can be prevented with vaccination, but we don't know if the cows were some he'd bought that hadn't been vaccinated, or were only vaccinated once a year. In our area, people need to vaccinate twice a year for that disease. That rancher was looking for a nurse cow for his orphan calves.

Many people have raised calves on bottles (a twin, or a calf that

isn't accepted by its mother, or a calf whose mother died soon after giving birth). It's usually easy with a newborn or young calf — as long as you make sure the calf receives colostrum within the first hours of life to ensure a good start. The antibodies in colostrum provide temporary immunity to many of the diseases the calf might encounter. Newborn calves are usually hungry and eager to suckle, and it's not too difficult to feed them. After a bottle or two of colostrum, the calf can be switched to regular milk or milk replacer.

More challenging is the 1- or 2-month-old calf that's been with the herd all their life and suddenly loses Mom. Freak things can happen to cows, such as getting stuck on their back in a ditch, dying from poison plants or bloat, being killed by predators, or some other misfortune. This leaves you with an orphan that might

be semi-wild (not ready to accept you), but too young to go without milk or high-quality feed.

Some of those calves can survive by robbing milk from other cows — sneaking up to suckle alongside the calf of another cow. The orphan feels comfortable with the herd for companionship and security and might manage on a bit of milk robbed here and there, although they may be a little smaller than the other calves at weaning.

If calves are only a couple months old when they lose Mom, and you want to provide an adequate diet, you first need to get them out of the herd and in a separate place where they can be fed. You might be able to get the calf to suckle a bottle and drink milk or milk replacer for a couple more months, but some of these calves can do all right without milk — if you can provide good quality hay and a concentrate like grain or calf pellets. The rumen isn't developed enough yet in a young calf to handle enough forage to sustain them, but they can digest grain or a more concentrated feed like calf pellets.

Milk replacer is expensive. It can also be a hassle to get a calf that age to suck a bottle if it's afraid of people. Instead, you might put the orphan with an older animal in a small pen — as a buddy, for security — and feed some good-quality feed. Once the calf learns to eat it by following the buddy's example, you could then create a creep feeder that the calf can go into — if you don't want the older animal eating all the calf feed and not letting the smaller one get a fair share.

If an orphan is very young and you need to bottle-feed, try to capture the calf without the stress of a chase. Or bring them in from the pasture with a group of cattle

— and get your hands on the calf in a small corral. Don't stress them too much by chasing; stress hinders the immune system, and you don't want the calf to get sick. If you've already lost the cow, you don't want to risk losing the calf, as well.

Depending on when the calf lost their mother, they may already have been vaccinated (at branding age), but if there's any doubt about immune status, give that calf another vaccination with one of the 7-way clostridial vaccines, for adequate protection. Keep the living environment clean. A young calf is vulnerable to problems like coccidiosis or calf scours.

On our ranch, our family has been raising cattle for more than 70 years and we've had several experiences raising orphaned calves. One of the first was a calf whose mother was butchered out on the range by a cattle rustler

when the calf was just 2 months old. My daughter and I rode for days trying to find the calf, with no luck. He'd gone through several fences into another range and went home with the neighbor's cows that fall, and the neighbor called us because the calf had our brand on him. He'd survived but was stunted and raggedy and it took all winter to nurse him back to health and get him growing again. He was too young to go without milk when he lost his mama and needed better feed than dry bunch grass.

Over the years, we had cows with fatal problems (one was dying of intestinal cancer, and another was dying from an impacted abomasum) and their pregnancies were far enough along that we were able to take the calves by c-section and euthanize the cows. Those calves fed on bottles until we could "graft" them onto a cow



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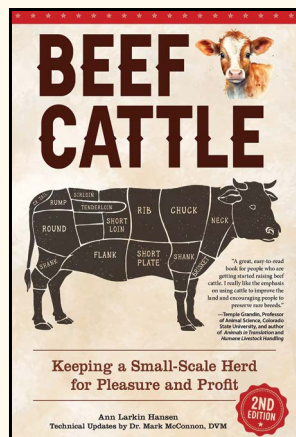
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them healthy, and so much more, also included is a chapter on pairing cows and heifers, breeding, artificial insemination, the care of pregnant cows, calving, caring for the young, and weaning calves. The final chapter focuses on getting beef processed, grading meat, and selling the final product. Sidebars of fun trivia, stories from farmers, and useful advice appear throughout. **Item #12641, \$14.99**

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that lost a calf, or had our milk cow raise them. Our young son, Michael, enjoyed feeding them.

One spring we lost two cows. One got on her back in a ditch and bloated, and we didn't find her in time to save her. We brought her month-old steer calf in from the field quite easily; he followed his dead mother as we dragged her body out the gate with our feed truck. We cornered him in the barnyard and fed him a bottle. He wasn't very wild and was hungry enough to suck the bottle.

A couple of weeks later, another cow in the herd suddenly died, leaving a 2-month-old heifer calf. That calf was wilder and more scared than the steer. We had to bring several cows in with her from the field to capture her, and when we cornered her to try to feed her, she was too scared to suck a bottle. She needed milk, so we finally used a nasogastric tube to get the milk into her stomach. At the next feeding time, she was still too scared to suck the bottle and had to be tubed again. By the fourth feeding, she finally realized people meant food and decided to take the bottle. After that, it was easy. Those two orphans lived together in our backyard, and our 6-year-old granddaughter enjoyed feeding them bottles.

Those two had good pasture in the backyard and grew nicely. When they got a little older, we taught them to eat grain. The heifer gentled down and became a pet. Our granddaughter named her Buffalo Girl, and she stayed in our herd until she was 15 years old, producing good calves.

The most recent orphan was a young bull calf we'd planned to keep as a bull, because he was sired by a very good Angus bull and was out of one of our best cows. Her name was China Doll, and we'd named the calf Kung Fu. He was only 3 months

old when he lost his mama. She was fine one evening and nearly dead the next morning. Our vet thought she might be suffering from grass tetany, and we tried to give her the necessary treatment (magnesium solution, administered intravenously) but we were too late; she died just as we were starting the treatment.

We were able to butcher and salvage the cow, but little Kung Fu refused to suckle a bottle. We put him into a small pen, cornered him, and put the nipple in his mouth. He kept getting milk in his windpipe because he refused to swallow, and we didn't want him to get aspiration pneumonia. So, we gave him access to good grass in a small pen and fed him alfalfa hay and a little grain and he grew nicely and became a good bull.

What to Feed an Orphan

Calves can eat a significant amount of forage by the time they're 3 months old. Younger than that, they generally do better if they have milk. If they're on good pasture,



Emily and Buffalo Girl as a calf.



Feeding Shiney.

they can do very well, but if it's mid-summer in a dry climate, the pasture quality is rapidly declining.

Early-weaned or orphaned calves can be raised to normal weaning weight in a corral with good feed. Young calves need a ration that is highly palatable and highly nutritious (at least 16% crude protein and 70% TDN — total digestible nutrients). There are many options for providing this kind of diet, including a commercial calf starter or a COB (corn, oats, barley) mix with molasses. Commercial calf starter is fortified with vitamins and minerals and, optionally, with medication to prevent coccidiosis. A little high-quality alfalfa hay (with fine, soft leaves and stems; not overly mature and coarse) will also provide the necessary protein and a higher level of nutrients than grass hay.

At first, you can give the calf long-stem grass hay and top dress it with the grain ration for 3 to 5 days until they're eating the grain or pelleted ration. Make sure the calf always has access to clean water. During the heat of summer, calves also need shade. The less stress, the better. Some calves adjust nicely to living by themselves, while others do better if they have a buddy or companion, either living with another animal or in a pen next to it — to provide mental comfort and security.

Because of the stress of sudden weaning off of milk, it's always wise to make sure the calf is vaccinated for clostridial and respiratory diseases. 🌿

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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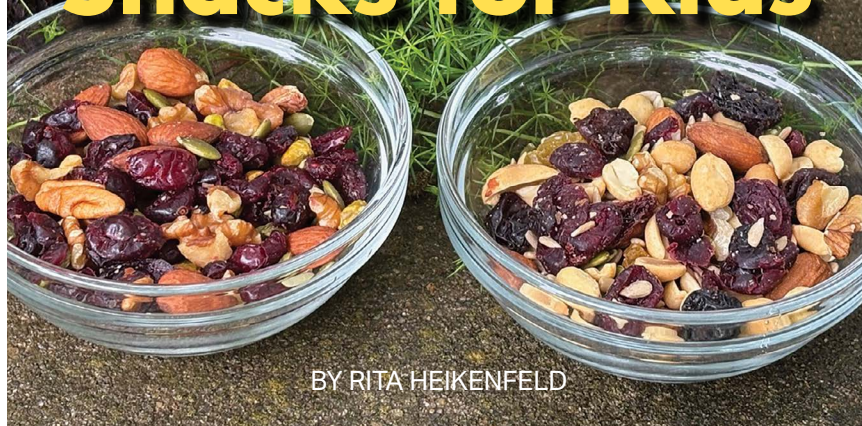


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Back-to-School Snacks for Kids



BY RITA HEIKENFELD

Left: Heart-healthy trail mix #1. Right: Heart-healthy trail mix #2.

I NEVER CONSIDERED myself a “pioneer” in any shape or form, but I chuckle when I think about a book I wrote way back in 2001 with three talented colleagues, about healthy snacks for active kids. That book was timely. Orange slices didn’t cut it anymore. Kids wanted cool snacks and parents wanted those snacks to have some identifiable nutritional value.

Fast forward to today, and the same tenet holds true. Whether it’s the in-between time from school to supper, or the post-game hungries, snacks are fuel for growing bodies. A few days ago, I checked out the snack aisle at the grocery store and came away with sticker shock.

How about making your own versions? You’ll save money and can customize them to your children’s taste and needs. Get those kids involved in choosing ingredients and prep work. That way, they learn about benefits of good food choices, and get some family time to boot.

Here are some favorites, tried and true through two generations!

The first recipe is crunchy granola, with a good amount

of protein from mixed nuts and seeds. And it’s versatile. I use old-fashioned oats because they hold up well during baking. But that doesn’t mean you can’t use quick-cooking oats if that’s what you have. As far as seeds go, think high-protein hemp hearts and pumpkin seeds (pepitas). Do your own thing here. Chia, sunflower, or flax seeds are good protein choices, too. Stirring dried fruit into the granola after it cools makes it irresistible.

Hummus is one of my grandkids’ favorite snacks. We make batches when they come to my house. Hummus, at its core, is peasant food, chock full of fiber and protein from chickpeas and tahini (ground sesame seeds). Garlic, lemon, cumin, and yogurt work in symmetry to create a yummy dip.

My newest recipe uses a technique that makes hummus super smooth. Cooking the chickpeas in a bit of water and baking soda softens the legumes and allows the skins to slip off and float to the top, where they’re easily removed.

Trail mixes are hugely popular, with good reason. Make a heart-

healthy blend with your choice of nuts, high-protein seeds, and dried fruit. Just the ticket for an after-school snack or a tote-along treat.

Oh, I wanted you to have a couple more favorites, too: “No recipe” Mozzarella rollups and tortilla pinwheels!

High-Protein Crunchy Granola

A little more or less of any ingredient is fine.

INGREDIENTS BASE

Mix together, then set aside to make coating:

4 cups rolled oats — I used old-fashioned oats

1½ cups nuts, chopped — I used salted mixed nuts

1 cup your choice of seeds

¾ teaspoon cinnamon or pumpkin pie spice

COATING

Whisk together:

½ cup oil

¼ cup each honey and maple syrup

1 tablespoon real vanilla extract

Add after baking:

1 cup coconut and dried fruit, if you like

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Spray large, rimmed baking sheet.
3. Pour coating over oat mixture, mix, and pour onto pan.
4. Bake until golden, stirring halfway through, about 25 minutes.
5. Cool, then stir in coconut and fruit (optional).

Super Smooth Hummus

Hummus is a personal thing, so taste as you go along. Recipe doubles or triples. Serve with pita wedges or raw vegetables. A side of pitted olives is nice.

INGREDIENTS

15-ounce can chickpeas, drained

½ teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon garlic, minced

Fresh lemon juice — start with 3 tablespoons

Olive oil — start with 3 tablespoons

Tahini — start with 3 tablespoons

1 teaspoon ground cumin

3 to 4 tablespoons Greek yogurt

Salt and a bit of cayenne (optional), to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Pour chickpeas into saucepan. Cover with water and stir in baking soda.
2. Bring to boil, then lower to simmer for 10 minutes or until you see some skins floating on top. Remove as many skins as you can, but no worries if some remain. Drain.
3. Put chickpeas, garlic, lemon juice, olive oil, and tahini in food processor. Process until smooth.
4. Add cumin and yogurt and process until blended.
5. If hummus is too thick, add a little water.
6. Pour into bowl; adjust seasonings.
7. Garnish with a swirl of olive oil.
8. Store, covered, in refrigerator up to 2 weeks.

Tips

- Don't want to go the baking soda route? Your hummus will still be yummy, just not as creamy.
- Make hummus by hand with a potato masher. Depending upon how much you mash, you'll wind up with a rustic, or somewhat smooth texture.
- Smear inside of a pita half generously with hummus. Fill with diced vegetables and olives. Top with favorite cheese.



Hummus with side of olives.

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Heart-Healthy Trail Mix #1

Use this recipe as a guide. More or less of any ingredient is okay. Feel free to divide the recipe in half if that's your take. Make bigger batches by doubling or tripling the ingredients.

INGREDIENTS

1½ cups dried fruit, chopped if necessary — I used cranberries

1 cup walnut halves

1 cup almonds

½ cup pepitas

½ cup pecan halves

¼ cup pistachios

INSTRUCTIONS

Mix everything together. Store in covered container for 2 weeks at room temperature.

Yield: About 5 cups

Heart Healthy Trail Mix #2

This batch includes dried cranberries, peanuts, raisins, and sunflower seeds.

INGREDIENTS

1½ cups dried cranberries, or favorite dried fruit

1 cup walnut halves

1 cup almonds

1 cup raisins — I used a combo of black and golden

½ cup peanuts

½ cup pepitas

¼ cup sunflower seeds

INSTRUCTIONS

Mix everything together. Store in covered container for 2 weeks at room temperature.

Yield: About 6 cups

Tip Toast the nuts.

- To store for a longer time, lightly toast the nuts for a few minutes in a 350 degree F oven, just until they smell fragrant. Check after 5 minutes. This process removes some of the moisture, allowing for longer storage.


Bonus “Recipes”

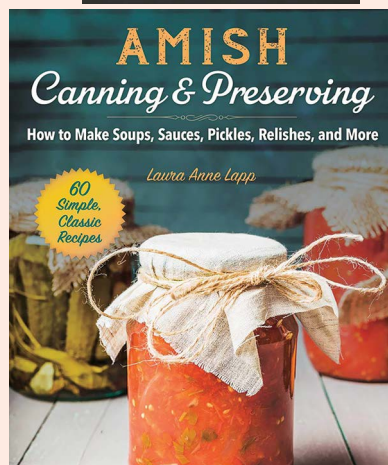
(No real recipe needed!)

Tortilla Rollups with Chicken and Roasted Peppers

Smear a flour tortilla with a thin coat your favorite condiment. We like spicy ranch dressing. Top with lettuce or spinach, thinly sliced roasted chicken, roasted red pepper strips, and thinly sliced red onion. Roll up tightly and refrigerate up to a day. Slice as desired.

Fresh Mozzarella Rollups

Remember these when you were a kid? The go-to back then was thinly sliced salami. Change it up by wrapping the cheese in prosciutto or pepperoni. Cheddar sticks work well, too. 



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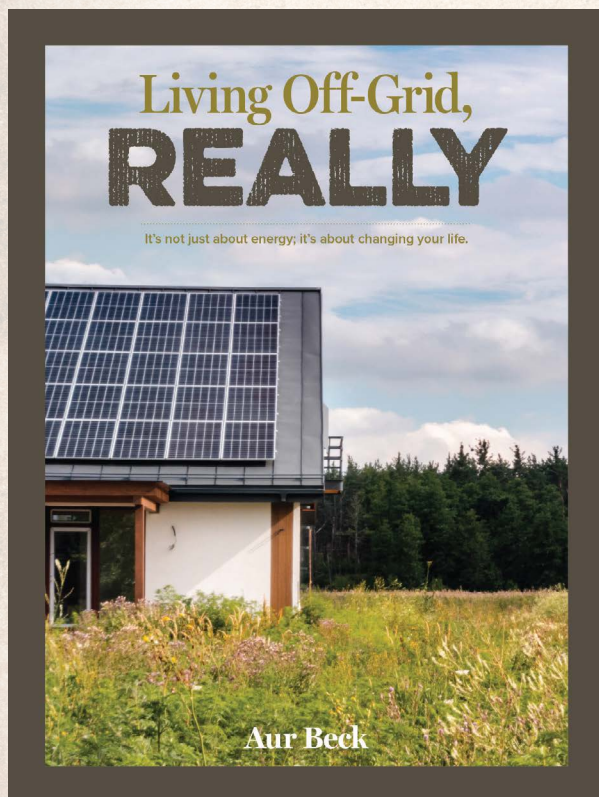
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RITA HEIKENFELD comes from a family of wise women in tune with nature. She's a certified modern herbalist, culinary educator, author, and national media personality. Most importantly, she is a wife, mom, and grandma. Rita lives on a little patch of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

AboutEating.com column: rita@communitypress.com

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Within these pages, you'll discover the story of Aur's childhood and learn how to live, learn, and be entertained off-grid, all with little to no money, and find housing, food, and medicine off the beaten path. These topics are, to Aur, the crux of living off-grid, rather than focusing solely on energy. He does, however, include a chapter all about energy.

Aur hopes to energize, inspire, empower, and enlighten people to create a mental shift toward a simpler, less stressful way of life. After seeking a balanced life for himself, he would like nothing more than to help others achieve the same goal. He continues to learn and teach, share ideas, and train solar installers around the world.

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BY GINA STACK; PHOTO CREDITS PEXELS.COM

THE MASSIVE BRUSH PILE I passed daily made me think something was living in it. Peering in, I could see evidence that lots of digging had gone on underneath. I felt like eyes from within were staring out at me, giving me the creeps!

One spring day, I walked past the sinister-looking pile, imagining what kind of creature was lurking inside. Dismissing these thoughts, I began to walk back to the house when, without warning, an animal

jumped out beside me from its hiding place in the tall, dead grass and took off! It was a mangy looking fox, obviously terrified.

Frozen in my spot, I began to wonder why it looked so scruffy and why it was hiding so close to that brush pile. Unless she had young ones, which would explain her bedraggled appearance; motherhood can do that. Every morning, afternoon, and evening after that, when I came out to do chicken chores, I was on the lookout.

Our friends had fox issues with their chickens, and I was fearful. Life was busy and there wasn't time to figure out what to do. Praying was my only option. I was thankful my chickens were in a chicken tractor and never out loose. I made sure they were secure but was sick with dread thinking they'd be devoured.

Fox parents will leave food at the opening of the den for the pups to come and get when it's time to start coming out. We started to spot bones and bird wings near the den, we wondered if there were young, but we weren't sure.

There were no sightings for a while, as we scrutinized the area whenever we were out. I had a small section of woods to go through to get to my chickens. I could see the evil brush pile through the trees. The chicken pen wasn't far away, and I expected the worst.

One day, I stopped dead in my tracks in the middle of the woods as there, on a mound of dirt, was a little fox pup. It had a bone in its mouth, which it dropped upon seeing me. It looked like a regular puppy,



complete with one ear down and one up. Its eyes were a light color with an expression of wonderment as I said hello. We stared at each other for a long moment, then, after picking up its bone, it left.

My pent-up steam about these evil, good-for-nothing foxes floated away. I was still nervous for my hens, as these were wild animals, but my heart softened. I couldn't wait to get another glimpse and alert my husband.

For a period, we both had pup sightings. We saw only two of them, and they didn't venture far. We talked softly at each sighting so we wouldn't startle them. They always dropped what they were carrying, as if shocked at the sight of us. They'd now graduated from bones to small rodents.

I knew they'd started to widen their wanderings, as I saw scat in new places. One day, as I was walking through the woods, a small fox leaped across my path directly in front of me. I froze, wondering what this was about. At my feet was a small animal corpse. Was it trying to attack me to protect its prey? Did it carry rabies? Was it playing with me like our daughter's dog? Was the little corpse a gift, like what cats do? I resumed my chores, musing about this. As I came back through, it flung itself across my path again,

from the opposite direction. The same little corpse was at my feet. It apparently was watching me and planning this. It crouched and waited till the right moment to jump out at me. The same thoughts crossed my mind as I stood there. I was leaning toward it being playful. What would you think?

We continued to witness the siblings as they learned to hunt. As long as they weren't hunting my chickens, I didn't mind having fewer rodents around. While doing dishes, I witnessed the kits through my window, running past with their latest catches: gophers, squirrels, and an opossum.

Another odd thing happened: In the middle of a grassy patch in broad daylight was a large, dead mole that was about 10 inches long. These are hard to spot and harder to catch, but these little guys were becoming skillful. I wondered why it was left lying there, as foxes will bury their prey for later. I went about my work and came back through a few hours later and saw it was still there. I imagined the fox was leaving me a gift. I did some research but didn't find answers. I'd like to believe it was!

We were decreasing our chicken flock and transferring chickens to a box when, of course, a young, sprightly chicken escaped. She went underneath the pine trees that lined the area but was impossible to catch, so we gave up trying. On a time crunch, we had to leave her loose, thinking the foxes were going to enjoy a nice, fat chicken for dinner. We left,

praying as we went, that she would be spared.

When we returned, she was strutting outside the pen with the fox sauntering around nearby as if she wasn't there. What a miracle! I coaxed her back into the pen and all was strangely well. These undomesticated animals could easily have had a free meal, and I'd never trust them. My fear of them being ravenous was softened, however.

One day, we came home from camping, and as we drove into our driveway there was the mother fox sitting on the side of the driveway facing our car, as if welcoming us home. She watched us enter the driveway and then ran off. Was she greeting us or did she think she owned the place?

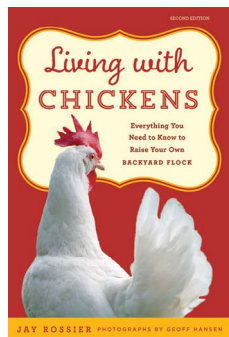
The last one we saw was out our front window. The young fox had its beautiful fur coat and bushy tail and was hunting in our front garden. It crouched, sprang up, pounced on its prize, and toyed with it a bit before taking off. I was excited to see one so close in action. That was the end of the show for us. We're so thankful for the gift of watching this fox family interact and grow up. 🌿



GINA STACK is a freelance writer in southwest Wisconsin. She, along with her husband and son, reside on five acres with 22 laying hens (some as old as 10 years!), a large vegetable garden, perennials, and Lily the pug.

RESOURCES

- National Wildlife Foundation www.nwf.org/Educational-Resources/Wildlife-Guide/Mammals/Red-Fox
- National Park Service www.nps.gov/articles/species-spotlight-red-fox.htm



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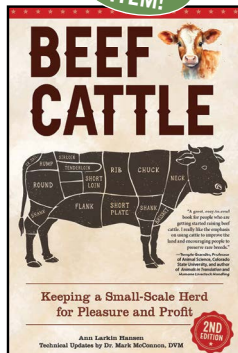
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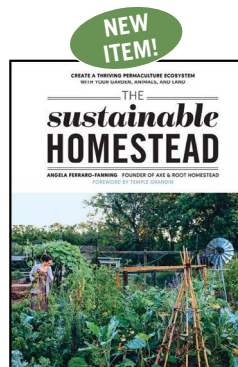
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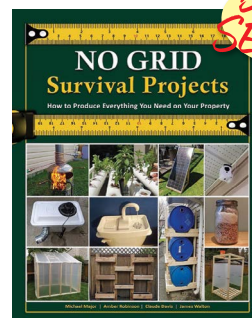
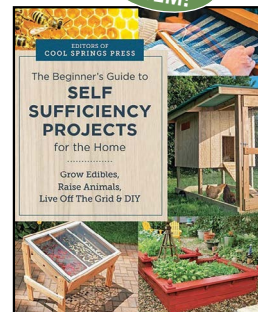
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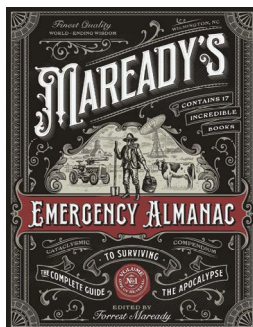
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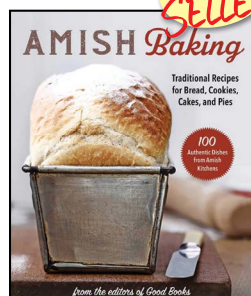
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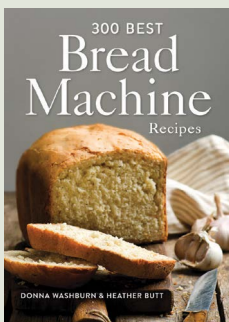
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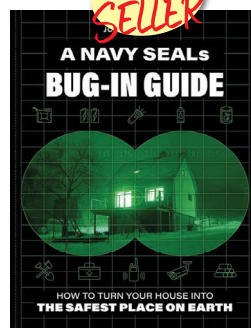
STITCHIN' CHICKEN EMBROIDERY KIT

Stitchin' Chicken Embroidery Kit includes designs for crafters of all levels. With a nod to folk-art motifs, these designs have timeless appeal. This collection contains an overview of basic embroidery stitches, original patterns, and instructions for creating each design. Included with the kit are materials to make any two of the ten projects in the book.

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A NAVY SEAL'S BUG-IN GUIDE

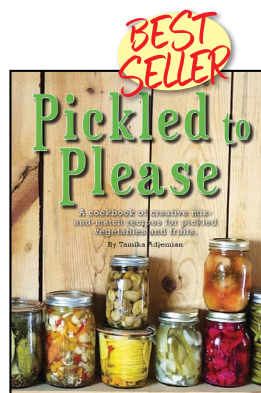
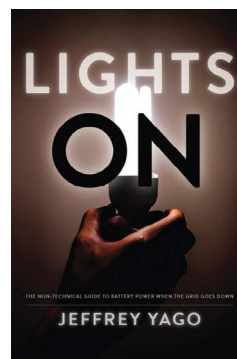
A Navy SEAL's Bug-In Guide will help you prepare for any kind of crisis, including the most severe ones, like an EMP, civil war, or a full-blown economic meltdown. Having it by your side is the best insurance policy you can buy for your family. You will discover exactly how to build a long-lasting stockpile that needs no refrigeration, how to stockpile water to last you for years, how to looter-proof your property, how to still have power when the grid is down, how to communicate during an EMP, and many others that will help you survive any crisis.

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Many books and magazines on emergency preparedness, survival, solar power, and disaster planning show strong public interest in these topics. However, many offer brief introductions to each topic. *Lights On* provides easy-to-understand detailed information on having a plan of action for setting up a battery-powered home in advance of widespread and sustained power outages. This is the only book you need to be prepared to keep your refrigerator running, your lights on, and much more.

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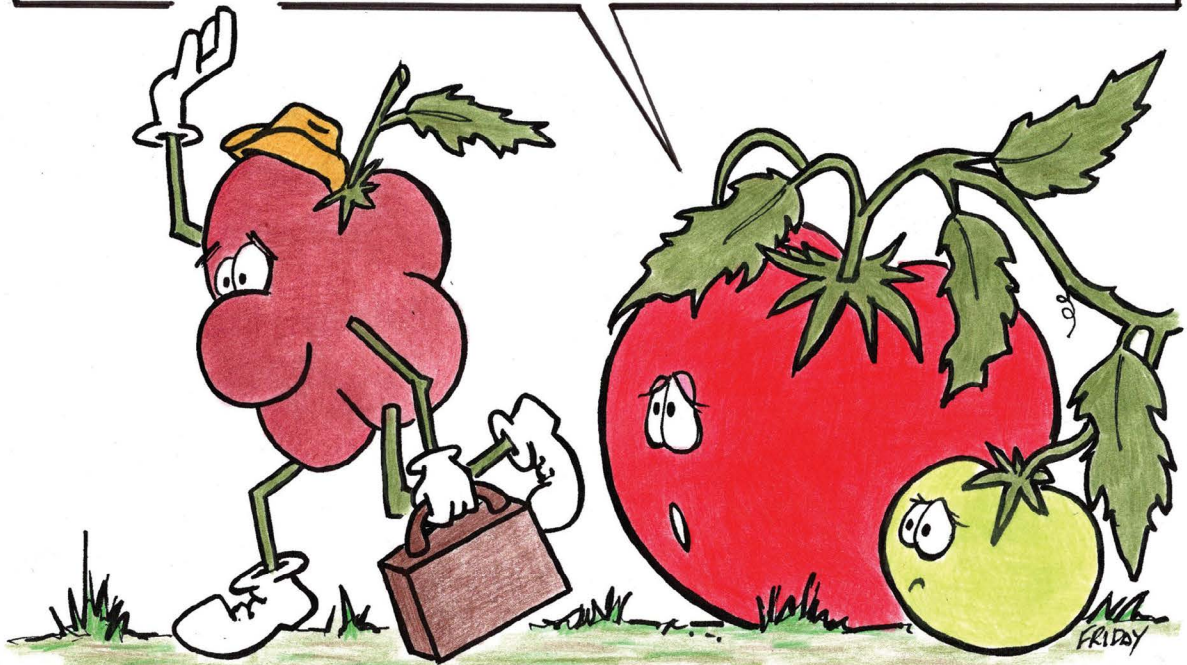
PICKLED TO PLEASE

If you've been considering canning your own pickled products, *Pickled to Please* is perfect for you. Author Tamika Adjemia has put together a well-rounded collection of methods and recipes for your first foray into canning that will make it easier than ever. Intended for new and experienced home canners, this book covers food preservation methods safety information and teaches the "mix and match" approach that demonstrates the easy way to swap out seasonings and spices, vinegars, brines and fruits, and vegetables. Every cook will relish the tips in this cookbook, as Adjemia encourages experimentation with different flavors and combinations to find the perfect pickle. After you've mastered the art of pickling, the recipes included will help turn the ordinary into delicious at every meal!

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Happy travels, Reise! Go make something of yourself. Such as soup, salad or sandwich, just don't spoil sitting on a window sill.



It's called shimmering, silly. Come on, Bee, you can do it. Just follow the wave and show our foe how you go with the flow.



SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2025 READER CONTEST
All words can be found within this issue of COUNTRYSIDE.
HAVE FUN AND GOOD LUCK!

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2. SUMUHM _____
3. NEHOBESY _____
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The winner will be chosen randomly from all the submissions returned by October 1, 2025.
The winner of the May/June Reader Contest was June Geiger.
Congratulations to you, June! Enjoy your new camp mug.



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**Print, fill out, then take a
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Be sure to include your contact information so we can
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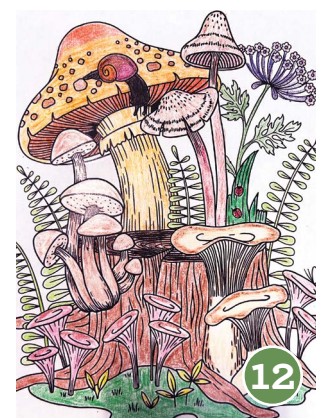
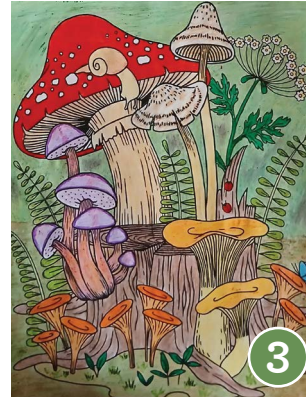
Once you're done, snap a picture and send it to us via email at editor@countrysidemag.com or snail mail at *Countryside*,
Attn: Coloring Pages, 1503 SW 42nd St, Topeka, KS 66609.

Watch for your creation in an upcoming issue!



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.** Esther Jenkins, age 12; **2.** Lyric Jenkins age 6; **3.** Irma Chesson, Texas;
4. Mackenzie Gray; **5.** Sedona O., age 16; **6.** Heidi Miller, Ohio;
7. Irma Chesson, Texas; **8.** Joye Stauffer; **9.** Laura Grace;
10. Logan Tanner; **11.** Val Nelson; **12.** Karen Good

CAPTURE YOUR COUNTRYSIDE AND SHARE IT WITH US!

We love getting a glimpse into your everyday homesteading moments.



1. Everything's better with a puppy! 📷 **Ann Tom, Countryside Editor**
2. Grasping the last bit of summer, knowing the season's change is soon approaching. 📷 **Hannah McClure @muddyoakhennhouse**
3. Follow the path less traveled to find the views worth taking. 📷 **April Hanson, Wisconsin**



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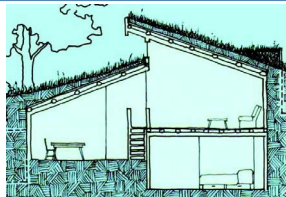


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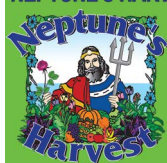
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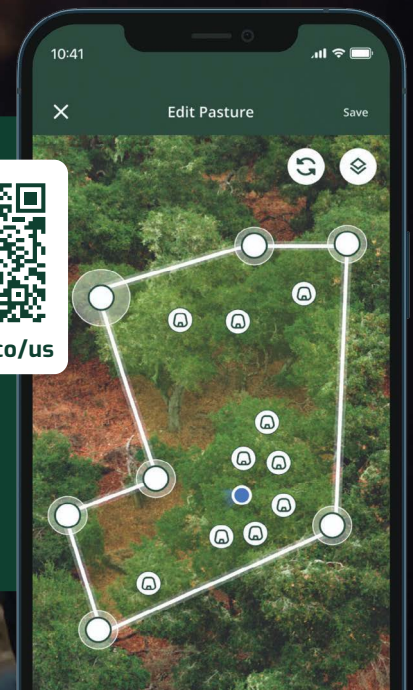
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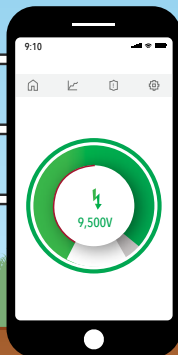


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