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& Small Stock Journal

Volume 98 • Number 2

March/April 2014

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Our Philosophy

It's not a single idea, but many ideas and attitudes, including a reverence for nature and a preference for country life; a desire for maximum personal self-reliance and creative leisure; a concern for family nurture and community cohesion; a belief that the primary reward of work should be well-being rather than money; a certain nostalgia for the supposed simplicities of the past and an anxiety about the technological and bureaucratic complexities of the present and the future; and a taste for the plain and functional.

COUNTRYSIDE reflects and supports the simple life, and calls its practitioners homesteaders.

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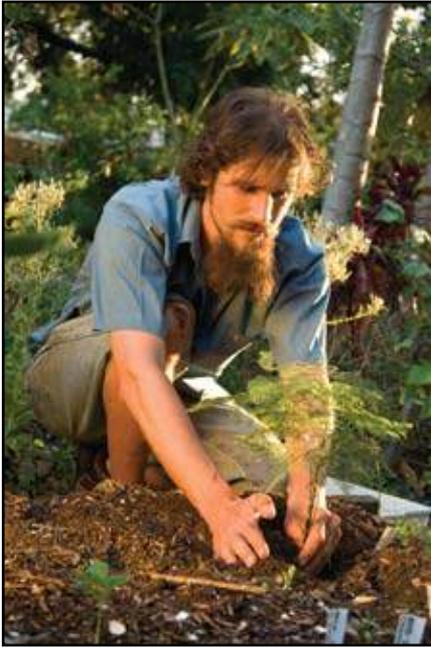
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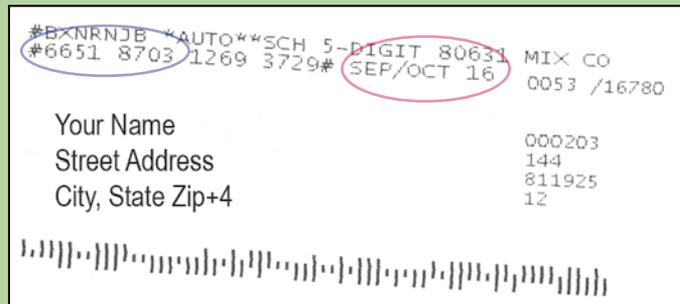
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Country conversation & feedback

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What's bothering your woodlot?

COUNTRYSIDE: Susan Gateley's article on deer browse in the woodlot was of special interest (Jan/Feb 2014). I heartily agree that scent repellants are useless unless browse pressure is very light, and that it is unwise to provide alternate food sources intentionally, since this will only attract even more animals.

In my woodlot in the western mountains of Maine, snowshoe hares are a big problem. People outside of our area laugh at me when I show them damage six feet in the air, but the hares walk on top of the snow, which can reach five feet deep here by mid-March.

Aluminum foil has saved many a tree on my woodlot. Somewhat over 20 years ago we had some timber cut, and the regrowth was vigorous but very dense, mostly balsam fir, but lesser amounts of spruce, white

pine, red maple, and birch. I began thinning when the trees were about five-feet tall, while it was still fast and easy to work with loppers, cutting mainly the fir since there was too much of it in relation to everything else. But I found that the hares were working at cross purposes to my forestry plan. They wouldn't touch the fir except under starvation conditions, but they wanted to trash everything else. You can't protect every tree, but I wrapped the leaders and principal branches of the best specimens with aluminum foil in the fall. The hares could easily have bitten through, but they never did. When the snow was mostly gone in the spring, I removed the foil, which couldn't be re-used, but at least it gets recycled here. After the trees got tall enough to be above the browse line, they were on their own.

Maple was a special problem because the hares not only browse the twigs, they also girdle the bark. Here I wrapped the entire trunk up to about six feet. Once the trees reached about two inches in diameter, they were much less likely to get girdled. I now have a pretty good mix of species.

Buck rubs are a heartbreaking problem since they often pick the nicest trees, but I've found that they prefer conspicuously located specimens (at trail junctions, for example) and it helps not to de-limb these.

I hope other readers will write articles on their solutions to problem wildlife in the woodlot. — *Joseph D. Conwill, Maine*

Fancy fabric scares wildlife

(And dresses up a garden)

COUNTRYSIDE: I just wanted to share that the best, safest, least toxic and most effective way we have found to "repel" both deer and squirrels from our gardens and fruit trees is to hang lengths of holographic sequined fabric remnants from the fence tops and branches. We use strips about three inches wide by 24-36 inches long, and just tie them on loosely at one end.

The slightest breeze causes the sequins to pick up whatever ambient light is available, glitter without regularity in all directions, which seems to keep the critters wary and out of reach of whatever *that* is. It has worked in our gardens and orchard for several years and the polyester fabric seems to hold up forever. — *Bob and Lorelee Sienkowski, Packwaukee, Wisconsin*

Chimney temperature is important

No matter what wood you burn

COUNTRYSIDE: I would like to agree and add to the letter about wood stove thermometers. (Jan/Feb 2014). The key is to keep the chimney at a temperature always above the boil-

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ing point of water and not too hot (250°-600°F).

I would like to add that dry wood is best, but what you burn green or dry, has nothing to do with keeping the chimney clean, the temperature you keep the chimney is the key. If you don't have enough dry wood, green wood will burn okay if you can keep the chimney hot.

Also, don't try to keep the fire burning at low temperature during mild weather. Just burn enough in the morning to warm up the house and let the fire go out.

Short periods of low chimney temperature are okay. Long periods of low chimney temperature are when you get chimney creosote build-up.

If you are going to burn wood, put a magnetic thermometer on your stovepipe. (I'm 76 years old and have heated with wood most of my life.)

– Lowell Brown, Missouri

Store grains whole to retain nutrients

COUNTRYSIDE: In response to the Canadian reader, flour begins decomposing the moment it is ground. If you would learn to store whole grains and nuts, even dried arrow leaf, grasses to dried blueberries, and grind them as needed, you'd get much better bread. Some dried fruits obviously cannot be ground, but beef, chicken, etc., can be ground if very dry. Great for pemmican. You see the bizarre weather – it will only get worse. Plant some nut trees, bushes, etc. If you don't eat it (pears, apples and such) they'll make prime livestock feeds. Use as many perennial food crops, from cattail to wild rice and wapotato (arrow leaf), learn the lichens, and the food value of each – then you're self-sufficient.

– Ken Bynum, Florida

Headache remedy

COUNTRYSIDE: A while ago, I read a little letter in your magazine about sodium laurel sulfate, or SLS. I read up on it, and started reading the labels on my shampoo, toothpaste and soap. It was

in it all! It is an industrial degreaser. It has no business being in or on our bodies.

I have been suffering from headaches since I was very little. Lately I was getting one at least six times a month that was severe enough to require medication. The medication that I was taking is for migraines and is very expensive, and although it got rid of the headache within 30-45 minutes, I felt lousy the rest of the day. Since I removed the SLS from everything that I use in or on my body, the headaches have been reduced from six a month to less than one a month!

It was not that hard to eliminate SLS. I strongly urge your readers to really read the labels on everything they use. I was only reading labels on food items. Skin is the body's largest organ, it can and will absorb chemicals very easily.

I would love to hear from anybody who tries this approach and has some success like I did. I had tried eliminating all the foods that are considered migraine triggers to no avail, but this worked! – Ken Yellen, smoken24@gmail.com

Dad's "cool" and didn't know it!

COUNTRYSIDE: My father-in-law often exclaims: "Well, I used to be crazy, but now I'm cool!" He's referring to the growing seed-saving movement and nation-wide interest in heirloom vegetables. Thirty years ago, when he insisted on continuing to raise heirloom open-pollinated corn, it was anything but all the rage. People were often puzzled and even ridiculed him, but many have had reason to be glad he has kept the seed alive.

Pure open-pollinated corn is now some of the hardest seed to find. Due to the fact that it is wind pollinated, varieties cross very easily (even when they are miles apart.) This means GMO contamination for many modern farmers, or at least hybridization and loss of seed. My father-in law has prevented crossing



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by planting much earlier (or later) than our farming neighbors, so that the corn tassels out at a different time than the surrounding crops. This is a lot more trouble because of late frosts and such, but has been worth it to keep the seed pure.

The corn our family raises is called Yellow Jarvis field corn. It's a yellow variety, ears average about seven inches, but can be as long as 10 inches. It has nice tall stalks—about eight feet last year when tasseled out. A great animal feed, it is also excellent for grinding into cornmeal for human consumption. Our family even picks the ears early when they are still tender and uses them for roasting ears.

The large number of small farmers and homesteaders looking for a reliable heirloom corn has caught our attention and we've decided to get the word out about our Yellow Jarvis. Anyone who is interested in learning more or obtaining seed may contact: Lowell Morgan, c/o Dustin and Janet Morgan, 1085 Chappell Farm Rd., Clifton, TN 38425 or call 1-870-283-4002.

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Their rabbits are very "hoppy" in their space

COUNTRYSIDE: This is in response to the article in the November/December issue "Rabbits Make Great Pets." Yes, rabbits are fun, easy to care for pets. However, I disagree with the author's saying they require very little space and that you never have to walk them. Rabbits are grazers and are meant to hop around! How happy can they be sitting in a cage their whole life?

My three daughters each had their own pet rabbit when they were young. We made a "corral" about 12-feet in diameter, with two-foot high hardware cloth. The rabbits were put

in there daily for some time to graze and hop around. It was easy to move to new ground every few days. The two rabbits that got along went in together, and the other by herself. They enjoyed the freedom as well as the grass, clover and plantain to eat. My daughters stayed there and watched/played with them, as it wasn't safe to leave the rabbits unprotected that way for long periods of time.

Just because an animal can survive in a small cage, doesn't mean they're happy about it. Think about chickens in commercial egg operations. — Debbie Mack, New York

Thoughts on retirement and homesteading

COUNTRYSIDE: Now that I have been retired for one year, I have been thinking about the ways my spending habits have changed since retirement. I like to think that I have always been a careful spender. However, when I worked full time I felt like I deserved those little extras such as eating out, buying that new outfit and spoiling my only grandchild.

However, after I retired reality quickly set in. Prices of food, gas and just about everything else are sky high. Although I had worked long enough to be able to keep my health care under my state retirement benefits (if I paid the premium each month), it still took a huge chunk out of my retirement pension. Not that I'm complaining. After working over 30 years at stressful jobs and long commutes, I was grateful to be retired at 59.

So what did I learn? I was surprised to find out that after I retired I felt anxious and was not sure what I was going to do with "the rest of my life." I felt like this even though I consider myself a homesteader. My husband and I are living in a small cabin in a rural area (downsized from a larger home) and enjoy growing many of our own vegetables and herbs. We use a wood stove, cut and split much of our own wood, which



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Once I retired, one of the first things I did was to take inventory of what I had, what I wanted to keep and what I could give away. Thrift shops, Craigslist, family, friends and strangers are often happy to take items off your hands. I felt very "free" once I reduced the number of possessions that I had.

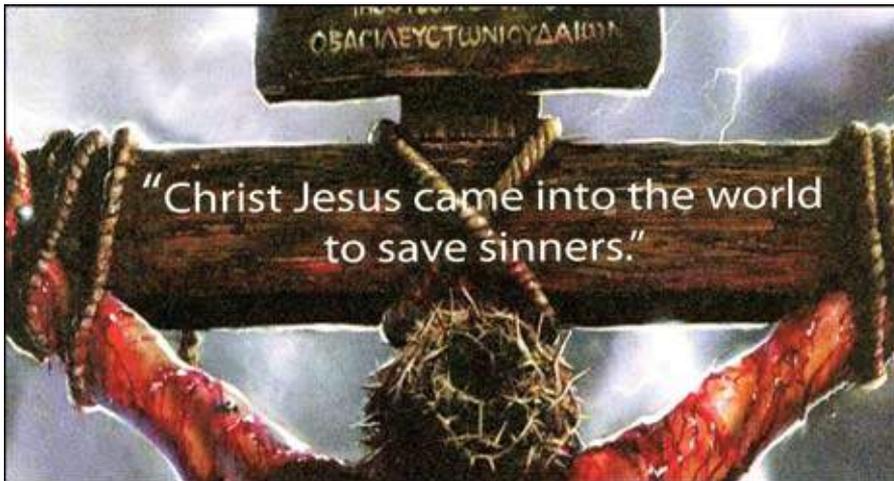
At this time I rarely buy anything if it is not on sale. At the grocery store I shop with a list, always check the reduced produce shelf before I buy the regular priced produce, and stock up on whatever is on sale that week. I live in a state that supports food co-ops and I am a member-owner at a co-op where I buy healthful organic food in bulk while supporting local farmers at the same time.

I rethink everything that I do. From doing laundry (using just one half of the "recommended" amount of detergent, using white vinegar for deodorizing clothes and using bleach with cold water for whites) to cooking (I grow and dehydrate many herbs to flavor foods) and use the crock pot for delicious meals.

My husband and I now find inexpensive ways to have fun. We rent movies from Redbox, find the freebie days for in-state museums, ski days and other events that require little or no money. We believe in helping neighbors and offering a helping hand when someone needs a project done. This builds goodwill as well as friendships. We give to the food shelf and foster animals for a local rescue organization. We take pleasure in nature, feeding the birds, growing flowers, taking walks and sitting by the river that runs through our rural property.

Life has slowed down, although I run at full tilt. My advice: enjoy life, spend time with nature, your family and pets, find a church community and help your neighbors.

I would love to correspond with like-minded people. My e-mail address is: maplemoonfarm1954@gmail.com. - Dawn, Vermont



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On writers, calves, and preventing loneliness

COUNTRYSIDE: I thought I'd comment on a few ideas rolling around in my mind.

I met Ken Scharabok in 2011 at the COUNTRYSIDE reunion (in Indiana). It was a pleasure to meet and talk with someone who has shared so much information over the years. He will be greatly missed.

I regret not being able to attend more of the COUNTRYSIDE reunions over the years. What Mr. McKenna said so eloquently is absolutely true. Robert and Yvonne (hosts of the annual reunion at their farm) and their children make everyone feel at home. The seminars are icing on the cake!

Over the years I've been a subscriber and feel I have this unseen family of fellow thinkers. The reunion helps put a face to our extended family.

I loved George Sims's writing. He's precious! I love the articles years ago by the man in Baltimore, the Intentional Peasant. Maybe you could reprint some, as you are Pat Katz's recipes. She's another of my old-time favorite contributors. And of course, JD Belanger. (What an intense individual. He knows how to keep the balance, or in some cases, "bring it back" into perspective.)

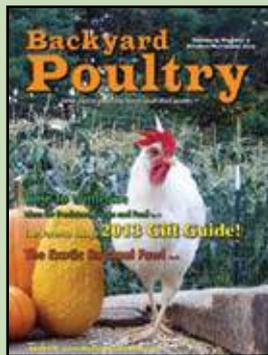
I look back at old issues and enjoy the complete enthusiasm of the subscribers. We are all looking for "the promised land" in some way or another.

Now on to some of our happenings.

One of our cows had twins and rejected one of them. We brought her to the barn, head-gated her for two days while the calf nursed, with lots of feed in front of her. We also had to tie one back leg to a post to keep her from kicking the calf away. We gradually moved her out of the head gate into a wedge made by stock gates. The calf was eager to nurse from behind.

A German friend said to collect the mother's urine in a bucket and

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put it on both calves to confuse her with her own scent. We did this the first day in the stall. I can't say if this helped or not. When it comes to life or death situations, try anything others suggest that makes sense. The vet later suggested Vicks Vapor Rub up the cow's nose to confuse her sense of smell and identity.

Anyway, after working days on this bonding using lots of good feed, she began to accept the fact that this calf was hers to take care of. All three are living happily together in a secluded lot where we have monitored the progress.

The other little calf was born with, or developed shortly after birth, a very red eye. We thought it was blind in that eye. My friend who helped run a ranch told me since we had the cow in a head stall to milk colostrum into a cup and rub the calf's eye with it three times. The colostrum will heal infections in the eyes. (Human mothers have had similar results.)

The weather here in Kentucky (early December) is horrible for this time of year. The old-timers are predicting a bad winter. So far, they are right. We have calves in the field that are very young. It's worrisome. A lot of idealism comes to a screeching halt when nature doesn't cooperate.

Two more things that have been on my mind:

I love the old-time remedies and stories of survival. We need to go back and study the success as and failures of those who survived homesteading. Their courage, compassion, and tenacity are meaningful when we want to whine!

Some of our family seems lonely and out of sorts occasionally with their choice of locations and situation. One way to connect with others of similar ideas is to either join an existing club or start one. I belong to an herb club that has evolved from just using herbs to gardening, homesteading, etc. It has really been a great choice for my husband and I. Before that, many years ago we joined a horticulture club at the high school. Many of my homesteading friends have come from that club as well. Instead of finding differences

in others, try to get together with those with similarities. — Deborah Carmichael, Kentucky

What's old is new...sooner or later

COUNTRYSIDE: I have enjoyed your magazine for many years, since my first issue in the 1970s when I raised goats, horses, chickens and a hog and beef each year for our freezer. It has been very helpful and I have boxes of them in the attic. I must soon pass these on to another person who will like them for reference use.

I grew up during the Second World War years and learned how to eat seasonally, recycle and use what we had instead of buying new all the time. I'm glad that there are still people who think the same!

I hope I never have to give up reading your articles and trying new ways to stock up for winter, etc. — Nancy Miller

Oven canning advocates defend practice

COUNTRYSIDE: I would like to apologize to everyone for the controversy caused by my last letter (Jan/Feb issue.) I am sure COUNTRYSIDE will survive the slur to its integrity; the many loyal readers have the greatest respect for their favorite publication. Thanks for always giving all sides, opinions and ideas.

I realize my "I never killed anyone yet" comment probably sounded a little flippant, but I am rather proud of my record. Seventy years of canning 300-1,000 quarts a year and not one person ever got sick from it. Every scientific research project you read brags about 70-80 percent survival rate, but 100 percent? Wow!

I am a little confused by the criticism. I have always studied the latest methods and pressure can by directions from the newest Ball Can-

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ning Book (the title changes each year). I only gave options for people to look up and study if they were interested.

I can give up the oven canning of my dehydrated foods if it is not safe. I will just go back to putting them in freezer bags and storing in a plastic bucket if that is better. I only did that to protect them from bugs, moisture, mold, and for my own convenience. I don't know what to do with all the other foods I have always canned by what I thought was a safe, approved method. There is no need for me to have access to all that beautiful garden fruit and vegetables if I only have it for a short time and cannot preserve it for the winter. Without that there is no way this 85-year-old grandmother can make it on social security, so it looks like I will be just one more person on food stamps buying the herbicide, pesticide, preservative-laden feeds we have all been trying to avoid.

Incidentally, my grandmother began her lifetime of preserving her own foods with the approved salting, smoking and drying method. When glass jars became available, she moved up to the new and approved, glass lid, wire bale closure, water bath way. Later the jars were improved to glass lined zinc lids with a jar rubber seal, but still water bathed, all officially approved. Somewhere during this time span the method of home canning in metal cans was introduced, but my family never got into that, so I have no information on it. In the 1930s she bought her first Phillip's Presto Company pressure canner, the latest approved process. The 1940s brought the new two-part Ball and Kerr lids with the removable ring. Grandma's career ended with the new approved method, and the rest of us took on from there.

Food preservation hasn't changed much from that time. Lids have improved, canners have changed in style and how-to-books have been constantly updated to include new pressures and times, but basically it is the same way my grandmother passed it on to us. Grandma could read and she was smart enough to

realize we had not learned all there is to know in this world. All she could do is adapt to the newer, safer, approved ways that developed. As far as I know, she never "killed anyone," either.

I wish the writer would have taken a few more minutes to share with us her self-taught, safe method of preserving foods so we can continue to be self-sufficient and live the independent lifestyle we all love. — *Shirley Benson, Wisconsin*



Don't rely on memory

COUNTRYSIDE: I just got our newest COUNTRYSIDE magazine yesterday, and after reading the statements from Maureen Widmer and one of the COUNTRYSIDE staff's comments on Shirley Benson's article, I am wondering about sharing the one I have just completed to send off. So to do so, I want to state right off, the statements in the articles I send are my ideas only. I am not suggesting anyone try them, the articles will be like a story, take what you want and enjoy.

The people I have added are willing to share their ideas, but these are methods that we use and share with each other, we are not suggesting that anyone has to do the canning, drying or gardening as we do. We trust each other, so we have no problem sharing our learned skills.

We are all "old" canners, and gardeners, meaning we have been doing it for years. And our methods are not just self-taught, as Maureen's were, we also read up on the best way to garden, and share what we learned, also on how to dry foods. We also read up on canning and how to use pressure canners, water bath canners and such. If you buy a pressure canner, it will tell you to check the gauges, seals, etc., of your canner. We are old canners, but we did learn how to read.

I still refer to my Ball Canning Book each time I am canning something, as the memory cannot store and bring forth that information when needed—and I do not just guess.

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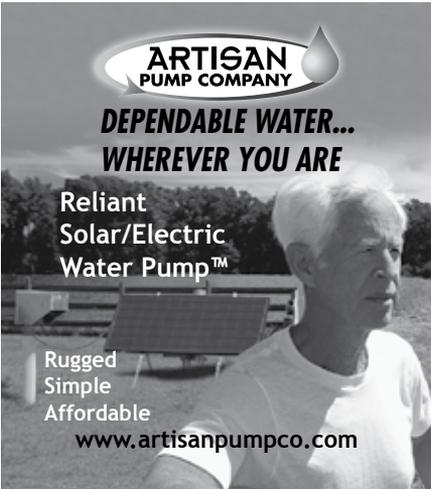
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Also, lots of people have had jars break in a pressure canner or water bath canner; I sure have. That does not mean using that method for canning is wrong or dangerous, and we should never do that again.

Maureen missed the concept somewhere that dry food canning is a means to keep dry foods safe from bugs, rodents, and other critters that can get into and destroy foods. It will also kill any bug larvae that are inside of the dry food when you buy it. And stating they are in there already is a fact. Also, completely dried foods cannot get mold on or in them. There has to be moisture for mold to form. When dry foods are put into dry jars and then oven sealed, the shelf life is extended to the point it would be wise to put your foods in your will, as they are going to outlive most of us.

This is not like putting up fruits and vegetables where canners must be used to process the food. I do not deal very well with comments that people make that are off the wall and rude, like the statement of having cold spots on dry foods that have been in a 200°F oven for an hour. If there is a cold spot, please...get your oven fixed. Oven thermometers are inexpensive; one should be used now and then to make sure your oven temps are correct.

Shirley is a fantastic person, canner, gardener, knows a lot about drying herbs, spices, and natural healing and medical plants, and what is right and wrong in processing all of these items. The attack on her was way off base. No, she "has not killed anyone yet," and it is sad that Maureen did not have a clue that it is just a figure of speech.

The note she made about the Master Electrician added with the canning issues was out in left field. My husband is a Master Electrician and he said to compare the two is like comparing apples and donuts. And he is right.

I need to make a comment on the note on the bottom of the article about the canning jar company. Years ago you would buy the jars with the rubber ring on the lids face up. Then they started putting the lids on with

rubber against the rim of the jar. But this causes the jars to seal and unseal several times as the jars get warm or cold. I called Kerr about this, and asked if sealed lids could be used a second, or third time. They said no, once lids are sealed, they should not be used again. I said, well all the lids on the new case of jars I just bought sealed, unsealed and sealed again several times, so would you send me a new set of lids? They said that was different, those lids could be used again. Excuse me? A sealed lid, is a sealed lid. You can either re-use it or not. They said in the case of being on the new jars they were safe to use. So a light went on. I have successfully tried reusing lids that have been sealed. Now *do not* do this just because I mentioned it. But that statement from the jar company showed me that their comments and statements cannot be trusted either. Who do I trust when it comes to foods my family eats? ME. I know what is in it, and how it is prepared.

I wish all of you a fantastic gardening year, and a great canning year. — Lil Roberts



Maybe it shouldn't be called "canning"...

COUNTRYSIDE: In response to Maureen and her response to Shirley's article on dry canning, like many people Maureen has not understood this canning method and how it is used and what it is used for. I have been canning for over 50 years and yes, a lot of changes have been made in that time but, with dry canning I think the problem comes in with calling it canning. Perhaps it should be called sealing. This method of (canning) is not used for any wet food. It is used for dry foods and foods that have already been prepared, such as crackers, etc. When using it for herbs or things like celery the food is dehydrated first, that is the preserving method. To make sure that the celery can be kept for a longer period of time it can



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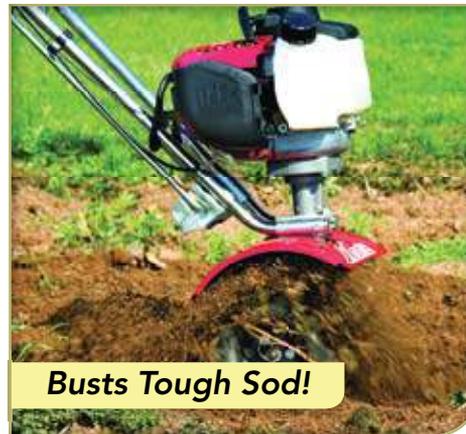
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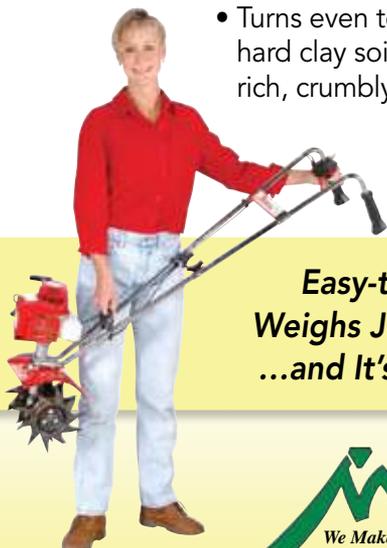
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either be put in a vacuum seal bag and sealed or it can be put in a jar and sealed in the oven. The jars are always clean and then the food is put inside. By processing it in the oven the jar becomes sterilized and the food is heated to a temp that will cause the air in the jar to rise and come out of the lid. When the jar is cooled the hot air escapes and forms a vacuum seal and the dry food inside is perfectly safe. If you can seal the celery in a room temperature vacuum seal bag and it is safe, you can certainly seal that same product in a jar in the oven and it will be just as safe if not more so. The reason for using a jar rather than a vacuum seal bag is that some foods have sharp edges or points when they are dried and can puncture the bag, so you may decide to use a jar instead.

I do a lot of dehydrating too and have had this experience and it is maddening to go through all that trouble and find out a couple days later that the bag has lost its vacuum and now you must do it all over and you have wasted a sealing bag. I have preserved flour in jars. Now with the flour, you can put it in a jar and add an oxygen absorber to the top and just put the lid and ring on it and let the jar seal by letting the oxygen absorber remove the oxygen. It is safe like that but if you don't have an oxygen absorber then you use the oven. I have done Cheerios in the jars this way and many other things. With Cheerios, there is enough preservative in the box that it is safe right in the box on the shelf, so why wouldn't it be safe processed in the oven by the dry canning method? I would never preserve wet or raw food in this manner, but I do think people may have done so a long time ago, and probably with disastrous results. But use a little common sense here. This is a handy method to use when putting food by. I have preserved dry pasta this way, along with many other things. Preserving in jars keeps the bugs out. I also vacuum seal dried foods and store them in a bucket with a snap on lid.

Every year my kids get a big box of the foods that mom cans and preserves. They love it. Don't get all

excited over this method and think that it is going to poison someone and the person using this method is misguided. Before making judgments use some common sense. Now, years ago everything canned was done in a water bath; now that is unsafe. People would process the foods for hours, but the water temp. will not get high enough to kill a lot of the bacteria and spores, plus a lot of that canning was done outside. Now that doesn't seem sanitary or safe to me. Common sense is the way to go, the oven gets a lot hotter than the water bath method, but then again this method is used for dry foods only.

Try it for some things like crackers. They stay fresh longer, especially if you don't use a lot of them and then the box goes stale before the crackers are gone! Happens a lot at my house where there is just me and the old guy. Kids are all grown now. So my advice is don't get all excited and give this some thought. It's like everything else: use it right and everything is fine don't pay attention and you lose.

I love this magazine and have gotten many good tips to use in and on my homestead over the years. Thanks! — Judy, Florida

The woes of location, location, location...

COUNTRYSIDE: Living in California is just plain crazy. Don't get me wrong, I love it here on the Central Coast, but crazy is still crazy. I'm not sure which is worse—the politics or the cost of living? A topic that I am fairly certain you don't want to get me started on, I have a hard time knowing when to stop. I have stuck it out this long because of the beautiful weather and the ability to grow just about any crop or keep most any type of critter, due to the microclimate. I am ready to admit that I should pack it up and move on to the next stage in my country/homesteading/hobby farming life. Yes, it is time to get out.

I have my eye on Kentucky, but would like to know more from people

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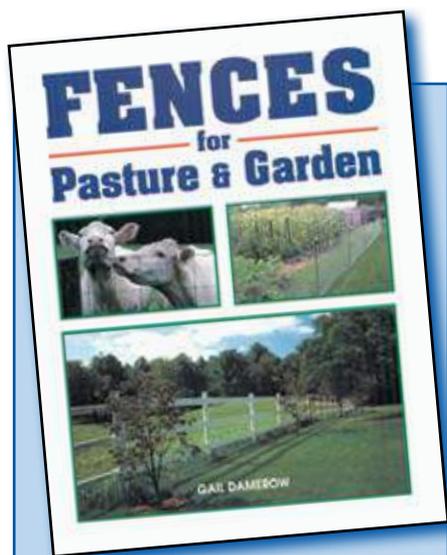
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who actually live there. I would be grateful to any COUNTRYSIDE readers who would take a few minutes out of their busy day and share some wisdom on the good, bad and the ugly of the state, areas recommended and ones to avoid, etc. I have been doing research on the web, but feel a firsthand opinion would be far superior. — Robin, PO Box 2068, Atascadero, CA 93423-2068



High taxes in Florida

COUNTRYSIDE: We are a very small family farm investing in small cattle on a small six-acre agricultural/residential zoned area who are tired of paying \$3,500 a year just to live in Sarasota county, Florida.

We would like to hear how we can persuade the county agricultural tax appraisers to lower the taxes to under \$100. Got any ideas? We have a meeting coming up to bring our information for them to make a decision. Thanks for any input that would augment our case! — Julie

Send your ideas to csyeditorial@tds.net or COUNTRYSIDE Editorial, 145 Industrial Dr., Medford, WI 54451.

Why won't people listen?

COUNTRYSIDE: It's been almost 20 years since the last time I took a dare to write to COUNTRYSIDE (March/April 1994, pg 52). It was to answer the Question of the Month.

What I said then seems to be all too true now. I believe the things that are happening now are a real threat to all of us as homesteaders, and I don't see why people have ignored all of this since it has only become worse since that time.

We are now losing our freedom to pursue our dreams of becoming more self-reliant. The laws and regulations that have been pushed through federal and state government have been done under the guise as to regulate big business and big ag-industry. But

these laws are only there to drive us out of competition with them. They are using these to target small business. The Food Safety Act was not meant to regulate the industrial food industry. It was done to stop the small farmer and healthier food producers from competing for consumer dollars.

Many of you who are trying to make your homestead produce a livable income have come in contact with regulators and know what I'm saying. Others, no matter how much we tell them or any amount of proof we come up with, don't believe it. I came up against great resistance and total disbelief.

In 2003 prices for land in our area was becoming so high, that they were inflating the market. We predicted then that this was creating a bubble that would burst soon. We had made many preparations in 1998 to be ready for the Y2K scare. We paid off our mortgage and made investments to make sure we would be insulated from an economic downturn. So when the 2007 downturn came, we were very minimally affected. Not so for a great majority of people who had paid these high prices for land and homes. Our county became one of four with the highest foreclosure rates in Minnesota.

Now they are creating yet another economic bubble by the Federal Reserve buying 85 billion dollars a month for Wall Street bonds for the last five years. Also creating a debt bubble by spending trillions more. This will become the perfect storm that will cause hyperinflation. The "Un" Affordable Care Act (Obama Care) may prove to be the straw that broke the camel's back.

I have read all the articles in COUNTRYSIDE since 1990 and many believe that those living in the country will be insulated from all these effects because they live in a utopia beyond the sidewalks. When the economic collapse does come, we are no longer safe anywhere! In that time people will not pay or trade for food; they will just take it.

Enough about these grave things.

A Few Solar Generators With Slight Scratches At Astonishing Discounts!

There has never been a better time to get a "Solar Generator" from Solutions From Science. Why are Solar Generators spreading like wildfire among off-the-grid-enthusiasts across the country? There are a lot of good reasons. Here are just a few of them:

- **Generate Free Electricity From The Sun**
- No Dangerous Fumes
- **Life-Saving Back Up Power When You Need It Most**
- Portable - Take It Anywhere
- **Runs Quietly In Your Home**
- Electricity Prices Are At All-Time Highs
- **Plug-And-Play Means "Easy To Use" Instant Power**
- Gas Stations Can't Pump Gas Without Electricity

I'm so convinced every American household needs a Solar Generator, that I've arranged for a truly incredible offer for Countryside readers.

Once A Year We Let A Handful Of People Buy A Solar Generator For Very Little Money

Here's the exciting story:

In the rush and excitement of selling several thousand Solar Generators in the last year, there was no time to pay attention to the units that were slightly scratched or had dented boxes except to put them aside in our warehouse.

Some of the units have only slight scratches on the outside shell — so slight that you would have to make a real close inspection to discern the damage, but still... you know how it is... they cannot be sold as perfect "new" Solar Generators.

So rather than send them back to our manufacturing plant in Canada and give Canadian workers the job of putting new outside shells on the units, we have decided to pass a huge discount on to a few people who really don't care about a minor scratch, but are just interested in having reliable backup power... and to offer these units at "below wholesale" pricing.

Only 33 Units In The Warehouse!!!

We currently have 33 PowerSource1800 "scratch and dent" Solar Generators to sell at a drastically discounted price. Once we sell out, it'll be very hard to buy a Solar Generator at such a steeply discounted price. But while the inventory of these slightly scratched units lasts, you can pick one up for very little money. (Less than half of a new one.)

All Scratch And Dents Have Full "New Unit" Warranties!

We also guarantee every PowerSource1800 Solar Generator to be in like-new condition. As we mentioned earlier, in some cases, only the box was "dinged up" a little, so the units inside the box are absolutely perfect. In fact, in most cases not even one of our techs could find anything wrong, except that the box doesn't look new. (But if you think about it, you will probably throw the box out anyway.)

We know how important solar backup power is to our Countryside Magazine readers, so we wanted to offer this to you right away. Now, the truth is, these special "scratch and dent" units aren't going to last very long when priced this low.

The price is just \$995.00 plus \$162.50 shipping and handling. (Total \$1,157.50) But I've decided to sweeten the deal even more this year. I'm also going to give you \$1,000.00 in Heirloom Seeds absolutely free and a way to get \$1,250.00 in free LED bulbs. All of this may seem too good to be true... but I can assure you it's very real. You can even see a video we made about this very unusual offer at:

ScratchAndDentSolar.com

Please understand, quantities are definitely limited, so we must receive your order as soon as possible in order to help guarantee a unit.

Here's what you should do right now. For the absolute fastest way to get one of these discounted "scratch and dent" units is to go to this website right now...

ScratchAndDentSolar.com

If you would like to order by phone, you can call toll-free by dialing 800-218-4615. Tell whoever answers that you want one of the



2013 Scratch and Dent models, \$1,000.00 in free seeds, and the bonus LED bulbs.

Please call even if you plan to pay by check or money order so we can put your name on a unit. But don't take too long to think about it. Every year when we sell our "scratch and dents" they go very quickly.

If you want to order by check or money order, after you call, have your check or money order made out to "Solutions From Science" and mail it to...

**Solutions From Science
Dept. Scratch & Dent CS130
2200 IL Route 84
P.O. Box 518
Thomson, IL 61285**

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Heid".

Bill Heid
President, Solutions From Science

P.S. You can pick a unit up at our showroom if you'd like. (Please call first.) We're in Thomson, Illinois on Route 84, one block north of the bank.

P.P.S. If you have any questions at all, don't hesitate to call the office at 800-218-4615. But please... watch the video before you call.

ScratchAndDentSolar.com

My wife and I came here to pursue our love of providing all our food. We have been doing this since we found each other 37 years ago. We started out on a one-acre lot growing our own food and using fresh vegetables and fruit for our two kids when they first started eating solid food. We outgrew our acre, then we wanted to take the next step to growing all our food.

We wanted to do this and did not make excuses of not having enough money. We sold our house and after a short look we found a 58-acre farm that was just what we wanted.

Now, 20 years later, here we are. What we had learned on one acre was gardening, canning and freezing. We just added the chickens, bees and other farm stock. Now we produce not only 99% of all the food we eat, but have surplus vegetables, fruits, eggs and beef to sell. We have planted fruit trees (apple, pear, plum, cherry and elderberries) every year since we came here. We also planted many maple trees about 15 years ago, which we tap for syrup. Dried beans are a big crop here, because they provide a storable food source that will last 25 years or longer. Much better than packaged food.

Thank you COUNTRYSIDE for all the years of articles which have been a great resource to achieve our goals and to all who write in. You can learn something even from others' mistakes. (We don't have cable or Internet, and don't miss it either!).

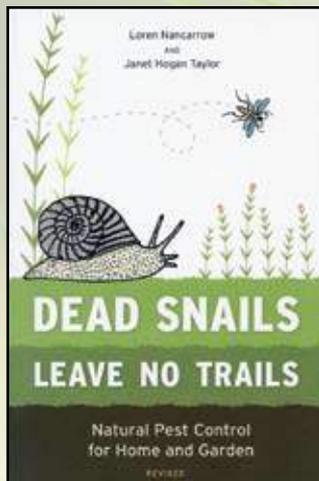
Good luck to all. — Jay and Karen Gasperlin, Minnesota

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Contact Kelly Weiler at
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for more information.

Need any help on your homestead?

COUNTRYSIDE: I lost my dairy farm (long story) in New York. I know cows, machinery, tools, I love gardening, I'm just not as fast as I used to be. If you need help on your homestead, please write: *Randall Touchette, c/o General Delivery, Grand Gorge, NY 12434.*

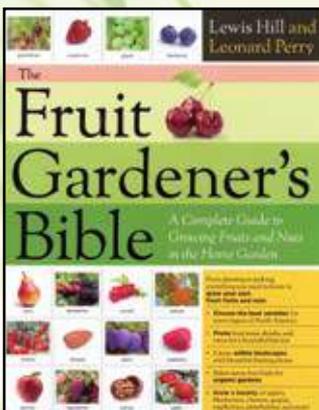


DEAD SNAILS LEAVE NO TRAILS

Natural Pest Control for Home and Garden

BY LOREN NANCARROW & JANET HOGAN TAYLOR

If you've ever had a swarm of fruit flies in your kitchen or a gopher wreaking havoc in your yard, you may have wondered what a conscientious gardener or homeowner can do short of heavy-duty chemical warfare. *Dead Snails Leave No Trails* is a comprehensive guide to repelling both indoor and outdoor pests using organic methods—it's the perfect DIY solution to eliminate unwelcome visitors in your home and garden while keeping yourself, your family, and the environment safe from harmful chemicals. With a few easy-to-find items, you'll learn how to: Make your own all-purpose pest repellents with simple ingredients like chili peppers and vinegar; Use companion planting to attract beneficial insects and animals or repel harmful ones; Keep four-legged intruders—including squirrels, deer, rabbits, and skunks—away from your prized vegetables and flowers; Safely eliminate ants, roaches, and rodents from your house or apartment; Protect your pets from critters like ticks and fleas. Full of tips, tricks, and straightforward instructions, *Dead Snails Leave No Trails* is the most user-friendly guide to indoor and outdoor natural pest solutions. **192 pages, \$12.99**



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BY LEONARD PERRY & LEWIS HILL

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If you want to lose weight and keep it off -- hate dieting and are tired of taking pills, buying costly diet foods or gimmick "fast loss" plans that don't work-- *you'll love the easy Vinegar way to lose all the pounds you want to lose. And keep them off!*

Today, the natural Vinegar weight loss plan is a reality after years of research by noted vinegar authority Emily Thacker. Her just published book "Vinegar Anniversary" will help you attain your ideal weight the healthiest and most enjoyable way ever.

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To prove that you can eat great and feel great while losing ugly, unhealthy pounds the natural Vinegar way, you're invited to try the program for up to 3 months on a "You Must Be Satisfied Trial."

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What's the secret? Modern research combined with nature's golden elixir.

Since ancient times apple cider vinegar has been used in folk remedies to help control weight and speed-up the metabolism to burn fat. And to also aid overall good health.

Now-- for the first time -- Emily has combined the latest scientific findings and all the weight loss benefits of vinegar into a program with lifetime benefits-- to melt away pounds for health and beauty.

If you like food and hate dieting, you'll love losing pounds and inches the Vinegar way.

Suddenly your body will be energized with new vigor and zest as you combine nature's most powerful, nutritional foods with vinegar to trim away pounds while helping the body to heal itself.

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younger shedding unhealthy pounds that make one look older than their age.

According to her findings, staying trim and fit the Vinegar way also provides preventive health care against the curses of mankind-- cancer, heart disease, diabetes, high cholesterol and blood pressure and other maladies.

In fact, the book's program is so complete that it also helps you:

- Learn secrets of ageless beauty and glowing skin
- Help build the immune system, to fight arthritis and disease
- Speed the metabolism to use natural thermogenesis to burn fat

PLUS so much more that you simply must use the book's easy Vinegar way to lose all the weight you want to lose--and enjoy all its other benefits-- before deciding if you want to keep it.

To Lose Pounds and Enjoy a 90-Day No-Risk Trial... Do This Now To Get Your Personal Copy of the Book:

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LETTERS

Dentist Recommends Vinegar

I have some useful advice that others may be interested in. When I got my Dentures several years ago, the Dentist told me use vinegar to get the plaque off them. So - about once a week I soak them in the wonder liquid and Presto - they sparkle.

I have since gotten implants - Since I am not fond of the hygienist scraping the posts for cleaning - I clean them with Vinegar before going for my check-up. On my last visit to her, she couldn't believe how clean they were and praised me for it!

I then asked the Dentist that put the implants in if the vinegar would harm the metal posts and he informed me it is OK to use it.

- D. L., *New Braunfels, Tx.*

Vinegar Heals Ear Ache in 2 days.

I have been plagued with an itchy ear for several months. It then developed into an earache. I was able to cure both the itch and earache in two days.

- J. D., *Jacksonville, Fl.*

Vinegar Diet helps mother of the Bride

This is kind of embarrassing, but here goes.

My name is Sarah Pierce. I am 58 years old, and through the years (in my mind's eye) I always thought I looked pretty decent.

Especially so when our second daughter was married. I really considered myself a rather 'smashing' Mother of the Bride.

That is, until the wedding pictures came back. I just couldn't believe it.

Here I am, definitely portly - not lean and svelte like I thought. Unfortunately the camera doesn't lie.

Since then, I heard about Emily Thacker's Vinegar Diet and decided to give it a try. What surprised me most was how much I could eat yet I was losing weight and inches. It was like I was getting thin, thinner and thinner yet with the Vinegar Diet. I just thought you should know.

- S. P., *N. Canton, Oh.*

NEWS & RESEARCH

Simple Vinegar used to reduce cervical cancer deaths by 31%

The latest study about vinegar, shows it will prevent an estimated 72,600 deaths from cervical cancer each year.

This according to a study released at the American Society of Clinical Oncology annual meeting in Chicago, IL.

The results were based over a 12 year period tracking 150,000 women in Mumbai, India, between the ages of 35-64 years.

The conclusion, a simple vinegar test significantly reduces cervical cancer deaths. Immediate plans are to implement this simple and successful screening test in developing countries.

The study had been planned for 16 years, but after the results were analyzed and found to be conclusive it was stopped at 12 years.

Vinegar has always been used for its versatility in home remedies, cooking and cleaning. And now scientific and medical findings are showing its a simple, low cost, non-invasive and safe for the patient.

Scarlett Johansson confesses her apple cider vinegar beauty secret

When celebrity beauty Scarlett Johansson needs to keep her skin looking beautiful and glowing one would think she would turn to high priced beauty creams.

Not so, according to an article in the February 2013 issue of Elle UK. She uses simple apple cider vinegar and its natural pH balancing properties to keep her skin looking amazing.

Homestead business:

**Information:
the currency of the
new economy**



Dave Westbrook and family live and work in the country.

Starting an online information-based business

BY PATRICE LEWIS
IDAHO

If you're reading this magazine, it's likely because you either live rural, or you have a deep desire to live rural. That's almost a given.

But I speak from experience when I say that *the single biggest obstacle* preventing people from moving to the country is the thorny problem of how to make a living once you're there. Most people who live in the country get by through one of four methods: (1) they commute to the city; (2) they take multiple local jobs, which are almost always low-paying; (3) they live on their retirement or other investments; or (4) they work at home.

Of those four options, #4 is clearly the best. By working at home, you can avoid the commuting nightmare which can eat up a large portion of your day, cost a tremendous amount of money, and can even endanger your life if the weather conditions are bad. Working from home also allows you to live much further away from urban areas, which means you can take advantage of lower property prices.

But how on earth do you go about building a home business?

My husband and I solved this problem 20 years ago by starting a woodcraft business, but that was by no means an easy way to make a living. However it did give us the freedom to live our rural dream, even if it was by the skin of our teeth at first. But frankly, there must be an easier way, right?

Yes, there is.

When I heard that some guy named Dave Westbrook was giving a talk titled, "How I built a successful business from my country home" at a preparedness expo, I knew I had to hear what he had to say. I came away deeply impressed. He didn't tout a get-rich-quick scheme or offer advice for stuffing envelopes. Instead, he demonstrated a business model which can be applied across many specialties and can help endless numbers of people build an Internet-based information business.

Intrigued, I attended two of his seminars, took advantage of some of his online webinars, and spent two hours talking with him on the phone. Since my husband and I are successful home-based entrepreneurs—and

since I've seen too many people fail in their attempts to start home businesses—I've concluded that Mr. Westbrook's business model is solid, practical, and eminently do-able.

"Most people flop around with ideas for making a living and can't seem to grasp the notion of an *information-based* business," said Dave Westbrook. "They think in terms of either making something to sell, or finding someone to employ them. Not many people think about selling *information*. Information is the currency of the new economy."

Don't misunderstand—building a home-based information business takes *work*. It's not a guaranteed success, and it takes time to get up and running. But the potential for self-employment anywhere there's an Internet connection is hard to resist for those who are serious about wanting to work from home.

It goes without saying that the model used for building an information-based business can be done anywhere, not just in rural locations. This means if you have no desire to leave your current urban or suburban home—but you *do* want to transition away from a job or commute you

dislike – then this model will work just as well in your current location.

Dave emphasizes that in order to create an information-based business, you have to *act* on what you learn. And while he makes no guarantee about results, he *can* guarantee that those who take *no* action will get *no* results. Sadly, most people never take action and therefore never succeed.

In the beginning...

Dave’s interest in country living started as a child, but as he grew up he got busy with the usual adult concerns of home, family, and making a living in ministry.

“The turning point as an adult was Y2K,” he said. At the time, he was living in a townhouse in Lake Tahoe, a beautiful but crowded tourist area straddling the California-Nevada border. His wife visited a Costco store on New Year’s Eve and saw crowds of people stocking up on food items at the last minute. It dawned on him that they simply weren’t prepared – “stupidly unprepared” is how he phrased it. “We had no gas and not much food. I decided then and there I wouldn’t put my family in that situation again.”

These concerns led him to do extensive research (which turned into a documentary film) on major threats looming in the future of metropolitan areas. Population-dense areas are subject to the spread of diseases, terrorism, and other disruptions that trap people and make them vulnerable. This research, as well as his family’s unprepared lifestyle, started him thinking about homesteading. Shortly thereafter he began searching for rural property.

From his experience as a traveling ministry speaker, Dave decided to spread the message on rural living. He knew there were endless numbers of people who felt trapped in cities but wanted to escape to the country and get back to basics. He started some “Out of the City” rallies through his ministry, working freelance with churches around the

country. These began in Los Angeles in 2004 and later took off all over the U.S.

But he was frustrated on two fronts. First, these rallies required him to travel widely and be away from both his home and family for long stretches of time (thus missing out on the benefits of moving to the country in the first place). Second, the rallies would fire people up and get them excited about getting out of the cities, but then the rally would be over and people would be left hanging and wanting more information, something he was unable to provide.

Dave realized that people who were seriously interested in moving



rural needed help, some practical tools, and a bit of hand-holding along the way. This realization was the birth of his first information-based home business, Country Living University (www.countrylivinguniversity.com). His focus shifted from a ministry model to a business model.

“I needed something that could be replicated,” said Dave. “Something that could teach, something that people could follow. I had been learning a lot about the Internet and online learning, and I realized that the Internet could give me the biggest leverage, and the fastest.”

This need for a business model created the pressure he needed to make a break from ministry to business. In 2010 he stopped taking ministry donations and began fresh by giving himself a clean-cut deadline to start Country Living University in 2011.

Country Living University was

designed to help people transition from urban or suburban to rural living, to navigate the challenges, avoid pitfalls and mistakes, and give them the tools to successfully realize their country lifestyle goals as quickly as possible. “There’s a whole gamut of things to learn about,” says David. “Everything from how to search for suitable property, what things to be aware of and look out for, independent water systems, alternate energy systems, gardening, food storage, heating with wood, etc. These are all things people have to learn, so CLU is a tool to help people to shorten the learning curve, a one-stop chance to go through the whole process.”

Country Living University has a module called “Country Living Income” which walks people through the making-a-living options before them. “This module became so popular that it turned into a stand-alone coaching opportunity,” Dave says.

In response to the demand for income-earning information, he developed an online course teaching people how they could do what we do with what they know, specializing in their own particular niche. Whatever their current passion or interest, he teaches how they can create an online information-based business.

That was how Country Home Business was born, which is now a separate website with separate training (www.countryhomebusiness.com). “This training is focused on helping people build an information business from start to finish, something that will support them in a homesteading lifestyle,” says Dave.

Different types of businesses

There are many different types of businesses that people can start, and all of them come with a number of built-in problems:

- **Product-based businesses** require manufacturing, which in

turn means a larger up-front investment. It also requires attention to logistics, production methods, and sales techniques. Rural areas are often economically depressed, so there is a limited potential for local customers, especially for small niche businesses.

- **Service-based businesses** are especially problematic in rural areas because of a reduced customer base, and they require more time to build up a clientele.

- **Buy-and-sell businesses** (selling other people's products) mean handling wholesale costs, shipping costs, and the hassle of refunds and returns.

- **Multi-level marketing** (besides the need to pressure friends and coworkers to buy unnecessary products) is not, let's face it, something most people can feel *passionate* about. Many people have chased their financial dreams through multi-level marketing only to be disappointed by the results.

The value of information

Rather than following these traditional paths for a business, Dave believes the fastest path for starting an online business is to create an **information product**, particularly digital products (DVDs, CDs, ebooks, videos, webinars, etc.).

The advantages of online business:

- There is a bigger potential customer base, literally world-wide;
- It can be run from anywhere there is an Internet connection;
- It enables target advertising at a reasonable cost;
- It gives small niche businesses a better chance of success;
- It provides a way to build a business faster than ever before;
- It has low startup costs.

Information products offer a number of advantages:

- They're inexpensive to produce and distribute by using free software and pre-made templates;



"Nothing is as successful in marketing as a story. People are captivated by stories. Your story can get customers for you because it resonates with them."

- You get the lion's share of the profits;
- You can start with nothing (no up-front investment), especially if you already have a computer. In fact, because you have a skill you're able to share, you've already made your investment by doing whatever it took to acquire that skill.
- Delivery can be automated by using such services as PayPal, email auto-responders, shopping carts, etc. This means your products can sell even while you're asleep.

"People go online because they're looking for information," says Dave. "If you have valuable information that will help someone quickly solve a problem, or to keep them from doing all the original research you had to do—and if you're willing to share that info for free—then you can sell a training course that goes deeper. And don't make the free video a teaser; give them solid information they can use and build on."

Offering in-depth information—both free and paid for—establishes you as an authority in the marketplace. No matter what kind of information you have to share, your influence will spread and you'll have more and more opportunity to touch lives—and your business will grow.

Why give it away for free?

So what is an information-based business, and why would anyone pay for it when information is so widely available online?

The fact is the Internet is so huge, and contains so much information, that busy people don't have the time to wade through it all in order to learn what they need to know. If you've done the research for them, often people are willing to pay you for that shortcut.

Because we're in an information economy, there are endless marketing opportunities for a product. If you don't have an information component, even for a physical product, your days are numbered. Someone will come and shove you out of the marketplace. "Don't just try to sell your hand-made soap," Dave illustrates. "Provide information. How and why did you start making soap? How do you make it? What kind of mistakes can people avoid? By offering information in addition to your product, you'll sell much better."

"People don't buy information for information's sake alone," Dave continues. "They want proof it works. They're looking for people they can trust, whose world values resonate with them. Sure, you can probably find identical information online for free. But people don't just look at cold hard facts. They like to know about someone's story and experience, and whose trust and credibility resonates with the buyer. If you're going to be successful in this business model, you have to let them know you're a real person—what you're like, what your story is. Nothing is as successful in marketing as a story. People are captivated by stories. Your story can get customers for you because it

resonates with them. That's one of the ways you rise above the competition."

To that effect, Dave recommends giving a lot of information away for free. "This seems counter-intuitive," says Dave, "especially since the Internet is full of free information. But it's your language and personal touch that resonates with readers. Readers (or listeners) become buyers."

Free information draws people in and instills trust in you. "People who are insecure are the ones who are afraid of giving stuff away for free," says Dave. "It's the market leaders who aren't afraid to give things away for free who are the secure ones."

If you can write or speak about something without charging for it, it establishes your place and authority in the marketplace. People are eager to find out what else you have to offer. Despite how contrary it sounds, giving away things for free will benefit you financially.

Selling your information

But how do you sell your information? How do you market yourself as well as your information products?

The beauty of the Internet is it allows you to avoid the awkwardness traditionally associated with salesmanship. Or, as Dave puts it, "It takes the ickyness out of sales." The Internet also allows you to teach to a wide market through articles, ebooks, podcasts, videos, webinars, or teleconferences.

"Marketing is simply creating a desire in the marketplace for what you have to offer," says Dave. "Marketing can be achieved simply through teaching. If you teach about your passion, that's your marketing."

Dave suggests people make two "levels" for an information-based business: the free information, and the paid information. "The free information has to be worthwhile," he emphasizes. "It can't be a teaser, it can't be fluff. It has to be solid, useful, and practical. Then if people are interested in delving further into the subject, they have the option to pay



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for the additional information. Also, look for every opportunity to build a marketing list. That way when you have a new product or ebook or webinar available, you have a built-in list of people to contact.”

Inexpensive or free startups

What does it take to start an on-line business? There are a number of myths and falsehoods that must first be dispelled:

- You must be a computer geek with expertise in computer programming and web design.
- You need a fancy webpage to run a successful business.
- You need a huge list to make money online.

The fact of the matter is, free website builders are available all over the Internet, and even the most computer-challenged individuals can build professional web pages with a very short learning curve.

There are also free open-source software programs available online that you can download to use to create your info products, including:

- Audacity (www.audacity.sourceforge.net), a cross-platform software for recording and editing sounds such as podcasts. For some people, it’s easier to *talk* about something than it is to *write* about something. And with audio recordings, you don’t have to worry about being on camera.
- CamStudio (www.camstudio.org), a professional screen recording and video editing software. It lets you record what’s on your computer screen so it can be used to create PowerPoint presentations, slide presentations, etc. Video editing software also often comes built-in on new computers.

How do I decide what to sell?

What kind of information should you sell? This is the heart of the is-



“Everyone knows something that someone else in the world wants to know how to do.”

sue. Before you claim that you don’t know enough about something to sell information about it, Dave begs to differ. *Everyone* knows something that someone else in the world wants to know how to do. If you can solve someone else’s problem—if you can teach someone how to do something—then you can create an information product.

Dave recommends starting with something you love. “I started with something I was very passionate about: country living,” says Dave. “A country lifestyle, and helping others achieve it, *drives* me. It’s also something I had a lot of experience in. Our first attempt at country living failed, but in that process we learned some secrets of success that we knew would help others succeed as well.”

What if you really love something but you haven’t had any experience yet? “Start with something in which you have *some* experience,” suggests Dave, “and build on that. Everyone starts as amateurs. You can still manage even if you haven’t any experience. Even your learning journey can be a marketing tool, since once again people are interested in *stories*.”

As a hint about what kind of

info product to make, look at your hobbies. Hobbies are voluntary activities on which people feel passionate enough to spend a great deal of time, money, and effort—without compensation. These are the types of info you’ll feel passionate enough to promote and sell.

Ask yourself this: If money weren’t an issue, what would you dream about doing? Is it knitting, weight loss, kayaking, mountain climbing, or teaching inner-city children to read? Once again, the answers to this question reflect what kind of info product you can create.

People underestimate the fact that if they’ve taken the time and effort to solve a real-life problem, there are others who will pay to learn what it took to solve that problem, rather than taking the time to research the solution themselves.

Another hint about what kind of information product to sell is to look at your talents. Now often *talents* and *interests* coincide, but not always. If you’re very very good at something, then you have the ability to pass that talent on to others and help them improve.

Education is another hint. What are you educated in? Education might be formal, or on-the-job, or from the School of Hard Knocks. There are people who can help others through problems that they themselves have experienced. Never underestimate the importance of this kind of education.

Lastly, consider a *need*. What kind of need will your information product fill?

In short, there are four vital points that characterize a niche, which can be turned into an information-based business:

- Interest
- Talent
- Education
- Need

The point at which all four of these things intersect is the “sweet spot” on which to focus your information products. *This is your niche*.

Dave talks about what he calls

the “profitability test.” “Google some key words that correspond with your interest,” he suggests, “and see if anyone is advertising the same thing. Competition means there’s a viable market for that information. No competition means there’s no market.” As a humorous aside, he adds, “Go to Amazon.com and see if there’s a ‘Dummies’ book on your particular interest. If there is, then it’s a profitable subject.”

Dave also suggests using Amazon.com as a sort of profitability search engine (what he calls the “Amazon test”). Try searching on Amazon.com using your particular niche key words, and see what kind of information *others are willing to pay for*.

It’s astounding what kind of information and/or materials can be sold online. Dave points to people teaching music online (even live lessons through Skype); selling physical as well as digital products; audio products such as MP3 downloads and CDs; video products through YouTube or streaming; written products such as PDFs, Kindle or Nook ebooks, e-magazines, and special reports.

“In today’s market,” says Dave, “it’s wise to offer a blend of physical and informational products.”

How to create profitable web pages

You don’t have to be (or hire) a computer geek to make a profitable web page. Some of the most profitable websites are simple, even minimalist. (Dave recommends WordPress for creating free or inexpensive web pages.) You don’t just want a web page; you want a *profitable* web page.

There are five simple page layouts that make money:

- **Opt-in page** (sometimes called a “squeeze page”). This performs one function, but it’s strategic. The purpose is to encourage people to put their name and email in the form. The reward for this action is to provide free information (training, webinar, etc.). This provides a built-in list of people interested in the particular niche you’re filling.

- **Confirmation page**, which asks

people to confirm their email address (this circumvents spam problems and computer robots). This page asks them to check their email inbox and click on the provided link to obtain their free information.

- **Training page**, which leads people to the page to receive the free information that you offered on the Opt-In Page.

- **Order page**, where the reader is introduced to an information product that they pay for. By offering information for free, it allows customers to “test drive” your product to see if it’s worth paying for additional information. It allows people to see if your information is practical, useful, and helpful.

- **Download page**. This is the delivery; it gives them the information they’ve purchased. It could be a link to an ebook, or to download a video, or otherwise transfer information from your web page to the customer’s computer.

These five types of pages are the most natural way to market a product, and leads to the opportunity to get *more* solutions... for a price.

But Dave emphasizes that what you give people for free has to be useful and helpful, *not fluff*. It has to be some of your best stuff. After all, that’s what’s going to convince them you have *more* great stuff, and it’s worth paying you for more information.

(Along these lines, Dave has an eight-week downloadable business plan which offers step-by-step training through the entire process of building a business. This material includes building web pages, creating info products, the tools to put things on auto-pilot, and marketing strategies customized to a particular home business idea.)

Just one warning...

Dave always warns people about a common misconception: In your enthusiasm to start your own online information-based business, *don’t quit your day job*. The beauty of this type of business is you can build it

in your spare time, such as evenings or weekends. “Wait until the business grows to the point of providing a sustainable source of income before you quit your job,” advises Dave. “Don’t be speculative. It’s important to work in a strategic, orderly fashion to build your online business.”

However he recommends that people start their business *now*. “Your chosen field will only become more competitive, so it’s best to start right away. Perfectionism and procrastination can keep you from getting things done, so setting yourself a deadline can help a tremendous amount.”

To recap...

Dave recaps with what he calls Six Steps to Success:

- Choose the right niche. Getting this right means starting off on the right foot. Finding the sweet spot, the intersection of interest/talent/education/need.

- Create your first information product. Audio? Ebook? Video? Make an outline, break your topic down into the most logical way to teach someone else.

- Get your business on the Internet by focusing on the five kinds of web pages mentioned earlier.

- Promote your business using free training. Offering a free component of your product brings in more business.

- Offer your information product to those who want more.

- Use automation to enjoy the freedom of a home business. Automation means you don’t have to babysit your business.

What do you have to lose?

Speaking from personal experience, I cannot underscore strongly enough how important a home business is for successful rural living. Since Mr. Westbrook’s business model for starting an information-based business has a proven track record of success, what do you have to lose?

It’s time to teach the world what you know. 📌



A tidy install of eight 6-volt L-16s for a typical small, off-grid home.

Alternative energy:

Battery banks: *The heart of the system*

BY DAN FINK
COLORADO

Anyone who owns a vehicle likely already has a love-hate relationship with the starting battery inside. It's heavy, dirty, expensive, dangerous, and always seems to fail at the most inopportune times. In an off-grid home, those irritating issues are compounded exponentially. A typical bank of batteries needed to power the needs of a small family in a modest-sized, energy-efficient home for only a few days is the size of a refrigerator, weighs over a ton, lasts less than 10 years and costs over \$3,000. Systems for greater electrical needs are often two-to-four times that size.

If there were such a thing as a compact, lightweight, long-lasting and affordable rechargeable battery, we'd have all been driving electric cars for decades, but no such battery

yet exists. The one that starts your car or backs up your home electrical system right now is just Planté and Faure's late-1800s technology with a few minor, modern tweaks. The newest electric vehicles (and your smartphone and laptop computer) use new Lithium-ion battery technology, but it's still far too expensive for home backup power—a battery bank comparable to the example above would cost well over \$20,000, more than most folks pay for an entire off-grid solar power system! Equipment that plays nice with Li-ion cells is also rare and expensive, and the technology has no track record yet in the home renewable energy industry.

Battery types for home backup power

With only a few rare exceptions (see sidebar pg. 36), the batteries in cars, trucks, and new or existing home-scale renewable energy backup

systems today are formulated with lead and sulfuric acid—the “lead-acid battery.”

Lead-acid batteries come in two main varieties, flooded and sealed. Flooded are the most common, most durable and least expensive. The caps on each cell are vented, so that gases released during charging and discharging can escape. During the electrochemical reaction, water is split from the electrolyte and must be replaced with distilled water on a regular basis. The batteries will spill electrolyte if tipped, a corrosive situation that will ruin almost anything it touches, and a very time-consuming liquid to replace.

Sealed lead-acid batteries won't spill electrolyte at any angle. They were first invented for industrial applications where the battery could be mounted on its side, or in unstable situations like a boat in rough seas or a camper on rough roads. They are often called “gel cells” or

“valve-regulated lead acid batteries (VRLA).” The drawback of these batteries is that if not charged with the *exact* regimen specified by the manufacturer, they lose water from their gelled electrolyte—and you have no way to replace it.

Absorbed Glass Matt (AGM) batteries are the latest in the sealed lead-acid battery world. They have the advantages of not spilling electrolyte when tipped (or even when broken), and that internally they chemically recombine battery gases into water again. You don’t have to add water to the electrolyte, and they are much more tolerant of charging problems. The downside is that AGMs cost about twice as much as flooded batteries, and are not available in as many size options.

Deep-cycle batteries—aren’t

“Deep-cycle battery” is probably the most misleading term in the history of electricity. All batteries—even the latest and greatest high-tech marvels—are rated for how many “cycles” they can perform before they degrade so far that you need to replace them. A cycle means going from full charge to 50 percent depth of discharge (DOD) and back to full again. Manufacturers may also rate their batteries for cycles to 80 percent

Battery safety

Batteries are dangerous, even your car battery! Here are some safety guidelines. Whenever you are working with batteries:

- Wear safety glasses with side shields, nitrile gloves, work shoes and work clothes.
- Keep a large box of baking soda nearby to neutralize acid spills.
- Wear a dust mask or respirator when cleaning corrosion from battery terminals.
- Lift batteries only by their built-in handles, or use a battery lifter.
- Wrap the wrench you’ll be using for tightening battery terminals with electrical tape to prevent accidental shorts.

DOD and 20 percent DOD.

An automotive battery is designed to put out a huge amount of energy in a short time to turn your car’s starter motor, even in cold temperatures, and then be quickly charged back to full by the car’s alternator as you drive. So, inside there are a large number of very thin lead plates, which gives more surface area for that electrochemical reaction we depend on. You’ll see ratings for “Cold Cranking Amps” on car batteries when you shop at the auto parts store, and if you live in a very cold climate you probably already choose batteries with higher CCA numbers. But for home renewable energy storage, higher CCA is exactly what you *don’t* want. Those thin plates don’t tolerate much abuse and fail quickly

if not recharged promptly. That’s no problem in a car; the battery rarely gets below 10 percent DOD and can survive thousands of shallow cycles like that. But in a home power system, automotive batteries would be lucky to survive a year before failing completely.

“Deep-cycle” batteries for boats, RVs, forklifts and home renewable energy systems are built with fewer, thicker plates. They can’t put out the instant amperage you need to start a truck at 20-below zero, but they don’t degrade as quickly if it’s going to take some time to charge them back up to full, such as if your home runs on solar or wind power. They don’t thrive on this treatment, though—they simply survive it a while longer than a car battery. A typical starting battery can only take around 100 cycles to 50 percent DOD, a renewable energy battery around 1500 cycles and a forklift battery up to 4000 cycles (and beyond).

In industrial applications batteries are hit hard (50 percent DOD or worse) on a daily basis, but most home battery banks are designed to provide more gentle power for a couple days to a week, and in the process never fall below 30 percent DOD, or even better 20 percent. As the batteries approach 50 percent DOD, the homeowner can run a backup generator for a few hours to get things charged up again (or the system computer can start and stop the generator on its own). Fifty-percent DOD should only happen in an emergency, like when your generator won’t start during a blizzard.



Left: A 6-volt golf cart battery in a T-105 form factor. Photo courtesy Trojan Battery.

Right: A 2-volt commercial battery in an L-16 form factor, designed specifically for renewable energy systems. Photo courtesy U.S. Battery.

A professionally-fabricated battery interconnect cable.

Battery grades

I tend to classify batteries into four main groups: starting, marine, commercial and industrial. I've already explained why starting batteries won't cut it in an off-grid situation. Marine batteries are slightly better, and are convenient for tiny power systems because they operate at 12 volts, like a car. They can work well in boats, RVs and campers but they don't hold much energy, and you can expect only one or two years lifespan in a home or cabin application.

Commercial batteries are by far the most popular in home power systems due to reasonable cost, high capacity and good resistance to abuse, with the T-105 and L-16 types used the most. These numbers are simply "form factors," just like with AA and D batteries; many different companies manufacture them and they are all about the same physical size, with slight differences in capacity and performance. T-105s are commonly used to power golf carts, and L-16s were designed for electric floor sweepers. Those are very demanding uses, so both battery types also perform quite well in home RE systems.

A golf cart battery typically measures about 10 x 11 x 8 inches, weighs in at 67 pounds, produces 6 volts DC and can store about 225 amp-hours of energy. An L-16 is also 6 volts, has about the same footprint, is twice as tall, weighs twice as much and stores about twice the energy.

For smaller installations or where transportation to remote sites is a problem, I always recommend golf cart batteries. A normal human can lift one without much strain, they are easy to fit into tight spaces and you can transport them more easily to remote locations. They also make excellent "training batteries" for folks with modest electrical needs who are new to off-grid living. If they make a mistake and ruin a battery bank, the financial burden of replacing it is not so high.

For larger installations, L-16s are usually hands-down the best, most affordable choice. For my potential off-grid clients, I often draw the de-

The Edison battery

In 1901, Thomas Edison developed a new type of battery using nickel and iron for the plates, and alkaline potassium hydroxide for the electrolyte. He intended them to be used in electric cars and for automotive starting, and you'll see them referred to as nickel-iron (NiFe) or Edison cells. They are making a bit of comeback in the renewable energy world and are especially popular among "preppers" for one reason — they are extremely long-lasting and resistant to abuse from over- and undercharging. It's not uncommon for 50-year-old NiFe batteries to still be functioning just fine.

Unfortunately they also have major disadvantages, which are why they never caught on for Edison's planned uses. They are very expensive to manufacture, don't store as much energy for their size and weight as lead-acid batteries, have a high self-discharge rate, are very inefficient when charging or discharging, and are subject to thermal runaway if not charged carefully. Currently they are only made in China, and there is only one company in the USA that imports them. That company is currently working with charge controller manufacturers to develop programming to better suit NiFe cells.

I usually advise clients to avoid NiFe and go for industrial lead-acid batteries instead, but I can't deny that the idea of a battery that can last decades is very attractive. If you are going to use NiFe batteries, I recommend that you size both your solar array and battery bank at about twice the normal capacity, and be certain that all your charger equipment has specific settings just for NiFe.

...ciding line between T-105s and L-16s squarely at the refrigerator door — if you'll be using a typical electric fridge and/or freezer, you need L-16s. If you'll be chilling with propane appliances instead, golf cart batteries could do an excellent job at running everything else. That seems kind of arbitrary, but a fridge and freezer are large, essential loads, and you don't have much control over when they need to turn on and off to keep food from spoiling. During a long stretch of bad weather with a broken backup generator, you'll appreciate the extra capacity and durability of L-16s.

Industrial batteries are amazing things, commonly found in forklifts, mining vehicles and large renewable energy installations, and each battery gives out 2 volts. They are by far the most long-lasting and abuse-resistant battery out there, and in a home RE system lifespans of 10 to 20 years are common. But, ouch, the price! They

cost two to four times as much as L-16s for the same capacity, and are extremely heavy, bulky and difficult to move. You're not going to be loading any of these into and out of your pickup truck by hand, as even a small one weighs in at over 300 pounds.

Battery capacity

Battery capacity is rated in "amp-hours," a confusing term designed to keep renewable energy consultants like myself employed because hardly anyone understands it. An amp-hour (a-h) means the battery can store and release one ampere of current for one hour. But, at what voltage? I find watt-hours (w-h) and kilowatt-hours (kWh, 1,000 w-h) to be *far* easier to work with, as solar panels, generators, lights and appliances are all rated in watts of output or consumption, so I use watt-hours in all the off-grid electrical classes I teach. Fortunately, the conversion



Six T-105s snuggled tight in their insulated battery box in frigid northern Canada. T-105s were chosen because they had to be moved in by helicopter.

is easy – just multiply the battery’s amp-hour rating by its voltage to get watt-hours.

Battery capacity also changes depending on how fast you are discharging the battery – the higher the rate, the lower the capacity. So a

battery that holds 400 a-h when discharged over the course of 20 hours (called a C/20 rate) might hold only 300 a-h if discharged in only five hours (C/5 rate). Also remember that you should *never* discharge any battery to over 50 percent DOD, so

if your calculations show you need 10 kWh of backup storage for your home, you really need to purchase a 20 kWh battery bank.

Battery killers

Most batteries don’t die of natural causes, they are murdered! The most common culprits are loss of electrolyte, chronic undercharging, too many deep discharge cycles, corroded connections and heat.

In a flooded lead-acid cell, it’s critical that the liquid electrolyte level remain above the top of the plates at all times. If it drops below, permanent damage occurs quickly. It’s an easy problem to prevent; someone simply has to check the electrolyte level at least monthly, and top up with distilled water as needed. In remote and automated systems where humans can’t keep an eye on things, AGM batteries are often used to reduce these maintenance tasks.

Chronic undercharging is a more insidious killer. You might be surprised that I don’t list *overcharging* as

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a prime suspect instead. But in reality, overcharging a flooded lead-acid battery is no big deal, as long as you keep adding distilled water to keep the electrolyte level up. The damage from undercharging builds up slowly over the course of months or years, with the only symptom that someone finally notices that “gosh, sure seems like these batteries don’t hold much of a charge anymore.” The cure is to install a relatively inexpensive battery monitor, size your solar array correctly and scrupulously follow the battery manufacturer’s instructions for programming your charge controllers.

Loose and corroded battery connections are another problem that can creep up on you slowly. Batteries are by nature low voltage, and that means high amperage and frequent heating and cooling cycles in the wires and connectors. This can cause them to eventually loosen, creating high-resistance hot spots, and corrosion begins to build up internally — right where you *can’t* see it starting. By the time you can see green, powdery crud building up on the outside of the battery terminals (photo page 37) there’s already likely a bad connection. And *that* means one or more batteries in the bank are getting less charging current than the rest, which over time will cause premature battery failure.

You might also be surprised that I don’t list cold temperatures as a battery-killer, but heat instead. Most people who live in northern climes have experienced poor automotive battery performance during cold

Are batteries “green?”

With their toxic and corrosive mix of lead and acid, it’s hard to imagine batteries as environmentally friendly. But according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 97 percent of lead-acid batteries in the U.S. are recycled, with the lead and plastic going to make new batteries and for other uses.

Battery myth

“Don’t put your batteries on a concrete floor — the electricity will leak out.”

This one is false. In fact, a concrete floor is an excellent place for batteries, as the large thermal mass evens out the temperature of all the cells, and an accidental acid spill won’t damage concrete. But back in the day, this myth was true! The earliest lead-acid batteries encased the cells in glass, inside a tar-lined wooden box. If the wood swelled from a damp concrete floor, the glass could crack, ruining the battery. Later battery designs used primitive hardened rubber cases that had a high carbon content. After long enough contact with damp concrete, circuit paths could form through the carbon in the rubber out into the concrete, discharging the batteries. Fortunately, modern plastic battery cases have solved all these problems, and I recommend a concrete pad to all my clients for all new battery installations.

temperatures and even frozen and cracked cells. But lead-acid batteries can survive just fine at temperatures of 50 below zero and worse if they are fully charged, though they do become sluggish. Their performance bounces right back to normal when temperatures rise again, with no permanent damage.

It’s all about the electrochemical reaction between lead and sulfuric acid. When a lead-acid battery is fully charged, the electrolyte liquid or gel inside is a very strong and corrosive acid. When the battery is discharged, the electrolyte is mostly water...and water freezes quite readily. There are two sides to the chemical reaction going on inside a battery; a “good” one that lets us store and release electrical energy, and a “bad” one that happens when the battery is not fully charged, smothering the internal plates with sulfur that can’t be easily removed. Both are slowed down by cold temperatures, and sped up by heat. But the bad one (called “sulfation”) causes permanent damage to a battery, while the good one doesn’t. The ideal temperature for a battery, both in operation and in storage, is about 70°F.

Batteries also lose charge when just sitting and doing nothing; think of them like a bucket with a hole in the bottom. The phenomenon is

called “self-discharge” and is the reason that vehicles which sit for a long time between uses — like fire trucks, yard tractors and small airplanes — are usually stored connected to a small trickle charger to compensate for these losses.

Battery installation

Batteries hold a tremendous amount of energy, more than enough to quickly start a fire. It’s critical that they be installed correctly and safely. Before you attempt to install, remove or maintain a battery bank, be sure to read the safety guidelines I’ve put together in the sidebar on page 33.

The National Electrical Code requires a sealed, vented battery enclosure with only a few exceptions. Commercial enclosures made from steel or plastic are available but very expensive, so most folks build the enclosure out of wood. For the floor, a concrete pad is ideal (see above). I’m surprised wood is even allowed — improperly installed and maintained battery banks are a leading cause of fires in RE systems. So I recommend lining the interior of the wooden box with cement backer board, which won’t burn. Because the gases emitted by batteries are both explosive and toxic, you should *never* install any kind of electrical equipment inside a battery enclosure. In



Severe corrosion on the terminals indicates bad connections. These 6-volt industrial forklift batteries had to be replaced, but on the bright side served for 14 years in an off-grid solar power system before failing.

with a protective spray, or just plain petroleum jelly. This will help keep corrosion from creeping in.

Maintenance

I recommend a quick and easy (hah!) battery maintenance on a monthly basis. Mark your calendar and post a maintenance log sheet on the battery box. Be sure to wear full personal protective equipment as described in my safety guidelines sidebar.

Check all interconnect cables for loose connections by gently trying to wiggle them.

Check all battery terminals for corrosion – the dreaded “green crud.”

If anything is loose or you see any green stuff at all, shut down the entire power system with the master DC disconnect, remove the cable lug from the battery terminal, and clean everything with a wire brush. Then re-coat the terminal with petroleum jelly and reconnect.

Clean the top of each battery with a damp rag to remove dust and chemicals. If there is chemical buildup, add some baking soda to the water for your rag. Do *not* let this cleaning solution enter the holes on the sides of the vent caps under any circumstances! The operative word here is “damp.”

Remove each battery cell vent cap and check the electrolyte level with a flashlight. Add distilled water (and distilled water *only*) up to the “full” mark inside and replace the cap.

At the end of the day

I hope I’ve shed some light on the mysteries of battery energy storage. A battery bank is the heart of every off-grid renewable energy system, and also the part most likely to fail. By choosing wisely from the very beginning, you’ll maximize the lifespan of your batteries and lower their lifetime cost per kilowatt-hour – but I regret to inform you that at *some* point in the future, you’ll still have to remove and replace them. Sigh. My back is hurting just thinking about it.... ☹️

most climates it’s not necessary to insulate the battery enclosure, but in extremely cold climates it can be useful, as batteries do make heat when charging and discharging. In extremely hot climates, you may even need to install the batteries in an underground enclosure to keep temperatures down close to the recommended 70°F.

The lid of the box should be slanted, with the outdoor vent screened off to prevent rodents from entering, with the vent placed at the highest part of the box so that the flammable and explosive (but lighter than air) hydrogen gas the batteries emit will naturally exit. The *other* reason for slanting the lid, in my long experience with off-grid power systems, is simply so that the homeowner won’t have a flat surface on which to pile tools, owner’s manuals and other clutter that impedes easy access for maintenance!

The short, thick wires that interconnect the batteries in a bank and then connect it to the rest of the power system are critical for both safety and performance, and must be sized and installed correctly. The wire size needed is determined by

the maximum output amperage the battery bank will have to supply to the inverter (I’ll discuss inverters in a future issue of *COUNTRYSIDE*), and it’s best to follow the inverter manufacturer’s guidelines. The wire in any case must be thick, flexible and expensive, much like welding cable, and generally at least #0 AWG unless your inverter will be very small. In fact, welding cable works very well for battery interconnects, but for a variety of arcane and obscure reasons doesn’t meet code. If you choose to use it, you’ll be fine, and I promise I won’t tell.

The lugs at each end of the interconnect cables are critical, too. Set-screw lugs are commonly available, but I advise against them – too many parts that can loosen over time. Professional installers use large copper crimp lugs, installed with a special crimper, and seal the connection with glue-lined heat-shrink tubing (photo page 33). Most local battery distributors will have the tools and supplies needed to make excellent interconnects, and it’s often quite cost effective to have them build these cables for you. Before connecting the cables, coat the battery terminals

The machine shed:

A big truck for a small property



Most pickup trucks can be easily overloaded. That's not a problem with medium-duty trucks.

BY JOHN WILDER
FLORIDA

As a former hobby farm owner, I have an unusual suggestion. In addition to your pickup truck, I suggest that you buy a medium-duty flatbed truck. I realize you might think that it is too much truck and not needed. I am here to try to persuade you that you would be wrong. Let me make my case and see if you don't agree.

I have seen guys with delusions of grandeur about their pickup trucks being dangerously overloaded too many times. You put yourself, other drivers, and the load at risk by overloading your pickup. You create a lot of excessive wear to the transmission, tires, suspension and brakes by being overloaded. This is a case of testosterone overloading intellect. Medium-duty trucks are massive and handle heavy loads easily—that is what they are designed for. On a small property it is easy to have very big loads, like bags of concrete for a project. A pallet easily goes 1-1/2 tons, which is overloading to most pickups. What about large or multiple bales of hay? Or clean up of trees after being cut down? All of this is resolved with a flatbed medium-duty truck. Instead of hauling a trailer, you can load equipment right on the back of the flatbed truck. Instead of a stock trailer, you can load livestock right into a flatbed with stake sides.

There have been thousands of people killed in pickups on the roads. They offer little more crash protection than the average car. In a massive medium-duty truck, cars just bounce off of you and you just get jostled around in that big cab. I even had a garbage truck hit me in my medium-duty truck and I just got bounced around a little bit.

You will find that because of their size and the fact that people drive them a lot more carefully, insurance

on the larger truck is cheaper than your pickup truck. I would suggest just having liability insurance on this truck, because it is unlikely to be seriously damaged in an accident, and you'll save even more money.

A medium-duty truck will have literally twice the life span of your pickup truck, making it very economical. It is much cheaper to maintain because you will not cause wear to it like your pickup truck.

If you do any demo work and have rented a dumpster, you know how expensive it can be. It is not at all uncommon to pay \$600 for a big dumpster load. I use my medium-duty truck in the place of a dumpster. When I go to the dump, I have paid \$37 a ton to dump, which normally works out to about a \$50 bill for me. Not utilizing a dumpster will save you serious money. In addition, if you have a big load, it takes just one load as opposed to multiple loads with a pickup truck. My dump charges a minimum, so when I come in with the pickup, I don't get to dump very much for the \$50 minimum that they charge.

Because of the dual rear wheels and ground clearance, it is much less likely to get stuck. The massive transmission means you can pull vehicles loose without burning a clutch or a torque converter. The transmission's low gear and the driveshaft and rear end are all much more massive, and can easily withstand the rigors of pulling out a stuck vehicle.

A used, medium-duty truck does not have the resale value of a pickup truck, so you can buy a better and cheaper used truck for your money. Now is the time to find a real bargain in these trucks. My suggestion for an ideal truck is a flatbed dump with stake sides, or just a flatbed with stake sides. With a dump feature, it is much easier to unload by just hitting the up lever and effortlessly dumping your load. 🚛

Paint your house or barn in 3 days



By JOHN WILDER
FLORIDA

If you are willing to follow my directions, you can indeed paint the exterior of your building in three days. There are a number of specialized techniques and tools that you will need to use in order to do the job in that period of time.

The first thing that I am going to recommend is *do not pressure wash your house first*. I know that seems counter-intuitive, but I have my reasons. Too often you get water up underneath the siding. While the surface is dry, the underlying moisture is trapped and can cause the paint to blister and peel. Dirt on the surface is not going to matter because of the prep work that you are going to do.

The first secret to a long-lasting paint job is proper prep work. This is not a step that you want to skip. The best way to make paint adhere and last without peeling is to sand all of the surfaces that you plan to paint. This gives the surface "tooth" for the paint to adhere to. I know that sanding every square inch seems like an inordinate amount of work. I have a secret that will make it "child's play."

Most people do not know what a "mini-grinder" or right angle grinder is. Those who do, think of it only as a tool to grind down and dress welds in metal. It is so much more than that. If you attach a sanding disc and attachment to it, it is truly a multi-functional tool. With the sanding disc attached, you can still grind down welds, but you can also remove flaking paint easily and super fast, as well as rough up the existing paint that is in rela-

tively good shape. A mini-grinder is small and lightweight at about four pounds. This means it does not take a lot of strength to hold or to use. It spins at an amazing 10,000 rpms

(revolutions per minute). You simply sand away loose and flaking paint. You also quickly sand every square inch of surface that you plan to paint with a 50-80-grit sanding disc. You



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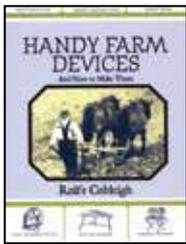
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BY ROLFE COBLEIGH



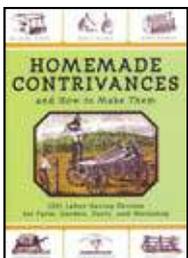
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also want to use a seven-inch sanding disc and backer, even though the tool says 4 1/2".

There are some precautions that you need to take when using this tool. You need to wear leather gloves to protect your hands. Sometimes a sanding disc will rip apart and fly away because it is spinning so fast. You can get lacerations on your hands without the gloves.

You also need to wear good eye protection. Safety glasses, unfortunately, are not safe and you need to understand that the designers do not understand that when you are cutting something or sanding overhead, the debris can fly into your eyes around the rim of the safety glasses. You need to either wear ski goggles or paintball goggles to completely encase your eyes to protect them from flying debris and sanding dust.

Once you have sanded everything, take a broom and brush off all of the dust from the surface or use rags and wipe down the surfaces.

You need to rent what is called an airless paint sprayer. Airless means that unlike most paint spray guns, which rely on compressed air to spray the paint, the airless operates like a mechanical pump which forces the paint out and atomizes it under a high-pressure mechanical pump. The advantage is that you have more control and much less overspray. Have the clerk at the rental store show you how to use it, and more importantly, clean it. If you bring it back without being properly cleaned (and that means disassembling the spray gun and cleaning the interior parts as well), they will charge you a cleaning charge.

You will also want to either buy a hand-held paint spray shield or make one out of 1/4-inch plywood. The dimensions should be 12-14 inches wide and about three feet in length. You use this when spraying near the roofline so that you don't get paint on your roof, or anywhere else you don't want paint.

You will want to mask plastic over your windows, doors, and anything else you don't want paint overspray on. A staple gun comes in

handy here. It will go much faster if you invest in a hammer stapler, used in stapling down roofing felt. You can find it in stores where they sell roofing felt. This tool allows you to set the staple by using it literally like a hammer instead of having to use both hands and applying pressure, like a conventional staple gun.

Properly dilute the primer according to directions and thoroughly stir it. You can do this with a paint mixer attachment chucked in a drill. You will want to prime the whole surface and then follow with a finish coat. It is essential that you do not skimp on paint quality. Buy the top quality available. The extra price per gallon is worth it in quality and the longevity of your paint job.

To spray, hold the gun 14-18 inches from the surface and move it in a straight line, keeping the nozzle 90 degrees to the surface being sprayed. If you end up shooting too much and the paint drips, then back roll the paint with a dry brush or dry paint roller.

Don't use a ladder. According to OSHA, the number one cause of accidents is from ladders. It is also tough to hang on with one hand and try to paint with the other. Not only that, it takes a lot of time and energy to get up and down the ladder and then move it. Invariably, you mess up wet paint by placing the ladder against it.

Use a portable trailer-mounted man lift that you can also rent. This way, you don't touch the house or the wet paint. You can also instantly move with the touch of a joystick and work with both hands safely in the bucket. At 2,500 pounds, you can tow it with a compact car. You simply set it up on the ground, centered on the wall that you want to paint. You can paint the whole wall without moving the man lift until you're ready to paint the sides.

Paint the trim last, but don't attempt to spray it. This still requires a trim brush and doing it the old-fashioned way. Good luck with that painting project. 🍷

The woodlot:

PLANTING TREES PROVES ENERGIZING, SUSTAINABLE & PROFITABLE

BY ANITA B. STONE
NORTH CAROLINA

Planting trees for future income begins with finding new energy sources. Because energy crop growing is an investment, it is crucial that the right choice is made from among a variety of options available, preferably based on land availability. One popular energy commodity is Short Rotation Forestry (SRF), the practice of cultivating fast-growing trees that reach their optimum size between eight and 20 years, compared to the usual 30-year wait for harvest. Reforesting property offers substantial income from timber. A typical rate of return for a well-managed forest is about 12% annually. And that's not to mention the benefits of hunting, protecting water quality and offering habitat for critters. There are several ways in which income can be realized from timber property. You may receive ordinary income from rent for the use of the property itself or from other services that the property offers, including hiking and resource materials. Income can also be derived from the sale of logs, lumber or other forest products as medicinal plants, moss and ferns. Several loggers receive income from the disposal of standing timber (stumpage) or by cutting the timber as a sale, including firewood. On the homestead, trees can offer a variety of fruit, vegetables, flowers, perfumes, sugar, syrup, spices, gum, paper, furniture, tea and coffee, all of which can become profitable. Sometimes it is best to specialize in one or two crops and focus on profitable income.



A grove of poplars will grow quickly.

For instance, a stand of trees restores the environment, grows more food and builds a sustainable future while providing a diverse income. Trees not only provide shade, renew and stabilize the soil, but they increase crop production. This is also sustainable and becomes an income-generated product. By using a process known as Short Rotation Forestry, the tree is cut back to allow the growth of multiple stems on a regular cycle of two to four years. It consists of planting a site and then felling the trees when they reach 10-20 cm (roughly five to eight inches) diameter. This has the effect of retaining high productivity of a young plantation, but increasing the wood-to-bark ratio.

Depending on the species chosen, single or multi-stemmed trees can be grown on agricultural land, previously forested land, or reclaimed land. These selective trees do not compete with food crops. Several fast-growing species grown on a reduced rotation length are primarily grown as a low cost, low maintenance harvest energy crop, used in conventional power stations or specialized electricity generation units, thereby reducing the amount of fossil fuel-derived carbon dioxide emissions either alone or combined with other fuels, including coal. Once harvested, the energy crops are used to make biofuels such as bioethanol or combusted for the energy content to generate heat, resembling the wood-fuel concept.

Homesteaders can grow the perennial willow tree, which has a long harvesting cycle along with dense plantings of very tall crops. Weeds are kept at bay during growth and after cutbacks. Typically no insecticides or fungicides are used.

The potential effects of this type of plantation are tourism, rural employment, family farm futures and a farming infrastructure. Biomass can be grown from a variety of woody or herbaceous crops, including miscanthus, switchgrass, and bamboo. Eucalyptus has the potential to deliver greater volumes of biomass from the same land area than alternative crops. Using the SRF methods you



If you don't have the space, planting even a few trees will prove beneficial for future generations.

can also grow poplar and sycamore, which can produce an energy source. If you select willow, the second harvest (in about nine years) will fill the landscape; thereafter, the willow plantation will be extremely profitable when the market develops and the crop does well. Willow has a high potential for enhancing biodiversity in the agriculture environment as it can support large numbers of invertebrate species.

SRF production is also expected to

be significantly beneficial to improve water quality and result in proactive water conservation. The main benefit to water quality would be using the strong nutrients of crops and saving water. SRF could be an effective option for mitigating nitrate leaching by maximizing nitrogen removal while providing a high yielding crop for farmers. The environmental impact varies. Some species including eucalyptus have a high water usage, a major concern due to changing climate

areas. There can also be impacts on biodiversity and the effects of large scale SRF on flora and fauna which are unknown.

Due to excessive amounts of natural fertilizer contained in the soil, a fertilization program is unlikely to be required for the first and possibly second rotation, which saves money and protects the environment. Normally there is sufficient ground nutrition until the soil becomes depleted.

Another benefit with the establishment of SRF in an agricultural landscape is providing additional cover by the tree crops for mammals and future nesting areas occur with the protection of the crops. Certain areas will provide forage for small ground species. With SRF as a maintenance plan for crops, it also incorporates biodiversity of the land area.

Species such as the red squirrel are unlikely to find suitable habitat in SRF because of the lack of the mature trees needed for nesting sites. But fox, weasels and badgers thrive within the habitat stability. Deer are able to forage while seed-eating birds are likely to nest as well as birds that feed on litter and worms. A balance of nature is provided for the forest animals to select their method of survival and requirements.

A major facet to SRF is exemplified through Short Rotation Coppicing (SRC). Historic fuel wood coppice systems have been used as energy for hundreds of years. Coppicing is a traditional method of woodland management which takes advantage of the fact that many trees produce new growth from the root or the stump which resembles a stool-like chunk of wood. The reduction of tree size promotes the growth of multiple stems on a regular basis. Once a tree is cut and the stump remains, several short stems begin to take root. Southern beech, aspen, sweet chestnut, ash, birch, eucalyptus and sycamore perform as energy crops and can produce high income.

An average SRC plantation should be visible for 10 years before it needs replanting. Harvesting takes place during the winter and provides employment opportunities for agri-

cultural workers at a quiet time of year.

Farmers are not limited by tree species. Experimentation with known and unknown tree varieties allow for quick growth and easy harvesting. Trees are usually felled when they are approximately 15 cm (5.9 inches) wide at chest height, which takes from 8-to-20 years. This compares with 60 years or more for standard forestry crops. The trees are replaced by new plantings or allowed to regenerate from the stumps as coppice. The wood chips produced are preferred in the power industry because they do not contain bark and wood and wood is more homogenous than chips provided by SRC. The financial potential includes profit after transportation and is estimated to be around \$15-\$30 per ton.

Another planting for profit is firewood. You can sell whole logs to a buyer, cordwood that you have already cut and split for the consumer or cut-up lumber. Woods like maple and ash are excellent for burning in wood stoves. Soft woods like pine are good for short, hot fires like those in fire pits or wood cooking stoves. Their sap does create a lot of creosote, though, so they should not be sold as a primary heating wood. If you don't already own wood-cutting gear, you can purchase or rent a chainsaw with extra chains, a log splitter, a truck for delivery an axe and a hand splitter and wedges. A covered shed or barn is an ideal place to keep your wood with tarps covering it. If you are selling scrap lumber, talk

to owners of woodworking shops or lumberyards and make a deal to purchase their unused wood. Before you stack and sell your wood, cut it into saleable lengths. Most consumers require wood to be in 12-16-inch lengths and no more than six inches around, which is comfortable to pick up by hand. Once cut, simply split the wood into suitable lengths, bundle or stack it.

Once the wood is ready for sale, place a sign in front of your home, lot or near a heavy traffic area. Many folks use shopping centers and the intersections of main roads to display their wood piles. Place fliers on community boards, use a local newspaper and spread the word by mouth. To get above the competition, you may want to offer free delivery or extra wood with a certain amount of purchases.

With the advent of plastic becoming less advantageous and the conscience of buyers turning to more sustainable, green and organically grown energy crops, sales have increased over the past few years in the area of seasonal trees, including a selection of fir, pine, oak or spruce for Christmas sales. High income may be derived by planting homegrown trees, not only for the season, but for the yard and decorative purposes.

Whether you find a logger to swap trees for crops or plant timber, growing trees for income may become an extremely profitable journey when natural resources are used and conservation plays a major role in the career of energy. ♣

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Country communities:

A straight line to community wellness

BY JERRI COOK
COUNTRYSIDE STAFF

It's not brain surgery. The shortest path between two points is a straight line. The hard part, however, is identifying the line and following it where it leads. It's easy to get turned around and lost on the path from here to there, especially if you're trying to get from unhealthy to healthy. Sometimes, you need a leader—someone who can see the big picture. It just so happens that in Maine, the leader isn't exactly a someone. It's an institution leading the way towards community wellness by cultivating healthy relationships with small-scale growers around Augusta, Maine.

Point A

Maine General Medical Center is at the forefront in the march towards healthier communities, one of the first in the region to institute such a program. They work with local farmers to source in-season fruits and vegetables, breads and oatmeal, milk, sour

cream, meats, and herbs, which are prepared by Maine General's accomplished chefs and served to patients, staff, and guests. Providing access to these farm-to-table, nutrient-dense foods supports economic development in the local community, lessens



Above: Cedar Smith, daughter of Sarah Smith, on the farm.

the hospital's carbon footprint, and combats poor eating habits including reliance on processed foods. This is particularly important in Maine, where 65 percent of the population is obese or overweight.

"We are a community hospital. When we started on this journey we looked at ways we could be a part of our community," says Paul Stein, the Chief Operating Officer of Maine General. "Obesity is a problem in our community. It's a problem that can

be traced directly back to the quality of food."

The Board of Directors at Maine General, the patient care staff, and the food management team, all agreed that sourcing food was an important first step in helping their community get healthy, but it wasn't going to be without cost. In order to pull this off, Maine General needed to have several things in place. Not the least of which was the growers.

"It got to the point in the first couple of years the farmers weren't ready for us and couldn't handle the demand. So we started having meetings before the growing season to let them know the kind of produce and quality we're looking for. We had to educate our growers," says Stein.



Left: Conrad Olin, manager, Food & Nutrition Services at Maine General Medical Center, holding produce purchased for serving in the hospital.

Then, there were the government hoops to jump through, and when you're an institution as large as Maine General, it requires the coordinated efforts of many different people and agencies to get through the process. "At first, there were some regulatory obstacles. We worked with state, private, and local authorities to make this happen. We hope we inspire other hospitals to buy local. And what does local mean? Going out to the farm."

For Paul Stein and those on his team, educating the growers meant educating themselves about the community they serve. "Our staff took it upon themselves to go out and do their own inspections of the farm. Our chefs have such passion for sustainable growing. Our head chef has his own garden and his own chickens. So he goes out to the farm and helps the farmers understand and follow our process."

Learning more about the community and the growers paid off when Maine General built a new addition to the hospital in Augusta. "Now we have a walk-in cooler that we created just for the local farm deliveries. We are also setting up an education program with our new community kitchen. Our goal is to have children from the school up here once a week where they can learn how to cook with locally grown non-processed food."

"Sourcing local food highlights the fact that we are a community hospital," says Stein. "We want our patients to know that we're committed to their health and the health of the community. We have a room service menu. Patients can eat when they're hungry. Their loved ones can order off the same menu. On the menu we make sure we highlight where the food is coming from. We also run specials during peak season and highlight that for our staff and visitors."

Stein acknowledges that implementing a program requires a commitment to funding healthier choices. "There's an investment with this. Whether it's our teaching kitchen, buying local, setting up the mechanism, but it's all part of a healthy community lifestyle, and we are the community hospital."

Many points B

If Maine General's goal of sourcing locally grown food is Point A, then the people who grow the food are Point B. However, with an institution as big as Maine General, efficiency is key, and Point B was anything but efficient. There were dozens of growers producing hundreds of different crops of varying quantity and quality. Point B needed a point person. Enter Sarah Smith.

Sarah Smith is the manager of The PickUp, a multi-farm CSA that

provides produce to Maine General. Smith's farm is just one of over 50 that provide CSA members with a variety of locally grown produce, dairy and meat. She's also the point person for the producers who grow specifically for Maine General.

This is the first season The PickUp has worked with Maine General. In the beginning, Maine general tried to work with a non-profit grocery store, but they didn't have a way to deliver and couldn't accommodate Maine General's needs, so The PickUp stepped in with their delivery truck.

Each week during the growing season, Smith compiles a list from the 15 or so core growers, and sends it to Maine General on Mondays. Each Tuesday, she relays Maine General's order to the growers, and it's delivered to the hospital on Wednesday. Smith coordinates it all, and like Paul Stein and the management of Maine General, she does it by cultivating relationships with people who she may not have previously thought of as collaborators — those who work for large institutions. "The reality is that in a diversified farming operation — the market of the creative culture and healthy choices people — there are only so many of them. In order to expand, we have to start looking at institutions."

Working with large institutions does present problems for small-scale growers. "The obstacle with insti-



As a part of Maine General's overall nutrition initiative, they made the commitment to build a teaching kitchen in the new hospital. Having the teaching kitchen is a huge step in their commitment to showing people how to prepare the local whole foods that they purchase to serve in the hospitals. They also support financially two farmers markets in the area and produced a film on farmers markets that showed statewide on Maine Public Broadcasting Network and Time Warner Cable. (Right: Who says you shouldn't play with your food?)



tutional selling is that there aren't tomatoes in Maine in January," says Smith. "In the summer, there were weeks I couldn't get enough tomatoes to fill Maine General's order." Then there are the requirements that institutions have regarding food. "On the open market, consumers will buy smaller or bigger tomatoes, but Maine General needs uniformity because of what they do."

"We're finding we all have to plan better and make better use of our resources to make this happen. There was some training we put our growers through— food safety training, and the hospital comes out to the farms to do inspections. All that will continue and improve as we get used to working together as a team."

Even as she works to improve the fledgling mechanism, Sara Smith knows there are challenges ahead. "The challenge and the next big step is to start training the chefs in institutions to work with a more diverse product line. Consumers have to learn to eat seasonally, and chefs are the key to making this happen." Smith points out that marketing and branding are important tools that those who prepare local food can use to increase consumer awareness. "Don't call it roasted kohlrabi. Give it a different name, and offer free samples," she says. "This is one of those challenges that will work itself out over time."

Maine General's commitment to buying locally has increased

opportunities for growers. "Part of expanding into the market is a matter of knowing your farm," says Smith. "Certain things grow great on certain farms. This model allows farmers to grow more of the things they grow well and still make a go of it. This way, farmers don't have to grow 60 different crops just to make a living."

An institution has to be willing to take on a little more work and see the inherent value in what they do. We hope other institutions will take notice of what Maine General is accomplishing and follow suit."

Point C

When the order from The PickUp is placed in the cooler at Maine Gen-



Maine General's food booth at last summer's Taste of Greater Waterville, where they prepare locally grown food to serve at the festival. Last year they won Best in Show because all of the dishes won such high praise from the judges. Left to right: Paul Stein, COO, Maine General Medical Center; Chuck Hays, CEO, Maine General Health; and Chuck's wife, Maria Hays. They were guest servers at the food booth that evening.

eral in Augusta, Maine, it is Chef Conrad Olin who will be overseeing the preparation. Like Paul Stein and Sarah Smith, Conrad Olin believes the healthiest food is grown by farmers who have healthy relationships with their consumers. "We needed to have a relationship with the farmers. That's why we went to The PickUp. Sarah has a good relationship with the local growers. We couldn't go out and buy from every Tom, Dick, and Harry who wanted to sell to us. Obviously, in a hospital, we have immune-compromised patients. We have to take that into consideration. That's why we go out and inspect the farms. So far we've looked at about 16. Sarah knows who is using good growing practices. We depend on her to coordinate our efforts and keep us up to date on any issues in the farming community."

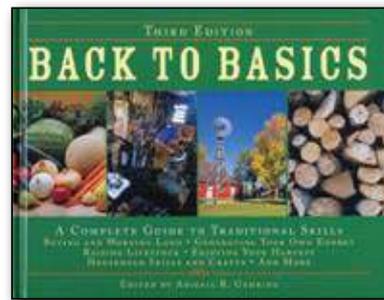
The planning meeting is one of the tools that Maine General depends on to ensure the program continues to work and grow. "It is a great opportunity for local farmers. The hospital is not going anywhere. Local growers know they have a solid customer for the next 40 years. It gives the grower an opportunity for long-term planning. It's critical

that we let the growers know what our volume is what our needs are. Sara has a meeting in the winter with the growers, and I'll be a part of that this season."

While the cost of sourcing locally grown food is higher than buying from traditional institutional providers, Conrad Olin echoes the sentiments of Maine General's Board of Directors. "It was the right thing to do for lots of reasons. Supporting our local growers. Knowing where our food comes from. The obstacle that we did face was the increased cost of our produce, but with the support of management in regards to our budget, they were on board and expected the budget to increase."

Points beyond

In 2012, Maine General purchased 16.5 tons of locally sourced food. In 2013, that number increased to 17.5 tons. Paul Stein hopes that other hospitals will consider reaching out to the community that they serve. "Community hospitals should reach out and help the community in ways that promote health and growth." For more information visit www.maine-general.org or www.thepickupcsa.com. ❁



Back To Basics

~ 3rd Edition ~

By Abigail R. Gehring

Anyone who wants to learn basic living skills and adapt them for a better life in the 21st century need look no further than this eminently useful guide loaded with full-color photos and illustrations. Escape to an era before power saws and fast food restaurants and rediscover the pleasures and challenges of a healthier, greener, and more self-sufficient lifestyle. *Back to Basics* includes chapters on: buying (and building on) your own land; energy from woods, water, wind and sun; raising your own vegetables, fruit and livestock, beekeeping and fish farming; preserving vegetables, meat and fish, dairy products, regional cooking, and cooking with wood; natural dyes, spinning and weaving; rug making, tanning, leatherwork and woodworking; crafting a dulcimer, and so much more!

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Wwoofing across America



BY BERNIS INGVALDSON
MINNESOTA

It might sound a bit like a Tom Sawyer trick, but there actually are people willing to pay the initial \$30 sign-up fee and drive half-way across the country to pull weeds and put up fences! Several organizations exist to match short-term workers with willing hosts and Wwoof.org (Willing Workers on Organic Farms — www.wwoof.net) specializes in matching volunteers with farms, or any project for that matter, that uses organic methods in sustainable agriculture. Wwoof gives people a work experience that they might never have had before, as well as an opportunity to tour local sites, all at a reasonable cost to both the worker and host, whose only obligation is to provide meals and lodging.

From September 28–October 2, 2013, The Honeyberry Farm (www.honeyberryusa.com) hosted its second wwoofers of the summer, Tyler and Krystal Wares from southern California. Along with Jim, my husband and co-owner of the farm, we asked the Wares if they would like to share their impressions so far, in a Question and Answer format.

Q: *Why are you doing this (wwoof work across the country)?*

Krystal: We wanted not only to see our big beautiful country, but also meet the people in it. We drove cross-country last summer in a hurry and didn't get to really experience places

and cultures, so we figured by slowing things down a bit and staying with kind strangers we would really gain more love for our country. And we knew working for them would be a fun way to learn new things. It has been very fulfilling so far!

Tyler: Because we wanted to learn about other lifestyles and get away from our normal surroundings to experience new ways of life. It helps us to have a different perspective of what kind of life we want for our future.

Q: *What have you learned through wwoofing?*

Krystal: A lot! We have learned to milk dairy goats, to make soap, to cook some dang good food, and a lot about gardening and self-sustenance. We've lived in a handmade straw bale house and a handmade log cabin so far. We've never lived in any type of self-made home before, so it is exciting for us to see that it is possible and people live so differently than how we have in our 20-something years of life.

Tyler: I have learned that you don't need to eat dollar McCheese burgers in order to survive. I knew people before the modern fast food craze had survived and thrived without it. To see families completely sustain themselves off their own gardens is very inspiring and essentially what we wanted to learn while doing this. Farming where we're from in California is mainly huge corporations or non-existent. So seeing it on this level is very helpful.

Left: Tyler and Krystal Wares experienced a picture perfect fall evening on one of Minnesota's 10,000 lakes.

Q: *How did you hear about wwoofing?*

Krystal: We were in Italy last summer and we met an American couple who had been in the area for a month. We wanted to know how, because we knew this was a very expensive part of the country. They told us all about work exchanges and the several websites that allowed workers to contact willing host farmers in countries all over the world. From that moment at that bed and breakfast table I knew this was something that I had to do in life. Preferably soon, while I was still young!

Q: *What made you decide to become a wwoof worker at this time?*

Krystal: The stars pretty much aligned for us in kind of a funny way. We thought all was lost when we didn't get into the school when we were expecting to in the fall. We had planned our lives so that we would be ready to fly off to Hawaii in a month. So when we got the news that we would have to wait 'til January, we were devastated. But that devastation quickly turned to hope and opportunity. When one door closes another one opens! Soon we were making plans on where we would work and what route we would take and packing our car up with camping gear, food and lots of warm snow clothes. I can't think of a better way to pass four month's time ('til school) than to take time out to see our country in a more intimate, slow way. I'm actually really thankful for our fall rejection letter now. It was definitely divine intervention. We are having the time of our lives.

Q: *Do you feel safe wwoofing?*

Krystal: Yes! Absolutely. Everyone that we've been lucky to meet has been warm and welcoming to us. We have felt instantly part of the family everywhere we have gone. Plus most workers and hosts have reviews from other people on their profile pages, so that helps too. But realistically, we've



Tyler Wares pulls in his first Northern pike at Leonard Stinar's favorite private fishing spot (photo by Krystal Wares).

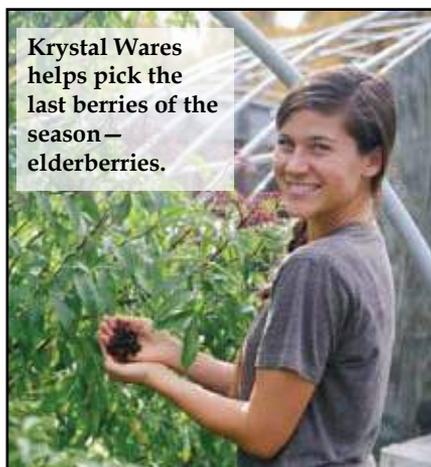
found that 99% of the people in this world are good kind people, and we really have nothing to worry about.

Q: *Where have you visited so far?*

Krystal: We left our parents' homes in Southern California and drove straight through to Utah, where we stayed with friends for a week. We enjoyed Yellowstone and the Tetons in Wyoming while on our way to Montana, where our first work exchange was with another organization called Help Exchange (helpx.net). Spending time with 70 cashmere goats and three dairy goats was a blast on Pine Needle Farm in Kila, Montana. We were back on the road before we knew it, seeing Glacier National Park and the prairie lands of eastern Montana and North Dakota. Our last night in Montana got down below freezing, and I didn't so much appreciate waking up to frost outside our tent, so arriving in Minnesota on Jim and Bernis' farm was highly anticipated!

Q: *What have you done at the Honeyberry Farm this past week?*

Krystal: The wwoof arrangement is for half a day's work at the host farm, with half a day free time. Bernis' cooking has been out of this world good and the workload has been perfect. We took time out on Sunday to see Itasca State Park, which was beautiful with fall colors coming in slowly. We loved learning about gardening, plants, cooking, and knitting from the Ingvaldsons. We even learned how to work a 1920s sock machine! We have tried berries that we didn't even know existed – our favorite being the honeyberry for sure.



Krystal Wares helps pick the last berries of the season – elderberries.

One of the highlights of our whole trip so far was fishing on a private access lake with a local man named Leonard. Ty was in heaven when he caught three pike – his dream fish. Leonard gutted them for us and fried them up for dinner.

Tyler: It was fun being apprenticed to Jim, the fencing engineer. We have mule deer in the wild in California, but no whitetails to fence out. It's very uncommon to find deer in the suburbs.

Krystal and Tyler: The kind people of Bagley have touched us and made a special place in our hearts for Minnesota. On Wednesday we'll be off to see the Great Lakes shoreline on our way through Canada to Maine. But we will keep in touch with our Minnesotan friends and cherish our time here. We will spend a week in Maine, working on a farm in Pownal before going to the New York countryside for three weeks to spend time with family there. In November we will start our journey south to Florida, and back across to California.

And a word from the hosts

Bernis and Jim: We have really enjoyed meeting people from across the country who are so eager to learn new things as well as share their skills. Our first wwoofer, who was from Vermont, had worked in a bike shop for a year, so we asked him to tune up our bikes. Krystal does photography, so we asked her for a few shots we could post on our website, and we got some questions answered from Tyler who had recently worked for a solar company. We very much enjoy the stories our guests have shared about their lives at home as well as tales from their travels. It also gives us an opportunity to see our world fresh through their eyes. As for good food, we simply feed our guests what we eat – fresh produce from our garden and orchard, local grass-fed beef, fresh milk picked up from a local farm, and we make a point to prepare some Minnesota wild rice chicken soup which has been a real hit. Finally, we are grateful to those in our community who helped give our guests a broader taste of the local area and culture. 🌿

The garden:

Big deal...

12 of the most overrated garden selections

BY JEFFERY GOSS, JR.
MISSOURI

For some reason, certain varieties of vegetables get way more attention than others. Sometimes it is for good reason; the “Hollow Crown” parsnip, for example, has largely displaced the once popular “All American” variety because of its superior sweetness, winter hardiness, and other qualities.

Many times though, a certain variety of something will get a lot of undue attention for no better reason than being at the right place at the right time to get promoted. This article features just a dozen examples: plant varieties that are highly overrated. Some are hybrids; some are heritage varieties. Before you plant, consider alternatives that may not be as well known or currently popular. Quite often the best selections are not the same as the biggest fads.

✿ **Big Boy tomato.** Developed decades ago by Burpee, this hybrid continues to be a best seller, but why? Neither its size nor its flavor is outstanding. The seed is also expensive, since it must be hand-pollinated at the corporate farm every year (as with any hybrid tomato). Probably the main reason for Big Boy’s continued popularity is mere name recognition at this point. There are hundreds of other tomato cultivars available; try a few!

✿ **King Tut pea.** There is nothing really “wrong” with the peas, but there is something very wrong with the story used to sell them. The story is often told that the original seeds

were found in the tomb of Egyptian King Tutankhamen, but botanists generally agree that this tale is false. The original seeds were probably found in a Cairo marketplace and brought back to England by a member of the tomb excavation team in 1922, and then billed by the team’s unscrupulous sponsor as having come from the tomb itself. Actually, soup peas of that type were probably not even present in Egypt at King Tut’s time. So if you live in an arid climate and you like this pea’s drought tolerance, go ahead and grow it. But if you’re growing it for historical value or “novelty,” you’re wasting your time; it’s a hoax.

✿ **Sweet Dumpling squash.** Despite its name, it is usually not that sweet, and demands long weeks of hot, humid weather. The squashes often have a “cardboard” consistency and are quite difficult to cook. Nevertheless, because of the name and colorful appearance, people buy them up not knowing any better. They look like a mini-pumpkin or acorn squash in shape, with stripes like a Delicata, but the interior flesh is a drab tan, suggesting low levels of beta-carotene. It is far better to grow a good acorn variety, such as Sweet Reba or Gill’s Golden Pippin, or grow a Delicata type.

✿ **Brandywine tomato.** Probably the most promoted tomato in history. Introduced in 1885 and heavily publicized by late 19th century seed houses. In recent years it has become the object of a renewed craze, becoming the “poster child” for all heirloom vegetables. But it is very susceptible to fungal diseases, it is not very pro-

ductive, and the flavor is unremarkable. It has sometimes been claimed that Brandywine tomatoes have a superior taste, but *any* open-pollinated tomato will taste better than hybrids. Brandywine is simply the most well known OP variety and most likely to be compared with hybrid types. In actual taste trials of various OP tomatoes, Dester and Vorlon are usually said to be the best.

Also, the history of the Brandywine tomato is often misunderstood. It is not an “Amish heirloom,” as so many sources claim. It is actually a variant of “Mikado,” which was first introduced in England and most likely originated in southern Mexico, according to garden historian W.W. Weaver. Once established in America, it was never considered an Amish variety, though it was indeed popular in southern Pennsylvania and was surely grown by many Amish farmers. Some sources claim that variety was introduced to the U. S. seed trade by Mennonite market growers, but this is probably false also. Think about it: Would a good Mennonite farmer really name his tomato variety after brandy, or for that matter, wine?

✿ **Beauregard sweet potato.** Yes, this University of Louisiana variety is good for maturing early in places where threatened by early fall frost, but some growers—and some supply houses—act as though it is the only sweet potato variety in existence. You might have to look a little harder, but there are dozens of other sweet potatoes around, some of them short maturing and very productive. Some gardeners have found that Stevenson’s yields double what Beauregard

does. Still others, such as Indiana Gold, yield less but are also good for short summers. And Brinkley and Darby, dry-fleshed varieties, yield more than Beauregard, but take more time. In my opinion, Brinkley is among the best-tasting, but it just doesn't always have time to yield much here in the Ozarks.

✿ **Iceberg lettuce.** This ubiquitous lettuce was first introduced in 1894, and now has led to several sub-varieties. It is nutritionally bankrupt, having virtually no vitamins except tiny amounts of vitamin K, and is often deplored by nutritionists. Not to mention that it is hard to grow compared to other lettuces. Instead, grow "Bibb" or "Buttercrunch."

✿ **Wapsie Valley dent corn.** This is more of a field crop than a garden vegetable, but in a sense it is the corn equivalent of the Brandywine tomato. Not to say that this yellow dent corn, named after an obscure river valley in eastern Iowa, is "bad." But in recent years it has become the most oversold OP dent corn, when there is no reason it should be. If it's cool-weather performance and quick dry down you want, try "Nothstine Dent" or "Kucyk Early" or "E-95." If it is the red ears you like, you might as well grow an all-red variety like "Bloody Butcher." If it is the high standability and yield you need, and you have a little more time, plant "Greenfield 114" or "Neal's Paymaster" (if you can find it). Drought tolerance the most important thing? Try the relatively new Kutka 1776 corn. And if you'd like to have some extremely tall stalks, plant some "Ohio Blue Clarage." There are so many open-pollinated field corns out there, and so many of them good ones, that one should not judge all OP corn by the example of "Wapsie Valley." It's just one of many others.

✿ **Dasher cucumber.** Chances are if you buy a cucumber at the supermarket in the U.S., it is a "Dasher." This hybrid was introduced in 1980, but it has virtually no advantages over the open-pollinated "Marketmore76." Even the disease resistance and hot-weather tolerance for which the "Dasher" is so acclaimed is for all

intentions and purposes matched by the "Marketmore." This is an example of a heavily promoted hybrid taking over the marketplace when there is already a good standard variety that could easily meet the same criteria.

✿ **Grandpa Ott's morning glory.** Not that there's something bad about it (except that it, like all morning glories, is poisonous and possibly invasive), but it is often grown because of the storyline behind it. This morning glory is claimed to have been brought over from Bavaria by the immigrant grandfather of Dale Ott when he came to the States. Well, this is possible, but it would've had to come the other direction first: morning glories are native to the Americas and the Pacific Rim, but not to Europe. But the story doesn't end there. Supposedly this morning glory was one of three plant varieties that were handed down to Diane Ott (Dale's daughter) and inspired her then-husband to start the TSE, predecessor to the Seed Savers' Exchange, to preserve such "heirloom" varieties. (Oddly though, the other two varieties, "German Pink" tomato and "Grandma Einck's" dill has not received nearly the amount of attention that Grandpa Ott's morning glory has.) At any rate Grandpa Ott's is no more special than any other morning glory, except to the Ott family.

✿ **Prizewinner pumpkin.** If huge size is what you want in a pumpkin, grow "Atlantic Giant," which is public now that the USPVP and CPBR (legal protections) have expired on it. If you want one with more orange and better flavor, in addition to large size, you can grow "Wyatt's Wonder" (technically still protected, but not enforced), but beware that it is prone to rot if not kept dry.

✿ **Howden Field pumpkin.** When you cut into one, you find mostly air. The shell is thin, which makes carving a little easier, but that means there's not very much pumpkin for baking or canning. Not to mention that the consistency is stringy and watery, the flavor prone to bitterness, and the fruits themselves very susceptible to rot. The variety "Sugar Pie" (a.k.a. "Small Sugar") is much better, as is

"Kentucky Field," though that one is not as sweet.

✿ **Sugar Baby watermelon.** Perhaps it's just because of the cute name, but this variety has stolen the thunder of many other miniature watermelons. It is fine for warm climates, but in such climates it is no great hardship to grow a full-sized watermelon anyway. For chilly climates one should look for a variety that is not merely short-season, but also has good cool-night pollination and fruit set traits. Such varieties include "Osh Kirghizia" (also called Small Shining Light), "Golden Midget," "Early Canada," "Sweet Siberian," and "Melitopolski."

So this year, go outside your comfort zone and try some other varieties in your garden. Don't try things from off-the-wall climates and soil types necessarily, but actually try to search that heap of seed catalogs for the varieties likely to perform best in your area. Quite often, they're not the most widely publicized ones. Fame does not equal quality, and never will. ✿

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The garden:

More High Desert gardening techniques

BY JEFF HOARD
NEVADA

With 20-plus years of desert living over a mile high, I thought that I should add onto the desert gardening topic.

HM Ranch is in a high desert (6,000' elevation) location and in the last few years we have been fortunate to get even four inches of moisture per year, so water conservation has been really important.

Our August lows are frequently down in the 30s, which makes heat retention an important issue also. Over the years we have evolved to using four core elemental rules and grow only basic produce.

First of all, potatoes.

Potatoes are our #1 priority. Being a root vegetable, they can be planted earlier than the rest (although we still have to wait until the end of May to plant). Plus they store for a year, which makes them ideal for us in our situation. Having a cellar full of potatoes and a couple of animals on the hoof provides a lot of security for Karen and me no matter what the year ahead may bring. The following spring a portion of the potatoes are cut into pieces the size of a small egg (keeping eyes in each piece), which means we have seed for each successive year. Again, potatoes are essential for us, grow fairly well in our cold environment, and we do not have to do anything special to grow a crop. French fries, mashed potatoes, potato salad, pancakes, etc., are ways we look forward to enjoying our crop throughout the year.

The other garden plants will simply not make it out here without some help; fortunately we don't crave a lot of variety. The only other plants we grow are tomatoes, lettuce, squash and cantaloupe. Carrots and dried beans are fairly inexpensive and store well, so we would rather use that garden area for more potatoes.

Simple things to ensure a crop

For tomatoes, we have to buy hybrid seed — Early Girls do well. We plant them in our sunroom around March. We cannot transplant these tender plants outside until June 21 (longest day of the year) because



Row covers and trenches

until then we have brutal late frosts. Around the first of June I'll dig in used truck tires and use a three-foot tall wire cage wrapped in clear plastic that we set snugly inside each tire. The tomatoes are planted in these tires. The tires absorb heat during the day and retain moisture around the plant. The plants explode in growth with this set-up. Early on (at night) I'll cover each cage with a cloth to hold in heat. This is the only way we can grow tomatoes out here.

The lettuce we grow all year long (even though we have -25°F nights). A friend of ours gave us some old beat up 16' stock panels. I took a few and bent them into an arc, lengthwise. We put a layer of five-foot wide clear plastic sheeting sandwiched between two panels and (on winter nights only) I will cover these with old carpet pieces. The lettuce grows well under these half hoops. Our least active growth occurs in midsummer and completely stops in mid-winter, but it never dies out and picks up as soon as the weather warms up again. Being 100 miles from a grocery store, growing lettuce is important to us. It is the only veggie that can't be stored for long periods, dried, canned, frozen, etc.

The squash and cantaloupe use a different method. We are able to use heirloom varieties, but timing is of utmost importance. A clipped sprout from a ground

Protecting plants from both cold and heat requires some imagination.



Melons are grown in trenches covered with black plastic.



squirrel or jackrabbit eating a young plant is detrimental to us, as there is not enough growing season left to replant. We put a small, two-foot high chicken wire fence around the garden area. Between that and our night watchman, Rusty (dog), the plants are safe. Look at COUNTRYSIDE July/August 2012 for the squirrel problem. With these deterrents in place, the only way that we can grow melons and squash is to dig a trench and on the two outsides of the displaced furrow dig another small trench. (I built a simple plow for our garden tractor that digs this all in one pass.) Then we cover the rows with a three-foot wide strip of 4 mil. black plastic (not clear, black is a must!). Bury the edges of the plastic with dirt. As you cover the edges, keep pulling on the plastic with the shovel to keep it taut. Now, on each side at the high point of the soil, using a small hand-held propane torch, I burn a two-inch diameter hole every five feet down the row. I'll melt the hole and as it burns to two inches in diameter, I spray water on it with a squirter (otherwise the plastic will keep burning). Again, every five feet down the row and back up the other side, every five feet staggered from the first side. Especially with melons and their spreading vines, a fair amount of space needs to be kept between the rows. I keep them just far enough apart that I can still drive the garden tractor with

the rear blade or a drag through early on and kill the weeds before they become a problem. It is the easiest way to garden I've ever known.

If I roll up the plastic sheeting as soon as the plants have died off in fall, even this 4-mil black plastic will last three seasons here. This plastic does three very important things for the plants. First, it heats the ground. Second, it holds in moisture, and third, it keeps the weeds away from the plants while they get established. I also burn a small hole in the middle at each end — one to insert the hose for watering and the other to see when the water reaches the other end. Again, this is the only way that we can grow melons and squash.

So to sum up, the methods we concentrate on are root vegetables (potatoes), old tires and covered cages for tomatoes, covered stock panels for lettuce and black plastic strips for the other garden plants.

These simple techniques have served us well for many years and might help you also. ✿

HM Ranch sells a DVD titles "Hoards Hillbilly Heaven", a tour of HM Ranch. It is a poor man's guide to low-cost comfortable, off-grid living, featuring an educational workshop on using the scrap pile to build inexpensive utility-generating devices. For more information visit www.hmranch-hoardmfg.com

The garden:

Grow better lettuce

Think beyond iceberg

BY NANCY PIERSON FARRIS
SOUTH CAROLINA

Americans have embraced the salad bowl. Salad greens are low in calories, low in fat, low in carbohydrates. But a bowlful of pale iceberg lettuce is... well, boring.

Leaf lettuce brings color to the bowl; it also adds texture and flavor. The USDA says that loose leaf lettuce contains three to six times more vitamins than the blanched leaves of head lettuce. Most produce markets now offer a variety of leaf lettuce—enough to create a bouquet for your table.

However, by the time you buy that lettuce and transport it to your kitchen, it has already lost some of its nutritional value. To get the freshest and most nutritious lettuce for my salad bowl, I grow it myself.

Because I live in the coastal south, I need to get lettuce started very early. Head lettuce forms heads at temperatures between 50-60°F. In my garden, early spring may bring wide temperature variations, with occasional nights in the teens or days in the 70s. After our last frost in early April, temperatures rise. By late May, coastal South Carolina may have day temperatures above 80°F. This will cause head lettuce to bolt or rot. I get better results with butterhead or leaf lettuce.

In late December, I plant two short rows—about 10 feet each, of Green Ice and Buttercrunch lettuce. These



Nancy holds a bowl of freshly picked lettuce.

usually thrive, even when temperatures drop into the teens at night. I do not mulch these rows. Bare soil absorbs heat during the day, and at night, that warmth rises around the plants. If the plants freeze, they usually recover as long as they are not touched while frozen. Unless we get several consecutive days with temperatures below 40°F, most of the leaf lettuce will survive.



When night temperatures drop into single digits, I cover the lettuce with an old bed sheet and hope for the best outcome. If days are sunny, I remove the cover, because heat will gather underneath it; that can do more damage than the cold nights.

To ensure a continued supply of salad material, I sow seeds in flats early in January. Along with lettuce, I start plants of spinach for use in salads. I would start plants of head lettuce if I thought I could expect at least 60 days with daytime temperatures below 70°F. The few times I have tried iceberg lettuce, I have had to harvest the heads when they were small—not a good return for the space used. Thus, I plant mostly butterhead and leaf lettuce.

The seedlings will grow under fluorescent lights in my cool greenhouse, for six to eight weeks. If weather remains unsettled or seedlings become crowded in the flats, I pot them into four-inch plastic pots. (I keep these pots from year to year, washing them in hot, soapy water between seasons of use.) While plants are in the greenhouse, I feed them weekly with a fish emulsion solution.

Most years, we get our worst weather in February. If we get an ice storm, the lettuce in the garden will probably get broken up, stay frozen

for several days, and never recover. That is when I am thankful for the replacement plants I have nurtured in the greenhouse.

After the storm has passed, I prepare a site for lettuce seedlings to go into the garden. Since lettuce is a heavy feeder, and hot weather will deplete humus and nutrients from my soil, I add about five pounds of finished compost to each 10 feet of row. I cover the compost with about two inches of soil. On a cloudy day, I set the seedlings into the prepared space. I settle the thread-like roots into the soil, taking care not to get dirt into the crown of the little plant. Planting too deeply would smother the fragile roots; dirt in the crown encourages rotting.

I water the plants to settle soil around them. Since cool temperatures accompany low humidity, I water the young lettuce regularly – early afternoon is a good time for this, so leaves can dry off before nightfall.

In early March, I harvest lettuce for a lunchtime salad every day. At the same time, I plan ahead:

I prepare three 10-foot rows and sow lettuce seeds for a summer crop. Black Seeded Simpson, an old standby, produces well into late spring and early summer. At this time I also plant a romaine type, which will make long, slender heads of dark green leaves. Green Towers performs well for me in a range of weather extremes. Braveheart takes longer to mature, but tolerates heat well into the summer.

In the third row, I grow a mixed blend. Most seed companies offer a mix: Burpee has “Healing Hands” which contains four lettuces high in phyto-chemicals. They also have a “Heatwave Blend,” which I am trying this year. Harris offers a colorful red and green mix called “Fire and Ice” and they have a “City Garden Blend,” a mixture of easy-to-grow lettuces. I have used Park’s “Master Chef Blend,” which contains red, green, and a variegated type.

When direct sowing lettuce, I spread seeds thinly and use my hand to crumble enough dirt to barely cover the seeds.

As weather warms after Easter, I mulch lettuce with grass clippings. This helps keep soil moist and cool when temperatures rise above 80°F. The grass clippings rot fairly quickly, adding nutrients to the soil. I replenish this mulch about every two weeks.

By late May, with daytime temperatures nearing 90°F, lettuce becomes bitter and bolts to seed. When I perceive this is about to happen – evidenced by lengthening stems – I

harvest most of the remaining lettuce. It may keep for two to four weeks in the refrigerator.

If you want fresh, nutritious salad greens, mark out a space where soil is well drained and plants will receive a little shade as deciduous trees put on leaves. Sow seeds, or set seedlings after the worst winter weather has passed, but before summer heat arrives. Then find a good recipe for salad dressing, and enjoy the reward of your labors. ✂



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While you were celebrating

By JERRI COOK
COUNTRYSIDE STAFF

On December 19, 2013, FDA Deputy Commissioner for Foods and Veterinary Medicine, Michael Taylor, announced that the FDA would revise the proposed rules required by the Food Safety and Modernization Act, and invite further public comment sometime in the summer of 2014. In a heartwarming statement, Taylor claimed that the revision was a result of his department's efforts at transparency. Taylor claims his thinking evolved as he and his staff traveled the country listening to input from concerned small-scale farmers. He says he hears us. The revised proposed rules will be released late in the summer of 2014, and you're going to love them. Just wait and see.

The media loved the story. All the major networks reported that the FDA was working with small-scale farmers. It was the heartfelt supplications of America's small-scale farmers that moved Michael Taylor and his department to take action. A victory for the small guy. Let the celebration begin.

The guest of honor

I'd like to introduce everyone to the guest of honor, the reason for this little shindig, Michael Taylor—the man who claims he has evolved from a proponent of Big Ag and Big Government to a lover of the little guy. A nice round of applause, please.

Michael Taylor, like every other agency head in D.C., wouldn't know a family farm from a leftover Christmas fruitcake. He's an attorney whose background is in political science. Nevertheless, Michael Taylor is star.

When the Administration created a new position at the FDA just for Taylor in 2010, it was because of his background in food policy. It's true that Michael Taylor cares about food, but it's his commitment to genetically modified food and the cancer-causing chemicals added to processed foods that makes him shine.

In 1994, Michael Taylor and two other FDA officials came under fire from three members of Congress who called for an official investigation of the agency's unilateral approval of a genetically modified drug produced by Monsanto. Not only does Taylor support the use of GMOs in veterinary medicine and agriculture, he also supports the suppression of free speech. Taylor was one of the most vocal opponents to allowing labels informing consumers that milk was rBGH free.

Taylor's 1994 actions in favor of Monsanto and against consumers aren't at all surprising given his 1988 proposition that a small amount of cancer-causing chemicals in food is appropriate if current scientific principles and practices can ensure a safe level of use—a stance in direct opposition to already enacted federal law and established legal precedent. How's that for a fly in the punch bowl?

Speech, speech, speech!

In 1958, the Food, Drugs, and Cosmetic Act of 1938 was amended to include the Delaney Clause. Introduced by Democratic Congressman James Delaney from New York, the Clause required that "the Secretary of the Food and Drug Administration shall not approve for use in food any chemical additive found to induce cancer in man, or, after tests, found to induce cancer in animals." Even

though the language is as clear as day, the EPA took it upon itself to ease the legislative ban on cancer-causing additives in food by allowing certain pesticides to be added to processed food products—even though the EPA's own tests had determined that the four additives in question were in fact cancer-causing agents.

In 1988, ignoring the legislative mandate, the EPA adopted a *de minimus* standard regarding cancer-causing additives. As long as there was no proof that there was a quantifiable risk of a chemical causing cancer, it could be added to food.

During the intense public debate, Michael Taylor published an article siding with the EPA in the *Journal of the American College of Toxicology*. In "The De Minimis Interpretation of the Delaney Clause: Legal and Policy Rationale" Taylor argued that if current science determines something is safe to eat, it's safe. No reasonable person would question science, right?

Several individuals and groups, including Natural Resources Defense Council and Public Citizen brought an action in federal court to enjoin the EPA from allowing even a small amount of cancer-causing pesticides in food. In 1992, the Ninth Circuit agreed with the petitioners—no cancer-causing chemicals means none, and ordered the EPA to comply with the requirements of Delaney Clause. It was a victory celebrated by supporters of sustainable agriculture. The celebration was short-lived.

In 1996, the Congress voted unanimously to put an end to the Delaney Clause, and President Bill Clinton signed the Food Quality Protection Act into law. With the Delaney Clause out of the way, proponents of biotech were free to write the rules, with a little help from Taylor who promptly left his job as Administrator of the Food Safety & Inspection Service and joined Monsanto as the Vice President for Public Policy.

While working at Monsanto, Taylor continued to use his influence with his colleagues in government to influence food policy. It was this influence that landed him a part in two well-known documentaries ex-

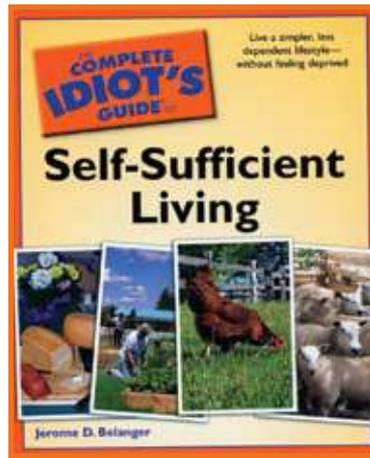
posing the cozy connection between Monsanto and unelected government regulators. In January of 2010, he was appointed to his present position to assist in implementing the Food Safety and Modernization Act. How about a nice round of applause for the guest of honor?

The party's over

On December 19, 2013, both the FDA and Michael Taylor issued public statements announcing the proposed rules for implementing the Food Safety and Modernization Act would be delayed. In a wholly self-serving message, Taylor touts his agency's commitment to food safety. He's committed to ensuring the food you eat is safe from everything except cancer-causing pesticides and herbicide residue. When the proposed new rules hit the Federal Register sometime this summer, Taylor invites you to leave a comment. However, comments will be limited to only the proposed revisions of the proposed new rules. He's not promising anything, not even that any changes won't ultimately destroy small-scale agriculture. If this seems a little hard to digest, grab a cup of punch to wash it all down. Just be sure to pick out the flies.

Michael Taylor has effectively muted any opposition to his policies by ensuring that just before Christmas, there was a nice squishy story about how the big bad FDA had finally seen the light and decided to be nice to small-scale farmers. It was sheer genius. This summer, when growers are out sweating in their fields and the media is distracted by a contentious mid-term election cycle, the proposed rules will be posted and the public invited to comment.

There won't be any stories on the national news about the FDA's revised proposed rules. They'll be implemented without much fanfare at all, and if anyone believes for one second that Michael Taylor has had some sort of epiphany and has decided to abandon his Monsanto pals in order to dance with small-scale farmers, think again. He came to this dance with Monsanto, and that's who he's leaving with. ❁



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The homestead kitchen:

Purslane

The gourmet delights of an annoying garden weed

BY HABEEB SALLUUM
CANADA

Rather than saving it for the salad bowl, most gardeners weed out purslane for the compost heap. Yet, this weed/green, needing no care, has been eaten as a vegetable in some parts of the world since time immemorial.

It was known to the ancient Egyptians and cultivated over 2,000 years ago as a potherb in Persia and the Indian sub-continent. However, it was only in the Middle Ages that Europe came to know it as a food plant. In North America, where it is also known as “Indian cress,” it was a favorite green long before Columbus set foot in the New World. Today, both the cultivated and wild varieties are consumed as a vegetable in most countries of the globe.

A hardy potherb which thrives in any type of soil, purslane is an early, easy to grow annual. It is a prolific green, which does not need seeding every year. A single plant can produce up to 50,000 seeds and will re-seed itself year after year.

A sprawling plant, it hugs the ground, only reaching several inches into the air. Its tendrils: green, purple or red, emerging from the center, have fat small reddish-green leaves and, as the plant matures, they produce tiny yellow flowers. The only difference between the wild and seeded types is when cultivated they have large golden-yellowish leaves, which are milder in flavor.

The tender leafy tips are the succulent part of the tendrils, which must be harvested before the plant flowers and becomes tough. They are sapid and have a spicy and refreshing taste, but are gelatinous and slightly sour. They are eaten fresh, in the

same fashion as spinach and other greens.

The North American Indians brewed the leaves into a tea and ground the seeds and cooked them into a mush, both for nourishment and as a medicine. They believed that purslane would cure coughs, head and stomach aches, hemorrhoids, inflammation of the testicles and regulate woman’s excessive menstrual flow.

The medieval European herbalists prescribed this vegetable for fevers, inflammations and, mixed with honey, for coughs and shortness of breath. In the England of the Middle Ages, purslane was employed to ease kidney ailments, coughs, gout, and both liver and stomach problems. Furthermore, it was employed to soothe hot tempers, quench thirst and quicken the appetite. In other parts of Europe, purslane was held in such esteem that some people spread it around their beds to keep away the devil.

Modern medicine has established that this green has many of the attributes ascribed to it by medieval doctors. Purslane is cholesterol free and has been found to be a good source of ascorbic acid, iron and magnesium. It also contains phosphates, urea, vitamin B, and more vitamin C than an equivalent amount of orange juice. Modern herbalists prescribe it for coughs, fevers and insomnia. In addition, the fresh or dried leaves, brewed into a healthy tea, are recommended for counteracting inflammation and the destruction of bacteria in bacillary dysentery.

Besides its healthy qualities, purslane, cooked, pickled or raw is a delectable green, especially raw or lightly cooked. The Chinese, who call it *carti-chop*, produce tasty dishes by

just stir-frying the leaves for a few moments.

Purslane is an excellent ingredient in casseroles, omelets, sauces, stews and as a replacement for cucumbers in pickles, and is delicious in salads as well as in lentil and pea soups. Its mucilaginous texture makes it ideal as a thickening agent. Hence, it is often used to replace okra in soups and other pottage dishes.

A nourishing flour can be made from the seeds if the plants are allowed to mature before harvesting. After the tendrils are dried the seeds are removed, cleaned and ground into a flour. When mixed half and half with whole-wheat flour, it makes appetizing muffins and pancakes.

The dishes one can prepare with purslane are never-ending. The simplest way to make this Indian cress ready for the table is to wash and chop the tendrils, then place them in a saucepan with a little butter and seasonings. They can then be cooked over medium/low heat for 10 minutes. The result is a savory cooked green.

A healthy and new gourmet world is free for the taking in any homeowner’s backyard. Most people who cultivate gardens need only look between the growing vegetables to harvest what to many is an annoying garden weed.

Purslane and Yogurt Appetizer

Serves 4 to 6

2 cups chopped purslane, packed

2 cups plain yogurt

2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh coriander leaves

4 tablespoons finely chopped green onions

1 clove garlic, crushed

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon pepper

1/8 teaspoon cayenne

In a mixing bowl, thoroughly combine all ingredients, then place on a serving platter and chill before serving.

Cooked Purslane Greens

Serves 4 to 6

4 tablespoons olive oil

2 medium onions chopped
 2 cloves garlic, crushed
 2 tablespoons fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped
 1/2 small hot pepper, finely chopped
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1/2 teaspoon pepper
 4 packed cups chopped purslane
 4 tablespoons lemon juice

Heat oil in a frying pan, then sauté onions, garlic, coriander leaves and hot pepper over medium heat for 12 minutes. Stir in salt and pepper, then spread purslane on top and cover. Cook over low heat for 15 minutes. Stir in the lemon juice and serve.

Purslane Soup

Serves 8 to 10

4 tablespoons cooking oil
 1 lb. beef, cut into small pieces
 2 medium onions, chopped
 4 cloves garlic, crushed
 1 small hot pepper, finely chopped
 2 cups stewed tomatoes
 6 cups water
 2 teaspoons salt
 1 teaspoon cumin
 1 teaspoon ginger
 1 teaspoon pepper
 2 cups finely chopped purslane
 2 tablespoons fresh basil, finely chopped

Heat oil in a saucepan, then sauté beef over medium heat for 10 minutes. Add onions, garlic and hot pepper, then stir-fry for a further 10 minutes. Stir in remaining ingredients except basil, then bring to a boil. Cover and cook over medium heat for 1 hour or until beef is well cooked, adding a little more water if necessary. Stir in basil, then serve hot.

Purslane and Tomato Salad

Serves 4 to 6

3 packed cups chopped purslane
 3 medium tomatoes, diced into 1/2-inch cubes
 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh mint
 1 small onion, finely chopped
 1 clove garlic, crushed
 4 tablespoons olive oil
 4 tablespoons lemon juice
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1/4 teaspoon pepper
 1/8 teaspoon cayenne

Combine purslane, tomatoes, mint and onion in a salad bowl, then set aside.

Thoroughly mix remaining ingredients in a small bowl, then pour over vegetables and toss just before serving.

Purslane and Corn Stew

Serves 4 to 6

4 tablespoons butter
 1 small bunch green onions, chopped
 2 cloves garlic, crushed
 1/2 small hot pepper, finely chopped
 2 packed cups purslane, finely chopped
 3 cups cooked corn
 4 tablespoons parsley, finely chopped
 1 teaspoon salt
 1/2 teaspoon pepper
 1 cup water
 2 tablespoons lemon juice

Melt butter in a saucepan, then sauté onions, garlic and hot pepper over medium heat for 12 minutes. Stir in remaining ingredients, except lemon juice, and bring to a boil, then cover and simmer over medium heat for 25 minutes. Stir in lemon juice and serve.

Cheese and Purslane Casserole

Serves 4 to 6

2 packed cups finely chopped purslane

1 cup green onions, finely chopped
 1 cup small pieces feta cheese
 1/2 cup fine bread crumbs
 2 cloves garlic, crushed
 4 tablespoons mint, finely chopped
 4 tablespoons olive oil
 3 eggs, beaten
 1/2 teaspoon ground coriander seeds
 1/2 teaspoon pepper
 1/8 teaspoon cayenne
 1 cup water

In a casserole, thoroughly combine all ingredients, then cover. Bake in a 350°F preheated oven for 45 minutes, then serve hot.

Pickled Purslane

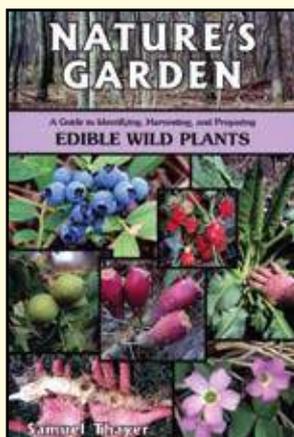
Makes 2 quart jars

2 cups vinegar
 3 1/2 cups water
 2 tablespoons pickling salt
 2 tablespoons sugar
 1 tablespoon mustard seeds
 1 tablespoon coriander seeds
 1/2 teaspoon peppercorn
 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
 4 whole cloves
 1/8 teaspoon cayenne
 4 packed cups purslane

Place all ingredients, except purslane, in a pot and bring to boil, then allow to boil for about 2 minutes to make brine.

Sterilize two quart jars, then fill with the purslane, then cover with brine. Seal jars and allow to stand for about two weeks before serving. 🌿

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BY SAMUEL THAYER

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The traditional way to make Crispy Plums in Taiwan

By MIKE DISHNOW
WISCONSIN

Feng-Que-Dou, located in the central part of Taiwan, features the largest plantation of plum trees on the island. The plum trees begin blossoming at the end of year. They will be in full bloom at Christmas and the New Year holiday. The snow-white blossoms give the small village a look of a paradise on earth. This beautiful scene draws a multitude of tourists to enjoy the trees in bloom every year.

The plum-harvesting season falls between March and May. This year we invited several foreign friends to join us making crispy plums. Here are the steps in the procedure.



1. Pick the plums when they are 60% ripened.



Jerry Becwar of Mt. Sterling, Wisconsin, gives a young picker a lift.



2. Scrub the plums with crude salt until they become darker and wet to get rid of the bitterness.



3. Crack the plums on the board with a wooden hammer. The purpose is to help the plums easily soak up sugary water.



4. Put 2 spoonfuls of refined salt in the plums and immerse plums in water for 8-12 hours.



5. Add running water in the barrel of plums for 4-5 hours in order to take away the bitter taste.

6. Remove plums from the running water and immerse them in sugary water in a container.

Your plums are ready to serve.



Author Mike Dishnow receives a gift of finished plums.

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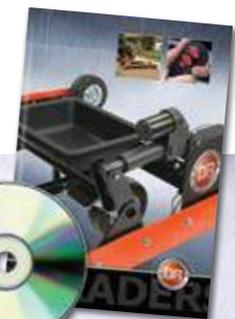
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The homestead kitchen:

Readers recipes

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SUBMITTED BY RAY CASHION
NORTH CAROLINA

Grape Hull Pie

(Ed. note: Muscadine grapes are traditionally used, as the skins are thicker than most grapes.)

2 cups (cooked) grape hulls
1-1/2 cup sugar
1 egg
2 tablespoons corn starch

Cook hulls in a small amount of water until tender. (Remove seeds.) Stir in sugar and let cool. Beat egg and add cornstarch until lumps are gone. Bake a piecrust for 7 minutes. Mix egg mixture and grapes, and pour into crust. Bake at 350° for 25 minutes.

PS: Where can I get a cabbage shredder like the one pictured on page 68 in the Nov/Dec 2013 issue?

Lehman's Hardware sells cabbage slicers/shredders (Phone 888-438-5346; <http://non-electric.lehmans.com/hardware/Cabbage%20Slicer>); along with The Sausage Maker, Inc., see their ad on page 67 (1-888-490-8525). They both carry fermenting crocks. Call for their free catalogs.



SUBMITTED BY JEANNE BOBERG
INDIANA

These recipes are from From Mrs. Main's Coming Home Cookbook,

by Jeanne Boberg: Mrs. Main is my mother. She passed away in 2003, a few months shy of her 102nd birthday. She was a countrywoman all her long life, a gardener and an excellent cook. It is a privilege to share this heritage with your fine magazine.

Concord Grape Pie

Pastry for 9", 2-crust pie
4 cups ripe Concord grapes
2 tablespoons butter, melted
1 teaspoon lemon juice
1 cup sugar
2 tablespoons quick cooking tapioca
Pinch of salt

Preheat oven to 450°F.

Line pie pan with half the pastry. Separate the grape skins from the pulp. Set aside the skins. Place the pulp in a 2-quart saucepan. Add the least amount of water possible to keep the pulp from sticking. Simmer for 5 minutes. Press the pulp through a sieve and discard the seeds. Combine the puree with the grape skins. Mix the melted butter and lemon juice with the grapes. Stir in the sugar and tapioca and mix well. Pour the grape mixture into the prepared pie pan. Cut slits in the top crust and place it over the filling. Flute the edges. Bake for 15 minutes, then lower the heat to 350°F and bake 30-35 minutes more.



SUBMITTED BY LIL ROBERTS.

Bon Bons

Sent by Sybil
2 pounds confectioner's sugar
1 2/3 cups sweetened flaked coconut
2 cups chopped pecans (I use chopped roasted almonds)
1 - 14 ounce can sweetened condensed milk
1/2 cup margarine or butter, melted
1 package chocolate almond bark, for coating

In a large bowl, mix all ingredients except almond bark well. Form

dough into balls, about quarter-size. Place on cookie sheet and cover. Refrigerate for at least an hour.

Melt chocolate bark by heating in the microwave at 45 second intervals, stirring after each, until smooth and creamy. Dip bon bons into chocolate and place on wax paper to harden.

Store in refrigerator until ready to eat or gift.

Makes about 4 dozen, 1-inch bon bons.

This is a quick and easy fudge recipe.

Fudge

1 can of sweetened condensed milk
2 pkgs. chocolate chips (dark, milk, or semi-sweet)
1 jar of marshmallow cream
Chopped roasted walnuts, or roasted almonds

Pour milk in a 3-quart glass microwave bowl and place in microwave; heat on high for about 30 seconds (until warm). Stir in chocolate chips, and heat for another 30 seconds; stir, repeat until chocolate chips are melted. Remove bowl and quickly add marshmallow cream to the chocolate mix. Add nuts if desired. Stir quickly as it starts to set up. Pour onto a cookie sheet that has been covered with a very thin layer of butter so you can remove the fudge easily.

Set in a cool place and let it set. Once it is firm, cut into squares and enjoy.

This sounds dreadful, but it is wonderful on pancakes, ice cream, or anything else you can use caramel on. It is very quick and easy.

Syrup

1 1/2 cups white sugar
3/4 cup buttermilk
1/2 cup butter
2 tablespoons corn syrup
1 teaspoon baking soda
2 teaspoons vanilla

Mix first 5 ingredients together. Bring mixture to a boil, lower the heat just a bit, and continue to cook at a slow boil for 7 minutes. Remove from heat, add vanilla. Enjoy.

Goofy Cake

3 cups flour
2 cups sugar
4-6 tablespoons cocoa powder (I use 6)
1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons soda

Combine all of the above in bowl.

Add:

2 cups water
2 tablespoons vinegar
2 tablespoons vanilla
3/4 cup oil

Preheat oven to 350°F. Combine all ingredients and place in greased and floured 9 x 13 pan. Bake at 350°F for 25-30 minutes.

While cake is cooling slightly, in a saucepan combine:

5-7 tablespoons cocoa (I use 7)
1 stick butter (1/4 lb.)
5 tablespoons milk

Bring to a boil on medium heat. Boil for 1 minute. Remove and add:

1 teaspoon vanilla
1 pound powdered sugar
Beat well and pour over cake.

Clafouti

from Kathy

Butter a 9 or 10-inch pie pan
Put about 1/3 cup brown sugar on the bottom

Slice about 3 cups of fruit. (Berries don't work as well)

In separate bowl mix together until not lumpy:

3/4 cup flour
1/3 cup sugar (to taste)
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 eggs
1-1/4 cups milk
3/4 teaspoon extract (I use vanilla for apples and almond for peaches)

Pour over fruit.

Bake 375°F for 45 minutes or until knife comes out clean.

This is easy and fast, and they taste great.

For your furry friend:

Here's a good, basic recipe that can be adapted to any dog's taste.

Dog Biscuits

2 cups unbleached wheat flour
1 cup cornmeal
Pinch of salt
1 egg
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 teaspoons fresh parsley, chopped
3/4 cup low-sodium chicken broth

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Mix the flour, cornmeal, and salt in a bowl. In a separate, larger bowl, beat the egg with the oil, parsley, and chicken broth. Add to the flour mixture until it forms a soft dough. Knead the dough and roll it out to about 1/2-inch thickness. Use cookie cutters of your choice to make shapes your dog would like. Bake for about 15 minutes or until they're golden brown. Cool on a wire rack. If you like, sprinkle them with parmesan cheese during the last minute of baking.

You can add more eggs, flour, or leave out the parsley. You can also use beef broth. I have used beef and chicken bouillon with water.

For the laundry room: Homemade Laundry Detergent

4 bars laundry soap to yield 12 cups of soap shavings
6 cups Borax (roughly one box)
6 cups washing soda (roughly one box)

Grate soap bars using cheese grater. Combine all ingredients in a bowl and stir well. Place in sealed container and measure out two tablespoons (roughly 1/8 cup) for each load.

For a smaller batch:

2 cups laundry soap shavings (you can get this much from one bar)
1 cup Borax
1 cup washing soda

The main difference you will notice between this and store bought detergents is that this detergent doesn't suds up as commercial ones do. Don't let that deter you! Once you pull out your first load of clean, fresh smelling, naturally soft and fluffy laundry that only cost you eight cents to clean, you'll be hooked.

Soaps you can use: Fels Naptha, Zote, Sunlight Bar Soap, Kirks Hard-water Castile, or Ivory. (Search the high/low shelves in the soap aisle – these aren't prominently displayed.)

Skunk deodorizer:

This is a must to keep on hand. With the skunks coming out soon with their babies, the dogs and people are going to need a good "deskunker," and this works great.

Skunk Remedy for Animals

1 quart of 3% peroxide
1/4 cup baking soda (or vinegar)
1 tablespoon dish soap

Mix well. Spray on offending animal and rub spray into fur, then rinse well. If it's cold and you are using it on animals, be sure to dry them well. You may have to use a hair dryer.

This has been tried and yes, it works great.

(Note: The peroxide may change the animal's fur color temporarily.)

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The homestead kitchen

BY DANIEL STRAUSS
NEW YORK

Eggs—look at all the eggs! We had plenty in the refrigerator. You can only do so much with omelets or scrambled eggs. I'm tired of over easy and sunny side up. Like they say, "Real men don't eat quiche," besides, it doesn't do much for me. The soufflé I made turned out well, but again how many times a month can you eat that? So let me tell you the story of how we got the eggs and what we did with them.

Several years ago I had heard one of those survivalist preppers talk about the importance of protein in one's diet. He went on to say how in hard times not only will protein be harder to come by, but it would be expensive too. Now we fast forward a few years and my wife and I decided that having our own eggs would be the easiest way to secure protein for what looks like hard times coming. I built a chicken coop and then we purchased a dozen little peeps, all

female. (We had previously received a rooster and two old hens from my father-in-law when he passed away.) The peeps grew and by summer we were getting a dozen eggs a day. So I lay in bed late at night contemplating what to do with them all. We sell some, give some to family, but still have plenty left. Then a thought crossed my mind, "They have a Hamburger Helper, why don't they have Egg Helper?" when a flash of inspiration crossed my mind, "Why not substitute scrambled egg for hamburger and use the boxed mix?"

Besides that, scrambled eggs can be used in taco shells in place of beef. The sauce is the dominating flavor, therefore one can't taste the eggs, though the texture will be different. This works well with sloppy Joes, Chinese egg rolls, lasagna, stuffed peppers, chili, and Italian Wedding Soup, which already requires eggs. (If you can put eggs in Italian Wedding Soup, why not other soups?)

A few recipes of my own design, which all met with family approval include:

Egg Loaf

2 cups of shell or elbow pasta, cooked
1 can cream of mushroom soup
8 eggs, beaten
1 cup summer squash, diced
Dash of salt
Dash of pepper

Mix ingredients together and pour into a greased and floured loaf pan, ring pan, or casserole dish. (It will stick, but the grease and flour help make cleaning up easier.) Bake for one hour at 350°F or until set; 15 minutes less for a ring pan.

Remove and cut into slices. Serve with tomato sauce, Parmesan cheese, salsa, cheese sauce or gravy.

My daughter thought the use of broccoli and cream of broccoli soup would be a good variation.

Egg Loaf #2

3-4 cups stuffing mix
8 eggs
3/4 cup milk
1 cup green peas
Salt and pepper to taste

Beat eggs and milk together, add stuffing mix and peas. Let set for 3-4 hours. Bake at 350°F for one hour or until set. Remove and cut into slices. Serve with beef gravy or ketchup.

The bread made the loaf filling. My wife said it was like French toast casserole, and by using plain dried bread, raisins, cinnamon, and perhaps a touch of brown sugar, we could serve it for breakfast with syrup.

Stir Fry

1 cup rice
2 cups beef or chicken broth
Stir fry vegetables
8 eggs, beaten
1/4 teaspoon salt and garlic powder
1/8 teaspoon pepper and ginger
1/4 cup soy sauce

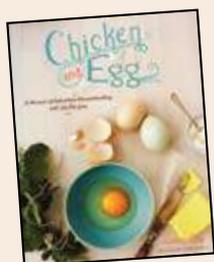
Cook rice in broth. Add stir-fry vegetables of your choice and eggs to cooked rice. Mix in spices and soy sauce. Bake at 350°F for 45-60 minutes, or until set. A ring pan works well. I serve it with sweet and sour sauce or Thai sauce, however feel free to use your favorite sauces.

Chicken and Egg

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BY JANICE COLE

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Thai Sauce

- 1/2 cup ginger ale
- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon of peanut butter
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch

Mix ingredients and boil until thick.

Sweet & Sour Sauce

- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup vinegar
- 1/2 cup Maraschino cherry juice (or other fruit juice)
- 1/2 cup crushed pineapple
- 1-1/2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1/4 cup cold water

Mix first four ingredients together and cook until sugar is dissolved. Mix cornstarch into cold water. Add to pineapple mixture. Cook until thick.

Curry Eggs

- 8 eggs, beaten
- 1 cup rice, cooked
- 1 chopped onion
- 1 chopped apple
- 1 can ceam of mushroom soup
- 1 cup milk
- 2 teaspoons curry powder
- Dab of butter

Melt butter in large skillet. Cook onions and apples until tender. Mix curry powder, mushroom soup, and milk together, pour into skillet, stir and bring to boil.

Mix rice and eggs into curry mixture and serve over rice. (Eggs can also be hard-boiled, cut into quarters, and added to curry mixture).

Bean Burritos

- 1 can black beans
- 2 teaspoons of chili powder
- 1/2 cup taco sauce
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- Garlic powder to taste
- Onion powder to taste
- Pepper to taste
- Paprika to taste
- 5 eggs, beaten
- Cheese
- Tortillas

Smash black beans in a skillet then add the spices, taco sauce, and eggs.

Cook until the eggs are scrambled. Top with melted American cheese (or cheese of your choice), and serve in a tortilla wrap.

Chocolate Meringue Pie

- pudding:*
- 4 egg yolks
 - 2 1/2 cups milk, divided
 - 1/2 cup sugar
 - 3 tablespoons cocoa
 - 3 tablespoons cornstarch
 - 1/8 teaspoon salt

Mix 2 cups milk, sugar, and cocoa together and bring to boil. Separately, mix the egg yolks, cornstarch, salt, and remaining 1/2 cup milk together. Pour hot liquid into the cold egg mixture. Stir, return to pan, and simmer 2-3 minutes until pudding thickens. Pour into pre-baked pie shell.

- Meringue:*
- 4 egg whites
 - 8 tablespoons sugar
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla

Beat egg whites into stiff peaks and slowly add sugar and vanilla.

Top the pie with meringue, bake at 350°F for 10-12 minutes until meringue turns a golden brown color.

I didn't have cream of tartar for meringue so I skipped it. It still turned out fine; I just had to beat it a little longer. The only thing wrong was the pudding seemed to shed some liquid, which I poured off the pie. Perhaps it was baked too long?

Ever hear of egg cheese? I found the recipe online. It comes from Slovakia. I cut the recipe down for experimentation purposes.

Egg Cheese

- 1 cup whole milk
- 3 eggs
- 1/2 tablespoon honey
- 1/8 teaspoon vanilla (optional)

Combine ingredients and cook in a double boiler for 20 to 30 minutes until it separates into curd. The curd will look like scrambled egg. The water in the double boiler should not touch the inner pan but be just below it.

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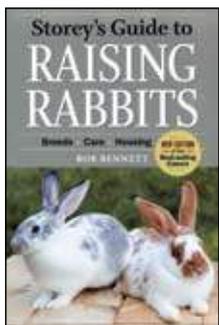
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After it is cooked, put in a cheesecloth or a scrap of old sheet and drain in a colander. Let cool, place in the refrigerator and continue to drain. I found, however, when it was cool you could squeeze the remaining whey out of it so it didn't need to drain all night in the refrigerator.

The Egg Cheese didn't taste *bad*... it didn't taste good...it didn't taste like much at all! It would be good for a filling in something like lasagna, but not to spread on crackers. I wasn't satisfied yet. The original recipe was very specific, stating only whole milk — no substitutes! So I substituted sweetened condensed milk.

Egg Cheese #2

1 – 14 ounce can of sweetened condensed milk

3/4 cup whole milk

4 eggs

1/4 teaspoon vanilla or to taste

I went through the same cooking process, combining ingredients and cooking in a double boiler for about 30 minutes. The whey didn't seem to separate out, even though it got the scrambled egg look. When it was cool enough to handle in the cheesecloth, I squeezed a fair amount of whey out of it. This made a nice sweet dessert cheese, although a bit crumbly. I used it in an apple cheese coffee cake and a plain cheese coffee cake. In the apple coffee cake the apple dominated, so I didn't taste much of the cheese. I would recommend putting in a flavoring like vanilla, almond, peppermint, orange, anise, etc., when making it to give it extra flavor.

Next, I remembered a very good recipe for carrot burgers on All-recipes.com. I decided to use it as a basis for vegetarian egg sausage, replacing the carrot — which would be too coarse — with winter squash instead.

Egg Sausage

1 cup winter squash, cooked and mashed

2 eggs, beaten

1 cup bread crumbs

2 tablespoons oil (preferably olive oil)

1 teaspoon Italian seasoning (or your preferred spice)

1/8 teaspoon salt

1/8 teaspoon pepper

1/4 teaspoon garlic powder

Mix all the ingredients together, form into ropes about the length and diameter of a hot dog. Roll in extra breadcrumbs. The mixture should resemble very soft cookie dough. Place on greased tray. Bake for 25 minutes at 350°F. Best served fresh.

I had some failures with eggs, too. My chiffon tomato soup didn't pan out very well. I added egg yolk to the soup, whipped the whites into meringue, and mixed it into the soup while it was hot. It was too fluffy, kind of like a soup latte'. Then I had a wild idea of eggeroni; pickling eggs in vinegar and pepper and using it as a substitute for pepperoni on pizza. That didn't fly well with the family. The pickled eggs were good and worked well in pasta salad. They also added a nice flavor to egg salad sandwiches. There are some nice pickled egg recipes online. The National Center for Home Food Preservation had several.

So these are some recipes that we came up with to use eggs in a non-traditional way. With the economy looking like it's going to take another dive, being able to feed your family properly is going to be very important. Eggs can be an essential food during this time, but eggs can get boring. To prevent this a person certainly needs to think outside the box, or in this case, outside the carton.

I would welcome any egg recipes that are creative or non-traditional and use several eggs at once. My wife mentioned my experiments at her place of work and it has generated considerable interest and perhaps would also interest your readers as well.

Send your unique egg recipes to: COUNTRYSIDE Editorial, 145 Industrial Dr., Medford, WI 54451 or csyeditorial@tds.net.

Book review:

Butchering books for the novice

Butchering Poultry, Rabbit, Lamb, Goat, and Pork: The Comprehensive Photographic Guide to Humane Slaughtering and Butchering, by Adam Danforth; Storey Publishing; 448 pages, 8-1/2" x 10 7/8", profusely illustrated in full color (photographs by Keller + Keller); Hardcover \$34.95, Paper \$24.95.

Butchering Beef, Adam Danforth, 352 pages; (other data same as above).

BY JD BELANGER

Killing and processing animals for food is one of the most distasteful chores on the homestead: for a beginner, it can be terrifying. While it will never become pleasant (nor should it), knowledge, experience, and a proper attitude can make it at least tolerable. And if you eat meat, *someone* has to do it.

All the knowledge you need to become confident, and with practice even proficient, is in these two outstanding books by Adam Danforth. He surely must have what amounts to a PhD in homestead butchering, and he's an excellent teacher. Make no mistake: these are not mere how-to guides: they are the equivalent of in-depth college courses.

The first five chapters (which are similar in both volumes) deal with what a college might call "prerequisites." These include an overview of tools, techniques, and a respectful Zen-like approach to turning an animal you raised into food that will become your own body, as well as some very important, scientific, helpful and interesting facts about meat and food safety.

Respect for the animal is evident throughout. "Honorable harvesting prioritizes the well-being of the animal; the process resembles nothing of the horror stories — and horrific realities — coming from inside improperly operated abattoirs or industrial-size slaughterhouses." That's one reason we raise our own.

Chances are you never even thought about some of the questions you'll find answered here, much less about why they're important. What's the difference between light meat and dark meat, or slow-twitch fibers and

fast-twitch fibers? What are the three stages of myoglobin? What should we know about pathogens? What do any of these have to do with cooking methods?

This might sound boring, but Danforth makes it fascinating. What's more, this is not just academic data: there are practical applications, and not only for homestead butchers. Anyone who cooks or eats meat would benefit from much of this information. It's basic, but even many "experienced" butchers, hunters and cooks will be amazed at how little

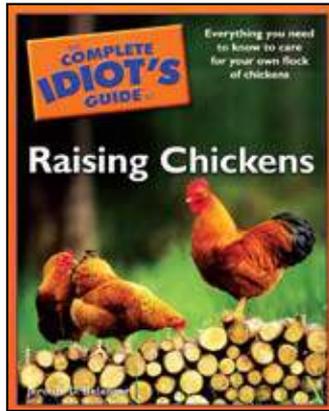
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This is an old story, but if you're new here...

Back in the 1960s there was very little information about homesteading, except in the heads of the old-timers who were still with us. When I butchered a hog, I phoned a meat expert at the University of Wisconsin, asking for some information on making bacon. There was silence, then laughter. "People don't make bacon," he chortled; "Oscar Mayer makes bacon!"

That's when I asked an elderly neighbor, who not only helped butcher but also lent me the lard press in his attic.

And that's when I started COUNTRYSIDE. — J.B.

they really know. (Bear this in mind if your butchering mentor has 20 years' experience, but it's really only one year's experience 20 times.)

This praise covers all of both books. Danforth explains everything in great detail (with the excellent large and clear photos and illustrations being a big help, of course), but again, he goes beyond the "cut here and do this" how-to guidelines to explain what you're doing, and why. Learn to tie butcher's knots and packer's knots; learn about types of fat deposits and types of muscles; learn how to trim, debone and use all parts of the animal.

Years ago there were several great discussions on aging meat in COUNTRYSIDE, but they never came close to the scientific approach Danforth fully explains. Despite the technical nature of this and many other topics, it's all easy to understand.

The author points out that "Familiarity with muscle structures and the skeletal map, knowledge about food safety and storage, and a collection of well-chosen tools will start you off on the right foot, but the real foundation to butchery as a craft is the mastery of methods. Understanding the conformation of muscle groups, the grain direction, the interworking of a joint, the connection points for seams: this knowledge is gained only through hands-on repetition. There is

no substitute."

Knowledge comes with experience, but you need at least a smattering of knowledge before you start. If I'd had these books 40-50 years ago when butchering my first hogs, I wouldn't have frozen lumpy packages labeled "pig meat" because it all looked the same: we would have had Boston butt, shoulder eye, bone-in and boneless rib roasts, sirloin tip, babyback ribs, spare ribs, pork steamship roasts, and semi-boneless ham, as well as cheeks and jowls and so much more. (See sidebar.) What little I've learned about butchering since then is a drop in the bucket compared to what Danforth teaches.

The volume on smaller animals will be the obvious first choice of most readers, and much of that applies to beef as well. The chief value of the beef book lies in its descriptive instructions for breaking down a side of beef. The author points out that there are many options (and describes all of them), but making certain cuts prevents others: you can't get both porterhouse steaks and a full tenderloin roast from a single side, for example. It's essential to plan ahead, using a provided sample "cut sheet" showing the various options. Veal is included in this volume.

On a scale of 1-10, these easily rank 12, minimum.

(See page 83 for book titles by Jd.)



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The hen house:



A home-made brooder

BY ZER EMUNAH

First, let me just say how much my wife and I enjoy your magazine! We just love it!

Enclosed are four pictures of a brooder I built this past spring. I have used it with great success. It is by far one of the best I have built. Plus, it did not cost me anything to build it as I used all scrap, recycled, and stuff I had on hand to build it, except for the clean-out tray. That I purchased at a local farm store for about \$23. I also built it so when I build the next one, I can stack them, hence, the clean-out tray.

In using this I would line the clean-out tray with old newspapers to make the clean out a breeze. Just turn it upside down and I was done!

The dimensions of the brooder are 32" x 32" x 16".

The inside height is 10 inches, making it tall enough for quart-sized-waterers and feeders to sit inside.

A 60-watt bulb was plenty of heat for the hatchlings.

We raised plenty of quail and chickens in the brooder over the course of this past summer.



Brooder interior

Right: Looking inside one sees the heat lamp as well as the thermometer in the back. Also, the tray is pulled out partially.



Finished brooder

Above: This is what the finished brooder looks like and where I set it for its first season. I hope to build a stand (on wheels) for it next year to get it off of my work bench.





Brooder doors

Above: Here is a picture with the doors open. I put doors in the front to be used when I begin stacking them. The one on top was for my own convenience and it will most likely be the brooder on top.



Brooder cleanout tray

Doors are closed and the tray is partially pulled out. The tray comes all the way out so it can easily be cleaned out. This is actually a rabbit hutch tray. But I found it worked great for what I wanted. The tray is 30-inches square.



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Raising backgarden chickens

BY CECIL HICKS

“Chickens!”

“You want to raise some laying hens, but we haven’t had chickens since we moved from our rural home several years ago.” That’s exactly what I said to my wife Maureen when she told me that she missed having hens around and she wanted some fresh eggs again.

Before moving to our current home in a subdivision in the panhandle of northern Idaho near the small town of Kootenai (pop. 450), we’d lived for 13 years on nine acres of land 10 miles north of Sandpoint (pop. 7,000). On our small rural farm, we raised five children and had a large vegetable garden, and over the years we also raised a variety of farm animals including chickens.

Each spring we’d buy baby chickens from our local farm co-op store and start them under a heat lamp in a small greenhouse off the back of our wood shed. A wood stove was

our main source of fuel for heating our older house during the winter months and I always kept busy in my spare time cutting and splitting firewood.

When the chickens were old enough we moved them out of the small greenhouse to a chicken coop, which had a six-foot tall fenced pen to keep the chickens in, wild animals and neighborhood dogs out. In our area of Idaho, these wild animals included raccoons, skunks, coyotes and crows. We usually kept about six to 12 Barred Plymouth Rock hens for egg production.

It was early spring when my wife informed me that she wanted a few chickens. As a homeowner, between our good-sized garden, fruit trees, lawn care and general house maintenance, I always had a project or two I was working on. Suddenly, I now had a top priority project preparing for the arrival of the chickens.

After picking up the chicks we started raising them in our garage in a large box under a heat lamp. The top



The Hicks decided to place their raised coop between raised beds in the garden.



Fresh eggs do taste better than store-bought!

of the box was covered with chicken wire. As the young chickens grew they had access to a chicken run (2 ½' tall, 2 ½' wide, by 6' long) that I constructed from 2" x 2" boards. I stapled chicken wire over the top and sides. Under the chicken run I laid down a tarp on the concrete floor and filled it with bedding straw.

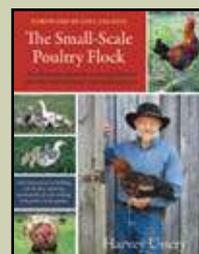
I then visited every farm supply/lumber company store in the region checking out and pricing chicken coops. I also checked out our local newspaper's farm supply sales ad section. Everything that I saw I thought was either too small for keeping at least six hens, not practical enough, hard to access and clean, or too expensive for our budget.

It wasn't long before I was designing our own backyard chicken coop that I'd planned on placing in an area in the back of the garden between two raised vegetable beds. I priced building materials at a few building supply companies in our region. I ended up buying all the boards, hinges, paint,

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wood screws, small window glass, door hooks, etc., plus a roll of six-foot tall fencing and eight-foot posts for around \$500.

I wanted to have a practical, sturdy chicken coop design, easily accessible for filling the feeder and water container, cleaning, and be safe from predators. I also wanted it to have two nesting boxes with an outside door that could be opened to gather eggs. It should be raised off the ground (mine is 14") so during the hot summer days the chickens can go underneath for shade if necessary.

For the chicken yard I fenced in an area 10' wide by 20' long. To keep your flock safe from predators digging under the fence, be sure to either bury the fence in a ground trench dug several inches deep, or insert a protective board in the trench nailed to the posts. To prevent any aerial attacks from crows for the first couple months when the young chickens are first moved to the outside coop, I strung garden and fruit tree netting over the top of the pen.

For the coop I used rough-cut ½" x 6" boards painted white. The length is five feet, which gives each chicken plenty of room for roosting on a 1-1/2" wooden dowel nailed between the front and back walls. The width of the coop is 36". The slanted roof is hinged in the back and can be easily raised and a prop board inserted for feeding, watering and cleaning. The peak of the roof is 57" and the front edge of the roof is 38".

There are two nesting boxes each 15" x 15" and a door in back that opens from the outside when gathering eggs.

The chickens enter and exit the coop by a small door with a ramp at the front. This door should be hooked open during the day and closed and hooked shut at night. I remember one summer day forgetting to hook the door open and the wind blew it shut, locking the hens out of their feed, water and nesting boxes. I also inserted a small window above the door to let in early morning light.

In the past we always had a single breed of laying hens that we liked — Barred Plymouth Rocks. This time



This homemade coop is easily accessible for feeding and watering.

around my wife explained that she wanted to select six different breeds of chickens so she could name them individually, like pets. Besides a Barred Plymouth Rock, she selected one of each of the following breeds: Buff Orpington, Amber Star, Araucana, Brown Leghorn, and Golden Sexlink. Now when she comes back in the house after gathering eggs with a smile on her face she'll say something like "look at this big egg that Daisy Mae laid." She named the chickens Daisy Mae, Speckles, Pumpkin, Fuzz Ball, Feathers and Princess.

Another advantage of having chickens is when weeds, and/or certain vegetable stems and leaves are pulled and picked, these items can be tossed into the pen for chicken

scratch. Since we've started raising chickens, I've enclosed a six-foot chicken fence across our lot behind the backyard enclosing off the garden. After vegetable harvest in the fall, the gate to the chicken yard is propped open during the day and it gives the hens the run of the garden for several weeks before cold weather sets in. Another benefit of having chickens range over the garden, besides adding some manure to the soil, is a lot of unwanted insects and bugs disappear.

Overall, I'll have to admit that raising our own small flock of backyard chickens has been an enjoyable undertaking and I agree with my wife, that fresh eggs do taste better than store bought.

The goat barn:

~ The new kids in the barn ~

Meet the Nigora goat

By PATRICIA CHAMBERS

About six years ago, I was still on the quest to find the perfect breed of goat for our little homestead. We tried a Pygmy or two, a couple of Fainters, a few cross breeds and eventually the road led to Nigerian Dwarfs. After a couple of years of caring for and breeding a few Nigerian Dwarf goats, I came across some reference to a breed of goat called the Nigora. The description of a Nigora is a



small, dual-purpose goat breed that produces both fiber and milk. I admit I was intrigued by the description, but I was smitten when I saw some pictures of them. They were gorgeous! Some looked like the Pomeranians of the goat world. Others looked like they should be posed next to a Greek Goddess in a sculpture or painting, because of their long, lustrous, wavy locks of mohair. Literally every picture I saw of them was more beautiful than the one before.

It was then that I knew I had to see one of these goats for myself but I couldn't find any of them within a reasonable driving distance. However in my hunt to find Nigoras, I did find a few Angora does for sale and so I decided to just make my own Nigo-

ras. We started off with one white Angora doe and crossed her with our Nigerian buck, which led to buying a second Angora doe and crossing her until we were up to five Angora does. Every kid that we produced was so beautiful, but for the first few years, we had to sell them to make money to cover our winter hay bill. That is, until Giselle was born. Her Angora mom's udder was ruined by mastitis a year before we met her, but we bought her anyway because she was so beautiful—solid black with blue eyes. We knew that we'd have to pull her kids and so when she gave birth to little Giselle, I had her on the bottle from day one and of course in doing so, I bonded very strongly with her. I just refused to sell her and in

keeping her I was able to see for myself just what these little goats could do. Giselle has not disappointed us—she is terrific on the milking stand, has an incredibly soft udder, teats long enough to get three fingers around (I have small hands so that helps too) and her fiber is incredible. She has the type of fiber that looks like a Pomeranian. It is the kind that is considered Type B. It is straight, grows out in a big fluffy coat and it is so amazingly soft. Although I haven't gotten to the point

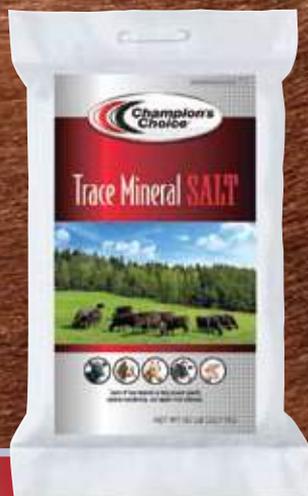
where I have the time to learn to spin myself, I have sent out samples of her fiber to some friends who do work with fiber and they have told me that Giselle's fiber is not only about as soft as an alpaca's but it also has either no guard hairs or they are so soft that they just spin right into that soft downy undercoat hair that makes up her mohair.

Our other Nigora kids seem to have either similar mohair (very soft and fine) or slightly more coarse mohair that has a natural wave and a high luster but still retains a very soft touch.

The fiber that a Nigora produces is classified into three distinct types. The first is type A which has mohair characteristics. It has a micron value

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at about 25 to 45 microns in diameter, has a luster and like all the types, the diameter of the hairs will increase as the animal ages. Mohair is strong, durable and is often blended with other fibers such a wool or llama fiber. Mohair also has no lanolin, which may be a concern for some people who are sensitive to it.

Type B fiber is a blend of mohair and cashmere qualities, which is commonly called Cashgora. It is very soft to the touch but has some guard hairs, which may be coarser. This type of fiber should be raked off of the goat (not clipped) to separate the soft undercoat from the guard hairs.

Type C fiber is the closest to cashmere; it is extremely soft. When spinning, it sticks to itself easily and can be spun into a yarn that is very thin.

All three fibers take dye well, are durable, and if not harvested, will shed out on their own and are often picked up by birds to line their nests. Nigoras are usually slick coated like a Nigerian during the summer.

The Nigora goat itself should be gentle, loving and even affectionate but because many Angoras are kind of flighty. If a breeder chooses to leave kids with a flighty dam, then there is a good chance the kids will be too. We actually made this mistake ourselves, but there is a trick that the old timers use to tame those wilder does. When the doe gives birth let her lick the afterbirth off your hands while they are still in the maternal/bonding state of mind. One of my customers did this with a doe that I sold her that wouldn't tame down any other way. They said it was like magic; she calmed right down and was so tame and loving from that point on. She was even affectionate with the father who couldn't spend much time with the goats because of his work schedule.

Ever since that happened, we just pull all our doelings at day one and put them all on the bottle. It isn't as much work as you might imagine and it really pays off when the kids grow up to be tame and affectionate adult goats. For example, when it's time to deworm, all I have to do is hold out the syringe and they just take their medicine right down.

Buying a Nigora goat is going to be like buying any other breed of livestock. If it's possible, visit the farm and see for yourself what it's like. Make sure that the goats are in good condition. This is not a rescue mission – when buying breeding stock, do your homework! Do not just fall in love with one and buy it because you feel sorry for it. These little Nigoras are adorable but remember that a free goat (or any free animal), can sometimes wind up being the most expensive animal that you ever have. When you buy animals that you intend to breed, this is the time to be picky! Ask them how long they've been breeding goats, how long they've had Nigoras, where did they get their original breeding stock from (preferably not an auction) and ask about papers, too. Registration papers on the parents will help you to get your Nigoras registered and then your farm will be on a national database. This makes it easy for potential customers to find you.

The Nigora Goat Breeders Society, LLC is the only Nigora registry that is currently actively registering Nigoras and is run by nice folks who have experience with both Angoras and Nigerians. We at the NGBS can answer questions concerning Nigoras because we have them and we know a lot about where their genetics came from and what they will produce. We are able to answer your questions and concerns honestly and from our own personal experiences with these goats.

For more information about Nigora goats, please call or email either of the founders of the NGBS. We love talking about goats!

I can be reached by phone or email. 815-274-8058 or heck6100@t6b.com, or visit my website at www.animal-instinctsnfp.com to see our Nigoras. We also welcome visitors, so if you are going to be in our area, please let us know and we would love to show you around our little piece of heaven in northern Illinois.

Petra Richards is the President of the NGBS and can be reached at texasherbcompany@yahoo.com, or by phone at 512-525-7386

Lamb nutrition helps Hidden Springs Creamery grow

Brenda Jensen, Dairy Sheep Association of North America (DSANA) Vice President, says she never thought she'd be a cheesemaker when you ask her how she and her husband Dean began Hidden Springs Creamery, now a thriving 550-ewe sheep dairy in Westby, Wisconsin. Brenda began her career working in business for a printing company while Dean worked as a mental health therapist; the two expanded their business portfolio in 2003, with ewes as their new co-workers.

But how did the Jensens go from zero sheep a dozen years ago to more than 500 ewes today? Brenda says the growth is a result of discussions with others in the industry, long-term planning and close attention to each member of the flock—beginning on day one.

“From the very beginning we planned to run a sustainable, environmental and financial farm,” she says. “We say, take care of the flock and they will take care of you.”

While traveling in Europe in the early 2000s, the two stayed a few extra days to tour small farms in France.

“We both were interested in farming,” Brenda says. “The thought grew into a real idea when we saw these farms in France. The sheep dairy farmers and cheesemakers are the hubs of local subcultures; with just 20 sheep, the cheesemakers bring their cheese to the corner, sell it and sustain their farms. It really is a cheesemakers’ dream.”

Brenda began researching options to begin a dairy sheep creamery back in Wisconsin. The economics and marketing opportunities in the United States proved that the two would need to build a larger flock than the farms they'd seen in Europe, to be sustainable. After creating a business



Brenda Jensen, Dairy Sheep Association of North America (DSANA) Vice President, at Hidden Springs Creamery in Westby, Wisconsin.

plan for growth, the two purchased 50 East Friesian and Lacaune ewes from the University of Wisconsin Spooner Research Station and began the dairy with a 12 x 12 parlor.

Healthy flock equals quality cheese

Much of the growth at Hidden Springs Creamery has been a result of attention and care for each member of the flock. Ewes are grazed on 76 acres of paddocks and then milked in the rapid exit 12-by-12 parlor. During the milking season, two additional employees are on staff: one to focus on cheesemaking and the other to help with the sheep.

Brenda credits a healthy flock to the growth of the creamery, which now markets cheese throughout the United States. Brenda has made crucial connections with restaurants and stores in the Midwest and also works with distributors in New York, California and Chicago.

“We make our cheese onsite at our creamery and then ship the cheese to distributors and also self-distribute to stores and restaurants in Wisconsin,” Brenda says, explaining that she hand-delivers cheese to customers in Madison and Milwaukee. “I like the personal interaction because I can talk to chefs, cheese buyers and store workers, and cre-

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ate intimate relationships with our customers."

With demand for their cheeses at a premium, the Jensens have grown their flock to fill orders and to improve efficiency. Because the flock is closed, all growth must come internally. The Jensens add new genetics to the flock with purchased rams and then retain ewe lambs each year. To continue their trend of an additional 100 new ewes each year, lamb health is key.

"In the past, we've had issues with lamb health, slow growth rates and mortality rates – and a big part of that comes back to nutrition," Brenda says. "We've used a lot of different milk replacers; last year, we used the milk replacer that the Wisconsin Dairy Sheep Coop purchased."

"We learned from experience that cheapest is not always the best; you might save a few pennies, but you're not catching up in the long-run if you're losing sheep or your lambs aren't growing as quickly as they should be," she says. "This year, we had close to 700 lambs; we needed to do what was best for them."

This year, the Jensens spoke with other sheep producers, their local veterinarian and researched industry materials before making a decision. Randy Radsek, a local dairy nutritionist with Premier Coop, recommended Ultra Fresh® Optimum lamb milk replacer.

Ultra Fresh® Optimum lamb milk replacer provided an enhanced fatty acid profile, a balance of 25% protein and 30% fat to mimic ewe's milk and Digestarom® to support gut health and lamb growth. In addition, Land O'Lakes Animal Milk Products mixed the product so that it was fresh and formulated the way the Jensens needed it, when they needed it and bagged the milk replacer so it could easily be added to the farm's auto-feeders.

"We saw excellent results," she beams.

For more information on Ultra Fresh® Optimum Lamb Milk Replacer, visit www.lolmilkreplacer.com or call 1-800-618-6455. Lamb producers are encouraged to contact their local feed retailer.



Blood pregnancy testing can help determine if ewes are open, so they can quickly be rebred.

Pregnancy tests for ewes

By JEREMY HOWARD

DIRECTOR OF SALES AND MARKETING
BioTRACKING, LLC

Determining the pregnancy status of a ewe is an important management practice. Determining if a ewe is open or pregnant helps you rebreed open ewes quickly or cull open ewes at the best time.

There are several methods to determine the pregnancy status of a ewe. Each method has its own positives and negatives associated with use.

One method is the monitoring of animals for the absence of heat. This technique can be learned by anyone and is inexpensive, but does require a lot of time and open ewes can be missed. The ewes need to be monitored every 17 days from the date they were previously observed in standing heat. If the ewe returns to heat, she is not pregnant and will need to be rebred or culled.

A second method is the use of an ultrasound to detect the pregnancy status of the ewe. Ultrasounds can be expensive and require a trained technician or veterinarian to operate the machine. A benefit of using this technology is being able to determine pregnancy status during the early stages of pregnancy (35 days), the ability to identify the number of lambs a ewe is carrying and the sex and viability of each lamb. If the

ability to determine the number of lambs is desired, the optimum time to perform an ultrasound is from 35 to 90 days post-breeding.

A relatively new and efficient method for determining pregnancy status is blood pregnancy testing. Shepherds can collect a sample of blood from the ewe and send it to a laboratory to be analyzed. Lab technicians use technology to detect a protein that is produced by the placenta during pregnancy. If the protein is found in the sample, the ewe is confirmed pregnant; if the protein is not in the blood sample, the ewe can be rebred. Blood pregnancy testing can be cost-effective and an accurate alternative to palpation and ultrasound – and you can collect the sample yourself. Tests are proven to be nearly 100 percent accurate when a ewe is determined to be open.

One of these tests, BioPRYN, offers high accuracy as early as 30 days post-breeding. Drawing blood for the pregnancy test is very simple with a blood pregnancy testing kit provided by BioTracking, LLC: the makers of BioPRYN. Using a new needle for each animal to avoid cross-contamination, a producer must draw at least two milliliters of blood per animal into a collection tube.

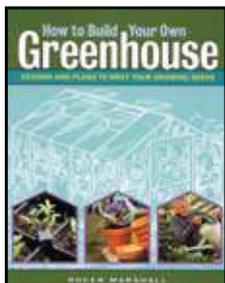
The producer then numbers the test tubes sequentially and with the animal's identification number and ships the samples without coolant to a local laboratory for analysis. The laboratory tests the samples and reports results back to producers via email, fax, mail or phone five to 24 hours after the samples reach the lab.

Additional benefits to this method are that the blood samples can be used for multiple tests including Ovine Progressive Pneumonia (OPP) and other serum-based diagnostic tests. Conducting multiple tests at once provides you to make more informed management decisions.

For additional information on the importance of pregnancy testing visit www.biotracking.com or contact Jeremy Howard at jhoward@biotracking.com or 208-882-9736.

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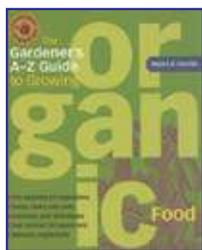


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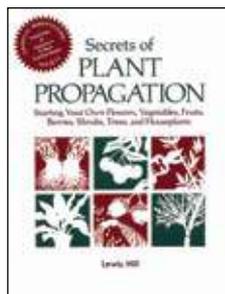
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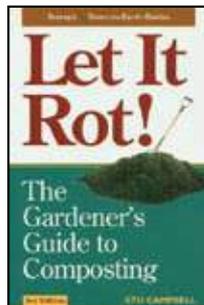
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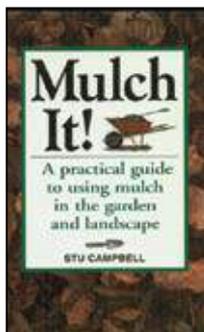


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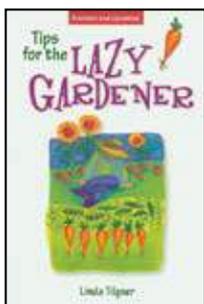


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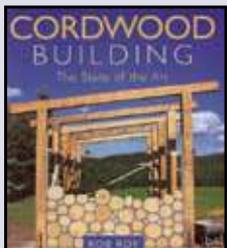


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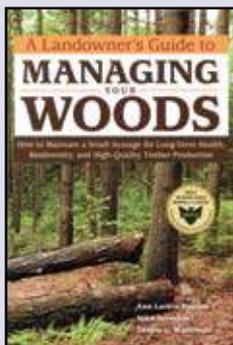


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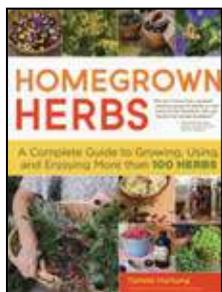


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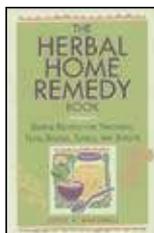


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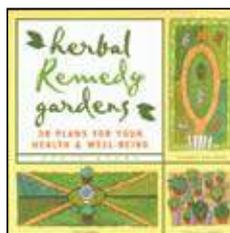


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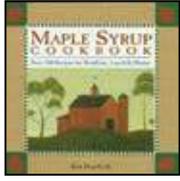
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The cow barn:

Training oxen

Part 3

Working a team

BY HEATHER THOMAS
IDAHO

A team of oxen can be relatively easy to train, since cattle are often more relaxed and secure when they are with a buddy. Training two young animals together is often easier than trying to train just one. They get used to doing things together and are more content as a “herd.”

Use a yoke that fits them comfortably. When starting them out as small calves, you’ll need several yokes of different sizes as they grow. The most commonly used yokes in the U.S. are wooden neck yokes, though some people use head yokes. To work in a head yoke, the animals must have substantial horns to help hold it in place. A head yoke is strapped to the horns; the animals push with their heads. With a neck yoke the animals push into the yoke and bows with their necks and shoulders.

When the pair has had enough experience to work nicely together in a yoke, you can hitch them to something to pull. Even small calves can start pulling something very light, such as an old car tire. When you hitch

them to something for the first time and they feel the pull, it may alarm them. They might try to run off—so be prepared to halt them. Give them the command to stop as soon as they take a few steps, and keep repeating this exercise (a few steps, then whoa) until they feel at ease with the weight dragging behind them and will readily stop when you tell them to stop.

If you can keep them from running, they soon realize that the tire or cart behind them is nothing to fear, and will quickly adjust to this new situation. The object to be pulled can be a small log, sled, wagon or anything else that is easy for them to pull around the barnyard, pen or pasture. An old tire is ideal because you can increase the weight gradually (as they learn to pull) by adding rocks to the inside.

Most oxen drivers walk alongside the left steer. This position allows use of a whip or goad in the right hand. The whip or goad are simply used as an extension of your hand and arm, enabling you to touch or prod an animal—such as to tap him on the rump to start him moving or to make him move faster. It can also be used to tap him on the nose or head (or brisket) to slow or stop

Training/working a single ox

Most oxen are trained and worked as a team, with two animals, but there are times it’s handy to use a single ox—for instance when pulling a cart on a narrow path or pulling a farm implement between close rows. If the work is not long or heavy, a single ox may be sufficient power for the job. For pulling, you merely need a single yoke with two traces, but the yoke must fit properly, with the hitch points putting the traces far enough out from the shoulders and body that they will not rub on the animal.

An ox that has been trained in a team can readily learn to work alone, since he already knows all the commands. In some ways it can be more challenging to train and work a single ox (even if he once had a teammate) because

he is more likely to try to run off, or wander rather than travel a straight line (especially when pulling a heavy load), and it’s harder to keep him from stopping to graze if he decides to do so.

If you started training your calves individually (to lead, to respond to commands) before you yoked them together, they won’t be as difficult to work singly later. They may adjust more readily to working on either side, or with an unfamiliar teammate. If you need to use one member of a team as a single, choose the one that’s most calm and trustworthy.

Practice working the single animal first in a corral or pen where he can’t just walk away if he is reluctant or unhappy working by himself; a single animal is often more headstrong and independent working alone than when he is working with a teammate.

him. After the animals become accustomed to physical cues and associate them with your verbal cues and arm motions, they will respond properly just with your voice and a movement of the goad or whip. You won't actually have to touch them with it.

When the team becomes good at obeying your signals and pulling their load, you can fine tune your training to get them to respond to more subtle cues or to just your voice commands. Keep practicing, and make sure they respond only to what you desire—and at the proper time. Don't let them anticipate and move before you command. They are good at watching body language and may anticipate your next move, so be careful in your actions and also insist on perfect obedience.

Vary the routine

Cattle prefer a routine, since they are creatures of habit and find comfort in always doing things a certain way. They quickly adapt to anything you do over and over again. This aptitude can be an aid in training, but it can also be a challenge—to have your oxen defer to you and not fall into a certain habit, such as always turning in the field at a certain spot. They become accustomed to where they are fed, where they are yoked and unyoked, and where you generally stop the lessons for the day and head for home. During the training period you must conscientiously vary the routine in what you ask them to do. It's also important to vary the training area—doing the lessons in different locations—so they never quite know

when the session will end. Otherwise they will automatically turn for home or halt at a certain spot. Watch your body language to make sure you don't give subtle cues that make them anticipate the end of a workout.

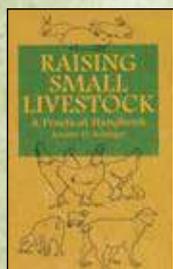
If they think it's time to go home and quit paying attention to you, hitch them back up again and continue working until they learn they are not going to head for home whenever you pass a certain place. If they are always trying to go back to the corral or area where you unhitch them, make them walk in and out of that area several times before you end the lesson, and then unhitch them somewhere else. Keep them guessing, and teach them they must always obey you.

Every time you handle them or work them, you are actually training them (teaching them good habits or bad ones), even after the so-called training period is over. It's important to keep adding new challenges, and keep fine-tuning their skills. They will continue to learn, and it's up to you to make sure they learn good habits, not bad ones. They quickly learn to take advantage of you, if they can. You must outsmart them, not the other way around, and this can be the biggest challenge.

If you are serious about wanting to train a team, one of the best sources of detailed information (covering everything from selection of a team, care of oxen and training techniques, to the needed equipment and how to work oxen) is Drew Conroy's book *Oxen: A Teamster's Guide* (Blue Mountain Press, Kentville, Nova Scotia, Canada 2013; clegged@gmail.com.)

Homestead Books by Jerome D. Belanger

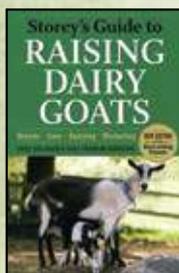
Jerry (Jd) Belanger, a lifelong goat raiser, is former editor and publisher of *Countryside & Small Stock Journal* and has written numerous books on country living and homesteading.



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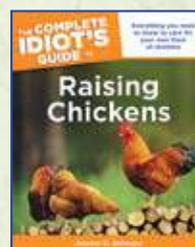


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The cow barn:

Scottish Highland cattle flourish in cool weather

BY STACY CORKUM
NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA

It's been seven years since my husband and I drove up the long dusty lane of what would become our farm. We wanted a simple life in the country; we wanted to be self-sustainable. We bought 165 acres of land on the floor of the beautiful Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia. The farm so rich in history, it traced back to the Rand family, New England Planters. The well-known Silas Tertius Rand was born in this house; his daddy's hands built the rock foundation.

The drive to the farm led up a road surrounded with ancient oaks towering over a field, what we now call the "Oak Field." A long driveway, with overgrown fields on either side gone

wild with alder, led to the house. A Cape Cod with a large sunroom sat hidden among a hedge of honeysuckle, mock orange and roses, with apple trees on all sides. The house was just bones, torn down to the 1800 timber frame. It took eight months of love to build it back into a home.

A large weather-beaten two-and-a-half story barn sat behind the house to the left, the doors boarded over and Virginia creeper climbing the grey walls. The walls are now slowly being replaced with new shingles, the mow once again full of hay. Three box stalls are on the main floor. Two stalls for horses, one for our Jersey cow, Ginger. The rest of the space for hay storage. Beside the main barn to the right, we have a pole barn. It provides shelter to a fold of

20 Scottish Highlands. It wasn't long after moving in we introduced our first Highland cattle, a cow and calf pair. And it wasn't long after that we added several more cows and a bull. It was an obvious choice in cattle, the breed perfect for helping rejuvenate our fields.

Our pastures are now lush in green, free of alders and bramble. We practice pasture management, cattle are moved weekly. There are five pastures in total, about 40 acres. The preferred pasture by the cattle is the meadow land, for which the farm is named, for its diverse vegetation. New pastures are in the making, enough to eventually move cattle daily would be ideal.

The cattle are strictly grass fed and finished, eating only the very best

pasture we can offer, hay and haylage through the winter months. Salt and minerals are also offered free choice as a critical part of their diet.

The Nova Scotia climate can change quickly. We have months that are terribly wet and raining every couple of days, hurricanes and tropical storms, other months we suffer with humidity. Winter can be bitterly cold with snow and ice storms. Regardless of the weather the cattle seem to fare well here.

The cattle are free roaming, never confined to a stall, with access to their barn and shelter of trees at all times. Most will use the barn to dry off after a storm but during the worst of storms I've seen them stare it straight in the eye, oblivious to the icicles forming on their horns.

Mid-March the calves are born to our 10 foundation cows. It didn't take long to figure out calving in warm weather with a double-coated breed of cow could cause issues with fly strike. Calving in cooler weather eliminates any issues.

As mothers the cows never cease to amaze me. They are protective and caring, gentle enough to allow me to help a calf nurse if needed. I have milked every single cow I own at some point or another, even first time moms.

Highlands are easy birthers, we have never had an issue even with first time heifers. Heifers are not bred until 28 months to ensure they are fully mature. The calves are left to wean naturally usually at eight months.

I run a small cow/calf operation with eight to 10 yearlings selling for breeding stock each year. The ones that don't make the cut as breeders provide us with beef for the year. Our one Jersey cow is crossed with our Highland bull to produce a "lazy man's Jersey" or a Jerseyland as they are known around here. The cross makes a wonderful milk cow. Winter hardy, compact with no birthing issues, enough milk to satisfy her calf as well as a family of five. The milk is rich in butterfat with the Jersey around 7-8% and a Highland at 10%.

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The Highland was once a dual purpose breed providing both milk and beef. Our first Jerseyland steer will be processed soon and I expect the beef will be wonderfully rich and beefy, lean and tender. I was a shepherdess up until last year raising the spectacular Cotswold. A flock of no more than 14 at one time, both colored and white, ewes and rams of each. I raised strictly breeding stock and sold the fleece to fiber artists. The locks of gold, silvers and charcoals fetching \$12/lb.

After the birth of my daughter I decided to concentrate my efforts on my cattle. With a heavy heart I sold my flock to Erin Gillis in Cape Breton who continues to breed the lines I worked so hard to preserve.

The sheep pasture has now been turned into a fruit orchard. Apples, pears, cherry, peach, plum and apricots grow where my sheep once grazed.

I grow two vegetable and herb gardens with cut flowers mixed in. One 30 x 100 the other 20 x 30. The land is early and able to be planted a month earlier than others. The soil is sandy loam, not a rock to be found, it is beautiful to work with but can be a challenge in the heat of summer drying out quickly. The gardens provide lots of produce, enough for the table as well as preserving.

I have just about everything I've ever wanted and a lot more than I need or deserve. Of course all I've ever really wanted was a farm of my own.

It may not look like much to some, with the 213-year-old house and barn in need of paint, but it's mine. I have a lovely 100-acre forest, green pastures, orchards and meadows. I have cattle, a fold of 20. Some may tell me they are not a practical breed, but I've never regretted my choice, they surely have to be the most beautiful.

When I look at my fold of Highlands on a field that is pea green with the spring dew, I know Monet couldn't have painted a scene any lovelier.

And for me that is reason enough to keep them. ❁

The horse barn:



BY BRYAN S. FARCUS MA, CJF
"FARRIER-FRIENDLY" SERIES

Planning a future horse facility? Don't forget your farrier

With the passing of one year and the arrival of another, many of you may have already begun to reflect on what new and exciting adventures you and your horses will embark on. Of many, one may be to commit to the construction of a bigger, or perhaps just better, horse facility. One of the most popular and exciting experiences is to create a barn for both you and your horse that you can truly call "home sweet home."

However, amidst all the excitement of planning, some people may forget a few practical points, one being an allotted space for your farrier and your vet so that they can safely and efficiently do routine health care procedures for your horses. As a practicing farrier, over the past "20-ish" years, I have worked in many different types of shoeing situations and it is always a thrill to see people who care enough to plan for a nice work area for their farrier/vet. Here are a few things that are important:

- Good lighting. Instead of one ceiling center light, have two ceiling sidelights. I find that they shine better with less shadowing. Also, a few windows would be nice. Nothing can beat good, old natural light.
- A level floor. It should be clean and solid — not necessarily concrete — if it is, then rubber matting is good to provide comfort to some of those tender footed horses while working on them. A note of caution, however. If you use rubber mats they should not be allowed to get wet. In colder climates, ice can form and cause slippery conditions.
- A fan. For the fly season, a fan will be more helpful to the horse than most fly sprays and it is also a wonderful treat for the "overheated" farrier. He/she will really appreciate it.
- A "roomy" space to work. Most of the time people forget that the farrier will need some space to set-up tools and move safely around the horse. I find that an area of at least 12' wide x 14' long gives farrier and horse enough space to be comfortable. A good rule of thumb is, *if the area is big enough to stand two horses, side-by-side, then it's big enough to shoe one.*
- An electrical outlet. Some shoeing jobs may require the use of electric hand tools, such as metal grinders, pad cutters, or drill presses. Access to such tools can make a world of difference in the quality of your farrier's work.

I hope you find these suggestions helpful and I sincerely wish each of you another fulfilling year of pleasure with your horses and in all your horse ventures. ❁

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Left: Winning male donkey



Above: Stallion winner and Supreme Champion and Donkey Project winner



Left: Winning mule

BY ANNA SAILLET
UNITED KINGDOM

The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust held their annual show in December to reward owners for providing the best care for their working horses, donkeys and mules.

The trust is a small UK registered charity working to improve the lives of working equines in The Gambia. They provide essential veterinary treatments at their center and through mobile veterinary clinics, but they also run a successful education program about

equine welfare, to create a long lasting change in attitudes towards working animals.

A healthy working equine can increase a family's income by 500%, so through improving equine welfare it is possible to improve the lives of their owners. The Trust works in a holistic and sustainable way through a variety of community development and educational programs. These programs include training of equine professionals as well as school and farmer education programs and a twice weekly "Donkey Club" that local children can attend with their donkeys.

The Annual Horse and Donkey Show is an opportunity for Gambians to gain rewards for taking excellent care of their working animals, and it provides proof that it is possible to maintain a healthy working animal, despite the difficult living conditions and prevalence of tropical diseases. Without such luxuries as horse trailers, Gambian horse and donkey owners are known to walk for several days with their animals to attend the show and a chance of winning a prize.

Classes are judged on a combination of condition of the animal and how well the animals are handled by their owners. December's annual show saw almost 200 horses, donkeys and mules in attendance and once again the overall standard of the animals had improved. Over the seven years that the show has taken place, the general health of competitors has improved each year. Heather Armstrong, Director of the Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust said "In the year that the show was initiated it was difficult for judges to choose a winner because so many animals were in poor condition; this year it was difficult to choose winners because the general condition of the animals was so good, particularly that of the donkeys. This is in part due to the fantastic success of our educational programs, teaching both children and adults how to take good care of their animals. This improves the lives of the animals and also enables the animals to be more productive for their owners who rely on them for their own survival."

Although the event is great fun for all who attend, it is also an important platform to help to raise the profile of the plight of working equines in The Gambia. Huge progress has been seen in the way that animals are cared for in the Central River Region since the Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust began its work almost 12 years ago, and this small charity is hopeful that there is even more positive change ahead.

A second Trust center for equine welfare is planned to be built in 2014, to provide an opportunity to work closely with both The Gambia College and Gambia University, offering training to young professionals and expanding veterinary services and educational programs.

For more information about the work of the Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust visit www.gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk or www.facebook.com/gambiahorseanddonkey.

Country neighbors:


They'll take upstate New York over Manhattan any day!

BY SUZANNE
NEW YORK

I've been a subscriber for many years and have always wanted to contribute my story, but somehow was never able to find the right words. Now, after 34 years of homesteading in upstate New York's mid-Hudson Valley, I think the time has come.

Let me start by saying that I was born in New York City 56 years ago and grew up in an upper-middle class home until 1975, when I left home and struck out on my own. I was very influenced as a teenager by the back-to-the-land movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and always longed to live in the country on a farm with lots of room for my animals. I learned how to ride very early in life and had a taste of country life through summer vacations, riding camps, etc., and I knew New York was no longer for me.

After two years of agricultural college in northern Maine, I headed back to New York, just a 90-minute drive from my folks, who continued to live in Manhattan.

For those of you who have never had the luck to visit upstate New York, let me tell you what you have missed. The mighty and wide Hudson River, apple orchards in pink bloom in Ulster County, the famous

Shawargunk Mountains, foothills to the bigger Catskills but important in their own right for their challenging sheer rock faces that lure mountain climbers from all over the world, 300-year-old stone houses and lots of horses and horse farms. I fell in love with it all and knew I had to stay.

About a year after I had arrived, I met and married my husband, then a welder but soon to be a farrier for the next 34 years and counting. He, too, had been bred and born in New York City, Brooklyn to be exact, but like me, knew that city life was not for him. An early love for the outdoors, especially hunting and fishing would have him leave the city and eventually find his way upstate as well.

We started out with next to nothing, renting for the first year or so, then finding our way to the property where we still live, a house and barn with 60 acres of land, 50 of it wooded. We have been heating our little (1,100 sq. ft.) home exclusively with wood for nearly 35 years. It's a lot of work, as my husband has to cut, haul, split and stack at least 11 to 13 cords a year. We start burning in late September and often continue right through to May, rarely allowing the fire to go out unless the weather is very warm or we're away from the house.

In the very beginning we used a horse to pull the logs to the house,

one by one, but soon we bought a used tractor, which made it much easier.

We have a very large vegetable garden, which provides us as well as our friends with produce each year. I would love to say that I freeze or can all of my garden surplus, but I'd be lying. We share it with others, we use some for barter and enjoy seeing those who have no way of gardening enjoying the fresh fruits and vegetables our patch provides.

I started raising poultry in 2000. Before that we either bought our eggs or farrier clients sent him home with a dozen from time to time. I had about 60 birds of all breeds, shapes and sizes at one time. Allowing several broody hens to raise chicks one year resulted in 30 roosters! As crazy as it sounds, I drove around, searching for homes that had signs of poultry on the property, drove in the driveway, introduced myself and inquired if they'd be interested in a free rooster or two. Very often they were, and I made a lot of new friends that way.

As time went on, I culled all my non-producing birds that were eating more than their worth and began buying ready-to-lay 17-week-old red sex link pullets from Moyer's Chick Hatchery in Quakertown, Pennsylvania. It was well worth the journey to get vaccinated, hard-working birds

that produced more than 300 large brown eggs per year. At the end of their second season, I gave the spent layers to a woman I knew who humanely butchered them and fed them to her family.

I kept an average of 25-30 birds until last February 2013, a weasel managed to get into my coop and killed all but eight birds. I was heartbroken and tried every way I could to catch the weasel, but to no avail. I decided to just keep the remaining birds to produce eggs for my own use and would not buy more pullets until this spring.

It would be nice to be able to say that we make a living income off the farm but sadly that is not the case. Taxes are very high here in New York and we do not get agricultural dispensation as our farm makes no real income. That's why I have worked fulltime for a local veterinarian for the last 27 years and my husband, at age 63, still cannot fully retire.

It is partly because we have no children or grandchildren that we are able to live as cheaply as we do. When the television reception went digital, we discovered that the signal would not reach us via the "black box" we were instructed to buy and that we would have to purchase either cable or satellite tv. We decided that it would not be too much of a sacrifice to give it up altogether, and so we have, for over four years. We get our news mainly from the radio as we do not subscribe to the local newspaper. We have no computer either, although I have the use of one at my workplace and I send and receive emails to my friends and family that live a distance away.

We gave up our clothes washing machine when it went on the fritz over a year ago, and I discovered that the laundromat in town three miles away had extra large machines that did a better job of washing my clothes. I will never own a clothes washer again. I enjoy going to town early Sunday morning, doing my wash and milling around the shops close to the laundromat. When the cycle ends, I bring the wet clothes home to either hang outside on the

clothesline or downstairs by the woodstove.

I really see no need to go off grid, although I admire those who do. My electric bill averages about \$35 per month and I happen to enjoy electricity, one of our few luxuries in life.



We keep busy during the long winter months by listening to radio, playing musical instruments, playing Chinese checkers, reading, watching movies on our little 12-inch tv (found at a local yard sale for \$2 – remote included!), and browsing local antique stores and junk barns for cheap treasures. I do a lot of baking, especially cookies and pies, most of which find their way to our friends and my workplace. People often ask me how I find the time to bake, which I think is funny, because they often find the time to watch tv or go online. To each his own.

We raised a flock of sheep for wool and meat for some time years ago, but realized that without acres of pasture, it was not practical. We fed hay and grain year round and had to pay someone to shear the whole flock and had to give the shearer the wool to keep, to boot. We traded the sheep to a local 4-H family for horse hay. It was a good trade.

I consider myself a horse person. We are in the horse business and they have always been a part of my life, and I hope they always will be.

Some horses we bought, some we bred and some were adopted when their original owners could no longer keep them. We may not go on vacations, or out to dinner in fancy restaurants, but we will always have a few good horses. As our land is mainly wooded, I must buy all my hay and I know I spend way too much money at our local feed stores, but I write it off to mental health care.

I save money at the supermarket by stocking up when the products I buy go on sale. My chest freezer was a wise investment. Whenever we're able, we get a deer. Our good neighbors have given us venison in the past, for which we were grateful. I do bake bread in the winter, but during the rest of the year I buy it at bakery outlets on sale. I have no luck growing green peppers, so I buy them when they sell for about 79 cents/pound, then freeze them. Ditto onions. Most of the soups and chilis I make start with sautéing onions, peppers and garlic, so I always have a supply in the freezer. Staples such as flour, cornmeal and sugar are bought in bulk, spices are purchased inexpensively from the local health food store. We stock up on canned goods when the sales at the local supermarket come in January.

I used to think that our lifestyle would last forever, but now I believe it won't. In the past few years our rural area has changed as a new surge of building has begun. This will mean higher taxes as well as increased traffic. Many local people commute to NYC and earn higher incomes than the locals. There has been a mass exodus of middle class citizens who simply can't afford to live in the area anymore. As we get older and earn less, we wonder if we will have to move, too.

The physical labor of burning wood most of the year, hauling feed and water for livestock and shoeing horses has become more difficult as we grow older. But for right now, we'll enjoy what we have and make do with less. Looking around at the beauty of the trees and mountains, I can't imagine anyone wanting more from life. ❁

Country neighbors:

LOVING & EATING

By SARA YURT

Last year, our wee mixed-breed turkey hen, Agnes, reared two Standard Bronze toms in Champion Mother style (were there an award for such a feat, Agnes would surely win it). Little did she know, her two big, bad boys were destined for our table. I maintain the idea that things are never as easy, nor as difficult, as we anticipate them to be, but this was our first venture into keeping our own animals for food, and I couldn't have fathomed the range nor depth of emotion it would bring.

During the spring and summer of the boys' poult-hood, their execution was a fuzzy, abstract thought, like something that would happen someday, but not today. All through the month of November, I kept saying, "Oh, the boys don't have long left," but the words meant nothing. Even when I woke up and found that they had five days, then four, then three, and so on, the idea of their deaths wasn't something solid.

The day before it was to be done, the 20th of November, I woke up with a sick feeling in my stomach. It was the last day that I would let them out of their cage in the morning and watch them chase one another around in circles, then go have a smackdown with whomever had offended their pride.

But no. I wouldn't think about it. For the last week or so, the two had been fighting mercilessly with everyone. They even had a disagreement that led to a huge, knock-down, drag-out fight between the two of them.

The boys were officially too big for their britches.

The day of, I felt grim. The pair was totally oblivious and ran out of

their cage like maniacs so that I had to chase them down to shut them in the big turkey coop (which is open on all four sides, so they had lots of fresh air and a great view).

I could paint you a picture of the day in painstaking detail, but I don't think it's really necessary. No one in our family has slaughter experience—though my father does know how to clean a carcass—so an acquaintance killed them for us, and my dad cleaned them.

Before they went, I talked to them. I said "thank you" for being so beautiful and full of fire. I said "thank you" for the experience of knowing them, and "thank you" for the life they would give to me and my family. Last, I wished them luck on their way.

I cried after leaving them to their fate because of...well, a few reasons....

I felt very anxious about how our acquaintance would kill them. He has a lot of experience and would be efficient, but I knew he didn't love them as much as I did. I felt anxious about honoring them once they were dead. And most profoundly, I was having trouble reconciling their deaths with my need to eat. It's easy to say that, "I need to eat meat, and it has to be my animals that I eat," but when it really came down to it, I was thinking something more along the lines

of, "Am I so important that I can just kill something and eat it?"

The price of a life cut short didn't seem enough for the sustenance I'd glean.

Yet they still died. Because as unkind as it is, that's Nature. Cooking Smaller Boy on Thanksgiving actually meant something to me. The naked turkey in the sink was running across the yard the day before, and I didn't feel that particular dirty brand of guilt we call shame, because before me wasn't a poor, nameless store-bought bird.

When I tasted his cooked heart and liver, I breathed a sigh and said a silent 'thank you.'

When we sat down to our supper of turkey and stuffing, lacto-fermented vegetables, steamed broccoli, and cider, I felt rich. I looked over the table and thought, "I know where all this food came from, and I knew that bird. This is wonderful."

I'm a person. I have a mind and a heart, and it's those things that make it difficult for me to not feel some guilt and remorse over having raised, then killed those animals to eat. But with this ache, comes a deep feeling of rightness.

They weren't tortured. They roamed and flew, sometimes into my garden to eat tomatoes. They fought, and in one of his more confused moments, Bigger Boy tried to love up Smaller Boy. Many confused moments, actually. I knew them, I cared for them, I loved them, and then I ate them.

The conflicting emotions are healthy. It means that I'm alive and feeling deeply. My eyes are open and my heart is open.

Living is supposed to be hard. That's how we know it's worth it. 🌿



Poor Will's COUNTRYSIDE Almanack ~ for ~ Early & Middle Spring 2014

BY W. L. FELKER

*Now nourish soil with fattening dung,
Now scatter grimy ashes on the wasted
plot.
— Virgil, Georgics*

The Ephemeris for March The Phases of the Crocus Moon and the Forsythia Moon March

- 1: The Snowdrop Moon becomes the Crocus Moon at 3:00 a.m.
- 8: The moon enters its second quarter at 8:27 a.m.
- 16: The moon is full at 12:09 p.m.
- 23: The moon enters its final phase at 8:46 p.m.
- 30: The Crocus Moon becomes the Forsythia Moon at 1:45 p.m.

The Sun's Progress

Even though the day lengthens at different rates at different locations throughout the country, equinox is still equinox on March 20 at 12:57 p.m. (EDT) and brings equal day and night everywhere in North America — just as the sun comes into Aries.

Daylight Savings Time Begins

Set clocks ahead one hour at 2:00 a.m. on Sunday, March 9, 2014.

The Planets of March

Mars is the earliest of the morning

stars this month, coming up in Virgo after midnight. Saturn follows along behind in the boxy constellation of Libra, and then Venus appears in Capricorn, outshining all the other objects in the sky until sunrise. In the evening, Jupiter is the brightest planet in the west, following Sirius, the Dog Star, high in Gemini.

The Stars

Before dawn, all the constellations that ride the Milky Way into summer lie in the east. To the far north, Cassiopeia zig-zags towards Cepheus, the house-like constellation just east of the North Star. Following the Milky Way to the south, find Cygnus, the Northern Cross, shining above you. Below Cygnus, is Aquila, with its bright star Altair.

The Ephemeris for April

The Phases of the Forsythia Moon and the Tulip Moon April

- 7: The Forsythia Moon enters its second quarter at 3:31 a.m.
- 15: The moon becomes full and enters its third phase at 2:42 a.m.
- 22: The moon enters its final quarter at 2:52 a.m.
- 29: The Tulip Moon becomes new at 1:14 a.m.

The Sun's Progress

On April 21, Cross-Quarter Day (the solar halfway mark between equinox and solstice), the sun reaches a declination of +11 minutes, 45 seconds, and it enters Taurus.

The Planets of April

Mars remains in Virgo and Saturn in Libra, both rising well before daylight. Venus, brilliant in Aquarius rises before dawn, and Jupiter remains the giant evening star in Gemini following Orion into the west.

The Shooting Stars

The Lyrid Meteors move across the sky between April 19 and 25, with the best viewing on Monday, April 22. The meteors will appear near the Summer Triangle, especially in Lyra, across the southeastern sky.

Homestead Meteorology in March and April

Fish, game, livestock and people tend to feed more and are thought to be more active as the barometer is falling one to three days before the weather systems that arrive near the following dates: March 3, 6, 9, 14, 19, 24, 29, and April 2, 6, 11, 16, 21, 24, 28. New Moon on March 1 and 30, and April 29, and full moon on March 16 and April 15 are likely to bring frost to southern gardens, and increased chances of storms across the North.

A Calendar of Holidays for Homesteaders

March 4, 2014: Mardi Gras: This is a good time to sell kids and lambs for barbecues.

April 13–15, 2014: New Year's Day for immigrants from Cambodia, Thailand and Laos.

April 15 (sunset) to April 21, 2014: Passover: Milk-fed lambs below 60 pounds are favored for the Passover market. Lamb stew is a traditional Seder dish at Passover Seder dinners (April 14 and 15 this year).

April 20, 2014: Roman Easter and Greek Orthodox Easter: Save your newly weaned, milk-fed lambs and kids, weighing about 25 to 45 pounds and not older than three months, for this market.

The Almanack Daybook March

1: Pasture season has started in the southern states and moves north at the rate of about 10 miles a day. Drench livestock a week to 10 days before turning them out to graze. Frost-seed the lawn. Spray fruit trees with dormant oil.

2: Plant spring barley in the Pacific Northwest. Tattoo, castrate and dehorn kids born in January and February. Cull animals before they go to pasture. Check for birth defects in newborn kids and lambs.

3: Test soil. Add fertilizer two weeks before livestock graze. Wild onions grow lanky, often tainting the milk of the animals that eat them.

4: Remove old rhubarb and as-



paragus stalks, cleaning out around the beds, digging in well rotted manure.

5: Walleye, sauger, saugeye, muskie, bass, bluegills, bullheads, catfish and crappie start spring feeding. Lambs and kids born in January may be weaned in March. Three weeks before the weaning process begins, vaccinate for the second time with enterotoxemia type D.

6: Uncover and fertilize strawberries. Cut off tips of young black raspberry branches, and remove old canes. Inspect trees for winter damage. Remove dead and dying limbs.

7: Learn procedures to relieve bloat, and plan precautionary measures as pasture season begins. Conduct feeding changes slowly, and watch animals carefully as transitions are made.

8: The Great Dandelion Bloom has started in the South, will reach northern states by the end of April.

9: Transition your livestock and your family to the new feeding and workday schedule as Daylight Savings Time begins.

10: Transplant shade and fruit trees, shrubs, grape vines, strawberries, raspberries, and roses while the ground temperature remains in the 40s.

11: Seed tobacco and corn in the South. Set out hardy flowers and vegetables everywhere, as conditions permit.

12: When pussy willows emerge all the way, pick succulent leaves of the nettles for greens, and find chick-

weed blooming in the woodlots and alleyways.

13: This is a good month to think about fly control. Flying pests are common in the South by the beginning of March, and will soon be invading barns in the North.

14: Today is the average date for spring flower and garden shows.

15: As the weather warms, you may want to spread lime on the barn floor between cleanings to keep down the smells.

16: It is now pea planting time almost everywhere the snow has melted.

17: Close-graze pastures to encourage later growth. Don't forget the paperwork for registering the animals you intend to sell or show.

18: Canadian geese nest and lay their eggs now throughout the country.

19: Daffodils and goldfinches reach full color about the same time.

20: Plant spring oats in western states. Plant cotton in the Southwest.

21: Worm livestock. Perform annual vaccinations and do blood work. Check hooves/feet.

22: Cabbage moths are out, laying eggs on the cabbage, kale, collards, and Brussels sprouts. Termites swarm.

23: Go morel mushroom hunting in the South. Move north as the weather warms. New May apple leaves unfolding are a sign that the morels are emerging.

24: Plant early sweet corn in the country's midsection, potatoes, sugar beets, carrots, and red beets throughout the Midwest. Fertilize evergreens before spring growth begins.

25: Ramps (native wild onions, famous throughout Appalachia for healing and seasoning) are three to six inches tall, their foliage unraveling along the rivers.

26: Protect rabbits from spring weather extremes; they are particularly sensitive to March cold waves.

27: Gall mites attack the ash trees; pine weevils and moths can be moving in the evergreens.

28: Carpenter bees appear around the house and barn, looking for nesting sites. They typically return to locations they have used before.

29: Pollen appears on pussy wil-

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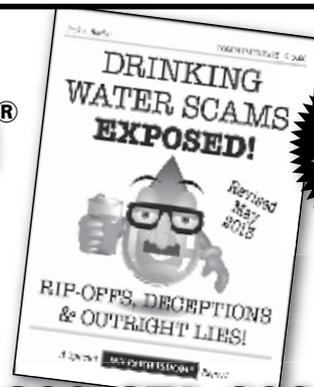
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low catkins. Frogs and toads mate. Grubworms come to the surface of the lawn when the temperatures begin to reach past 70 degrees.

30: The blooming of bright yellow forsythia bushes always announces the arrival of middle spring. This is the time that the remaining daffodils and grape hyacinths flower and that wildflower season unfolds in the woods with the blossoming of early violet cress, twinleaf, periwinkle, spring beauty, hepatica and small-flowered bittercress.

31: Be sure your boars are getting enough vitamin E and selenium.

April

1: Seed tobacco beds in the Border States.

2: The normal average air temperature starts to rise at the rate of one degree every three days — instead of one degree every four days.

3: Plant corn and lettuce along the 40th parallel. Potato planting is underway. Buckeyes leaf. New calves are in the fields.

4: Extend the grazing season by seeding autumn grasses and legumes.

5: The field and garden day now starts increasing at the rate of two minutes per day. Japanese beetle grubs move to the surface of the ground to feed.

6: Grass is usually long enough to cut by today across the nation's mid-section. Strawberries flower when grass is long, and young groundhogs come out to feed on the greens.

7: Mounds begin to show on your lawn as moles wake up and hunt grubs and worms.

8: Clover blooming in the fields tells you that tick and flea seasons have begun. Wild turkeys are gobbling, too. Deer are born.

9: The juniper webworm emerges, and eastern tent caterpillars may begin to weave on flowering fruit trees.

10: The boxwood psyllid starts to assault your boxwoods. Dogwood borers are at work on the dogwoods.

11: From now on, the chance of snow below the 40th parallel rapidly decreases until it becomes only one in 100 by April 20.

12: When possible, transport animals when the weather is cool and dry in order to reduce shrinkage and stress. Movement after the passage of a cold front usually provides more pleasant and more stable weather than transporting prior to the arrival of a front — with the possibility of an accompanying thunderstorm.

13: Mosquitoes bite you in the garden. Tent caterpillars begin to hatch on wild cherry trees.

14: Finish planting the soybeans in Mississippi, the sugar beets across the Midwest.

15: Aphids appear in the field and garden; ladybugs are hunting them.

16: Chances for highs in the 80s continue to climb across the nation's center. By today, those chances reach the same frequency as in mid-October.

17: Pasture plants often have an unusually high water content in April, and your animals may not get enough nutrition from this forage. Silage and hay supplements can take up the feeding slack.

18: Army worms, slugs, corn borers, flea beetles and leaf hoppers appear in the fields at about the same time that iris buds. Lilac borers bore the lilacs.

19: Pheasants and woodcocks are nesting in the woods and along the fencerows.

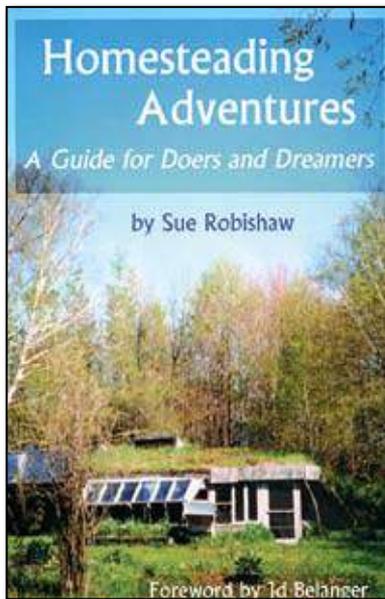
20: Animals (and people) run the risk of sunburn in areas where the leaf canopy is still thin.

21: Spring rains and humidity can increase the risk of internal parasites. Make use of stool sample analysis to ensure that drenching has been sufficient.

23: Weevils emerge in alfalfa. Set out early tobacco plants.

24: The use of sheep pasture in crop rotation has been found to increase soil fertility and disrupt pest cycles. Don't forget to take advantage of this plus-factor around your homestead.

25: Seed all the rest of your flowers and vegetables in flats or directly in



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the garden. Throughout the South, farmers can even plant tender peanuts.

26: Ducklings and goslings are born along the lakes and rivers; warblers move north.

27: Soybean planting begins throughout the nation's midsection.

28: Check for cutworms and sod web worms in the cornfields.

29: Many pines have started their new growth, some trees having pushed out tiny cones, others with fresh green needles at the tips of their branches.

30: Haying is underway across the South. Some orchard grass and rye is ready to harvest. Transition your livestock slowly from last year's old hay to this year's fresh hay.

Lunar feeding patterns for people, fish and beasts

All creatures are typically most active (and may eat more) with the moon above them. The second-most active times occur when the moon is below the earth.

Date: Moon Above; Moon Below

- March
- 1-7: Mornings; Evenings
- 8-15: Afternoons; Midnight to Dawn
- 16-22: Evenings; mornings
- 23-29: Midnight to Dawn; Afternoons
- March 30-April 6: Mornings; Evenings
- 7-14: Afternoons; Midnight to Dawn
- 15-21: Evenings; Mornings
- 22-28: Midnight to Dawn; Afternoons
- 29-30: Mornings; Evenings

Winners of the January-February Sckrambler

A total of 48 readers responded to the January-February challenge, and a prize of \$5 was promised to the 1st, the 11th, the 44th, the 77th, the 100th and the 150th persons who sent in their correct Sckrambler solutions by my deadline. The 1st person to respond correctly was Jeffrey Yeager, Cincinnati, Ohio; the 11th was Glory Adams of Eau Claire, Wisconsin; the 44th was Barbara D. Bargeon, Denver, Colorado.

Answers to the January-February Sckrambler

- AOLMLW: MALLOW
- TUBRET AEBN: BUTTER BEAN
- TUCETEL: LETTUCE
- SIHADR: RADISH
- AINHCSP: SPINACH
- ETEB: BEET
- EAKL: KALE
- AYD ILYL: DAY LILY
- IIAZNN: ZINNIA
- SSCMOO: COSMOS
- UERPLP WERCONFLOE: PURPLE CONEFLOWER
- RISI: IRIS
- OAADRNM: MONARDA
- APSN APE: SNAP PEA
- IAAECSP: ASCLEPIA
- OEUACAPLTN: CANTALOUPE
- NYPASA: PANSY
- CHABROLE TUBNOT: BACHELOR BUTTON
- EXFOLVG: FOX GLOVE
- TASIBEL: ASTILBE

The March-April Sckrambler

If you are the 2nd, 12th, 49th, 83rd, 99th or the 155th person to return your

correct Sckrambler solutions by my deadline of February 25, you will win \$5. There should be no typos in this puzzle, and no typo prize will be awarded. If you happen to find a typo, however, you may simply skip that word without penalty. Send your entries by regular mail (postcards preferred) to Poor Will at P.O. Box 431, Yellow Springs, OH 45387. The names of any winners whose correct responses are received after my deadline to *Countryside* will appear in a later issue.

- ONOM
- TASR
- LOSECITS
- RALIB
- RGVIO
- AECNCR
- ARYDH
- NMGHIE
- KYS
- OOINR
- IGB PPDIRE
- CORSIOP
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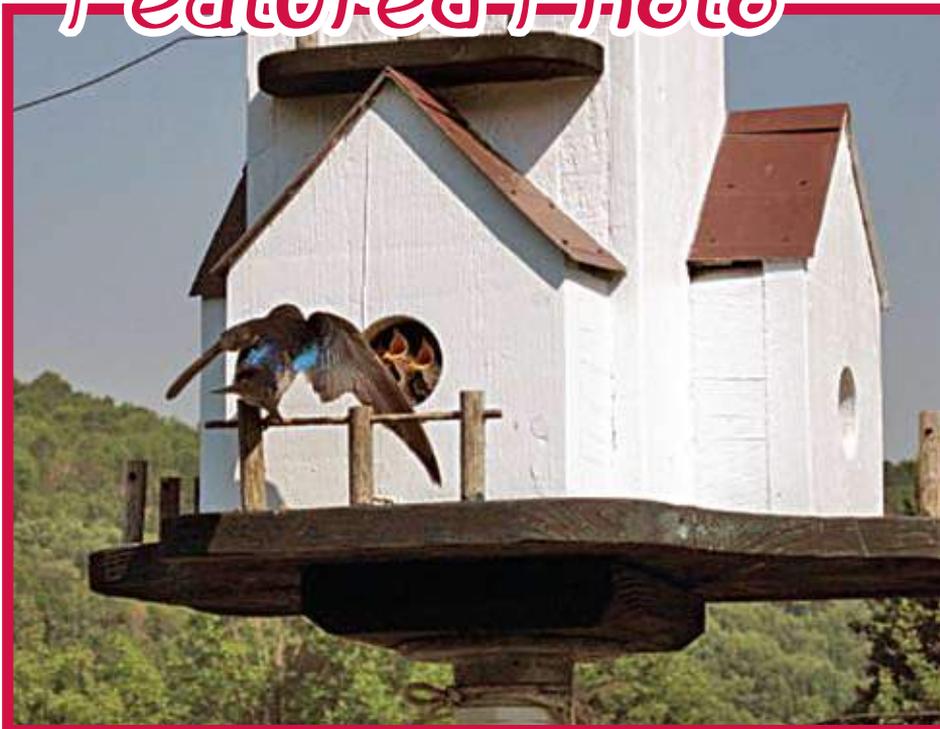
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Featured Photo



No rest for mama!
—Robert Bauer, Pennsylvania

**My granddaughter
free ranges with the
chickens.—Peggy
Adkins, Tennessee**





I raised Amaranthine from birth and grew attached. I just couldn't resist taking some senior pictures with her! Her name means "imaginary flower that never fades." I found it fitting for her personality.—Sabrina Duvel, Iowa



This is Bernard. When you ask him if he wants a cookie, Bernard shakes his head yes!—Rhonda Stevenson, Wisconsin



These are the multi-color eggs we get from our "Easter Egg" chickens, Araucanas.—Liz Meyer, Wisconsin

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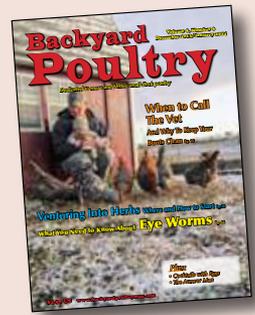
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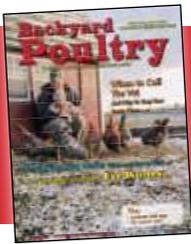
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After chores:

The blessings of having to go outside

BY NANCY ROBERTS

My grandkids call my home for assorted critters Nana's farm. Calling these four acres with three goats, chickens, a bunny, and too many cats and dogs a farm is really stretching the meaning of the word farm. Actually, I just provide a home for a lot of four-legged and winged friends who need feed every day and give me a reason to get outside. Here in rainy Washington it is a great temptation to stay inside for days at a time during our wet overcast winter.

In our part of the country chickens have to be locked up at night or they might become midnight snacks for raccoons, and they like to be let out to free-range in the goat pasture at the break of dawn. I am often grumbling out there in my nightgown in the early morning hours, but if it weren't for my feathered friends I would have missed many gorgeous sunrises as the sky brightens in the east over that little glimpse of Mt. Hood I can see through the bare winter trees.

My little Nigerian Dwarf goats have just enough cashmere from their great-grandmother to make burying my hands in their winter coats pure pleasure. Last night after they had their dinner I stood by their shed waiting for the clouds to part and reveal the full moon. That kept me out there long enough to hear the owl start calling down by the creek.

I realized that the gifts of time and place—the full moon surrounded by a halo of subtle colors in the clouds; the plaintive call of the owl, the cool evening breeze on my face—were all gifts from my goats. I would not have been outside after dark if it weren't for the time I lingered with them.

My critters give me many gifts: companionship, laughter, exercise, eggs, cashmere—but the one I value most is the simple fact that they get me outside. Albert Einstein said, "Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better." I know for a fact that I at least understand myself, and my place in the world, better. I am grateful for my animals for helping me get outside to do that.

When friends and family ask me why I keep goats, seeing only the need for trips to the feed store and hay farmer, I ask why they keep dogs. Honestly, I don't know why anyone who has ever watched the antics of a kid would ask that question in the first place. They are my pets just as much as the dogs are.

Speaking of dogs—there are three here right now. The dogs, like the four cats living here, all started life somewhere else and ended up here on Nana's farm when they needed a temporary, or permanent place to live and be loved. One old dog is an older daughter's and will return to

her after her year in a temporary living situation. The newest resident is a six-month-old stretch of energy in the shape of a doggy limousine. He is a perfect example of the dangers of getting a job at the Humane Society. My 22-year-old daughter brought him home three weeks after she started working there. True love requires sacrifices and she is now searching for an apartment that allows pets. There is room on my "farm" and in my heart for one more love for a couple of months. Now one more walking buddy joins my Lady Kate and me and helps to tangle the leashes as we walk our country roads. If you don't have farm critters to get you out of doors, dogs will get you out every day if you are a good pack leader. Early morning walks bless you with sunrises. Evening walks bring colorful sunsets and here just a few miles from town we often hear the evening song of the "wild puppies"; the coyotes who now have to share their territory with us.

We left on our walk a few nights ago just in time to catch a few rays of the setting sun. We returned tired, but refreshed, to see the first star of evening hanging off the tip of the moon. Venus, named for the Goddess of love and beauty, is a perfect star to wish on. I wished always to remember to be grateful to all my four-legged and winged friends for getting me outside to appreciate all the love and beauty of the great outdoors. ✨

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