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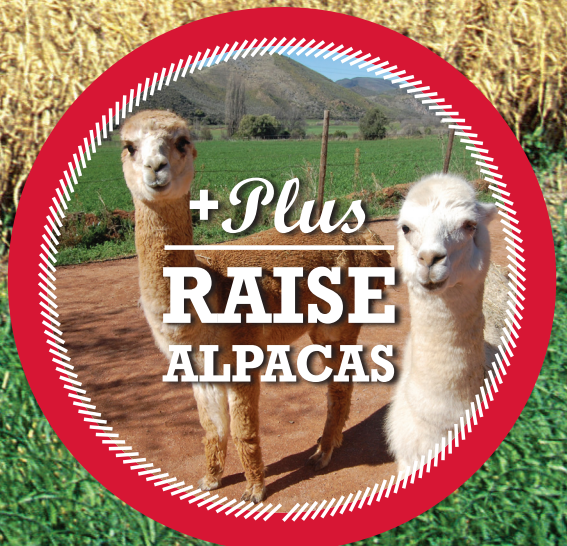
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September/October 2014

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# COUNTRYSIDE

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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.

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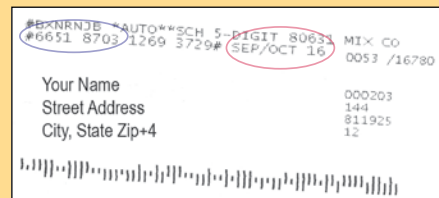
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## Country conversation & feedback

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### They fought city hall – and won

COUNTRYSIDE: For Swamp Fox and other Marion County, Florida taxpayers: Back in the mid 1980s, my husband and I lived in Palm Bay, Brevard County, Florida. The “city fathers” decided to tax the property owners for “road repair.” At that time, there was an old law on the books in Tallahassee that stated that the city, county or state leaders could tax the property owners for road repair. That way Farmer Jones and Farmer Smith could have the road between their farms paved.

The Palm Bay City Council found this old law and decided that since they could not get the taxpayers to

vote a general tax increase (with no specifications where the money would go), they would pass the referendum and just tax everybody. The city was divided into sections and the first two sections were repaved before we got involved.

Our home had a 100-ft. road frontage and our tax was about \$3,000. If the tax wasn’t paid, they put a lien against the property so that it would be paid when the home was sold. The street we lived on was dead-end and the crown was higher than the front door. We were told that all they wanted to do was resurface it. Since that had been done less than five years ago, we fought back.

To make a long story short, the taxpayers got together and formed

the Palm Bay Peoples Committee. In less than six months, we were able to remove the mayor and entire city council, and were able to pass a referendum that any laws that charged over \$25,000 had to be passed by the taxpayers, and a tax increase of two million that covered road repair, and fire and police benefits.

All of the liens on properties were taken off, all of the people who paid the tax got their money back, and no one else got presented with the tax.

The answer is *you can fight city hall*. We were not Republicans or Democrats, we were angry taxpayers. — *Bobbie Gitls, Piney Flats, Tennessee*

### Cooperation with Nature is key

COUNTRYSIDE: I would like to respond to the letter regarding how vegetarianism requires tilling of soil and wastes water. I am a lifelong vegetarian, and for the last four years have been growing as much of my own food as possible.

I am a beginner when it comes to gardening, but have been using the *Back to Eden* method, which does not involve tilling at all. We grow a lot of legumes and have never tilled the soil since we started this method. We harvest rainwater to water our garden, and we compost everything and add back to the soil over time. The soil actually improves each year with this method.

As far as tilling soil in the forest contributing to greenhouse gas, it’s important to remember that just the

---

### From the editor:

### Fresh look; same great material

If you’re a regular reader of this publication you’ve probably noticed something different in this issue. We’ve switched to a different type of paper that we think is easier to read. The brighter paper and color photos throughout will allow us to show plants and animals in their true colors.

Looks expensive, you say? Actually, switching to this paper costs us a little less than before. This helps offset increases in postage costs and allows us to keep subscription rates low. (Which, by the way, has been \$18 since at least 1985 – maybe longer, but those copies aren’t in the office.)

We occasionally get comments from loyal readers warning us not to become like the other magazines you may see on the newsstand. COUNTRYSIDE will continue to publish the letters, articles, and advertising about homesteading and self-sufficient living that you’ve enjoyed in the past. Only the paper is changing, not what we print on the pages.

We hope you enjoy it!

And as always, feel free to contact us at the address above with your thoughts and ideas. — *Anne-marie*

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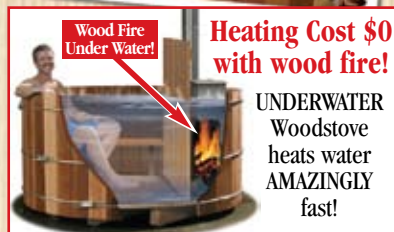
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## No computer = discrimination

COUNTRYSIDE: Re: "Not everyone wants a computer" in the May/June issue. One issue we have is people tell us to go use the computers at the library. We are handicapped and cannot easily get around. We don't have a vehicle to drive there. Some organizations will take us grocery shopping or to medical appointments, but not anyplace else. The taxi gets to be expensive for those on limited budgets.

It's irritating when we subscribe to some magazines and an article that is interesting and for which we have paid will say "For more info on this go to www...." Some stores we shop at actually charge us a higher price if we don't buy online or with a credit card. It seems a shame that we are being forced to pay a higher price. I don't think we are the only people feeling this pressure. It is just a shame, and discrimination. – Wisconsin

*Out of all the topics in the last issue, this one got the most response:*

## Backlash on budget numbers

COUNTRYSIDE: In response to Mr. Bender's letter in the July/ August 2014 issue, Snopes, the internet site that debunks a lot of the false information on the web has the following information regarding the national debt growth under modern Presidents:

Dates in Office	Debt Levels	Debt Increase	% Increase
Reagan 1/81	\$848B		
	1/89 \$2,698B	\$1,850B	218%
Bush (GHW) 1/89	\$2,698B		
	1/93 \$4,188B	\$1,490B	55%
Clinton 1/93	\$4,188B		
	1/01 \$5,728B	\$850B	35%
Bush (GW) 1/01	\$5,728B		
	1/09 \$10,627B	\$4,899B	86%
Obama 1/09	\$10,627B		
	4/11 \$14,288B	\$3,661B	34%

The numbers for Mr. Obama are the latest Snopes had available to them. Looking at the numbers, Mr. Bender is correct in his assertion that the President is getting a bum rap for raising the national debt exponentially; but if we take the argument to the next step to equalize the debt increase per months in office, the following analysis evolves:

Months in Office	Debt Increase	Debt Increase/Month in Office
Reagan 48	\$1,850B	\$22B/month
Bush (GHW) 24	\$1,490B	\$31B/month
Clinton 48	\$850B	\$8.85B/month
Bush (GW) 48	\$4,899B	\$52B/month
Obama 26	\$3,661B	\$140.8B/month

These numbers are not in "constant" dollars so actual values will change but relative amounts shown above are close to how it will come out with that correction.

What's the bottom line? Depending on which side of the aisle you're on, you can claim victory by putting forth either the first or the second table above. — *Larry Larson, Piney Flats, Tennessee*



COUNTRYSIDE: A reader wrote in stating that under President Obama, our National Debt had risen by only 1.4%. That dog don't hunt.

There seems to be a lot of debate as to which President is most responsible for the increase in the National Debt. Take a look at the growth in the National Debt by President using an unbiased approach. This analysis uses National Debt figures from the U.S. Treasury Department and the White House Office of Management and Budget.

To be sure, there is plenty of blame to go around for the uncontrolled growth in the National Debt. For this analysis, I've begun with Ronald Reagan's first term and followed it through the first term of Barack Obama's administration. No effort has been made to cast any particular President in a favorable or unfavorable light.

The numbers below reflect the amount of the *increase* in the National Debt during each presidential term.

- Ronald Reagan's 1st Term: \$656 billion increase
- Ronald Reagan's 2nd Term: \$1.036 trillion increase



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Remember those scam notices we run in the front of the magazine (pg. 6)? Well, now it seems these people **CALLING** readers with threats if they don't pay the \$59.99 (or whatever today's) price. If you get a call like this, don't fall for it. The price of a COUNTRYSIDE subscription is \$18—and we never solicit subscriptions by phone or email. If you do get a call like this and you can trace the number, we'd like to hear about it.

- George H.W. Bush's Term: \$1.587 trillion increase
- Bill Clinton's 1st Term: \$1.122 trillion increase
- Bill Clinton's 2nd Term: \$418 billion increase
- George W. Bush's 1st Term: \$1.885 trillion increase
- George W. Bush's 2nd Term: \$3.014 trillion increase
- Barack Obama's 1st Term: \$5.806 trillion increase
- Barack Obama's 2nd Term as of Jan. 2014: \$1.473 trillion increase

To summarize, the National Debt increased by huge amounts under each of these presidents. However, the largest increase under any President, whether for one or two terms, occurred during Barack Obama's first term, which saw an increase of \$5.806 trillion to the National Debt.

As of the end of President Obama's first term, the National Debt stands at \$16.433 trillion dollars. Current Obama administration projections indicate that the National Debt will increase to over \$20 trillion by the end of his second term.

It is clear that the National Debt has been growing uncontrollably in recent years, regardless of which political party has been in power. To reverse this trend, we need to hold our elected officials accountable and demand that they balance the budget and reduce the National Debt. — R. Chaney

## Coming events:

**August 23-24, 2014**

**Illinois:** 13th Illinois Renewable Energy and Sustainable Lifestyle Fair Hosted by the Illinois Renewable Energy Association at the Ogle County Fairgrounds. Exhibits will include solar, wind, biomass, geothermal and healthy personal home and yard care products. Organic produce, native plants and environmentally sound products will be for sale.

Workshops will cover topics including local foods, how to produce, prepare and preserve your own food, raising small animals, how communities can work together to build more sustainable systems, energy use and efficiency in third world countries, growth and resource consumption, natural health management, adapting to change and many more. Enjoyable and educational children's activities will be offered.

Visit the IREA web site: [www.illinoisrenew.org](http://www.illinoisrenew.org) Sonia Vogl, 1230 E. Honey Creek Rd., Oregon, IL 61061; 815-732-7332; [sonia.vogl@gmail.com](mailto:sonia.vogl@gmail.com).

**September 5-5, 2014**

**New York:** Southern Tier Sheep and Wool Growers annual Wool Pool will be Friday, September 5 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Saturday, September 6, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Otsego County Fair Grounds, Morris, New York.

The pool will be accepting white and naturally colored wool again this year. The wool will be separated into two categories: good clean wool and off-sorts/short wool.

The wool pool is more than a place to sell your wool. It is a place to see old and new friends and to network with other shepherds about rams, ewes, equipment and markets. The pool is also all-volunteer based, so please help if you can.

When you shear or if you have already shorn try to keep your wool clean and dry. Store out of the sun and away from vegetable matter and polypropylene.

If you have any questions or are looking for more information please

contact Sue Smith at 607-293-8810.

**Friday, October 3, 2014**

**Missouri:** Casi Farmers Conference at the Community Center in Vanzant. There will be a crop variety show and talks by Carroll Montgomery and Jill Henderson. For more information contact Jeffery Goss at 417-885-7787, or the Community Center 417-948-2372.

**October 4-5, 2014**

**Missouri:** Pioneer Gathering, Drury. Pioneer descendants gather-

ing, demos of old-fashioned homestead and farm skills, blue grass music, free admission. For more information contact Betty & Dale Thomas, 417-683-2482.

**October 11-13, 2014**

**Maine:** Fall 2014 Goat School will be held at Stony Knolls Farm, 49 Maple Lane in Saint Albans, Columbus Day weekend October 11-12th, and a Soap and Cheese class on the 13th. Call: 207-938-3714 or visit [www.goatschool.com](http://www.goatschool.com).



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Homestead preparation:

# The Get Home Bag

**A vital component of readiness**

By JIM COBB

For most people, home is where you will want to be during a crisis. That's where you have the bulk of your supplies and where you'll find the assistance and support of your family and possibly your neighbors. But, what if disaster strikes when you are away from home? Many of us spend several hours each day at our jobs, which are often located a considerable distance from our homes. Adding in commute time and errands before or after work, we're gone for upwards of nine or 10 hours a day. Odds are about even as to whether a crisis will occur while we're away as opposed to when we're safe at home.

The Get Home Bag (GHB) is an important part of your overall disaster readiness plan. Simply put, it is a portable collection of supplies and gear, designed to get you from Point A to Point B, on foot if necessary. The GHB is not a "run off to the woods and live off the land" type of survival kit, nor is it intended to meet your needs indefinitely. Instead, the focus is on having just what you'll need to get you home or to another safe location in the event you cannot easily drive your normal commute.

### What goes into the Get Home Bag?

There are several categories of supplies that need to be included in the GHB:

- Food
- Water
- Shelter
- Medical/First Aid
- Hygiene
- Navigation
- Communication
- Tools
- Security

As we talk about each of these categories in detail, it is important to bear in mind that the GHB must be light enough for you to carry for long periods of time. One of the most common mistakes when assembling a GHB is overloading the pack or

bag. Therefore, each and every item added to the GHB must be carefully considered as every ounce counts.

### Food

You aren't going to be preparing any five-course meals while you're trekking home, so skip the jars of home canned venison chili. Focus on food items you can eat on the go. Stick with things like granola bars, protein bars, dried fruit, nuts, and hard candy. Most of us are already carrying surplus calories around our waistlines, so there's little need to plan for large meals. The goal is simply to reduce or eliminate the rumbling tummy.

If you figure the length of your journey will require at least one night spent in the field, you might consider adding a couple of simple heat-n-eat foods, such as ramen noodles. This, of course, will require you to also have cooking and eating implements with you, which could be as simple as a small mess kit like those carried by Boy Scouts from coast to coast. The thing to remember, though, is almost all foods like this will require water in the cooking process, which cuts into the supply you'll have for staying hydrated.

You might consider adding a small fishing kit or a few animal snares as well. However, hopefully you'll be on the move most of the time, rather than sitting and waiting for a bite.

### Water

Water is an essential component of life. While the old adage says you can survive three days without water, you really don't want to be a test case. The problem, though, is water is heavy and there's nothing you can do about that. You can't make it lighter or less bulky, it is what it is. A gallon of water weighs a little over eight pounds. While picking up a gallon poses little problem for many people, coupled with all your other gear and carrying it for miles on end may wear you out.

To satisfy your hydration needs, you have a couple of different op-

tions. You could carry all of your water with you, figuring approximately one gallon of water per day of travel. Or, and this is my preference, carry some water with you but also have in your GHB the means to filter and disinfect additional water found during your journey. Two liters of water, split between two bottles, will weigh about five pounds, figuring in the weight of the bottles themselves. Having multiple containers gives you the ability to carry potable water in at least one of them at all times.

For filtration and disinfection, there are a number of portable devices on the market today, with Berkey, Katadyn, Aquamira, LifeStraw, and Sawyer being the most well-known brands. There are even water bottles with the filters built right in.

### Shelter

This category encompasses everything that will help protect you from the elements. Hypothermia is a very real threat, even in mild weather. It is important you have a way to keep yourself warm and dry. Clothing is your first line of defense. If your job requires you to dress in suits or skirts, I highly recommend you have a change of clothes in your GHB. You will appreciate having durable, comfortable clothing for your hike. Be sure to have a pair of shoes or boots, as well as at least one pair (preferably two) of thick socks. What I've done is set up a separate small bag with a complete change of clothes and a pair of hiking boots. This bag sits alongside my GHB. Should I end up having to start trekking home on foot, the first thing I'd do is change into my travel attire, leaving my business clothes behind. I also keep one extra pair of socks in my GHB, just in case I end up having to wade through high water and my feet get soaked.

Most people who live in areas of the country that experience seasonal swings in temperature likely already have jackets, hats, and such on their person when they leave the house during cold weather. However, I suggest keeping an extra hat, pair of mittens or gloves, and other similar

items in your GHB during those times of year when they'd likely be needed.

A couple of good quality emergency blankets, sometimes called space blankets, will go far toward keeping you warm and dry, particularly if you stop to rest for the evening. I do not suggest purchasing these from discount retailers or dollar stores, as you'll find the quality severely lacking. You need emergency blankets that are durable and aren't going to fall into shreds the first time you open the package.

Along those same lines, consider purchasing a small folding poncho. They weigh next to nothing and if the rain is pouring down, they will help you keep at least reasonably dry. In a pinch, you could use a heavy-duty garbage bag, cutting a hole for your head and two more for your arms. Garbage bags can also be used to carry gear or laid flat on the ground so you don't end up with a wet behind after sitting.

Some folks who expect to travel quite a distance include a small tent or at least a tarp in their GHBs. This is a judgment call. Doing so adds considerable weight and bulk to the pack but having a tube tent or a tarp could be very beneficial if you'll be spending more than a night or two on the road.

No matter where you live, a wide brimmed hat and sunglasses will certainly prove useful if you're traveling on foot. Sunscreen and lip balm are also highly recommended. Around here, the mosquitoes come large enough to qualify as low-flying aircraft so insect repellent is also a must.

We also include fire-starting gear in the shelter category. These supplies include strike anywhere matches, a ferro rod, butane lighters, and ready-to-light tinder such as dryer lint or cotton balls soaked with petroleum jelly. Be sure to have at least three different ways to light a fire, just in case something gets lost or breaks.

### *Medical/first aid*

You will likely not need a ton of medical supplies but you should

have at least a small first aid kit, stocked with adhesive bandages, gauze wrap, pain relievers, antacids, anti-diarrhea medication, moleskin for blisters, and perhaps a tweezers for splinters. The idea isn't to be able to perform open-heart surgery, but just to get you home in one piece.

If you have prescription medication you must take on a regular basis, include enough doses in your GHB to last you for your trip home.

### *Hygiene*

While one day without brushing your teeth won't kill you, being able to keep reasonably clean will help prevent illness and infection. In your hygiene kit for the GHB, include a travel size toothbrush and toothpaste as well as a small wash cloth and bar of soap. Hand sanitizer should be used after going to the bathroom and it can also double as a fire starter, due to the alcohol content.

There are natural alternatives to toilet paper but most of them are substantially less than ideal. Remove the cardboard tube from a roll of toilet paper, then put the roll into a plastic bag and crush it flat to save space in your pack.

### *Navigation*

Depending upon where you work and how far it is from home, this category may not be absolutely necessary. I mean, if you work 10 miles from home, you probably know each and every route blindfolded. Even so, a compass and a map of the area can help prevent you from getting turned around should you need to deviate from your normal routes due to storm damage, road closures, or other reasons.

### *Communication*

Being able to send and receive information can be vital during a disaster or its aftermath. Of course, the ubiquitous cell phone is likely the first and best option. But, plan ahead for the possibility you can't get a signal, your battery dies, or the phone is lost.

While pay phones are few and

far between today, they are still out there if you look carefully. It is a good idea to keep in your GHB a list of important phone numbers as well as some loose change for making calls. Remember, if your phone dies or is lost, you won't be able to access your contacts list so have those numbers written down.

There are many different models of small crank-powered radios on the market. Most of them work very well and will allow you to listen to news broadcasts and keep abreast of developments related to the crisis.

Given that we have no reliable way of predicting the future, try as we might, it is conceivable that you may have a need to signal for help. Perhaps you are injured and need assistance or you get turned around in the woods and can't find your way out. The sound of a whistle carries much further than shouting, plus you won't lose your voice. A signal mirror works well, during the day only, of course. At night, a glow stick can be activated and tied to the end of a length of cord, then spun around to create a large circle of light that can be seen for quite a distance.

### *Security*

This can be a tricky category, but I do believe you should have some method of defending yourself, just in case. For many people, the method of choice is a firearm, typically a handgun. If you decide to go that route, please do everyone a favor and seek out training on the proper use of the weapon.

Other options for security include pepper spray, stun guns, and batons. I do not recommend relying upon a knife for defense unless you have received the proper training in its use. Otherwise, you are far more likely to have it taken away from you and used against you.

### *Tools*

In this category, we have a few different odds and ends that, while perhaps not strictly necessary for survival, sure make life easier. First and foremost is a good quality knife.

This is not an area where you should skimp and buy something cheap. You want a knife that is sturdy and that will retain a sharp edge. Remember, you are more likely to be injured using a dull knife than a sharp one. With that in mind, consider adding a small knife sharpener as well.

A multi-tool, such as those produced by Leatherman or Gerber, are very useful. It is one of those things that, once you have one, you'll wonder how you got along without it.

A flashlight or headlamp will be very welcome after the sun goes down and you are still on the road. Be sure to have at least one set of extra batteries. There are, of course, crank powered flashlights available, which will save you from needing the batteries.

Duct tape is also highly recommended. It has a million and one uses, including patching rips in clothing. Wrap several feet of it around a pencil to cut down on the weight and bulk of carrying the whole roll. Cordage is important as well. I suggest paracord, due to its strength. Paracord consists of several thin strands of cord covered in a fabric sheath. If need be, you can remove one or more of those smaller strands and use them separately, increasing the total footage of cord you have available to you. What I do is take an old plastic gift card and cut a notch at each end. Then, I wedge one end of the paracord into a notch and wrap the cord around the card several times, then slipping the end into the other notch. This keeps the cord from getting tangled in my pack.

Another highly useful item is a shemagh, also known as a headscarf. You've probably seen our military forces wearing these in the Middle East, as that is where this item originated. The shemagh is a square piece of fabric, usually around three feet on a side. It has many uses, such as wrapping it around your mouth and nose to protect against dust and debris or dampening it and placing it around your neck to cool down. In cold weather, it can be another layer of warmth. In a pinch, you could even wrap a few items inside it and carry it

hobo style at the end of a stick.

One last item to consider, and this doesn't neatly fit into any of the categories, is something inspirational to you. A few photos of your family or a small religious text of your choice may help give you extra motivation when the going gets rough.



### How do I carry all this stuff?

There is a reason why I saved this discussion for after the listing of contents. I highly recommend you first determine what needs to be carried in your GHB, then go out and find a suitable pack or bag for it. Frequently, people will buy the pack first and then either find it is too small or, and this is far more common, they will buy a pack that is entirely too large, then feel compelled to fill it.

The ideal for most people is going to be a backpack. By carrying your supplies on your back, you free up your hands. Plus, it is less fatiguing to carry your gear on your back than over your shoulder or in your hands.

The pack should be well made and durable. Avoid the cheap ones you'll find at back-to-school sales, unless you simply cannot afford anything better. The shoulder straps should be padded and a waist belt is a bonus. It is very important to field test the pack after purchasing it. Load it up, strap it on, and walk around for at least a couple of hours. It should be comfortable and not so heavy you feel like a pack mule.

A great idea would be to visit

a camping store, such as Gander Mountain or REI, and talk to an employee there about backpacks. They can recommend certain styles of packs based on your body shape and other factors. You need not necessarily spend a couple hundred dollars on a pack, but by taking their recommendations into account, you should be able to find something more affordable.

There are also a number of "sling packs," which are basically one strap backpacks. The strap runs across your body, from shoulder to opposite hip. Provided you don't weigh them down too heavily, these can be a great option.

Avoid anything along the lines of a rolling suitcase or duffel bag. These just aren't made for use on anything other than a hard, smooth surface like pavement. What will end up happening is you'll need to pick it up and carry it over rough terrain and these sorts of cases just aren't very light to begin with, let alone loaded down with your supplies.

### How do I maintain the Get Home Bag?

At least a couple of times a year completely unpack the GHB and inspect all of the contents. Check expiration dates on all the food items and change out any stored water. Any batteries should also be rotated out and replaced with fresh ones. Carefully examine the pack and gear for wear marks and other signs of deterioration.

What I do is to add GHB inspection to the list of things you do when the clocks change, right along with testing your smoke detectors. In the fall, you could add the cold weather gear we talked about in the Shelter section and remove it in the spring, should you wish to do so.

Consider the Get Home Bag as your lifeline to safety and treat it accordingly. Keep it with you at work or in your vehicle, so it is ready at a moment's notice. While it may turn out to be an item you never truly need, it is far better to have it and not need it than need it and not have it. ❁

## Homestead preparation:

# Which of these 50 essential items do you have for TEOTWAWKI?

BY THOMAS SCIACCA

**A**rguably, the most important thing to store for a SHITF (Stuff Hits The Fan) or complete TEOTWAWKI (The End Of The World As We Know It) scenario is knowledge. Without it, you won't survive. Beyond that, what physical things should you be storing? Check your list against ours to see what you might be forgetting or need more of.

**Rubbing alcohol:** Not only is rubbing alcohol good for disinfecting, it can also be used as a great ice pack when combined 1:2 with water. Rubbing alcohol also works as a fire starter, cleaning and disinfecting tools and more. Just don't use it for mixed drinks!

**Yarn:** Having sheep, shearing them, processing wool, and spinning yarn is laborious, and unless you're already an expert your future learning curve will thank you for having a supply of yarns on hand for knitting warm clothing and making repairs.

**First aid ointment:** A simple cut can result in serious infection if not treated properly. And because tubes of first aid ointment usually only contain an ounce, make sure you have plenty.

**Anti-diarrhea medications:** Diarrhea is also something that people can regularly die from without proper intervention. Expect cholera, a disease whose main symptoms are profuse, painless diarrhea and vomiting of clear fluid. Dehydration can occur a few hours after the onset of cholera. This disease regularly killed folks in pioneer times and there's no reason it couldn't return.

**Arnica:** This homeopathic remedy (*Arnica montana*) has been used for medicinal purposes since the 1500s and is still popular today. Applied to the skin as a cream, ointment, liniment, salve, or tincture, arnica has been used to soothe muscle aches, reduce inflammation, and heal wounds. It is commonly used for injuries such as sprains and bruises. As an herb, arnica is generally used only topically (on the skin) because it can cause serious side effects when taken by mouth.

**Toiletries, deodorant, beauty products:** Just because the world might go to heck in a hand basket doesn't mean you have to look and smell bad. Taking care of your appearance is good for both your physical and mental well-being.

**Bleach:** The importance of clean-

liness and disinfection of cooking utensils, the home, garden tools, animal holdings, and more will increase as diseases increase in a SHITF scenario. You should have lots of this on hand.

**Books of all sorts, in print:** A good library will be important for reference, but also entertainment. Long, dark winters will be a misery for those who don't attend to a decent library. Without electricity, solar power is a good way to recharge devices for digital books, but once the device breaks (and you know it will) that power is useless.

**Brewing/alcohol making supplies:** Storing alcohol for trade or personal use is one thing, but being able to make your own will be more valuable than currency. Tastes better than currency too! (Just don't consume all your profits.)

**Ammunition reloading equipment:** A lot of people have a stored supply of ammunition, but once that runs out, will more be available at stores? Don't bet on it. Save your brass and anything lead, and learn how to reload ammo. It's a talent that requires extreme precision and attention to detail (an incorrectly loaded cartridge could destroy your

gun or cause serious injury), so don't take this task lightly. If you're up for it, though, you could save a lot of money by investing in a reloading press.

**Citric acid:** It comes in canisters large or small, and is important for food preservation, cleaning, and as an additive for nutritious seed sprouting. It also acts as a meat tenderizer for the inevitable tough meats you'll be eating, and can be used to flavor beverages. You can buy it in bulk online.

**Cocoa nibs:** The health benefits of quality, unsweetened cocoa are well documented, and it will be worth its weight in gold as a cherished ingredient for sweets and treats. It can be used as a valuable barter item, but because of its storage abilities and ability to bring joy to a dreary

with you. (We've used Paracord to lace up our hiking boots. Heck, you can even floss with one of the inner threads of Paracord! Can you tell we love this stuff?)

**Dates:** Dried dates are a very nourishing, and very storable, food. They are very sweet, which will be welcome when sweeteners become scarce.

**MRE (Meals Ready to Eat):** Growing vegetables and hunting game are essential skills, but on the slow days, it's good to have some back up. High quality MRE has an extremely long shelf life and come in a variety of tasty flavors.

**Epsom salt:** Epsom salts contain important magnesium, which is useful for soaking sore muscles, soothing sprains, and more. Epsom salt is also useful in the garden to help increase

household, feminine supplies will be essential to have on hand, however, we don't recommend tampons. Why? One average female in the U.S. will use between 10,000 and 15,000 disposable tampons or pads in a lifetime, meaning there is no way to stock enough. Instead, stock reusable sea sponges and reusable pads, which can be cleaned, disinfected, and reused.

**Nail files and nail clippers:** Poor foot and nail maintenance and health can cause serious problems and infections later. Don't underestimate the importance of caring for your feet and hands, arguably the most important tools you'll have.

**Water filtration and water purification:** Water is essential for life so you'll need several gallons a day *per person*. So even if you store enough for a year, what about year two? It's a good idea to have a good filtration system, as well as water purification tablets as backup.

**Medicinal houseplants:** Stocking aloe vera gel and citronella oil is great, but having a renewable resource is always safer. Can't grow houseplants? Now is the time to learn. Collect medicinal houseplants and make sure you know how to grow them effectively for the home medicine arsenal.

**Games:** Along with good books, games are more important than you think to keep the family sane. TVs and DVD players breakdown in time, but Uno, poker, chess, and checkers never wear down and are always available to you and your family when it's too dark and cold outside to do anything else. Winters will be longer than you think without entertainment.

**Garlic:** As a valuable flavor enhancer and for its medicinal and healing properties, there is no way you can have enough. We also recommend storing and regularly rotating bulbs for growing your own when stored supplies run low.

**Ichthamol ointment:** This sticky, dark, slightly stinky goop is also known as drawing salve and it works incredibly well for extracting splinters. Just a dab will do ya, so a one-ounce tube of it will last years. Every



You're likely to encounter floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, blizzards and other natural or manmade disasters (blackouts) at some point, so be prepared.

existence, we recommend keeping it for yourself. And store more. Nibs can be used in themselves or ground into powder, so having nibs on hand is more versatile.

**Paracord:** You'll need to tie things up and genuine, milspec Paracord is stronger, lighter and more versatile than rope. Plus, the seven inner strands of Paracord can also be separated and utilized for another variety of uses only adds to its handiness and the importance of always keeping it

vegetable yields.

**Fabric:** Chances are you're forgetting some key, long-term items in your holdings, like fabric and the skills to make new clothing as your current stock wears out. In a bad scenario, your clothing will take much more of a beating than it currently does now, and you'll wish you had denim, cotton, and more available for repairs or making new clothes.

**Feminine supplies:** If you're a woman or have women in the

medicine cabinet should have this.

**Hand tools:** Repairs to your shelter and anything else will be necessary. There are many antique and new hand tools that will drill, dovetail, saw, and plane wood for shelter maintenance. Invest in the basics.

**Hemp seeds:** Hemp is good for fiber for nets and rope, can be woven into excellent fabric, and can be used to make a good milk product. No, it won't make you high.

**Honey:** It has an indefinite shelf life (honey has been found in Egyptian tombs and is still perfectly edible) and is important as a sweetener as well as having medicinal and important wound-healing properties. Make sure it's 100% pure honey.

**Potassium iodate (KIO<sub>3</sub>):** Potassium iodate is a critical item to have in the event of a nuclear disaster. Radioactive fallout can travel thousands of miles and if you're in the zone where it occurs, you can be sickened and die in short order. KIO<sub>3</sub> protects your sensitive thyroid gland from the effects of radioactive iodine, meaning you don't want to be without this



Honey has an indefinite shelf life.

important precaution.

**Compost pile:** Composting is environmentally friendly and will enrich your soil to help plants grow. You can throw any vegetable waste in your compost pile (and even coffee grounds and egg shells), but absolutely no meat, fat or sweet things that might attract rodents or bugs. Locate your compost pile well away from the house, keep it moist and turn it over regularly.

**Loom:** Storing fabric is important, but having a loom available for weaving blankets, clothing, and more will be important. A large loom is not necessary; even small woven squares can be stitched together into larger items.

**Lye:** Lye is used in soap making and to preserve or prepare certain types of food, like hominy, curing olives, or making century eggs. It will also be impossible to make soap without lye. Historically, lye was made using wood ashes, but this process takes time to learn to do correctly, and some woods work better than others.

**Needles/thread:** Don't underestimate the amount of thread that will be necessary for clothing repair, and how easily needles can break when being used regularly. During the Revolutionary War, sewing needles were a trade item among women. It's a good idea to stock different thicknesses of thread, making sure not to neglect heavy-duty thread for repairing jeans or leather items. And

knitting needles will enable you to make sweaters, mittens and blankets to a host of other items. Sewing and knitting are essential skills.

**Oil press:** Oil is not only for cooking, it is also for soap making, food preservation, and health and skin care. The problem is that oil doesn't store well. An oil press will allow you to extract oils from nuts or seeds.

**Old medical books:** While treatments can be found in old medical books, they're most important use is to diagnose disease symptoms. Many diseases have been near eradicated and medical books no longer teach students what they look like. These diseases will likely reemerge in a TEOTWAWKI scenario.

**Pencils/pens/paper:** We hardly use them anymore, but they will become more desirable and more valuable later. Make sure you have enough.

**Reading glasses:** We age and along with that comes reading difficulties once we hit middle age. Keep several pair, in case you lose or break them... which you will.

**Salt:** No, you're not storing enough for eating or food preservation. It never goes bad. Store more.

**Shoes for children:** Children grow and they will need shoes that keep up with them. Cheap shoes that will last six months are fine as a child is growing quickly, but once their feet stop growing, make sure you have high quality shoe wear available for them.

**Slingshot:** Silent, deadly, and accurate with practice, the sling shot is a way to defend yourself and hunt small game, even when ammo runs out. Rocks can be used effectively if you have practice under your belt. Make sure everyone in your group has at least one.

**Soap:** Cleanliness will be paramount as basic societal conditions decline. While you can make your own bar soap, make sure you have enough soap of all kinds, like soap flakes for laundry, or ammonia, to keep up with the cleaning demands. Cleanliness is one of the most important things to pay attention to.

**Socks:** Foot health is important,

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**Stainless steel buckets, milk pails, etc.:** Stainless steel will almost last forever. Buckets and milk pails are easy to disinfect and clean, too. Forget plastic in the home—it degrades and becomes increasingly difficult to keep sterile and clean.

**Tea tree oil:** Due to its long shelf life (indefinite) and ability to assist

with wound healing and disinfection, tea tree oil is an essential item to have in your medicine cabinet. It can be used alone or added to other skin preparations.

**Heirloom seeds:** Why heirloom seeds? Because you'll be able to save the seed year-after-year for continued harvests. GMO and hybridized seeds won't produce viable offspring, and many times the resulting seed won't even germinate. A good heirloom-based seed bank is paramount.

**Tobacco seeds:** Growing tobacco for trade will give you an edge, and it has uses as a plant for making repellants in the garden for problems such as aphids, borers, rodents, and more.

**Seed-starting supplies:** Don't assume you can just throw some seeds in the ground and have them grow. With many plants, like grains, this is the way to go, but your seed storage will go further if you start seeds then transplant viable vegetables into the garden. Invest in reusable seed-starting supplies.

**Vitamin C:** Scurvy is a pretty horrific disease, both to have and observe. It doesn't take much vitamin C to ward it off, but the lack of it is just not an option. People underestimate the value of vitamin C in the diet, and how quickly you can get into real trouble without it. Citric acid (#11) provides vitamin C, but we prefer to save that for food preparation and preservation and stick with vitamin C tablets for scurvy prevention.

**Alternate energy sources:** Electricity and natural gas may not be available from the utility company during a bad situation. Think about how else to heat the house (such as a wood stove) and provide electrical power (e.g. windmill, solar panels).

**Animals:** The amount of wild game available will likely dwindle with time. Having livestock such as sheep and goats will enable you to sustain yourself with meat, milk and fiber. Not everyone has the room for animals on their property, but if you can, do it.

You may have items to add to the list (clear plastic totes, ziplock bags, generator), but I wanted to keep this already large list to a manageable (yet not overwhelming) length. And isn't 50 a nice round number? On a serious note, though, you may find that you're not in a location that enables you to keep goats, chickens and sheep, but this is where you need to be creative and think about creative partnerships you might make with close friends or family members who can stock the items you can't.

Remember, the more you prep now, the better you'll be able to take care of your family during times when others are panicking. Use this list as a starting point to being capable and equipped in an emergency. And that's key, whether you're talking about a typical tough situation or an all out TEOTWAWKI scenario.

Be safe and stay prepared.

*Tom Sciacca is a U.S. Marine veteran of the Gulf War, a survival enthusiast and President of CampingSurvival.com. • www.CampingSurvivalBlog.com • www.wildernesssurvivalstories.com/ • www.urbansurvivalstories.com/*

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## Homestead preparation:

# How it started...

## A 10-day power outage leads to the beginning of a business

BY WANDA CLARK  
NORTH CAROLINA

My husband and I both came from hard-working North Carolina families. My husband's family were full-time farmers. My father worked with the telephone company, but took his "home farming" tasks very seriously. We both grew up with large family gardens where the garden supplied the vegetables until the next summer.

Our first "big" purchase after we got married, was an 18 cubic foot frost-free upright freezer. We live in the suburbs and have a small backyard garden that we supplement with fruits and vegetables from our farmers markets. As time went by, we added three more freezers. In addition to fruits and vegetables, I purchased large quantities of meat when it was on sale, and began to "prep" meals to cook for my family when I got home from work.

Things went well—until Hurricane Fran hit in 1996, we were without power for 10 days. We had a generator—and a five-gallon container of gas—but, all of the gas stations were without power as well. We would take out the "thawed" food from each of the four freezers every day. We sent the kids all over the neighborhood to look for propane tanks. We cooked *lots* of food each day and all of our neighbors came and ate with us each day while the power was out. Nothing went to waste, but at the end of 10 days, our four freezers full of food were emptied.

My husband and I agreed that we needed a preparedness plan that

was not dependent on electricity. We had canned tomatoes and green beans, but cold water processing has limitations. We purchased a 14-quart pressure canner and modified our strategy. The challenge with canning for us with our limited storage space proved to be rotating the jars to ensure that you use the oldest first, and purge the jars over two years old.



Sounds easy...but when I attempted to move back jars to the front, I managed to put too much pressure on the shelf bracket which broke three of the shelves beneath it, all falling on me and breaking on the floor below. I was bruised and cut... and the *mess*... there are no words!

At that point, I decided to research alternatives to freezing and canning. I learned that dehydrated and freeze-dried vegetables retain more nutritional value than frozen or canned. So, I bought a dehydrator from an infomercial and attempted to dehydrate tomatoes. When I checked on my tomatoes after a couple of days, I had "fur." The tomatoes had molded. Our climate is *very, very* humid, so to

dehydrate effectively, we need dehydrators with very strong fans.

Afterwards, I decided to purchase dehydrated vegetables from a North Carolina company that specializes in dehydrated and freeze-dried products. I excitedly purchased a package of dehydrated vegetables. I could hardly wait for them to arrive! When they arrived, I placed the "confetti" looking vegetables into a pot and promptly cooked them. My husband's response — "I'd rather starve to death."

The next year was a year of discovery and adventure. My husband and family were spoiled by my gourmet recipes. I purchased pre-mixed mixes from the majority of the food vendors, but my husband didn't like them. Then, I bought every book available on Amazon for dehydrated food mix recipes. The "discovery and adventure" was finding flavorings, seasonings, and ingredients that could be added to the food mixes, which would please my family's picky tastes. Who knew there was dehydrated butter, sour cream, wine, soy sauce, teriyaki sauce, honey, molasses, etc.? I created the recipes for "*Soup Mixes Using Dehydrated Food Products*" which documented all 153 of my "husband-approved" recipes.

My dear friend and ministry partner, Steve Moore, realized the potential for retail, wholesale, and ministry, and partnered in establishing Pantry Stuffers as a business.

Today, we have two books, "*Soup Mixes Using Dehydrated Food Products*" and "*Re-hydration Made Easy*." In 2013, we received approval from the North Carolina Dept. of Agriculture to begin home-packaging our food mixes. In March 2014, we opened a retail store at The Cotton Company in beautiful downtown Wake Forest, North Carolina. In 2014, we also started an Etsy Online Retail store.

We have many more books and food packages planned for the future. It has become our passion. We are taking every opportunity to introduce the convenience and nutrition of dehydrated, freeze-dried, and powdered products. 🌱

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## Alternative housing:



# Our little cob cottage in the woods

BY MELISSA WEST  
VIRGINIA

When my husband, Eric, first told me about the land his family had left vacant—some 180 mountainous acres in the southern Appalachians—I caught a glimpse of our future. The story of the unwanted, roughly logged land was a hidden gem, and I polished it until it shone, convincing my husband to turn our hands to the land. I saw us living simply in a sturdy cob house, chickens scratching outside.

Though a bothersome black bear has deterred us from raising chickens, we've made our cob house, solid and beautiful. "Cob" is simply clay earth, sand, water, and straw. It's a building material similar to adobe, but instead of bricks, the 18-inch thick walls of a cob home are sculpted into one big mass. Like most North American dwellings made from cob, ours is small (about 350 square feet) and off-grid. We're not professional build-

ers, and our house isn't perfect. Still, it's ours, built by us and owned by us.

During my suburban childhood, I had little outlet for the things that I was interested in, so I spent most of my time living vicariously through the characters of books that I read. Consequently, as an adult, I'm eager to act on my dreams, not just read about them. Our main resource for building our house was *The Hand-Sculpted House*, by Ianto Evans, Michael G. Smith, and Linda Smiley. I read it three times, and then I transformed it from fantasy into a tool. Every time I picked it up after that, I stained the pages red with the iron-rich clay of the land. No matter how many times I washed my hands, I couldn't seem to get the color all the way off. Even though my hands aren't red anymore, I still can't get the land out of me. After building on the land, of the land, you are always connected.

The first step in building our new home was to clear a driveway, two old logging roads that we could connect with a switchback. Loggers had used the hillside as a dumping ground, so Eric and I spent several weekends digging out layers of brush and cutting it into firewood-length pieces. This was the first of many



“Cob” is simply clay earth, sand, water, and straw. Views of the foundation-building in progress.

times that I used the skills I had learned from the local forest service’s chainsaw certification course. I highly recommend taking such a course, as a chainsaw was one of the most useful, but also the most dangerous, tools I used when building our home.

After clearing, Eric’s brother Brian came down from Indiana for a weekend. He’s a talented Bobcat driver, and he smoothed the logging roads, graveled the lower part, and created a switchback between the two. Brian taught Eric and I how to operate the Bobcat. It’s a rough machine, but I grinned through the jostling — this was certainly something I never thought I would do!

Once we could drive to our site, we cleared brush and marked the perimeter of our house. Even this simple project took days! The perimeter staked, it was time to start digging. Maybe we were crazy, but we dug the whole rubble-trench foundation by hand, three feet deep. A large heap of excavated clay filled the inside of our house when we were finished.

After digging a trench, laying drainpipe, and back-filling it with gravel, we were ready to begin working with stone. I learned how to dry-stack a stone foundation using the book *Building with Stone*, by Charles McRaven, which I found at my local library (and available from the Countryside Bookstore). I tested the

sturdiness of my walls by walking on them — and was grateful for success.

We were ready for the first layers of cob that May. The only problem was, I had never made cob before. Or was it a problem? After all, I had never dug a foundation, designed a house, or stacked a stone wall before, and I had managed. With some trepidation, I spread out an 8-foot x 10-foot tarp, on which I piled three buckets of red clay soil and one bucket of sand. Holding the ends of the tarp, I shifted the contents, mixing the sand in with the clay. Then, I created a divot in the mixture and added water, squishing it together with my bare feet. I ended up with a very thick red velvet cake batter — but maybe not even a worm would eat this one! Next, it was time to sprinkle in straw and stomp it in. The very last step was rolling the mass into a log, and then separating it into smaller balls, called cobs, that could be handled easily, tossed from person to person and shaped into the walls of our home. Did I do it correctly? Would my mixture form a log, or would it fall apart? I grabbed the ends of the tarp and pulled. The heavy mass rolled with it, and when I peeled it back, I had a beautiful cob log. Success!

The first layer of cob seemed to disappear, covering only a few feet of the 20-inch wide foundation. I had to



Friends helped mix the cob by...foot.



take special care to fill in the crannies that the natural stone foundation had created, plus make sure that I covered the entire width of the wall. The first layer of cob is the base for all succeeding layers; I didn't want to mess it up!

The next few months of our lives developed a rhythm dominated by foot mixing, wedging the mixture into cobs (much as a potter wedges clay), and stacking it on our house, making sure to integrate the new layers in with the old. Did I get tired of it? Yes, and no. Even with the help of friends and interns, mixing is hard work that can get tedious. If I were to build again, I'd use a mortar mixer or a Bobcat to make batches. I never did get tired of hand-building, however. I loved using the material to create the curves of our walls, unique niches, and our cob bench.

We also experimented with two cob-hybrid techniques. We used "bale-cob" on the north-facing side of our house, which mixes straw-bale building materials and techniques with cob. Thanks to the increased

insulating abilities of bale-cob, a small wood stove, and a large amount of interior thermal mass in the form of cob walls and earthen floors, our home is cozy and warm in the winter, even in below zero weather.

The second technique was "cobwood," which we used on a small portion of an interior wall. Here, we cut a de-barked log into sections the width of our wall, and then stacked them, adding cob between the wood pieces. Be aware, however, that cob pulls away from wood while drying. To prevent gaps in the wall, attach old nails to each piece of wood.

We had decided to build the roof after the walls, making the cob walls a load-bearing structure. This decision was made on the "We'll deal with it later" philosophy. Building a roof seemed so intimidating! Of course, I *now* see how building the roof first would have been better — but that's how hindsight works.

After designing the basics, we planned a series of work parties. With many helping hands, we erected two massive logs in the middle of our home, the posts



Views of the interior and the roof going up. The walls were built before the roof, but they wouldn't repeat that process again.

that would support a central beam. It was almost unbelievable to watch how, working together, 15 people can carry entire trees, making it seem as easy as carrying a 4 x 4. It was hardly an effort to set the rafters in place, which were simply smaller logs that ran from the central beam onto the cob walls. The rafters did not rest directly on the cob, but rather onto horizontal logs, for added weight distribution.

We hired a friend, who was also a handyman, to help us finish the roof. His first job was to cut and attach our purlins – rough-cut 2 x 6's – to the log joists. After I helped him with the purlins, we covered the purlins with a layer of plastic sheeting, and finally our metal roof. While many people prefer the organic look of a living roof on a cob house, we had decided on a metal roof for catching rain water.

The last part of the house that we were able to finish before an early winter set in was making a ceiling and insulating the roof. Eric used his chainsaw mill to mill poplar boards, which we screwed onto the underside of the rafters. Using blow-in insulation made

from recycled blue jeans, we filled the gap between the wooden ceiling boards and the metal roofing.

The next summer, we once again began work on our home, albeit at a slower pace. We opted not to recruit any interns this summer, and simply worked as our schedule allowed. Major building phases included plastering the walls, making the floors, and furnishing our home.

Plastering is a fun yet messy business, so we did that before finishing the floors. Quick-acting pulverized agricultural lime makes the best lime plaster – the regular, non-quick acting type will simply brush off your walls, never truly setting. We created two layers. The first was a thick mixture of sand, lime, and straw. The second was a lime wash that we tinted with paint pigments. You can't simply paint your cob walls with paint from the hardware store; the painted layer will separate from the cob wall and peel off.

To make the earthen floors in our home, we first had to level out the floors, which we did with tons of rock and gravel. After leveling, we began experiment-



Interior views of the ceiling, kitchen, and a lovely seating area.

ing with earthen floor mixes. Here, we found a mixture of about three buckets of sand and one bucket of clay worked best. To make the floor tough, resistant to wear and tear, and washable, we applied linseed oil and floor wax to the top layer of flooring. We went through a lot of linseed oil, and it didn't smell very nice either. It's a smell that still remains in places that don't get a

lot of air, like under the bed.

The floor took about six weeks total to dry in our humid climate, and towards the end, each day seemed almost torture. We wanted to move in!

Finally, during the second week of November in 2011, the floor had dried. We came home from school that Friday, and as we headed into the cramped, termite-infested, leaking, stove-less travel trailer that we then lived in, I turned to Eric and said, "I can't wait to move in tomorrow!" His reply? "Let's move in now!" In the fading light, we transported our mattress and bare necessities down the hill.

Settling into our home was a gradual affair. Over the next few weeks, I built a log bed, started making kitchen counters, sewed cushions for our cob bench, and emptied out the travel trailer. By the time Eric's family came to visit for Thanksgiving, we were ready.

The first meal we cooked in our new home was Thanksgiving supper, complete with two kinds of pie. Afterwards, our guests had a slumber party in the living room. As I went to sleep that night, climbing into a bed that my own two hands had made, in a house that so shortly before had been only an idea, I knew it was the best Thanksgiving I had ever had. I was truly thankful. 🍂



## Alternative housing:

# Tips for fixing up a mobile home

By KAREN ISAACSON

I live in a manufactured home. Technically, it's a mobile home (though not very mobile now that it's tied down and all) but in Washington, the distinction is made between mobile homes and manufactured homes by the date at which HUD took over jurisdiction regarding their construction and the codes that apply to them.

Why I live in one is because the stick built house that used to be here had dry rot (my ex put his foot through the kitchen floor when moving the fridge to get to the fuse panel), rats had gotten into the attic and walls, there was little to no insulation and cleaning the crawl spaces and attic would have cost thousands, the crawl space under the kitchen wasn't connected to the rest of the crawl space, there was carpenter ant damage and mold. It wasn't something you could remodel, so we decided to tear it down and replace it; we'd once thought of building an entirely new house, but circumstances led us to the replacement path instead.

### What you have to deal with

Here in King County, Washington, there are three agencies that deal with mobile home placements on property. One is the county health department, if you have a septic system, which I do. The health department has to certify that the system is working, based on you getting a report from your local septic company based on their test of the system. The inspection was informative; the guy told me the system needed to be pumped shortly thereafter, and when my ex didn't step up and do that, I did (nothing makes

you feel more like a grown-up than getting your septic system pumped. Or so they say...) and just in time, it turned out.

The county building department had to approve the tear down of the existing house. Then, they had to okay the placement of the manufactured home we put on the property, the excavation to place it so the doors were close to ground level to make it accessible for the future, and make sure we weren't destroying wetlands (out by the mailbox is a patch that shows up on the maps as kind of damp, so someone had to come out and check). The building department also had to sign off on egress, decks, stairs, etc., all of which are built after the placement of the house (I'll refer to it as my house from hereon in).

The state department of Labor and Industries in Washington has jurisdiction over the house in two ways, one, the section that deals with electrical systems oversees the electrical connections outside the house and up to the house; and two, the section that deals specifically with the house handles electrical wiring inside the house, modifications to the house (such as replacing siding, or a sliding glass door with a window, or windows with French doors). In my case, since the siding on the house was in poor shape in some areas, my ex-husband and I discussed covering what was there with T1-11, but we found that wouldn't work due to the fact that the house was engineered only to handle the weight of the existing layer of siding and probably wouldn't be able to handle the weight of an additional layer. After the move to our site, nothing was either plumb or square, and

replacing some of the siding with three sheets of T1-11 took us several hours of work when ideally it should have taken no more than one. We then changed course and went with vinyl siding instead, which turned out to be a good idea for the long term—no painting, and as long as I'm careful with mowing, no holes from rocks (or insects, either).

One oddity regarding the inspections: the state department of Labor and Industries has jurisdiction over the septic connection up to two feet from the house, and then the local county health department takes over. The county inspector wasn't pleased when asked to inspect the connection from the septic system to the house, but that is one part of the entire process I found to be problematic in that information on placing mobile homes was piece-meal and there were a lot of discrepancies between the three websites and offices involved.

One thing to watch for is the condition the house is in after it's moved. Big speed bumps are to blame for tweaking my house in the move; I hired a reputable firm to move it, but I have sheetrock to patch as a consequence of the bumps it took. You'll have the seam down the middle of the ceiling and end walls to patch or have patched as a consequence of the house being sawn in two if you buy a double wide.

You'll need to find a firm/person to do the setup, which involves tying it down (it needs to be inspected when it's done to see it was done properly), and you'll need diagrams and specs of the tie-downs used by the firm you select as well as documentation of what they will do. Ask for bids, and ask how much advance notice they need.

Depending on your skill level, you might need someone who's good at sheetrock/mud and tape work. Me, I'm hiring that out.

### What to look for

Shop around and be cautious of anything really old and cheap; in Washington, due to the age of and code restrictions regarding mobile homes, you can't take them over county lines if they are too old and

you must live in them or place them in the same county. You might also be looking at inadequate wiring, or a lack of sufficient insulation, single pane windows or really crappy wood framing, and while you can typically tear out most of the walls inside a mobile home as they are non-weight bearing, that's a lot of work and you have to consider if you need to be able to live in it right away or if you can wait until you fix it the way you want it to be. Can you live elsewhere while you do that? Do you need to be able to live in the house while you're working on it? Do you have the strength/skill to do it? What will you do with the material you pull out?

From what I've seen in tearing out the walls in an older (1960s vintage) mobile home, the lumber in interior walls is about 1x3, not the best to begin with, and paneling is the norm. Everything is stapled or pneumatically nailed together (and is in my much newer house as well as the two brand-new houses across the street that sold for somewhere in the mid \$300s). Replacing the paneling isn't impossible, but you need to consider that, a) you might need a permit (Washington's are cheap), and b) you can't put in 5/8" sheetrock in an older mobile home because of the weight; they aren't engineered to handle it. Part of the reason for getting a permit is that the department in charge of same will ask you questions about what you want to replace the paneling with and provide you with diagrams and answer your questions, although dealing with any building department means time involved in getting someone to get back to you, and it can be frustrating.

The wiring and the fuse box in an older mobile home may not be up to handling the number of devices or the appliances you put in the house; remember you aren't adding just lights necessarily, but small appliances, a computer, etc., and you may need to address this. Same with any older house, like the one I lived in when I was in high school—you couldn't use the toaster and the microwave at the same time because you'd blow a fuse (it was built about 1923). Mine was built in 1993, and the wiring is

still kind of weird (most of the lights are on one circuit, along with a lot of the outlets).

Older mobile homes may not have sufficient insulation which could make heating them with their existing heating system costly, and putting a wood stove in a mobile home means looking for one that is certified for use in a mobile home because of the draft needed and the tightness of more



**Remodeling a mobile home can be tricky, but it's cheaper than a replacement.**

modern mobile homes. I intend to put a wood stove in the house eventually, just as backup in an emergency. Here in the Pacific Northwest, and probably in northern states, there's an option for additional insulation in a newer mobile home—here it's called something like the "Alaska package." That's something to keep an eye out for.

You may find that switching to gas water heating requires a water heater certified for use in a mobile home, or that you have to add plumbing and/or walls to keep it to code. You might also find that despite assertions to the contrary, people installing water heaters or furnaces may not know much about mobile homes and the requirements for such appliances. The firm that put in the new water heater (literally) which said right on it that it was not for use in a mobile home and it had to be replaced with a more expensive one, and yes, we had to pay the difference.

If there's wallpaper on the wallboard, you can't peel it off like wallpaper applied over sheetrock; it actually

is the surface of the wallboard. You can paint it, however, and Grippr primer covers and sticks (you still have to prep the surface, but you can at least use the primer and paint to cover up the hideous wallpaper). Some folks like Kilz, but even the low-odor stuff stinks and it took three coats of it to cover some Barbie pink paint in a house we used to live in, so I'm not impressed with Kilz. I'm remodeling the kitchen (all the cabinets are falling apart) and since the backs are glued on to the wall, I'll need to run a box cutter around the perimeter to make sure I don't tear up the surface of the wallboard any more than is necessary. The former owner took the original medicine cabinet off the wall in the master bath and replaced it with a gaudy gold-framed monstrosity, but the vinyl surface of the wallboard got torn up in the process and it will take work to make it smooth and paintable again. I'll have one bit of wall painted in a room full of ugly wallpaper.

If there's sheetrock, it's thinner than what you'd find in an apartment or stick-built house, and you'll need to figure out how to hang things on the wall. I tried some molly bolts only to have them tear through the sheetrock, and regular sheetrock screws don't have enough depth to hold. I did find some hybrid screws/wall anchors at Target that seem to do the trick, but at over \$4 a package of six, they are not cheap.

I find the biggest problem with my house is a lack of storage. Darn thing is 66' x 28' and I've had to build in a lot of shelving, plan a broom closet, and put in pantry shelves in a big closet in the laundry room. One cabinet in the kitchen was hardly usable due to the width of the face frames and the narrow openings between them. Plus, the kitchen only had three drawers, and I don't know about you, but I have more than three drawers' worth of mixing cups, pot holders, silverware, and, of course, stuff.

Would I do it again? The process wasn't fun, and it was time consuming and frequently frustrating, but yes, I would. It's a comfortable, quiet house in a good location and I'm quite pleased with it. 🌸



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Currently, every state has a right-to-farm law. Yes, manure can be smelly when not handled properly, but we think it's better than any alternative chemical choice. *Photo by Linda N.*

# Right-to-Farm and what it means for homesteaders like YOU

By KATIE HUNTER  
FLOYD, VIRGINIA

The Right-to-Farm Act was established to protect farmers subject to the growth in housing development on once solely agricultural land from nuisance lawsuits, but increased desire for self-sufficiency has pushed for changes in these laws that could have a direct effect on homesteaders nationwide.

Modern homesteading is at an all-time high as people are compelled to lead a more agrarian lifestyle, maybe to have more control over their food supply or maybe to just leave the hustle and bustle of city life behind. Setting up self-sustaining homesteads

in the country on predominately agricultural lands seems simple enough and your state's right-to-farm laws provide protection from new neighbors who might not see the beauty in a rooster alarm clock, but what about your backyard?

### Right-to-Farm in suburbia

Right-to-Farm laws were established to protect farmers from nuisance lawsuits and newly established ordinances as suburbs sprung up in previously agricultural lands. These laws are designed to give the farmer a legal stance when displaced city dwellers quickly realized just exactly why the grass is greener in the country and they file a complaint about

the smell. Prior to the enactment of these right-to-farm laws, farms could be shut down or restrictions affecting their production could be enforced if the new neighbors weren't happy with their country setting after all and filed a nuisance lawsuit. Currently every state in the country has passed a right-to-farm law.

The decision in a nuisance lawsuit is argued in a court of law and left up to a judge to decide. The right-to-farm laws simply give the farmer a legal leg to stand on when defending themselves in these lawsuits, but the outcome depends on several circumstances of the case such as the time frame the farm has been operating without nuisance. These laws are to

help protect farmers who use good management practices win private nuisance lawsuits and put newcomers on notice that agricultural practices are a reasonable expectation in certain localities. The right-to-farm laws are not meant to protect farms from legal consequences of poorly managed operations having a negative environmental impact and these laws do not encompass the trending move of small farms and homesteaders into urban areas.

**Right-to-Farm laws:  
The controversy**

This is where the right-to-farm laws begin to muddy. For example, Michigan initially enacted their right-to-farm law in 1981, which gave the upper hand to residents using their property for farming as long as they followed the state-mandated guidelines. This decision opened up a once corporate-dominated profession to local, small, entrepreneurs in urban areas and homesteaders. It was ahead of its time and started a boom in the local food industry as well as an increased awareness of sustainability. Michigan was at the forefront of a global trend towards local food as local markets grew nationally 300 percent between 1992 and 2007, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and registered farms peaked. The boundaries defining city and farm territory began to blur and the complaints began to rush in.

In April of 2014, Michigan legislators sought to solve the conflict of neighbors upset at the sounds and smells of chickens and developers requesting budget changes to hide anything that looked like a farm. To put an end to the debate over a landowner's inherent rights, changes were adopted to the state's current right-to-farm laws, which agreed that cities were not suitable places for farming practices. These changes stripped protections under the right-to-farm laws from any and all farm operations located within 250 feet of a residence or having 13 or more homes within one-eighth of a mile. These areas were deemed "primarily resi-

dential" and farming was no longer considered a reasonable expectation in suburbia where local nuisance ordinances now ruled.

**Right-to-Farm and homesteading**

If Michigan leads by example and changes to Right-to-Farm laws begin to take place on a national level, already we are seeing minor adjustments to these laws in Wisconsin, Missouri, Ohio, and Arizona, and as the surge in demand for local food continues along with the increased movement towards self-sufficiency, the conflict will rise. As urban farmers and backyard homesteaders begin to feel the pinch, the need for changes in agricultural laws will only be more evident.

What this means for you is that you will have to follow local ordinances when considering backyard farming or homesteading. Many urban farmers don't realize they were never protected by their state's Right-to-Farm laws in the first place and have to follow local ordinances. Bringing the farm to urban areas is an entirely different ball game and the right-to-farm laws do not adequately cover this increasing trend.

**Do your research**

Knowing your local ordinances is just as valuable as feed when it comes to homesteading. Michigan's changes to state Right-to-Farm laws denied urban or backyard farmers raising small numbers of animals protection under the Right-to-Farm Act and

some may not be able to have chickens, goats, and other small livestock in certain areas where once they were appropriate. Keep up with changes in legislation that may have an effect on your small farm or homestead and play an active role in your local government. Speak out against the not-in-my-backyard mentality and practice sustainable farming that is less intrusive and easily incorporated into an urban setting if you are unable to purchase agricultural lands wholesale to start your homestead.


**Sources:**

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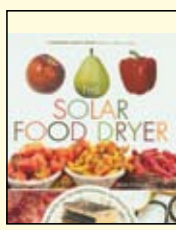
*Kate Hunter is an expert on organic gardening and sustainable farming. When she's not working on the family's organic farm, Hunter Farm (<http://hunterfarm.org/>), she makes and sells natural products and upcycled clothing on her Etsy shop Turnip Mims (<http://turnipmims.etsy.com/>). Kate enjoys whole food cooking and has been writing about nutrition, healthy living, cooking, and gardening for over ten years. Kate is a mother of three and spends her time baking, taking pictures, canning, growing and drying herbs, raising heritage breed chickens, reading, writing, and checking food labels of course.*



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## The horse barn:

# Horsepower for haying

By HEATHER SMITH THOMAS

**J**ohn Miller and his family moved from Montana to Idaho in the fall of 2012. He and his wife Ruby and their children and another Amish family (from Ohio) purchased a ranch at Baker, near Salmon, Idaho.

raised some really good ones. Then we started buying young horses from Iowa. A farmer there has 20 mares and some bloodlines we really like. They have good minds; they are willing workers and really walk out. We've got four of those now, and we want to get some more. As

we get more young ones coming on we might sell older, extremely well-broke horses to people who want to use them for anything, like feeding cows, or people getting started with draft horses. Because we've got a lot of good horses we can put colts with them in a hitch and train them easily, especially in the wintertime feeding cows," he explains.

"We enjoy starting young horses. We usually put one beside a team, where they don't have to pull much. This gets them used to the routine, responding to Whoa, Get Up, and turning. We gradually put them in there pulling and it's amazing how fast they catch on," he says.

Currently their workhorses are all Belgians except one. John's son Matthias (nickname "Sy") says that one was a mistake. "He's a cross between a Percheron and a Belgian. We loaned one of our mares to a farmer for a short time, and he had a Percheron stud. She got bred overnight. We almost sold him when he was a colt because we didn't like him. Now



**Matthias Miller cutting hay with a team.**

The Millers put up hay with teams of horses. Haying with horses has been their Amish tradition, and John enjoys working with his teams. He grew up with horses, farming with horses in Montana.

"My family always had Belgians. We've found Belgians to be mellow and easy-going, and generally safe — not that we haven't had our share of runaways — but all in all, they've been really good horses," says John.

"We never owned a stud. We borrowed a stud, raised some colts, and



we're really glad we didn't—because he's one of our best horses! He likes to work and is eager to go; his ears are always forward," says Sy.

### Haying with horses

"As we started farming more ground and put up more hay, we began using a round baler and power carts for running the haying equipment," says John. "An Amish company in Ohio makes all kinds of horse-drawn farm implements and these power carts. Those work really well and make our haying a lot easier. We can do 130 acres of hay very comfortably and it's not such a burden." A four-horse team can pull a big round baler with the power cart for making the bale.

"There is a big baler that's ground driven, but it takes tremendous power. There are also small square balers that are ground driven, and we used those early on. They had a small Wisconsin engine mounted onto the baler. We also used the horse-drawn ground-driven sickle-bar mowers. That works, but it's hard to do as much acreage as we need, to put up enough hay for our cows," John says.

"Those mowers have a tremen-

take most of the weight away from the horses' necks," he says.

They also started using a neoprene shoulder pad. "We really like these; they don't soak up any sweat. The old ones filled with deer hair were good, but they soak up the sweat and once the horse has a sore shoulder it's hard to get it to heal," he explains. The neoprene is non-abrasive and stays dry.

"We also keep the collar fairly tight. We've found that we sore a horse quicker by having a collar too big rather than too small. I was taught that you had to be able to stick your hand down between the horse and collar, but you want it fairly snug.

day we'd take a five-gallon bucket of cold water, put some loose salt in it, and go along with a brush and wipe the horses' shoulders down. We had very little trouble this summer with sore shoulders, and we farmed a lot of acres."

This success was due to multiple factors--reducing the tongue weight and trying to keep the horses clean, with the right size collar. "As they work, they lose weight from what they were in the spring, and we downsize the collars a little, if we can, and keep them fitting snug. We really like the collars that don't just have the buckle (latch system) up on top. Ours have what looks like a leather sock



dous amount of tongue weight and also have side draft. Unless you have the little dollies out front to carry the tongue weight, it's hard to keep the horses' shoulders from getting sore—from all the motion. We try to be really careful to keep the tongue weight as light as possible. We use adjustable springs that pull the tongue up, to

When the horse drops his head, down comes the collar, and pretty soon he's sore down around the lower edge. You don't want it loose, with too much movement," he says.

A neighbor mentioned that he washed his horses' shoulders with cold salt water. "We started doing that this summer. At the end of the

that goes around the top and buckles on each side. These are adjustable to about three sizes. I think the ones with the latch system right on top can sore a horse," John says.

When you use horses this much, you have to diligently find ways to keep them working comfortably. "If a horse gets sore and you have to let him stand for a week or two during haying season, this can be a big problem. Prevention is very important."

On the baler and mower, they use four horses. "We generally like to drive three (in the lines) and put the fourth horse on the jockey stick. We can also put four in the lines. My youngest son Matthias ran some that way this past summer. If they are trained, and we don't have any young horses in the team, we can do that, but I don't feel you have quite as much control. A person can drive three just about as comfortably and

with as much control as you can drive two horses,” says John.

“With two horses in a team, the lines cross between them. For three horses you just unsnap those lines, lead the third horse into the middle, and snap a line to each side of him and put little check straps between the front. It’s very simple to drive three horses with two lines. Their response is almost the same as when driving two horses,” he explains.

“If we are driving four, we usually put our jockey horse on the left. If we have a colt with the older horses, that’s where he goes because all our turns are right-hand turns. He is led around the turn, rather than pushed around it. This makes it easier for him.”

“On the rake we use just two horses, and four on the round baler. To do a lot of acres you generally need 10 horses. It’s not that you can’t juggle and shift around with fewer, but if you want to do all the haying when it’s ready, without wearing the horses out, you need 10 because there are four on the mower, four on the baler and two on the rake.” If it’s good haying weather and you need to keep going, you don’t want to overwork the horses.

“This past summer our youngest son (Sy, now 17) did almost all the mowing, and kept ahead of us. There were just a few times that I put the other mower on and helped him finish a field. He is really good with the horses. He helps start the young ones, especially if they are mild mannered,” says John.

Daughter Hannah (age 19) also enjoys working with horses, and last summer did most of the raking. “I especially like horses that walk really fast and are not lazy, and I don’t have to get after them all the time so we can get the field done. The black team I was driving last summer were Percherons, and we only had them for the summer. They were very good, even though they were really green when we started them. The owner had health issues and didn’t have time to work with them, and wanted



**Hannah Miller raking hay with a team.**

then turn and go the other way to put the two windrows together. This rake puts two together at once and makes it a lot quicker and I really

like it.”

us to take them for the summer. They hadn’t been worked much at all,” she says.

“When I started using them to rake hay, I had to always be on my toes and could never trust them to stand for me to go open a gate, drive through, and go close it, because they would just take off. Dad went with me the first few times, just to get me through the gates, but before the end of summer I could do that with those horses by myself. They were doing very well, walked fast doing their job, and became more dependable. They wanted to go a little too fast at first, but after about an hour they’d settle down and not be so frantic, and just keep up their fast walk most of the day. Their owner got better and wanted them back, so after haying the horses went back to him — and were well trained and he could handle them very easily,” says Hannah.

“I told my brother Sy that I want to learn how to mow, but he does very well at that, so I just go behind and rake. Earlier we just had a one-sided rake; you had to go round the field

like it.”

Her brother Sy has been driving horses since he was eight years old. “At first I was always with somebody, before I drove them by myself. Last summer on our new place I did most of the mowing for the first cutting and a little bit of everything on the second cutting when dad was busy. I first started baling three years ago. This is a little more difficult than mowing. You have to pay a lot closer attention to what you are doing,” he explains.

He enjoys helping start young horses. “We generally start one by putting it in the lines beside a big one when feeding hay. That gives the young horse two hours of work every morning. They learn how to back up to a bale, pull hard, then back up again. We drive each colt with a broke horse until they get good enough to hitch them up together. That’s when they start improving fast and working together as a team,” says Sy.

“We need a few more horses for haying. The young ones we’re getting will only be yearlings so they won’t



John Miller bales hay.

be old enough to do much work. We might get an older team just to fill in for next summer. It won't matter whether or not they are broke because we can train them real fast—if they are old enough to work and have good minds," he says.

"With young ones, as soon as they are good enough to drive together, even if they are still very green, they learn to work together. If they grow up pulling together, they usually make a good team. They give it all they've got, and even some more.

"We don't drive them single, unless we're in the woods. When we're skidding out logs, I just ride the horse, and can drag out four big poles at once. These were green trees, and really heavy," says Sy. In the woods the horses are more maneuverable than any machine, and have a lot of power. They have better traction and don't spin out!

"When we hitch the teams for farming, we generally use four horses, but sometimes six. If there is no tongue involved, we can do them tandem such as two and two, or three and three. Having six abreast is not as good when we have to turn, but we sometimes use five abreast. It's a little trickier to drive them tandem, but the horses learn fast because they have ropes going up beside them—to the team in front. If a horse tries to go to the side, the rope rubs hard on their legs. This keeps them in line, once they are pulling hard. They learn to trail along behind the

team in front," he says.

"When driving them tandem, it takes a good lead team. You are back too far to tap them, so they have to do everything on voice commands. Our four horses from Iowa work really well



together, with the two mares in the front," says Sy.



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## Advantages of working with horses

John appreciates his horses and cattle. "If you don't enjoy animals and just raise them for the dollars, you are in the wrong business. It's the same with workhorses. You need to like to drive a team. My best days are when there is no stress and I'm just working with the horses or out in my fields with a shovel irrigating," he says. He gets a lot of satisfaction and contentment working with the land and animals.

The lifestyle is part of the reason for using horses. "Human nature often leads us into thinking bigger is better. If I look strictly at efficiency, however, and dollars at the end of the year, if I farmed with tractors and kept the acreage down to where I wouldn't have to buy an \$80,000 tractor, it might be more efficient than doing it with horses. But if I consider my

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## Buggy horses

"Last fall we bought a couple two-year-old Standardbreds from back East. One of them is really calm. The other one really wants to go but he's hot-headed. We're trying to see what we can do to calm him down. Our trotting horses must be dependable, especially if we're out on the highway. You don't want a flighty horse. These Standardbreds are bred for speed," John says.

"Of all the Standardbreds, maybe one out of 100 actually has the speed needed to be a top racehorse. The people who raise them try them out as two-year-olds to see if they have speed. Those that don't quite make it get sold as ordinary horses. Amish communities back East use all of those horses," says John.

"With these trotting horses, if we are only going a short distance, we can easily go 20 miles per hour. But going a longer distance, such as travelling to town (about 12 miles) we trot slower, and it takes a little over an hour to get there. We don't want to wear out the horse because we still have to come back home again!"

machinery costs (with horse-drawn equipment) and figuring in the cost of my horses, and the amount of fuel burned in a day, haying with horses is fairly efficient. We don't burn much fuel with our machines. We can mow all day with five gallons. I can bale for a day with about seven gallons," John says.

"We have to feed the horses in the winter, but it all works out. Part of why we do it is the lifestyle that goes with it. If I was strictly looking at dollars, I don't think an \$80,000 tractor and a 16-foot mower and all the other equipment could be justified on this little 300-acre place. It doesn't really matter how big or how small your place is; it's how much you do. If I had that machinery, it wouldn't pay for itself being used only two or three weeks during the year. We'd have to do more acres to pay for it," he explains. Then a person gets into the problem of doing more than they want to do—working more ground and longer hours just to pay for the machinery. "It's always a challenge, to find the right balance—to be ef-

ficient and still try to maintain the lifestyle you enjoy," says John.

Hannah and Sy enjoy helping with haying and other horse chores. "It's a pleasure going out and getting the horses ready and hitching them up," says Hannah. "It just seems more 'alive' than working with a machine! We prefer to work with horses. There's a lot of satisfaction in having the horses do a good job, and getting done with the last row, finishing everything. There's enjoyment in taking the horses back in, giving them grain." The horses are part of the team effort.

Sy enjoys going out in the morning and harnessing the horses and taking them out to the field. "As they start working, I like the smell of their sweat. We have to be careful in the spring when we first start using them, however, and not use them too hard. They need a little time for their shoulders to get tougher," he says. The Millers only need one team in the winter for feeding the cows, but trade off so the horses all get a little work. 🌱

## The goat barn:

# Breeding for the small dairy goat herd

BY CHERYL K. SMITH

Sixteen years ago I got my first goats: Jinx and Kea, two Nigerian Dwarf does. They were born in the spring and I bought them in the summer. I didn't think about breeding at first because they were too young and I was having so much fun playing with them and taking them for walks in the woods. As summer turned to autumn I realized that I didn't know any nearby Nigerian Dwarf owners and there was not a buck in sight. I needed to get them bred so I could start step two of my plan—milking.

Small herd owners, who need to breed their dairy goats so they can milk, often do not keep any bucks for a variety of reasons. These include housing, separation of space, prevention of breeding, the smell, and additional expenses.

### Separation of space and housing

Most dairy goat keepers don't keep their does and bucks together. They like to have some control over the breeding so they can know when the doe(s) will kid. If the herd already has doe kids from a specific buck, then inbreeding with the father may not be the best choice. When a buck is with the does, often it is impossible to tell when a doe is in heat. They just sneak back behind the building (or wait till you aren't looking) and do the deed.

Another reason that dairy goat keepers prefer to keep bucks and does separate is the buck smell. Bucks not only have scent glands that contribute to their smell, but they are also known to urinate on their legs and beards. This smell can get into

the milk, making it less desirable for drinking or making cheese. Just fraternizing with the does can be enough to get that smell all over the place.

Bucks are also known to be more aggressive than most does, so I don't trust them around small kids. If a buck is allowed to run with does up until they have their kids, he still needs to be put in a separate enclosure at that time.

The first consideration, then, in deciding to get a buck or bucks is whether you have the space and housing that is necessary. They also need a companion; so if there is just one buck, he will need a wether to keep him company. So now you have a pet, as well as a working member of the herd, to feed. That leads to the next consideration: expense.

### Additional expenses

Additional expenses for a buck include a strong fence (to prevent escapes and accidental breeding), housing and land for browsing. You will also have to feed the buck (and his wether companion). Good quality hay and a mineral block are the minimum requirements. You may want to feed the buck some grain in the fall, as well, because he is likely to lose condition as he uses more energy obsessing over the does he can see (or at least smell, depending on their proximity). Other minor expenses will include supplements, dewormer, a pail for drinking water, a bowl for feed or other supplements and a hay feeder.

Compare these costs (and the aggravation or work) to the cost of breeding to someone else's buck. If you have only a few does, the solution becomes obvious—lease a buck,

send your doe on vacation to another farm, or take her for a driveway breeding. (Another option is artificial insemination, which I don't address in this article.)

### Leasing a buck

The price for leasing a buck can be as low as \$75 to as high as several hundred dollars. I consider leasing a healthy buck a winning choice for all involved. The does get to have a boyfriend around, the buck gets to spend a few months (more or less) with some beautiful ladies, and the owner gets the experience of having a buck on the farm without the commitment.

Often the breeder who sold the goats is willing to provide a buck. One advantage of this is that the buck is coming from the original farm, and so the does are more likely to have been exposed to the same bugs as he has. The original breeder may also be helpful in determining which buck would be a good choice.

Unfortunately, many breeders are unwilling to lease bucks or have other limitations on who they will lease to. For example, I lease them to people who have purchased goats from me and have no other goats in their herd. I limit anyone with unrelated goats to driveway breedings.

You will need to keep a leased buck for at least three weeks to one month to ensure that your goats have gotten bred. If they come into heat after a first breeding he will be there to cover them a second time.

I chose leasing as the solution to the breeding problem with my Jinx and Kea. We got Harley from the original breeder, and kept him for almost five months—until a few

weeks before the girls kidded. They really loved him and living with us gave him the opportunity to live in a more normal setting (not with a bunch of fighting boys). The owners had plenty of other bucks, so they didn't need him back right away.

As with purchasing a goat, goat owners who plan to lease a buck from another breeder need to put their agreement in writing. This clarifies what is being agreed to, protects both parties and will help prevent hard feelings if something

unexpected occurs. (See example of a lease contract, below.)

### Sending her on vacation

Another less desirable solution is the reverse of leasing a buck—boarding the doe at the buck's farm.

## Buck Lease Agreement

\_\_\_\_\_, of \_\_\_\_\_, City, State, ("Lessor") and \_\_\_\_\_, of City, State, ("Lessee") agree to lease the Buck known as \_\_\_\_\_, subject to the following terms and conditions:

**Dates of Lease.** The lease shall begin on \_\_\_\_\_, or at the time Lessee picks up the buck, and end on \_\_\_\_\_, or at the time Lessee returns the buck to \_\_\_\_\_ Farm, but for no more than \_\_\_\_\_ month(s).

**Responsibility and Liability during Shipment.** Lessee shall be responsible for transporting the buck to and from Lessor's farm to Lessee's farm, unless otherwise agreed to by the parties in an addendum to this agreement. Lessee shall assume all legal liability for the buck during shipment to Lessee's farm.

**Payment.** Lessee agrees to pay \$\_\_\_\_\_. A \$50 deposit shall be made payable to Lessor at the time the buck is picked up. The deposit may be deducted from the total amount due for breeding, at the time the buck is returned to Lessor.

**Condition of Buck.** Lessor certifies that buck is in good health, has recently been dewormed and had his hooves trimmed, and is fertile. If the goat fails to successfully breed any of Lessee's does, Lessee shall provide a second breeding at no additional charge, if Lessee desires. Lessee is responsible for returning the buck in as good of condition as when picked up.

**Reasonable Management and Feed.** Lessee agrees to provide reasonable management to ensure the ongoing health of the goat, including, but not limited to adequate hay, water, and minerals, and other health maintenance. Under no circumstances shall buck be fed grain or other concentrates. In the event that the buck becomes ill, Lessee shall contact Lessor to discuss treatment to be undertaken. However, in an emergency, Lessee shall have the authority to obtain veterinary care for the buck, but shall be responsible for the cost. In the event that the buck dies while on lease, Lessee shall pay a lump sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_, but will not be liable for breeding fees.

**Housing.** Lessee may keep the buck with does, but shall house him separately from all other bucks at all times.

**No Semen Collection.** Lessor agrees not to collect or have another person collect semen from the buck.

**Service Memoranda.** Lessee shall be responsible for providing services memoranda, with the required information regarding does bred. Lessor agrees to return completed Service Memorandum for each doe bred to Lessee within 30 days of receipt of them from Lessee and upon receipt of all monies due under this agreement.

**Extension and Penalty.** Lessee may extend the length of this lease only if Lessor agrees and the agreement is in writing. In the event of no such agreement, if Lessee does not return the buck by the end date specified above, Lessee agrees to pay a late charge of \$\_\_\_ a day.

**Entire Agreement.** This Agreement constitutes the entire agreement between the parties. No modification or amendment of the Agreement shall be effective unless in writing and signed by both parties. This Agreement replaces any and all prior agreements between the parties.

**Governing Law.** This Agreement shall be construed in accordance with the laws of the state of \_\_\_\_\_.

**Dispute Resolution.** Resolution to a dispute arising between the parties that cannot be resolved through direct negotiation shall be referred to mediation. A decision reached by the parties in mediation shall be final and binding upon the parties. The expenses and fees involving the services of a mediator shall be determined as part of the mediation agreement. Mediation shall be completed within no more than thirty (30) days after the parties are unable to reach a resolution by direct negotiation.

**Severability.** If any portion of this Agreement is determined to be invalid or unenforceable for any reason, the remaining provisions shall continue to be valid and enforceable. If a court finds that any provision of the Agreement is invalid or unenforceable, but that by limiting such provision it would become valid and enforceable, then such provision shall be deemed to be written, construed and enforced as so limited.

**Waiver.** The failure of either party to enforce a provision of this Agreement shall not be construed as a waiver or limitation of that party's right to subsequently enforce and compel strict compliance with every provision of this Agreement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lessor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lessee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed

This creates added stress for the doe, which can decrease the chance of successful breeding. It may also be harder to set up because the doe will need to be housed separately from all other goats in the herd except the buck—a requirement that some breeders cannot meet. Owners may also not want their goat or goats away from home for weeks. As with leasing a buck, the parties involved will need to draft a contract to ensure that all bases are covered.

I once boarded two does that I hold sold to a family. They had only been gone for three months and the owners needed to improve their housing, so the girls came back to their herd of origin for a month. Because they were the only goats owned by the family, had not been exposed to other goats or sheep and knew the herd, I was able to keep them in the general population and breed them when they came into heat.

### Driveway breeding

Driveway breeding is just what it sounds like: bringing the doe to the buck, with breeding occurring in the driveway. This prevents exposure of other goats in the herd to a new goat and potentially new microbes or bacteria. It doesn't require any special housing or feed expenses.

Normally the doe is put on a leash (to prevent her from running away on a strange farm) and the buck (leashed or unleashed) is let out to breed her. The doe's owner usually pays a set fee (from \$50 to several hundred dollars) once the doe is bred. This is ideal from the perspective that because the breeding is known to have occurred at a specific time, the kidding date can be projected to within five days of actual kidding. We normally have the buck breed the doe three times in the visit to ensure that she settles (gets impregnated).

Most breeders do not charge a second fee if the doe fails to settle. After waiting for three weeks post-breeding, if the doe comes back into heat she can be brought back to the farm for another try at no charge.

There can be several disadvan-

**A buck rag is a rag or towel that has been rubbed on the head of and legs of buck during breeding season. It is kept in a tightly-closed container and brought out regularly for a doe to sniff to determine whether she is in heat or to help stimulate estrus. Goat owners who don't keep bucks and don't plan to lease a buck or send their doe to live with a buck should get a fresh buck rag each year to help guide their breeding decisions and timing.**



tages to driveway breeding. Often a long drive to a breeder is required, particularly if the doe's owner lives in an isolated area or a long distance away. This puts stress on the doe that can interfere with getting pregnant. I have driven goats for several hours only to find weeks later that they didn't settle. This entails a repeat of the drive.

I have also had people drive to my house, only to discover that the doe was no longer in heat (or perhaps wasn't to start with). Which leads to a common dilemma for those who don't keep bucks: How do you tell when the doe is in heat?

### Telling when a doe is in heat

Does' heat is driven by several factors. The first is the sun. When the days start getting shorter, the doe's hormone system starts a reaction that ultimately causes her to become fertile and sexually receptive to the buck.

The second factor is the buck himself. French researchers recently found that estrus (heat) can be put into play by a pheromone that bucks synthesize in the skin of their heads. Rather than the urine that bucks so freely spray their heads and beards during breeding season, this citrus-scented chemical is the key to "turning on" the does.

Each estrus cycle is about 21 days long (although it can be 18 to 24 days) and the actual heat lasts anywhere from 18 to 36 hours. Once a doe goes into heat, it is time for the owner to go into action to get her to the buck.

Even a half day wait can be too long and you will have to wait three more weeks to get her bred.

Goat owners who don't have bucks sometimes can't even tell when their does are in heat, particularly if they haven't previously had kids. They may develop subtle signs such as a pink vulva and some minor discharge, or just acting different with a little extra tail-wagging. They are much less likely to vocalize and they have no reason to stand at the fence-line. Sometimes they may mount each other, and if a wether (castrate male) is kept with them, he may be a heat-detector and act buckish. The best solution is to obtain a *buck rag*, which is rubbed on the top of the head (See sidebar).

Once a small herd owner decides which of these alternatives to pursue, he or she should get a buck rag from a friendly breeder and have it at the ready. Any time after July, if a doe is acting different, get out the buck rag and wave it in front of her face. If her tail starts wagging like crazy and she gets excited, she is probably in heat. Write it down on the calendar and then start planning to be ready in three more weeks. And remember, time is of the essence, especially if you are doing a driveway breeding. 🐐

*Cheryl K. Smith is a freelance writer and editor. She has been raising miniature dairy goats in the coast range of Oregon since 1998. She is the author of Goat Health Care and Raising Goats for Dummies.*



# American Blackbelly Sheep

Top 10 reasons why these unique sheep could be the breed for you!

By JANE ANDERLINI

The first time I saw a picture of an American Blackbelly sheep, I'm sure my heart skipped a beat. Within a month, we added six percentage American Blackbelly ewe lambs to our predominantly Katahdin flock and enjoyed them so much that, the following summer, we brought our first registered American Blackbelly lambs home to start our current registered flock. There are many more than 10 reasons why these sheep are amazing; these are my top 10:

**Beauty.** It's hard to beat the stately beauty of American Blackbelly sheep. These sheep always look proud and alert. Their brown and black markings look sharp and distinct at any time of year. Rams have impressive horns that rival those of wild sheep, and even though we've found that the rams will use their horns to protect themselves, ours haven't used their horns aggressively.

**Shearing not required.** American Blackbelly sheep are hair sheep. Their winter coat is a wool undercoat that sheds along with hair fibers in the

spring (or summer, depending on your climate) much as a dog sheds its thick winter coat. This is in contrast to wool sheep that are sheared annually. American Blackbelly sheep can save time and money without shearing costs. Their hair looks great year round; it seems to repel dirt (they just never get dirty), and our experience has been that ticks are not attracted to them.

**Tail docking not required.** Another time and money saving feature of these sheep is that the tail docking that is customary with most wool sheep breeds is not necessary. American Blackbelly sheep all have tails. Their tails are narrow and fairly short with short hair that prevents the tails from getting soiled (even during lambing). We think it's more comfortable for the sheep to have tails for protection from hot summer sun and cold winter winds, and they can twitch their tails to send flies on their way.

**Smaller size.** American Blackbelly sheep tend to be smaller and grow slower than many of the sheep breeds that have been bred for rapid



The hair of the Blackbelly doesn't need to be shorn.

market weight and size. This is not a disadvantage, though. It means they eat less feed, make less mess, and take up less space than larger breeds of sheep. The slower growth makes for healthy sheep that develop and mature at a natural rate.

**Non-selective grazers.** While all sheep need good feed, American Blackbelly sheep are not as fussy as some about what they eat. They are happiest with a variety of food choices and make their own selections wisely. They don't necessarily need lush pasture, enjoying wooded areas with a mixture of grasses, trees, and brush. They also thrive in climates where hay must be fed for half of the



A Blackbelly ram

year due to snow coverage.

**Adaptable.** We live in an area with extremely cold winter temperatures for extended periods of time and we can also have very hot, dry spells during the summer with dampness in spring and fall. The American Blackbelly sheep easily adapt to these changes and extremes. They're happiest outside surrounded by wide open spaces where they can see the horizon and the sky. They appreciate having a shelter, but will often prefer to be outside even in winter conditions.

**Healthy.** American Blackbelly sheep are hardy, even though they're structurally finer boned than our other breeds of "hair" sheep. It's rare for them to have hoof problems. They require less de-worming than other breeds, and some breeders are able to skip de-worming altogether. For us, they respond well to herbal treatments. They bring health to a crossbreeding plan. Newborns hit the ground running – they practically bounce up and keep on bouncing.

**Intelligent.** We have three breeds of hair sheep and love them all, but the American Blackbelly sheep seem to be amazingly intelligent. They figure things out quickly and often

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A Blackbelly lamb

instinctively. This can be challenging because their reactions are lightning fast and they may seem flighty at times, but afterwards we can always see exactly why they chose a particular action. They are happi-

est in a group with other American Blackbelly sheep. They don't like to be alone, even less so than other sheep breeds we've had. They are generally not cuddly sheep and can even seem aloof or unfriendly, but they know when they need human assistance and are very grateful for help if they've hurt themselves or need something they can't do for themselves. If fed grain regularly or have frequent human contact, they become very friendly once they understand they are safe.

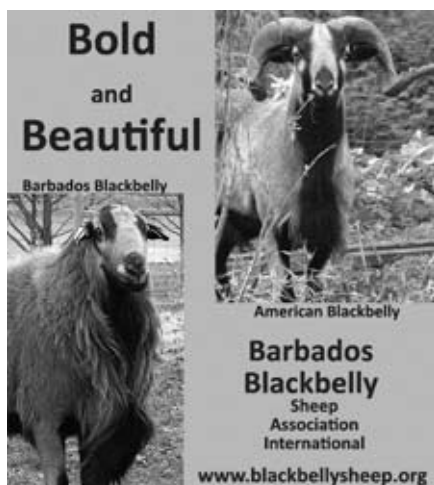
**Protective.** I fully believe our American Blackbelly sheep will be the ones that save our whole herd at some point. They move the herd to safety if predators are around, being constantly alert and reacting quickly to anything that doesn't belong. If a strange dog, cat, or other animal is

present, they instantly spring into action by stomping, jumping, and running to safety (in our case, up to the house and barn area or to our llama if they're in a fenced area away from the barn). The other breeds of sheep will be startled and run after them. American Blackbelly sheep won't go near people they don't know. Lambs stay very close to their mothers and always on the opposite side of them from strangers or threats.

**Easy lambing/great moms.** American Blackbelly ewes lamb with ease. So far, we have never had to assist with a delivery as we have with our other breeds. They take excellent care of their newborns. When the lambs are outside with their mothers, they tend to stay closer to them than lambs of other breeds and the American Blackbelly mothers always know where their lambs are. They're very family oriented, often babysitting the lambs of other ewes and letting other lambs climb on their backs. Something specific to the American Blackbelly sheep that we've noticed in our flock is that they share. Ewes with triplets will make sure every lamb has a chance to drink milk and the lambs themselves will take turns at the udder. This behavior carries on into adulthood where no one specific sheep monopolizes the hay manger to the exclusion of others.

If you're looking for intelligent, healthy sheep that are beautiful and relatively easy to care for, American Blackbelly sheep could just be for you. I have a lot of respect for these sheep; they seem a lot like deer to me and are endlessly fascinating to watch and to work with.

*To find a breeder near you, check out the Breeder Directory on the Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International (BBSAI) website [www.blackbellysheep.org](http://www.blackbellysheep.org). We are very fortunate to have the BBSAI. Its directors are professional, helpful and efficient. They will help in any way they can. The association is growing with the breed and is an excellent source of information on history, breed standards, and everything else there is to know about American Blackbelly sheep.*





# Alpacas

## *A labor of love*

BY CINDY BERMAN MORROW

**A**nimals are a part of our everyday life. They clothe us, feed us, transport us, protect us and even fill the role of “best friend.” Unfortunately, those who are meant to look after their welfare do not always live up to the task.

Recently, a herd of 176 alpacas found themselves in dire need of rescue from an Oregon farm. The rescue was coordinated earlier this year by Cross Creek Alpaca Rescue. When members of the Columbia Alpaca Breeders Association (CABA), the Northwest regional affiliate of the Alpaca Owners Association, Inc., heard of the situation, they sprang into action. The commitment and appreciation these business owners have for alpacas goes beyond their own back yard. They were outraged by the condition of the animals and collectively, the group donated more than \$6,500 toward the care of the rescued alpacas, which were being housed at OSU - School of Veterinary Medicine, with more to come. They also reached out to alpaca owners throughout North America, and donations began to come in from as far away as Virginia, Georgia, Tennessee and Arizona.

While it is easy to point to the economic downturn as reason for the abuse these animals suffered, the explanation is likely not so clear-cut. The exact circumstances that led to such dire conditions are uncertain, but there are ways to prevent similar situations from happening with any livestock.

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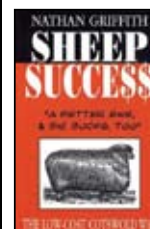
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## Deciding to own alpacas

The anger and hurt felt by those who assisted with this rescue was amplified because they understood how preventable the situation was. As with other livestock industries, rescue situations occur. Successful alpaca businesses exist, are attainable, and whether the focus is breeding stock or use of their fiber, alpaca business owners understand and embrace the work that goes into running their alpaca business. With the industry steadily growing in North America for more than 30 years, successful alpaca business owners did not go into this venture expecting to “get rich quick.” Many have, indeed, made a successful living in this industry but, as with any business, research and hard work are necessary.

Research is the most important step when considering starting any livestock business, and a prospective owner must understand the basic information necessary to care for these animals. Every livestock species has its special requirements and visiting alpaca farms is an excellent place to begin the investigative process. A listing of local farms can be found at [www.alpacainfo.com](http://www.alpacainfo.com), and a wonderful repository of information about alpacas can be found at [www.ariACADEMY.com](http://www.ariACADEMY.com).

Learn from someone with experience and integrity,” said Lona Nelsen Frank, owner of ALPACAS of Tualatin Valley, LLC in Beaverton, Oregon. “And when you decide to purchase your first alpacas, buy from someone who will mentor you 24/7; not just at the point of purchase, but in the future.”

Another great way to learn about the industry is to attend alpaca shows and events. These shows are national, regional and local. The alpaca industry features a world-class show system developed to promote positive public awareness of the unique qualities of alpacas. They provide owners the opportunity to learn how to improve the breed and enhance their marketability while promoting and protecting the health and well-



Some of the beautiful colors of alpaca yarn.

being of alpacas. Attending these shows can prove to be a highly educational, exciting and enjoyable experience. These shows also offer unmatched networking opportunities, where alpaca business owners and individuals interested in this livestock come together from across the country, and the globe, to discuss their alpaca business, experiences, successes and failures. A calendar of upcoming educational and show events can be found at [www.alpacainfo.com](http://www.alpacainfo.com).

## Adequate planning

No endeavor will succeed without a plan. Thomas and Connie Betts of Cascade Alpacas of Oregon in Hood River, Oregon, attest to the fact that creating a well thought out, detailed business plan has helped them to succeed in the industry.

“People who expect to succeed in this livestock industry must run it like the business that it is,” said Connie. “Keep focused on your goals and pay attention to cash flow and expenses. It is important to not go into debt in case things don’t turn out. From the beginning, we were prepared for ‘worst case scenarios.’”

The Betts have been running their alpaca business for almost 10 years. They earned their return on investment within two years, and now have increased their revenue every year except one during the recession when revenue was flat.

“From the beginning, we knew our focus would be on fiber and other revenue streams, such as boarding alpacas, and not as much on the selling of alpacas,” said Connie, “and we focused our business plan on that. Because of our focus and ability to stay on track with our mission, we are now known for the fineness of our fiber and we often run out of yarn before our season ends in October!”

The alpacas, including alpacas boarded at their ranch by other individuals, and their yarn shop are Thomas’s full-time job.

## Be prepared for change

Beth Osborne of The Alpaca Hacienda in Temecula, California, originally



entered the alpaca industry concentrating solely on the breeding of high-end breed stock. When compared to other livestock, the North American alpaca industry is still in its infancy and until recently, the focus of the industry was developing a national herd with high-quality fiber. Now, with more than 230,000 registered alpacas, alpaca business owners can shift their focus to other qualities of this livestock.

“The alpaca industry followed the natural progression of any livestock industry,” said Osborne. “But the change in the business doesn’t mean we throw the baby out with the bathwater!”

Osborne’s focus today is to be an asset to her community by providing jobs, hosting community events and tours and providing community service hours to high school students. Osborne also concentrates on her farm store where she sells handcrafted alpaca fiber products. She also cares for alpacas other owners board at her ranch, which provides additional income. “I have built a family of boarders and we gather at the farm for felting days, where

we create items to sell in the store,” said Osborne. “We’ve begun making nuno scarves, which shoppers have come to expect. Around the holidays, they sell like hotcakes!”

Dr. Jeri Booher, owner of Timberland Alpacas in Forest Grove, Oregon, and co-president of CABA, also knows that as with any business, change can happen at any time, and can directly affect your operation.

“When the economy took a hit, all businesses were affected,” said Dr. Booher, “Successful business owners adjusted accordingly.”

### Becoming part of an agricultural community

Joining organizations focused on the alpaca and livestock industry offers countless resources to help ensure a successful alpaca ownership. Alpaca Owners Association, Inc. regional affiliates, FFA, 4-H, State Farm Bureaus and County Agricultural Extension offices can provide access to local resources. Everything about the care of any livestock is easier when you have help and support to guide you in the proper direction instead of reinventing the wheel on your own.

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Alpaca Owners Association, Inc. (AOA), headquartered in Lincoln, Nebraska, serves as the national livestock association for alpacas in North America. As the largest alpaca association in the world, AOA facilitates the expansion of a strong and sustainable alpaca industry through the tracking of bloodlines, registration and transfer of alpacas, national educational outreach, the national show system, marketing, public relations and its highly respected judges training program.

The AOA affiliate organizations support ranches within geographical areas. For complete list of affiliates, and for more information on how to join AOA, visit [www.alpacainfo.com](http://www.alpacainfo.com).

"The owners of the rescued herd were not active members of any of the national, regional or local organizations that we are aware of," said Lona Nelsen Frank of ALPACAS of Tualatin Valley, LLC. "They did not participate in industry events or shows. They did not form mentoring partnerships with successful alpaca business owners. They were not part of the alpaca community. They do not represent our industry."

### A labor of love

While many alpaca business owners do, indeed, enjoy their morning cup of coffee while watching their herd in the field, this is just a small portion of their day. Just like any livestock owner, alpaca owners put a lot of labor into their business.

Stacie and Skip Chavez, owners



Alpacas can survive in bad weather, but shelter is required.

of Albuquerque Alpacas in the North Valley of Albuquerque, New Mexico, start each morning and end each day caring for their herd. They check on the well-being of each animal, feed and water them, and then go into the field and barn to clean manure.

Stacie arranged for Seed2Need, a local organization that grows food for people in need to pick up manure every other week. Alpaca manure is a rich soil conditioner that improves soil quality and its ability to retain water. Now, Seed2Need sells composted alpaca manure to help fund their efforts.

Ensuring proper shelter, solid fencing, general health checks and regular vetting and assisting in the birth of crias (baby alpacas) are just

some of the other day-to-day tasks a successful alpaca business owner faces.

The common element you will find with all successful alpaca business owners is that they enjoy what they do. And there are so many things about this livestock to enjoy. The alpaca industry is, in many cases, 100 percent American made from start to finish. Employees are being hired to work on farms, creating jobs for Americans. The alpaca industry receives no government subsidies or other similar support. Alpacas are environmentally friendly. When compared to other livestock, alpacas are a safe animal for children to work with, and the entire family can get involved.

"Alpacas are my 'glass of wine'," says Stacie. "I get out of my car after my marketing job and can sit in the middle of a field surrounded by these beautiful animals. It is the perfect end to a stressful day." ❁

For more information about the alpaca industry, to locate a farm near you, or to view a calendar of upcoming shows and events, visit [www.alpacainfo.com](http://www.alpacainfo.com).

To contact Cindy Berman Morrow, email: [cindy@alpacaassociation.com](mailto:cindy@alpacaassociation.com); phone: 216-952-7510.

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## Homestead business:



By HEATHER SMITH THOMAS

The goal of this small Idaho dairy is to sell good, clean milk directly to the public. “We farmed in southeastern Pennsylvania prior to moving to Idaho,” says Bill Stoltzfus. “We’d been farming there since 1973, but our rural area was becoming crowded.”

“There was a lot of development in that area. I had a good friend in northwest Washington and I came out west to visit him a few times. I really liked the idea of moving west and putting cows out on pasture, to get away from the farming end a little bit. We started looking for places in western Washington and Oregon, but ended up here in Idaho, near the little town of Buhl. It’s been an adventure—probably similar to what brought all the pioneers out here.”

In 1992, he and his wife Donna bought a 40-acre parcel with a house, and built the dairy barn and corrals. “That original farm is all pasture. I was buying my feed locally—corn silage and hay. Then one of the guys who raised a lot of hay for me was retiring and I had the opportunity to buy his farm. This gave us more room for our young stock.” The farm now consists of 200 acres. They are milking about 90 cows, raise their own

heifers and currently have about 90 head of young stock.

“We raise our own feed and forages. The cows have corn silage and pasture. When we moved here, buying our feed was a good way to do it, but now with the higher prices for feed I am really glad that we are growing our own,” he says.

“My son Eric is in charge of the processing plant, and son-in-law Eric Butterworth is helping with the farming end of it. We had a fellow named Eric working here for awhile, so it was a bit confusing with three people named Eric!”

His wife Donna works at the processing plant. “Before we had the creamery, she was very involved in the dairy. She has enjoyed getting out of the barn and into the processing plant. She’s also in charge of all



the girls who run our store,” says Stoltzfus.

The heifers, dry cows, and the entire milking herd are on a rotational grazing program. They are supplemented with a little hay and some corn silage through the summer, but pasture is their main feed.

“The rotations are not as intensive as some pasture dairies, but the milking herd gets a fresh lot every day. I really like having them on pasture; I think the cows are healthier, and they help the pasture by spreading the manure themselves. They are harvesting a good portion of their feed,” he says.

The cows are all registered Holsteins. “I’ve been into the breeding end of this, improving the herd, my whole life.”

For about 10 years the dairy supplied milk to a small processing plant in town. “We had the opportunity to buy that plant in 2003 but it didn’t seem to fit our program at that time. I was really interested in direct marketing, however, so when a second opportunity came, we purchased that plant in 2007. Milk was at an all-time high at that time, hitting \$20 per hundredweight,” says Stoltzfus.

“Buying that plant has proven to be one of the best things we’ve ever done. We process about 95% of



CloverLeaf cows enjoy the fresh air and sunshine on pasture.

our milk. We sell a little skim milk and occasionally some whole milk if we have extra, but most of it goes through our plant. We do a full line of cream top whole milk, skim, 2%, half-and-half, cream, butter and ice cream."

The plant is in town, on the main highway, with a store front. "This location has been fantastic because we get a lot of tourists as they go through town, along with regular customers. We have a truck on our milk route five days a week, delivering milk to stores and restaurants within a 120-mile radius—as far east as Pocatello. We go to Boise and Sun Valley. We have big customers and little customers," he says.

"We sell our milk as local, fresh and natural. We are not certified organic but we do things as naturally as we can. We process all our milk in returnable glass bottles. It's a niche market, but a good one—a lot of hard work but also a lot of fun," Stoltzfuz says.

"One of the things printed on our

milk bottles is an invitation to our customers to see where their milk comes from. We've given hundreds of people tours through the creamery and the farm to see the cows and feed the calves," he says.

"We are very much a niche market and don't do much advertising except in some of the local travel magazines. The tours have been good; many of the people who come are our customers. I could advertise on TV or radio and tell people to try our milk because it's the best, but then people would just think I'm trying to sell them something. I don't need to do that. When our customers come and take the tour and see our operation and what we do—the whole deal—they go and tell their friends and family. When a friend tells you that you need to try a product, it's more convincing than any advertisement. The word of mouth has been far and away our best advertising."

"Our goal is to put out the best possible product that we can. It sells

itself. Some customers have questions about GMO feeds, etc. Right, wrong or otherwise, just the fact that we grow all our own forages, and people can see the whole thing and what we feed the cows, makes a difference to them. They can ask questions and we are very open with what we do and how we do things." Customers can be assured that this is a wholesome, healthy product.

More and more people are becoming interested in where their food comes from. "We have a program called Idaho Preferred, through the Idaho Department of Agriculture. They promote all Idaho Ag products. There is an Idaho Preferred label on much of our packaging, and this tells people at a glance that it is locally grown. We've been with this program from the beginning and it's nice to see the growth it's had, with more and more people interested in supporting the local economy—knowing what they are getting and where it's from," says Stoltzfuz. ❁

## Crops & soils:

# The way to

# healthy hay



By JERRI COOK  
COUNTRYSIDE STAFF

It's fall, and whatever hay you've grown is off the fields and baled. But the work isn't finished. Now is the time to think ahead to the next growing season in order to improve your hay fields. Using proper soil amendments, sensible crop rotations, and direct seeding in the fall or spring, any hay field, no matter how neglected, can produce healthy grass. And even if you're relatively certain that your field is producing at the highest capacity it can, a little attention to detail ahead of winter can forestall any issues next spring. Forewarned is forearmed.

After the last cutting in the fall, invite your favorite shovel and pail along and head out for a walk in your hay field. Fall is the perfect time for taking a soil sample. The crop is off. You've used the nutrients you're going to use. Taking the soil sample now will yield an accurate analysis of what your soil needs to continue supporting your hay crop.

You'll need to bring several laboratory bags along with you. Get these from your local University Extension Service or Master Gardeners Club. In a five-acre field, you'll want to take three to five samples to get a good overview of your soil's health. However, instead of just randomly walking and digging, take a moment

to think back to last spring. Did you notice any areas that seemed to underperform? Did you notice anything yellow in your field that shouldn't have been there? If so, make sure to target these spots for testing, as it's more than likely you're going to be doing some amending to the soil in that area before next season.

To take your soil sample, dig a hole somewhere between four and six-inches deep. It's better to do this when the soil is damp or moist. Place the sample in your pail and move to the next sampling zone and repeat. Mix the samples well and fill one of the testing bags as instructed. By mixing the samples from several different spots, you'll get a good overall picture of your soil's health.

It takes a few weeks to get the results back from the lab. So, while you're out in your field taking the samples, keep digging. After you've gone six inches and take the sample, widen the hole to one-foot wide by one-foot deep. Sift through the soil you've removed and count earthworms. In healthy moist soil, you find 10 earthworms. If you're not finding that amount in each place sampled, your soil could use some attention. You may have a nutrient deficiency issue, or your soil may be compacted. When was the last time you turned the soil?

Even the highest producing hay field has to be rotated every five years. Not only is the soil tired, but it

needs a breather—literally. The conventional wisdom is that you spread manure, tip the soil, and plant corn. But what if you need that hay field? Suppose grass is your only option. Relax. All is not lost.

A poor producing hay field in early fall can be turned into a better producing hay field come spring. To restart your hay field, spread manure and turn and disk the soil. Replant with grasses that establish quickly in your area. Generally, a mixture of perennial rye grass, orchard grass, and clover with a cover crop of oats or barley in front to help keep the weeds down will a good base for a newly reinvigorated hay field.

Even if turning the soil isn't possible, you're still not out of options. You can use a no-till drill to plant your grasses in August and September. Don't worry if you don't have one of your own. Many county agencies have one that farmers can use for a fee. If not, you should be able to find someone in your area to do it for a reasonable price. The no-till drill will place the seed at the right depth in the soil without turning it over.

You can also frost seed in the spring. Rough disk the field in the fall. Then in spring, after the snow comes off, broadcast the new seed over the area. As the frost comes out and the ground heaves, the seed is pulled down into the soil. Clover is an excellent choice for frost seeding.

Of course, there's no reason to go tipping your hay field if you've only got small concerns. The problem is, small concerns grow into big concerns if not dealt with efficiently. If your hay looked pretty good but you had weed issues, you may only need a little touch-up to revive your field. For most hay fields, the weeds that stand out most are the yellow ones, and it doesn't take long to go from a few dots to a sea of yellow.

If you saw **dandelions** in your hay last spring, it's likely that your field has a calcium deficiency, and if you sent in a soil test it will confirm as much. The good news is that there is an easy fix—gypsum. Gypsum is a calcium-rich, water-soluble mineral that can be broadcast over the entire hay field. While gypsum is not a liming agent

and shouldn't be used to raise pH in fields, it does release aluminum toxicities and supply calcium and sulfur to plants. Gypsum will also support a healthy earthworm population, needed for proper soil tilth. This is of particular importance to those with clay soil. Gypsum not only helps clay soil hold water, it actually draws water deeper into the soil. Generally, gypsum is applied at a rate of one to two tons per acre every few years, with the cost running about \$45 a ton.

If your hayfield is in a low-lying area and tends to remain wet for long periods of time, you may have seen **buttercups** popping up last spring. If you don't do something about them now, you'll see even more the next time around. If you've got buttercups, you'll need to add lime. In order to know how much, wait until you get the results of your soil test back. It's worth noting that buttercups are generally the result of over grazing or over foraging or poor-quality stands. If you've let your livestock graze part-time in your field, you might



**A sea of yellow (anything) is *not* what you want to see in your hay field. (These are buttercups.)**

want to consider giving it a rest, or at least leaving part of it ungrazed for a rotation.

When you see **mustard** in your hay field, you know you're in for a battle. Mustard seed can lay dormant for ten years before it germinates. You have no mustard one year, and a whole field of the stuff the next. Mustard

generally arrives three to four years into your hay rotation. Other than applying chemical herbicides, you only have two choices – cut or burn it off before it goes to seed, or use a weed exhausting method of rotation. Anne and Eric Nordell's method of ridding the topsoil of weed seed before a crop is ever planted is a proven method of eradicating irksome weeds like wild mustard. To learn more about this method, go to [www.mofga.org](http://www.mofga.org) and search for "Nordell."

If you had any notion that growing hay was a passive activity, you might want to think again. Every crop needs to be managed in order to produce to its fullest. If you're a hay grower, there is no better way to be outstanding in your field than to be out, standing in your field. If you're not engaged, your hay field will show it.

One last thing. While you're out there with your shovel and pail, don't forget to fill in the hole. You don't want to find it again by accident next spring when you're out wandering the field. 🌱

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# The weasel

## *Friend or foe?*

BY CHERYL K. SMITH  
OREGON

Shortly after I moved to my property 15 years ago, I found a dessicated weasel in the barn. It was a longtail weasel (*Mustela frenata*), about 10 inches long from nose to tail tip, and brown in color — which indicated that it had died between spring and fall (they turn white in the winter). New to the country, I thought it looked cute and was sorry I didn't see a live one.

My next encounter with a weasel occurred 10 years later and didn't involve actually seeing one — dead or alive, but waking up to find half my chickens dead. They had been dragged to all corners of the chicken coop—not eaten, but nearly decapitated. (Naturally, hens and not roosters.) Unable to determine where a critter could have gotten in and repair or block it, I experienced the same horror the next morning.

I had designed the coop myself, believing that it was invulnerable to raccoons, opossums and the more obvious predators. (That cute little dried-up weasel was but a distant memory.) I noticed only in hindsight that the multitude of rats that were digging under the chicken house had gradually disappeared.

The word “weasel” conjures up visions of a sneaky, devious person, or a vicious little mammal that attacks poultry just for the thrill of the kill. Think of the thieving gang of weasels portrayed in the children's book *Wind in the Willows*.

*Weasel words* are those that are twisted or misleading, used to benefit the individual uttering them. This is believed to have come from the idea that weasels suck eggs; so weasel words are those in which the meaning is sucked out. But in fact, weasels do not have the necessary jaw muscles to suck eggs (or blood from a chicken's neck).

When I started researching these animals, my frame of reference grew out of all of these misconceptions. I believed that my chickens had their necks chewed through because the weasel was just interested in sucking blood. My explanation for the multiple dead bodies in the corners of the chicken coop was that the weasel was on a killing spree.

These ideas are all wrong, though. As it turns out, weasels are usually more beneficial than harmful. In fact, I probably have weasels on the property right now and am not even aware of them.

### Weasels in North America

The *Mustelidae* (weasel family) is quite large, consisting of not only weasels but minks, ferrets, martens, badgers and otters. The subgroup *Mustela* (true weasels) consists of up to 16 species. The long-tailed weasel (*Mustela frenata*) is the most widely distributed weasel, and is found in most of the United States. Other common weasels in this area are the least weasel and the short-tailed weasel or ermine.

Long-tailed weasels range from 11 to 16 inches in size, including the tail, with the males larger than the females. They are normally light brown, with a white belly and black-tipped tail. Some varieties molt their brown coat and become white in the winter. They are long-necked and short-legged creatures, a helpful adaptation for getting into small places. Their voice is said to be a high-pitched shriek.

### Reproduction and lifestyle

Long-tailed weasels have only one litter each spring, regardless of food supply — unlike least and short-tailed weasels, which can have a second litter in late summer. The actual gestation period is from 205 to 337 days; however, the mating occurs in the spring and then the ball of cells called a *blastocyst* floats feely in the uterus for nine to 10 months before implanting and developing into a kit.

Three to 10 babies are in each litter; the babies are called *kits*. Once

kits are born and the mother starts lactating, she does not go into heat for another 65 to 104 days. She can also protect herself and her kits from interested males by choosing or making a den with entrances too small for them to enter.

Kits are born with fine white hair covering their bodies. They get their razor-sharp milk teeth in three or four weeks, but do not open their eyes for another week or so. They can start eating meat after about a month—in their blind condition—but may not be weaned until they are up to three months old. They finally reach full size at six months of age, but are sexually mature several months before then.

Weasels are mostly nocturnal and solitary, living in dens that are constructed under rocks or logs in a hole, usually near a water source. The den is dry and padded with leaves and even fur from some of their prey. Weasels are also known to move in to the previously used den of another ground dweller such as a prairie dog, rabbit or gopher.

Their range is normally 30–40 acres. They spend most of their time on the ground, but also sometimes climb trees.

Males live separate from the females and kits. This leaves the burden of feeding the kits entirely to the female. According to biologists, males will occasionally bring a dead mammal to the female's den, but such generosity is linked to their desire for sexual activity rather than feeding the young.

### Weasels on the farm

Weasels are actually more beneficial than detrimental on the farm—most of the time. They eat rodents, fish, birds and frogs, as well as eggs. They are excellent helpers around the chicken house, as long as the rodent population is thriving, because they normally prey on a species that is regularly available. Only when they are running out of food—especially when they have young to feed—do they turn to chickens as a food source.

Because weasels eat other small

## Names for a group of weasels: Boogle, Gang, Pack, Confusion

animals such as mice, shrews, voles and rabbits, they can also help protect the vegetable garden. The lanky-bodied weasel even has the ability to pursue these critters down into their burrows.

Weasels also provide food for foxes, coyotes, hawks and owls. So their presence may help the chickens in another way—redirecting the predators to another food source.

### Understanding why weasels seem to kill in sprints

When prey is in short supply, weasels will often kill more than they and their kits can immediately eat. The females with kits need to ensure that they will survive, so they take what they can get. This is how the idea that they are thrill-killers arose.

Their killing instinct is also triggered by movement—which is why “freezing” by small rodents may protect them. In a chicken coop, the weasel is unable to stop itself from killing.

First, the wild, squawking and flapping movement of the chickens triggers the instinct, causing the weasel to kill until it perceives there is nothing left to kill. Second, it will want to kill as many prey as possible, with plans to save the extras for future meals. This is why my chickens were dragged down behind the feed cans into corners. The weasel was trying to hide them, most likely with plans to return later.

The method that weasels use to kill their prey is to bite the back of the neck of the animal. The long teeth penetrate the neck with only two bites. This signature method of killing led to the myth of blood-sucking.

### Preventing weasels in the chicken coop

Despite their helpful attributes, it is wise to try to prevent weasels from ever getting inside a chicken coop. The best time to do this is when you

are constructing it. Do not build the coop directly on the ground; put a floor in it or make sure it is raised up in some way. This was my mistake. I paid attention to trying to prevent holes in the top and sides, while the rats were digging holes underneath. When that food ran out, a weasel used those very holes as a way to get in and get chickens.

Another essential to keeping weasels out of the chicken coop and other buildings is to make sure that there are no openings larger than one inch—or even less, if you want to be extra sure. (The common saying is that weasels can get in through a hole the size of a quarter, which is 7/8-inch across.) The best method is to use 1/2-inch hardware cloth or a similar material in areas where you want ventilation. Make sure the coop is completely enclosed.

As time goes by, rodents will start to gnaw holes in the wood. Be aware of these and repair them quickly. Pieces of metal, even flattened tin cans work well to cover such hole.

If a weasel has already caused chicken losses, consider a live trap. Havahart has an extra small live trap that will work for weasels, for only about \$24. Make sure it is set so as not to harm other animals. Although damage is done by the time you determine a weasel is killing chickens, you can still try to trap it to prevent future losses. You will need to live somewhere that you can release it far from its range so as not to create a nuisance for others.

Because weasels are fur-bearing animals, check with your state Fish and Wildlife Department regulations before trapping with a trap that kills weasels.

Like in most affairs, the best advice is to be proactive. Make sure your coop is secure and be aware of the rise and fall of various wildlife populations, such as rabbits and rats. ❁

*Cheryl K. Smith raises chickens and Oberian dairy goats in the coast range of Oregon. She is a freelance writer and the author of Goat Health Care and Raising Goats for Dummies.*

## The garden:

Let the  
sun shine  
Let the  
sun shine

By ANITA B. STONE  
NORTH CAROLINA

One of the best non-chemical ways to get rid of weeds, pathogens and other pests is to solarize your soil.

As an alternative to soil fumigants, solarization, is a process that occurs in moist soil when covered with plastic film which heats the soil anywhere from 99°F to 150°F, especially during warm months. By doing this, the soil is changed physically, chemically and biologically, improving its health in two to four weeks. The biological changes lead to controlling soil-borne pathogens, such as, wilt, root rot fungi, bacteria, root rot nematodes, noxious weed seeds and other pests. The process may also reduce other populations of beneficial microorganisms, but those quickly recolonize within the heated soils.

Gardeners may see a major change in a serious challenge of controlling pests without the cost of chemicals and provide the demand for organic agriculture.

In 1939 attempts were reportedly made to use solar energy for controlling soil diseases and plant material in India. Known as “sand disinfection,” the practice was to heat the sand by exposure to direct sunlight. Solarization became a main topic in place of soil steaming and soil fumigation. In 1973 more studies revealed that when the soil is heated by the sun, the energy created may control pathogens and weeds once the soil is mulched and then covered with polyethylene sheeting during

the hot season. In 1977 scientists from the University of California at Davis issued a positive report regarding the control of *Verticillium* in a cotton field using solarization. And in 1979, orchard farmers began to use solarization rather than the standard pre-planting method and realized the impact of solar implementation. When used in orchards or vineyards, clear plastic is laid by hand around the bases of each tree or vine and connected to strips laid between the rows or laid in anchored strips and glued along the tree rows. It is best to begin solarization as soon as trees are planted. Partial shading by small trees does not prevent solar heating and solarization doesn't

seem to bother most young trees. But certain species such as herbaceous perennials and young *Prunus* trees may be damaged using clear plastic. Another plus in using solarization in orchards and vineyards is the reduction of the amount of water required for irrigation. By the 1980s solarization was used in 24 countries and is currently being used in more than 50 hot regions around the globe. Most of the studies have shown that this type of heat source works with vegetables, field crops, ornamentals and fruit trees. Pathogens and weeds not controlled by solarization can be recognized immediately. As with recent technology, researchers and growers are using computerized simulation models to decide whether their particular locality is suitable for solarization.

Interestingly, the soil was mulched during the hottest months rather than the coldest, as in usual pest management methods. But in this instance it was proven that more pathogens were obliterated with increasing temperatures. The longer the soil was heated, the deeper the control of soil pests and weeds occurred. The process always depends on location. For instance, in Colorado, a four-to-six week period was used, but during cooler seasons at a six-inch soil depth, eight weeks worked better. Some homesteaders hike up the tempera-



*While black plastic is great for weed reduction, it won't heat the soil as much as clear plastic will (which is good, or those tomatoes would be toast).*

ture control by using chicken manure or other animal manures. This often provides a better option for organic production.

When properly done, the top six inches of soil will heat up as high as 125° F with maximum solar exposure. The high temperatures trapped below the plastic become toxic to organisms weak from the heat. This can be effective against fungal pathogens, including wilt, root rot, potato scab, crown gall and tomato canker.

### **So how do you solarize soil?**

First, the area to be solarized requires level land where the soil is loose. Large dirt clods only prohibit the process. Using a rototiller or rotary spade also eliminates debris so there are no open soil pockets blocking the heating of the area. Also, a clean flat surface will prevent any plastic mulch punctures. The soil must be smooth to allow the sun's heat to penetrate deep into the soil. Next, the soil should be watered sufficiently, not saturated, but damp. Soil moisture is critical for solarization to work correctly because it makes organisms more sensitive to heat and transfers heat to weed seeds in the soil (much like "cooking" them). Third, place clear plastic over the soil and make sure the edges are buried five to six inches deep in the soil to prevent wind from blowing or

tearing the tarp material. It is preferable to use a clear UV plastic polyethylene or polyvinyl chloride tarp or sheeting. Thickness of the clear plastic can vary from .03 to 6 mils. Black plastic does not heat the soil as well as clear plastic. Other colors of plastic, including brown or green, do allow heating of the soil, but not to the degree of clear plastic. The colored plastics are useful as mulch. Some gardeners use a weed mulcher to lay plastic mulch across the area. Naturally the thinner plastic will permit faster soil heating since it will reflect less solar energy.

Sometimes it is necessary to place a drip irrigation line under the tarp or plastic mulch to keep moisture levels regulated. Make sure to leave the plastic in place for up to six weeks. This will enable solarization to occur, moving deeper into the soil and allow the moisture to cause a change in the salt while reducing soil salinity. If you provide irrigation before solarization and allow the weeds to grow, then incorporate them into the soil prior to the solarization treatment you will notice elimination. So, heat transfer is a major force in solarization.

For use on homesteads, plastic that is 1.5 to 4 mils thick can usually be found in nursery, hardware, or lumber stores. These are often called "drop cloths" and are used to catch paint drippings. For agricultural plantings, plastic can normally be

purchased in rolls from six to 12 feet wide and 4,000 feet long.

The use of a double layer of plastic with air space between the layers resembles a greenhouse effect and may raise soil temperatures almost 10 degrees higher than that obtained with a single layer. If you live in a cool climate, it is preferable to use a double layer for more effective solarization.

A cautionary note—do not mix soils from non-solarized areas into solarized because of cross-contamination of the solarized soil with pathogens and weed seeds. Solarization is extremely effective when done during the months of June and July, but this depends on your location. Some areas may be fully solarized during May, August and September. During the colder months you may have to leave the plastic on longer, but it will kill weeds eventually.

Solarization may be modified for cooler weather, where it will also minimize weed growth and stimulate the release of nutrients from organic matter in the soil. The excessive heat also increases major components of soil, including nitrogen, calcium and magnesium. The impact of the sun's heat will most certainly impact and improve crop production and protect the environment from toxic herbicides or pesticides. Using solar power is not only free, but also provides a better option for organic production. 🌱

*The garden:*

# Asparagus

## The garden wonder

BY RHONDA CRANK

**A**sparagus is the most worry free perennial plant there is for the home gardener. If you have bought some lately, then you know how expensive it is. We will be talking about bed preparation/selection, transplanting, harvesting, mulching, and propagating of the asparagus. After the initial investment, you can propagate your own seed and increase your crop very easily. Be sure you order your plants from a gardening supplier you trust. You can order seeds ([www.rareseeds.com/precoce-dargenteuil-asparagus](http://www.rareseeds.com/precoce-dargenteuil-asparagus)) or crowns (plant roots ready to go in the ground), it just depends on how you want to get your bed started. Be sure to plant them in the place you want them to be because once planted, they will produce for 20-30 years and repeat transplanting is not good for any plant.



**Asparagus spears ready for cutting.**

### About asparagus

Asparagus is a perennial vegetable grown for its delicious young shoots.

It is rich in B vitamins, vitamin C, calcium, and iron. Asparagus is one of the first crops ready for spring harvest. We started cutting ours in early March. It had produced quite a few spears before I realized it was even up. I actually found it by accident when I was checking the mulch level of the garden in preparation for spring planting. It was a welcome, delicious surprise!

Asparagus plants are monoecious (I had to look it up) meaning each individual plant is either male or female. Some varieties of asparagus, such as “Jersey Knight” and “Jersey Giant” produce all male or primarily male plants, so they’re more productive. Male plants yield more harvestable shoots because they don’t have to invest energy in producing seeds. If a higher yield is your goal, then you should choose an all-male variety, but even then you may get a female or two. We planted Jersey Knight and of the 15 I planted, three were female. This is fine with me since I have learned to propagate the seeds to increase my plot. We still have a high enough yield for us. If you prefer an heirloom or purple-stalked variety, you may like “Purple Passion.” With an all-male variety, 25 plants are usually adequate for a household of four; double the amount of plants for standard varieties and if you are an asparagus lover, you may want to triple that. We started out with fifteen for the two of us about four years ago and this year I am transplanting about 30 more that I started from seed. Since I started them from seed, it will be two to three years before I can harvest from them.

You will find that fresh-picked



**Our mulched asparagus bed.**

spears are far more tender and tasty than store-bought ones. The flavor doesn’t even compare. Asparagus thrives in just about any area where you have freezing in the winter and a dry season in the summer. The mild, wet regions of Florida and the Gulf Coast are about the only places where it’s difficult to grow and even there it is doable with a little work and ingenuity.

### Bedding

Asparagus needs loose, compost-rich soil. It does best in lighter soils that warm up quickly in spring and drain well; standing water will quickly rot the roots. It can withstand some shade, but it really prefers full sun. You want to be sure your site is in an area where it will not be endangered when you cultivate your garden. We planted ours directly in our garden at the far end, so as not to interfere with other gardening tasks. It is al-



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ways in the direct sun and produces abundantly from March until around the end of September. It slows down around that time and I usually let it rest a while without harvesting it; then I cut it off at the ground in late October or early November, depending on temperature and its health. In hindsight, I wish I had put them in a raised bed. When I next increase our plantings (by propagating my own seeds), I will put the new ones in a raised bed next to the garden. Some people do soil tests and amendments based on the recommendations of university and government studies. I do not do that and in all my years of gardening, I have never had an issue. We mulch and add compost and organic fertilizer from our farm.

You want your planting bed about four feet wide and to remove all weeds and roots. You will plant your crowns in the middle of your bed. You want to add plenty of aged manure or compost as well. Pretty much like you would any bed preparation. Asparagus has a strong root system that spreads as much as six feet horizontally and can go six to eight feet down.

### Transplanting

I am sure you have noticed I don't say "planting" asparagus, I say

"transplanting." Asparagus seeds have to be planted so deep that it impedes their development, so seeds are started (just like any other seed) in cups and then transplanted to the garden. Remember, while you can order seeds or crowns, the bed preparation is the same.

For crowns, dig a trench 12" deep down the middle of your four-foot row. Plant crowns 1' - 2' apart in it. Cover the crown with about two inches of soil. As shoots emerge, cover them with another two inches of soil, continuing this pattern as the plants grow, until the soil level reaches the top of the trench. In very sandy soils, you will probably be okay filling in the trench when you plant the crowns, but you must be sure your soil is "very sandy." Trenches should be four feet apart. Plant in spring or, in milder climates, late fall/early winter.

Starting asparagus from one-year-old crowns gives you a year's head start over seed-grown plants. Two-year-old crowns may seem enticing, but they tend to suffer more from transplant shock and by the time they recover, they won't have produced any faster than one-year-old crowns.

I have been asked about transplanting or moving mature crowns



A female setting ferns.

to a different location. While technically this is possible, my advice on that idea is forget it! Crowns more than two years old are generally huge and it is very difficult to get them out of the ground in one piece. The transplant shock is very great for these more mature crowns and the end result is that the moved crowns usually die. Even if they don't die immediately, you are probably moving, along with the crown, the root rot organisms that almost always infect them. In their weakened condition, the crowns will fall victim to the disease more quickly.

### General care

Asparagus is a heavy feeder so, while you will harvest some without it, your yield will be greater if you spend a little time and effort fertilizing your bed. In Carla Emery's Encyclopedia of Country Living (my go-to for all homestead questions) you will find detailed information. She says manure is best and compost second best. I have my bed mulched four to six inches so I really don't spread either in there. I add water to wood ashes and pour that over it. It produces well for us.

### Harvesting

Do not harvest your asparagus the year you plant it and, preferably, the year following planting. The asparagus plant needs to grow and establish a healthy crown and it will need all of its energy to do that. You can harvest lightly the second year, but it is best to allow most spears to set ferns (the spears will become ferns as they develop) so that energy is put into developing stronger plants. They need to put all their energy into



Female flowering to make seed.



Recent transplant lightly mulched.

establishing deep roots. During the third season, harvest lightly leaving some to set ferns. By the fourth year, you can extend your harvest to the full season. "Lightly harvest" means you take only the shoots that are 1/2" or greater in diameter.

Harvest spears when they are four to six inches high and just before the scaly section at the tip begins to open (see the first picture above). As the weather warms, you might have to pick twice a day to keep up with production. Cut asparagus spears with a sharp knife or snap off the spears at, or right below ground level with your fingers. They will snap off at the woody portion. I prefer to cut mine at ground level.

It is best to harvest in the early morning since hot sun makes them tough. You should check your bed at least every two days. I go to mine every day and almost always get some. You must harvest every spear of appropriate size or your plants will produce flowers and this will stop further shoot production from that crown (root). An established bed can be harvested until late fall (like mine), but the first few years of harvesting, say years four to six, you should let the spears set ferns after about 12 weeks of harvest. I know this sounds like you will be missing out on some good eating, and like most gardeners, I hate to let fruit sit in the garden unharvested, but it will benefit you in the years to come. Remember, you will be harvesting from your bed for

at least 20 years!

Whips are the tall slender spears and are generally higher in fiber and so tougher to eat than thicker spears because most of the fiber in asparagus is in the skin. You can harvest these also. The larger spears are more tender than the slender whips. If you notice the number of spears in a harvest drops off dramatically, or if the spear diameter drops, you may want to consider ending harvest early. These are good indications that the crown is experiencing some stress.

Remember, the fern is the "factory" that supplies energy to the crown and storage roots for the next year's crop and it takes a great deal of energy to perform this task. Throughout the post-harvest growing season, keep your ferns healthy by never pruning or cutting them back. You don't want a lot of new fern growth towards the end of the season so you need to stop any fertilizing and watering early to late fall, depending on your area. Later in the south (as I am). I usually let them rest after September.

Just a side note: I used to think white asparagus was a variety, but it is really just the very young spears before they green up in the sun. Some people like them because the flavor is milder. We really don't care for it since we prefer the flavor of the mature spears.

Weed control is very important in successfully growing asparagus. This is especially so in the first couple of years after transplanting, when the young crowns are at their most vulnerable. It should be four to six inches deep. Don't mulch your very young plants. They may have trouble growing through it. I spread just enough leaves around my young ones to keep them from over exposure to heat and keep some moisture in.

#### Starting asparagus from seed

Starting or increasing your asparagus patch from seed takes a little patience, but there are advantages. Seed-grown plants don't suffer from transplant shock like the roots (crowns) grown at the nursery. Seeds are considerably more cost efficient.

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You can buy a whole pack of seeds for the cost of one crown and if you save your seed from your existing bed, they are free. As I have already said, I am experimenting this year with this process. So far it has been easy and productive. We will see what happens next year when/if they produce shoots. I will update you on that event! Also, most seed-grown asparagus plants will out-produce root grown ones in the long run.

I am told you can discard the females and keep the males when growing from seed, however, I am still learning and not sure how to tell them apart when they are seedlings. I am studying it on the internet, so for now, I am planting whatever sprouts and hoping for the best. I can always remove them from the bed, if I get too many females. This is the best information I have found on telling them apart, but mine haven't "flowered": "When tiny flowers appear, observe them with a magnifying glass. Female flowers have well-developed,



Starting asparagus from seed

three-lobed pistils; male blossoms are larger and longer than female flowers." Still looking for a better way to tell.

I followed Carla Emery's advice to save my own seeds and it worked

well. In the late summer or early fall, when the female berries have turned red, cut the fern, leaving the berries intact on the stem, and hang it upside down in a cool, dry place. I hung mine in a room in our house where I store "things" like jars, preserved foods, and such; you know you have a place like that too. In late February, I soaked them in room temperature water for a couple of days then planted them in seed starter cups of organic soil.

Once they had a strong root system, I planted them in the asparagus bed in the garden. I have read that you should put them in a seedbed and transplant the following spring, but I wanted to avoid any root shock. Carla says that you can plant them directly to your permanent site from a seed flat when the plants are well rooted so I tried it. We will see how it turns out.

#### Preserving/preparing:

Once you cut the spears, wash them and pat them dry. Place them in an air-tight container (I use a baggie or veggie bag) in the refrigerator. They will keep fresh for about a week, so you can add to it after each cutting until you get enough to cook. Of course, this depends on the size of your family and number of plants you are harvesting from.

We like to eat it raw on our salads, or just as a veggie with our meal. We like to steam it, this takes 15-20 minutes depending on how tender you want it. Our favorite way is to put some butter in our cast iron griddle, put the asparagus in, sprinkle a little sea salt and garlic powder and sauté them until they are lightly grilled. Yumm....

As I always tell you, don't take my word as the end authority on anything. Always study it out for yourself. Experience is the best teacher. Just because it is in print and sounds good, doesn't make it right or true. Study and see what makes sense to you and try it. There are as many ways to accomplish a farm chore as there are farmers, so just dive in and enjoy the journey! 🌱

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# Put the garden to bed

TIPS FROM THE LEHIGH GROUP

Even though it's time to trade the hand trowel for a snow shovel, fall is still a busy time for gardeners as they reap their harvest and get ready for winter.

**Prep the soil:** Put the garden to bed for the winter by cleaning up and covering up. First, remove all garden debris, including leaves, weeds and plants, and compost only the healthy plant material. Then, to maintain a sustainable soil, add the compost and cover the soil with mulch to eliminate moisture loss and soil erosion during the cold months. This process helps control pests and plant disease, and reduces the amount of garden work come next spring.

**Cleaning:** Hard-working tools deserve a good cleaning so they'll last longer and work better. Simply clean tools with soap and water. For easy cutting and digging, sharpen blades with a handheld whet stone, filing at a 20-degree angle. Wipe down all wooden and metal tools with an oiled rag to prevent cracking and rusting. To ensure planter pots are mold-free, scrub the pots with a 10% bleach solution and let them air dry. Follow manufacturer's instructions when winterizing power tools, and service all mowers and blowers.

**Storing:** To prevent corrosion, store garden tools in a warm, dry place. For the ultimate in flexible storage for all gardening essentials, the Crawford Safe-Mount Mobile Caddy features a plastic bin and mesh pockets to store everything from spray bottles and weed picks to gloves and cutters.

**Store large equipment:** Store heavier lawn and gardening equipment to prevent tripping hazards and dangerous accidents. The Lehigh Group offers specially designed Crawford wall hooks that will secure equipment like wheelbarrows, rakes and shovels. Always follow manufacturer instructions regarding weight limits when using wall hooks, rails or shelving. 🌱



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# The gringo gets it

## Community gardens are vital for survival

BY JOHN HIBMA

A number of years ago I began to volunteer my time at an orphanage in Honduras. Initially I went there with church friends for the “feel good” factor and because it provided me with an excuse to get away from the frigid New England winter for a week in January. My heart was touched in ways that I’d never expected and I’ve been back to the orphanage five times, now. This past

winter I decided I wanted to take some extra time and see more of Honduras. I contacted some missionary friends who live in the capital city of Tegucigalpa and, because I make my living in agriculture, expressed an interest in visiting farmers in the country. I had no idea what I was in for.

About a week before my visit, unusually cold weather had moved through all of Central America and frost has killed many of the gardens that these people depend upon for their food. I’m told that no one could recall the last time there had been a killing frost in the country. It appears that even in the sub-tropical latitudes, the effects of unusual climate variations are being felt.

High in the mountains of central Honduras I arrive with my chaprones, Eduardo and Ceasar, in the village of Las Avispas. Families here are living in houses made of adobe with small gardens next to the house or on a nearby hillside. Most have been heavily damaged by the frost. For these families, the loss of a garden full of vegetables impacts how much they have to eat as well as a certain amount of their livelihood.

Outside the front door of an adobe home, a lady is raking and drying coffee beans on a sheet of plastic. She giggles when I ask, in my broken Spanish, if I may take her photograph. Then we are escorted to the bottom of a steep arroyo where a man is tending to a beautiful acre of cabbage that has not been damaged by the frost. And I wonder. Does an acre of cabbage and a sack of coffee beans represent the sole source of

income for these two people?

This produces a reality check for me. For many of us, gardening is merely a hobby. We dig in the earth and plant our favorite veggies when the weather is warm and we gain a closer affinity to nature when we get dirt under our fingernails. We derive a certain satisfaction in knowing that, for a few weeks, we have veggies that are fresher than we can purchase in a grocery store. But if the bugs or the weather or disease reduce our efforts to a pile useless stems—well, I’m certainly glad we have a grocery store. We Norte Americanos quickly forget how well off we are when it comes to food.

One of the things that my missionary friends, Caspar and Leanne, do in Honduras is to assist locals in securing small loans through a Honduran agency, Diaconia Nacional, to help finance improvements. After the unexpected frost the residents of Las Avispas have set about developing a community-wide financial plan to fund, with the help of Diaconia Nacional, the construction of a greenhouse that would both prevent this sort of loss from happening again and allowing them to grow even more produce that can be marketed for reliable income.

In the nearby dusty village of Los Charcos, I meet Lazaro and his wife, Amanda. Living with them are their daughter and grandson and Amanda’s mother. I arrive at their beautiful hacienda with my friends around noon-time on a warm day and Amanda treats us to a sumptuous meal consisting of a meat ball and pa-



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taste stew along with the ubiquitous red beans and corn tortillas. Later we all relax in hammocks in the shade of a spacious veranda.

Lazaro spent some years working in the U.S. and brought the money he made back to Honduras to build a home for his family. He soon planted an orchard of plantains and avocado trees. As the trees grow and create shade, he's planting coffee bushes – the real money-maker in this area of the country. Lazaro understands the synergies that come from diversification in his orchard and with the help of Diaconia Nacional he was able to install a drip irrigation system in his orchard.

Honduras is one of the poorest countries in the western hemisphere with a population of around eight million and an annual per-capita GDP of less than US\$4,000. Many Hondurans – especially those isolated in the mountains – live a nearly subsistence existence. There's no such thing as food stamps or welfare subsidies for the impoverished. Even though I'm always greeted with a smile, in every face is the reflection of grinding poverty.

A couple of days later on a cool morning I'm bouncing along in an SUV with my friends, up a steep, narrow mountain road high above Tegucigalpa. It had rained the previous night and the clouds were still clinging to the mountain tops that surround the city. In the small village of Montañanita I meet a farmer named Don Miguel. Don and his family have generously provided about an acre of land to be used as a community garden for the impoverished families of their neighborhood.

We're cheerfully led down a slippery path that has pine trees on one side and ginger plants with their bright red blossoms on the other. The forest eventually opens up to reveal the acre of heavy, chocolate-colored soil that's mostly fallow for now. In one corner, though, are recently sprouted cassava and red bean plants. There's also something that looks like celery or cilantro, but I'm not sure. On the perimeter of the plot I see several papaya and plantain

trees heavy with fruit. A lemon tree is tucked in between them. This garden benefits over two dozen families living in the area.

With few jobs to be had here, many of the men must go off to find what work they can. No one makes much money. The women are left behind in their tiny houses to take care of their babies – they all have babies. Many of the women have no spouse. Some are abandoned. Some are widows. They depend on family or they go without. For many of the women and their children a community garden is what keeps food in their stomachs.

I climb back up the hill and am led to the family's private garden. Here I see more papaya, a big avocado tree and some coffee bushes with their red berries. There are young pineapple plants along with bell and picante peppers, corn plants and onions. Don Miguel appears holding several avocado seeds that have germinated. He has just pulled them from the middle of car tires filled with rich earth. The brown orbs have split to allow for the emergence of the tender shoot with its new leaf. I don't know if Don is intending to plant them elsewhere or sell them.

My friends and I are invited into the casa for a small meal. Even though this family is obviously better off than others nearby, there's no electricity in this home. There's no indoor plumbing and the windows have no glass. As is the case in many homes I have visited this week, potable water is collected in an outdoor cement cistern called a pila. In the small kitchen fresh corn tortillas and red beans are being prepared on a wood burning stove that's encased in beautifully painted ceramic tiles. The most delicious cheese I think I've ever tasted has been made from milk taken from the family's cows. Coffee made from beans grown in the garden and elsewhere on Don Miguel's property is brewed to perfection. After an hour we must say farewell to this gracious family with smiles and embraces and I leave with an even better understanding of how to help my neighbor. ☘

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### The country kitchen:

In the last issue a reader requested recipes for zucchini...besides bread. Once again, readers came through with

## A boat-load of zucchini recipes

### FROM CHERYL Z. ILLINOIS

Here is a recipe for Linda B. in Vermont who asked for zucchini recipes in the July/August issue. It is perfect for the really big zucchini, which is how I like them best anyway. My youngest daughter absolutely loves this and will eat an entire pint by herself. Unfortunately the bugs have really gotten to our zucchini the past few years and we haven't been able to make it since 2011. I'm hoping this year will be different!

### Zucchini Pineapple

**4 quarts cubed zucchini - peeled and cut into 1/2" cubes (3 very large zucchini, with the guts scooped out, are about what is needed)**

**46 ounces of canned, unsweetened pineapple juice**

**1 1/2 cups bottled lemon juice**

**3 cups sugar**

Mix all ingredients in a large saucepan and bring to a boil. Simmer 20 minutes. Fill hot jars with hot mixture and cooking liquid, leaving 1/2" headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids. Process in boiling water bath—half pints or pints for 15 minutes. Makes 8 pints.

### FROM LORRAINE WILTFANG

I just read the article on zucchini on page 15/16, of the current issue. I just received it in the mail today.

My comment for Linda B. is to make appetizers using zucchini. I just read this online from *Readers Digest*. It might just use a few of the green things.

**1 cup of grated zucchini, press in towel to get moisture out**

**1 egg**

**1/4 cup diced onion**

**1/4 cup cheddar cheese grated**

**1/4 cup dry bread crumbs**

**Salt and pepper**

# “Quick! Call 911!” I shouted to my wife as the fire headed towards our barn.

I had been an idiot.

It was early spring, but there was still snow on the ground so I thought it was safe to burn some paper and brush. What I didn't realize was that the top of the tall grass was dry. The fire decided to travel across the top of the grass and head...straight towards my barn!

Never again would I burn without a barrel, I swore, as my neighbors gathered to watch the fire department bail me out (and save most of my barn).

That was years ago, and true to my word, I got a 55-gallon drum and used it to dispose of my household burnables and other yard trash and debris. But I hated how hard it was to get a fire started in a barrel and, once started, how burning material would fly out the top. Plus, a rusty barrel is a real eyesore.

Recently, I had a small mountain of sensitive financial material to get rid of, and I didn't want to stuff it in trash bags and haul it to the dump. There were credit card numbers, social security numbers—lots of stuff that an identity thief could have a field day with.

So I stuffed it into my rusty burn barrel, set a match to it, and...nada. The thing just sat there and smoldered. And when I tried to dump it out and start again, I had a real mess on my hands. The wind was carrying away small bits of paper with sensitive numbers on it. Boy, was I teed off at myself for being so stupid.”

I was complaining to a friend about my combustible problems when he asked me if I knew about The Burn Cage™. Well, within a week I had one delivered to my driveway, and you should see this thing! It's made of industrial stainless steel—the kind they use to build furnaces—and looks like it could hold a small gorilla.

I quickly stuffed it with paper, branches, leaves, boxes of old receipts, sawdust ... you name it. I put the lid on and then lit some of the paper.

Whoosh! That thing ignited like an inferno and pulverized the contents into a fine ash. There was nothing left. Best of all, nothing escaped. The lid kept all the ash from flying, and the four duck-like feet kept the cage from tipping over. And I never felt as if the fire could escape and spread. It was always under tight control, even when the wind picked up.

When I was done, I simply folded it up flat, and hung it in my shed. I can't recommend the Burn Cage™ highly enough!

— Josh M., Norwich, VT



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Fill small greased muffins tins full and press mixture in there. Bake 400°F 15- 18 minutes.

They look and sound wonderful, I am going to try them.

FROM DEB SCHORZMAN  
COLORADO

### Zucchini Sausage Soup Canning Recipe

1-1/2 lbs. sausage (any kind)  
1/4 cup olive oil  
3 onions, chopped  
3 bell peppers, chopped  
24 cups chopped zucchini, do not peel  
3 cans (14 oz.) diced tomatoes  
3 cups sliced carrots  
12 cups vegetable stock  
6 cups water  
1 tablespoon salt  
1 tablespoon seasoning salt  
1 tablespoon pepper  
1 tablespoon Italian seasoning

In large pot heat up olive oil and add the sausage, onions and peppers. Cook until the sausage is no longer pink and the veggies are soft. Add remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil and let simmer for a few minutes. Fill quart jars with the hot soup leaving a 1/2" headspace. Wipe rims of jars. Adjust 2 piece caps. Process in a pressure canner at 10 lbs. pressure for 90 minutes. (Adjust time for altitude.)

FROM MARIE GERSTER  
OHIO

### Zucchini Pie

6 cups zucchini, peeled and skinned.  
Remove seeds, slice like apple pie  
1 tablespoon flour, rounded  
1 1/2 teaspoons cream of tartar  
1 1/4 cups sugar  
2 teaspoons cinnamon  
Dash of nutmeg  
Pinch of salt  
2 pie crusts

Place zucchini in a pan with a little water. Bring to a boil, simmer until tender. Drain and let cool. In a bowl, mix the rest of the ingredients with cooled zucchini. Place in a pie crust. Dot with butter over top. Place a crust on top. Bake at 400°F for 35 to 40 minutes or until golden brown. This tastes like apple pie.

### Zucchini Dressing

1 stick butter  
3 cups diced zucchini  
1 medium onion, diced  
1 box chicken stuffing (Ed.: We'd prefer you make your own.)  
1 can cream of chicken soup  
1 small container of sour cream

Melt 1/2 stick of butter in bottom of 2 1/2 qt. casserole dish. Cook zucchini and onions in a little water until tender. Put on top of butter. Mix dressing as directed on box. Put on top of onions and zucchini, add sour cream, chicken soup and 1/2 stick melted butter on top. Bake at 350°F for 35 minutes.

This is very good and rich.

### Zucchini Fudge Cake

4 eggs  
2 1/4 cups sugar  
2 teaspoons vanilla  
3 cups flour  
1/2 cup cocoa  
3/4 cup butter  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
3/4 teaspoon salt  
1 cup goat milk yogurt  
3 cups shredded zucchini  
1 cup chopped pecans

Beat eggs well, add sugar and beat until thick. Add vanilla, softened butter. Mix dry ingredients and stir into egg mixture. Fold in zucchini and nuts. Bake at 350°F until top springs back when lightly touched. Makes 3 large or 4 small layers.

### Frosting

4 cups powdered sugar  
1 cup plus 3 tablespoons butter  
1 1/4 teaspoon vanilla  
3 tablespoons goat milk  
Beat until smooth. Makes enough for a 4 layer cake.

### Chocolate Zucchini Cake

1 1/2 cup sugar  
1/2 cup butter  
1/4 cup oil  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
2 eggs  
2 1/2 cups flour  
1/4 cup cocoa  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1/2 cup buttermilk or sour milk  
2 cups shredded zucchini



1/2 to 1 cup chocolate chips  
1/2 cup nuts

Mix all together and pour in a greased and floured 9 x 13 pan. Bake at 350°F for 35 to 45 minutes.

### Zucchini Cup Cakes

Beat together:  
3 eggs  
1 1/2 cups sugar  
1/2 cup oil  
1/2 cup orange juice  
1 teaspoon almond flavoring

Combine well, then add:  
2 1/2 cups flour  
2 teaspoons cinnamon  
1 teaspoons baking powder  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon cloves

Fold in 1 1/2 cups shredded zucchini.

Bake at 350°F for 20-25 minutes.

### Carmel Frosting

1 cup brown sugar  
1/2 cup butter  
1/4 cup milk  
1 1/2 cups to 2 cups powdered sugar  
Mix well.

### Zucchini Pie

1 cup zucchini  
1 cup sugar  
1 egg  
2 tablespoons flour  
1 1/2 teaspoons butter  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
1 cup canned sweetened condensed milk  
Cinnamon for sprinkling

Cube zucchini like potatoes,

cook 20 minutes. Put zucchini, sugar, egg, vanilla, milk, flour and butter in a blender for 5 seconds. Pour in a 9-inch unbaked pie shell. Bake 350°F for 45 minutes or until set. Take out of oven and sprinkle with cinnamon.

**FROM GLENDA BOTTS  
PENNSYLVANIA**

The cookies and cake I make while zucchini are in season and store in the freezer for winter.

I also grated zucchini and measured in 2 cup baggies for the freezer that I use later in a vegetable stir-fry.

I also like zucchini thickly sliced, breaded and fried, like green tomatoes with ranch dressing.

When I make the zucchini and tomatoes you wrote about I your article, I add sliced onions and green peppers. Delicious.

I have a recipe for zucchini fritters (which I haven't tried yet) and zucchini pie, which called for too much cinnamon. I just have to play with the recipe as it is supposed to taste like apple pie.

**Zucchini Cookies**

- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 cup softened butter
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 1/2 cups zucchini, peeled and shredded
- 1 cup nuts, chopped (I used pecans)
- 6 oz. bag chocolate chips
- 4 cups unsifted flour.

Measure white and brown sugar into bowl. Add butter and beat until fluffy. Mix in baking soda. Add beaten eggs and vanilla. Stir and add zucchini, chopped nuts and chocolate chips. Add flour 1/3 at a time until well mixed. Drop by teaspoons on greased cookie sheets and bake at 350°F for 11 minutes, don't over bake. (Chill dough if necessary.)

Bake only 1 cookie sheet at a time.

**Zucchini Cake**

- 3 cups grated zucchini, unpeeled
- 3 cups sugar

- 3 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 1/2 cups oil
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup chopped nuts

Sift dry ingredients together. Add eggs, oil, zucchini and nuts. Bake at 300°F for 1 1/4 - 1 1/2 hours in 9 x 14 oiled and floured pan.

- When cool ice with:
- 3 oz. package cream cheese
  - 2 cups 10x sugar\*
  - 1 stick butter
- Sprinkle with nuts.

*\*10X sugar is the second finest consistency of powdered sugar behind 14X, or superfine, sugar. Powdered, or confectioners', sugar is made by grinding and refining granulated sugar, and then sifting it together with small amounts of cornstarch to prevent clumping and moisture absorption.*

**Zucchini Bake**

- 6 cups zucchini, sliced
- 1/4 cup onion, chopped
- 1 can cream of chicken or celery soup
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 cup carrots, shredded
- 1-8 oz. box stuffing mix
- 1/2 cup butter, melted

Boil zucchini and onion 5 minutes, drain. Combine 1 can cream of chicken or celery soup and 1 cup sour cream. Stir in 1 cup shredded carrot. Fold in squash and onion. Combine 1 8 oz. package boxed stuffing with 1/2 cup melted butter. Spread 1/2 stuffing mixture in bottom of baking dish. Spoon vegetables over the top and sprinkle with remaining stuffing. Bake at 350°F for 30 minutes uncovered.

**Zucchini Casserole**

- 2 or 3 zucchini, sliced
- 1 lb. ground beef, browned
- 1/4 lb. spaghetti noodles
- 1 jar spaghetti sauce
- Parmesan and mozzarella cheese

Break 1/4 lb. spaghetti (raw) on top

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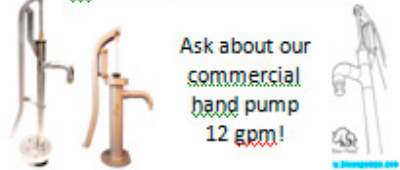
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of zucchini. Brown ground beef with chopped onion and put on top of spaghetti. Add 1 jar spaghetti sauce. Sprinkle with Parmesan and mozzarella cheese. Bake at 350°F for 35 to 40 minutes.

**FROM JUDITH BENEVEY**  
**WEST VIRGINIA**

Hillbilly Crab Cakes is a favorite here in West Virginia. I keep shredded zucchini in one-cup portions in the freezer to enjoy all year long.

2 cups shredded zucchini  
1 cup bread and/or cracker crumbs  
1 egg beaten  
2 teaspoons Old Bay Seasoning  
2-4 tablespoons onion, chopped  
1 tablespoon mayonnaise  
1 teaspoon mustard

Form patties and fry. It does taste like crab cakes. Serve with tartar sauce.

I also have made zucchini chips in my "solar dryer."

Drag that old car out into the sun, folding down all the seats. Spread thread-bare sheets on old screens. Slice zucchini thin, season with seasoned salt, pepper, or whatever you like.

Stack screens in the car, separated by tin cans at the corners — maybe up to five layers. You know how hot a car gets in the sun! They should be dry that evening. Leave a window cracked open to let moisture out. They might need a second day. Close window overnight.

If you've sliced them *very* thin, they make great snack chips.

Keep them in a jar, not the freezer.

**Baba Ghanovj**

1 large eggplant, cut in half lengthwise. Prick skin several times with a fork and place cut sides down on a lightly greased baking sheet. Add 2 cloves garlic. Bake at 400°F for 20 minutes or until the eggplant is soft.

Scrape eggplant off skin into blender.

Add:  
1 small onion, quartered

Garlic (from above)  
1 hard cooked egg, peeled  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
Dash salt and hot sauce

Puree until blended. Chill. Serve as dip or spread.

*A reader called to share a couple zucchini recipe ideas in response to a letter submitted in the July/Aug issue.*

Start with raw zucchini- washed  
Slice very thin or grate with cheese grater

Put into a fresh lettuce salad with dressing

or  
Add shredded zucchini to a flour tortilla

Top with desired ingredients.

## Cream of Lamb's Quarters Soup

FROM MARK CONN  
MISSOURI

Lamb's quarters is a weed that shows up fairly early here in southern Missouri. It is a great substitute for spinach in your diet. I created this recipe to take advantage of the free food.

8 cups fresh lamb's quarters  
1 green onion, chopped  
2 cloves garlic, chopped  
2 cups water  
8 oz. cream cheese  
2 slices bacon, chopped  
1 teaspoon chicken bouillion  
Salt and pepper to taste

In a large saucepan, bring water to a boil. Add garlic, onions and lamb's quarter. Simmer 15 minutes. Pour into blender, add cream cheese and blend until smooth. In a saucepan, fry bacon until crisp. Remove from heat, add pureed greens back into pan, with bacon and grease. Bring back to a slow boil.

Flavor with bouillion, salt and pepper. If you like it creamier, add cream or condensed milk to taste. Serve hot.

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# Life regrown



By JERRI COOK  
COUNTRYSIDE STAFF

I can't afford to die. Not only can't I afford it, I don't know anyone who can. Dying is an expensive proposition. If you think the cost of owning your little piece of heaven is expensive while you're alive, wait until you see how much a funeral, coffin, headstone, and plot of burial ground are going to set you back. The sticker shock is enough to make your heart stop.

According to the National Funeral Directors Association ([www.NFDA.org](http://www.NFDA.org)), the median cost of an adult funeral is \$7,045 – without the burial plot. Add in a resting place in your local cemetery, and the basic cost of an adult funeral is around \$9,245. Even this is a low estimate because it doesn't include things like burial clothes, musicians, flowers, and refreshments after the service. If you're thinking about dying, you might want to start saving now.

The good news is that planning a "green" burial could save you or your family thousands, and promote ecologically responsible death care. Chemicals and heavy metal traditionally used by the death care industry has alarming consequences. Joshua Tree Memorial Park Service estimates that each year in the United States we bury:

827,060 gallons of embalming fluid, which includes formaldehyde

- 180,544,000 pounds of steel, in caskets

- 5,400,000 pounds of copper and bronze in caskets

- 30 million board feet of hardwoods in caskets

- 3,272,000,000 pounds of reinforced concrete vaults and 28,000,000 pounds of steel in vaults (from Mary Woodsen, Cornell University)

The Green Burial Council (GBC) is the world's first eco-burial certification program to encourage people to move away from the expensive and dangerous use of chemicals in death care. A biodegradable shroud runs as little as \$50 and a simple biodegradable wood casket starting at around \$400.

The GBC also certifies burial grounds. Currently, there are about two-dozen such cemeteries throughout North America. In these cemeteries, the graves are dug by hand and the grounds are sustainably managed. If you're interested in learning more about eco-burial, or how to have property certified as an eco-burial ground visit the GBC's website at [www.greenburialcouncil.org](http://www.greenburialcouncil.org).

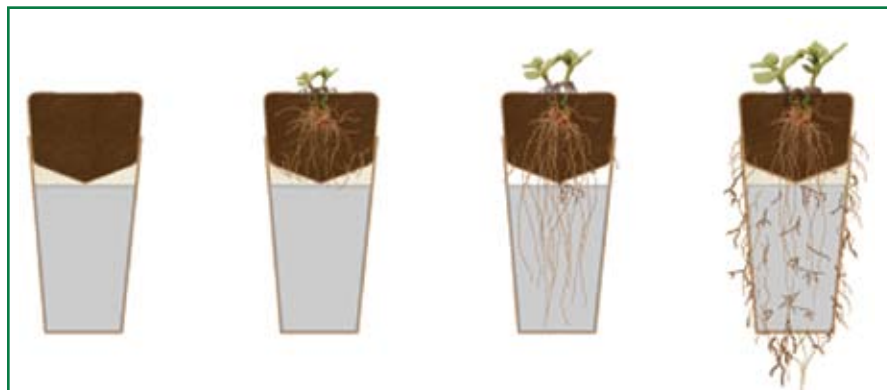
In recent years, cremation has become a more accepted way of interring remains. The actual process is much less expensive, running about half that of the median adult funeral. And while urns can be purchased for a modest amount at most big box and outlet stores, there's still an issue with storing or scattering the ashes. Many people opt to buy ornate urns and place them in an honored place in the home. Others go through the cremation process, and then buy a smaller burial plot in a cemetery for a final resting place. Increasingly, families of loved ones are scattering their loved

one's ashes at sea or from some scenic place in a national park. A company in Spain, however, is offering people another, more sustainable way to honor their loved one's place in the circle of life.

Bios Urn is a start-up company out of Spain. The CEO Roger Moline, is seeing a global increase in his product, a biodegradable urn that doubles as an incubator for a tree. The urn has two parts. The bottom compartment contains the ashes of the deceased.

- *Antimony* 0.0035%
- *Chromium* 0.0018%
- *Copper* 0.0017%
- *Manganese* 0.0013%
- *Lead* 0.0008%
- *Tin* 0.0005%
- *Vanadium* 0.0002%
- *Beryllium* <0.0001%
- *Mercury* <0.00001%

So, what happens when the sapling's roots extend out of the top container and into the bottom, hitting



The top compartment contains a seed that is guaranteed to grow into a tree. This idea of life coming from life has taken off across Europe, and Roger tells me the idea is catching on in the United States as well. The company is actively seeking U.S. distributors. If you're interested visit them at <https://urnabios.com/distribution>. I had some concerns about this idea when I first heard about it. Not because I don't think it's a good idea. It is. But I was wondering if the ashes would have an adverse effect on the sapling. According to *The Good Funeral Guide*, by Charles Cowling, the chemical makeup of the ashes of the average human remains is as follows:

- *Phosphate* 47.5%
- *Calcium* 25.3%
- *Sulfate (Sulphate)* 11.00%
- *Potassium* 3.69%
- *Sodium* 1.12%
- *Chloride* 1.00%
- *Silica* 0.9%
- *Aluminum Oxide* 0.72%
- *Magnesium* 0.418%
- *Iron Oxide* 0.118%
- *Zinc* 0.0342%
- *Titanium Oxide* 0.0260%
- *Barium* 0.0066%

that healthy dose of phosphate and calcium? To answer the question I reached out to Jean Ferdinandsen, a certified arborist with Wachtel Tree Science in Merton, Wisconsin. "It's not a problem at all," she assured me. With a seed, the initial rooting will take place closer to the surface. The roots will run lateral and seek favorable soil. By the time they get to the bottom chamber, they'll be well established. There isn't going to be a problem there. However, you might want to consider the type of tree you're going to plant. For instance, some localities have the Norway maple listed as an invasive species. Just make sure the type of tree you're considering will grow and thrive in your area."

"Our company offers something like this," she explains. "We plant a memorial tree and then sprinkle the person's ashes around the top of it. But I like this idea, too." The National Park System and many municipal parks allow people to plant memorial trees for a small fee, but you do need permission first. The GBC also has a list of certified cemeteries that not only allow, but encourage the planting of memorial trees.

In addition to the place and geographical are, there are other factors to consider when choosing the type of tree that will stand as tribute to someone's life. For instance, oak trees were considered to have come from the gods of lightening in many cultures. Some believe this is because oak trees are both more likely to be struck by lightning, and are the tree most likely to survive a lightning strike. This is because hollow, water-filled cells run the length of the trunk, and the oak's central root tends to grow straight down beneath the tree. An oak tree might be the perfect tribute to someone who was competitive or overcame many challenges in life.

Then there's Yggdrasil, or the ash tree. In Norse mythology, this tree was believed to have protective powers. The ash tree is also closely associated with the Catholic tradition of Ash Wednesday. For centuries, school children in England would bring small branches of black-budded ash to school on that day. An ash tree might make a good memorial for someone who cared for and protected others.

In Native American folklore, the maple tree is said to have saved the creatures of the forest with its thirst-quenching sap when the rivers dried up. In European folklore, it was held that passing a child between the branches of a maple tree would ensure good health and success. A maple tree might be a good selection to remember someone who was kind and compassionate.

There's something uniquely comforting about becoming a part of the natural world, or as Roger Moline puts it, "life beyond life." Not only do eco-burials and biodegradable urns help keep the cost of dying to a minimum, these practices ensure that generations yet to come will enjoy a sustainable life because of someone else's sustainable death care. While neither practice is yet to be widely embraced in the United States, in the very near future family forests will almost certainly replace family mausoleums as an inexpensive and heartfelt way of remembering those who passed this way before us. 🌿

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# The top 3 reasons I'm grateful I was homeschooled

By KRISTA NOBLE  
IOWA

The choice to homeschool can be an unnerving decision. After all, you are taking your child's academic and social development into your own hands, which will shape his or her future. As a recent university graduate, I am profoundly grateful that my parents made this unconventional decision. With each passing year I become more aware of the numerous ways in which my homeschooled years have enriched my life. Here are just a few of the benefits that I perceive.

### 1. I never lost my love of learning.

Many of my peers who formerly attended a public or private school express a cynical attitude towards learning. They associate schoolwork with rigid academic schedules and unimaginative teaching methods. These peers consider learning stressful and fatiguing.

By contrast, I—along with many of my formerly-homeschooled friends—experience a profound thirst for knowledge. We are excited by our college courses and enjoy discussing them during breaks. We want to live life to the fullest, and that involves expanding and refining our intellectual abilities. Our desire for knowledge has served us well. For instance, homeschoolers are disproportionately represented among the top tier of the students at my Alma Mater.

I think that our zest for learning

is natural. Homeschooling has supported our wholesome perspective in a simple way: it has not squelched our inborn curiosity and eagerness. Because of the flexibility of our homeschool schedules, we never learned to feel trapped by our studies. Because our classes took place in a variety of creative settings, we have never associated academics with boredom. Because we weren't constantly stressed by tests and grades, we never correlated learning with fear; we soon discovered that we were capable of mastering a subject without incessant external pressures.

### 2. I learned valuable skills of self-direction.

During my homeschool years, I enjoyed a great deal of freedom in my studies. I was encouraged to choose the order and length of time that I devoted to each subject on any given day.

As a result of my flexible schedule, I became adept at time management. I discovered the most efficient ways to cover each subject, paying close attention to my shifting moods and interests. If I was feeling especially enthusiastic about a project, I might devote a couple of hours to its completion. If I became bored, I would switch gears for a bit and return with a fresh perspective. If I found myself struggling with a concept, then I would seek assistance from my parents.

These time management tech-

niques served me well in college. I didn't need any advisor or a mentor to keep me on track. I could accurately estimate how long it would take me to finish an assignment, and I could discern which assignment was best suited to my current state of mind. I knew when I was in the right mood for planning a project, or writing a paper, or studying for a quiz. I understood how I assimilated new information, so I could easily select the most efficient method for doing so – whether that meant drilling with flashcards, scanning my notes or conversing with other students. The more I streamlined the process, the more I could pursue fun extracurricular activities (while still earning high grades).

Time management was not the only skill of self-direction that I developed during my homeschooling years. I also learned independence. By encompassing such a broad range of educational approaches, homeschooling reminds us that there are many paths to success in life. I took this realization to heart. I chose unusual hobbies, becoming involved in Tae Kwon Do, ballroom dancing, dog obedience training, horticulture, kayaking, international travel and more.

Within the sphere of academics, I took the time to cultivate my personal interests. For as long as I can remember, I have adored creative writing. Homeschooling gave me the freedom to pursue and refine this craft. At age 12, I began my first book, an adventure novel set in medieval England. Less than 10 years later, I completed my fifth novel, a Young Adult fantasy. Now, at age 24, I am building my writing resume by submitting articles, poetry and short stories to magazines. I am also working with a successful author in my field to find an agent for my fantasy novel. Although I am new to the publishing world, I've been fortunate enough to have my works accepted in seven national literary magazines. Without the flexibility of homeschooling, I cannot imagine that I would have come so far toward my goal of becoming a professional writer.

### 3. I became my own person.

In my observation, kids who attend public or private schools deal with a lot of peer pressure. They experience pressure to dress, talk and act in a predefined way. Students are judged by their conformity to stereotypical roles (jock, nerd, cheerleader, etc.).

As a homeschooler, I rarely faced such peer pressure, and I never associated myself with an artificial social label. There is simply too much variety in homeschooling approaches for a single, cohesive culture to predominate. Some of my friends wore loose, conservative clothing; others dressed in a more trendy style. Some friends enjoyed emulating the pop culture; others preferred a more traditional approach to life. I felt free to dress, talk and act in whatever way felt natural to me, and gravitate toward those who made similar choices.

I did not realize the full value of this freedom until recent years. Since 2011, I have lived in three different

states. I have transitioned from an undergraduate school in the Midwest to an international university. In each location, I have discovered a new culture. If I had been trying to mold myself to my surroundings, I would have had to drastically refashion myself three different times. But homeschooling gave me the confidence to be my own person, ignoring social pressures. And so I have stayed true to myself throughout these transitions.

### Overview

Through homeschooling, I maintained my inborn love of learning, cultivated strong skills of self-direction, and developed into my own person. These benefits have served me well during my college years, and I think that they will prove invaluable in my career and personal relationships. My parents' decision to homeschool me was perhaps the greatest gift they could have offered me. I hope someday to provide an equally rewarding gift to my own children. ✦

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## Country neighbors:

# I love my chickens... and my iPad

BY TAMI GRAHAM

**D**o you ever feel like you're living between two worlds? You want to stay connected to the earth and basic needs of growing your own food while simultaneously staying connected to the internet. Do you feel pulled in two different directions? Does it have to be a tug-of-war?

We live in an amazing age. We have computers that fit in our back pockets that can instantaneously answer any question we may have — and even some we may never have thought of before. We can also stay connected with family and friends who live far away and get updates on pictures of their families, pets, activities, and even what they ate for dinner.

Although we have so much that can literally fit in our hands, people are moving in droves back to the country and building homesteads to live a simpler life. Although we have huge technological advances, we're returning to a more primitive lifestyle. People are tired of having everything done for them and want to take back some control over their lives — starting with the fundamentals of what they eat.

Is it possible to thrive in both worlds?

I believe the answer is "yes!" There's no reason why we can't. We don't have to embrace both, but we can if we want to. And I'll go so far as to say that each one can enhance the other.

Growing my own food and making things from scratch keeps me grounded. I feel a special connection

to my ancestors as I harvest vegetables, collect eggs, cook from scratch, and spin my wool. There's something wonderful about going "low tech" and creating a product using my own hands like my great-grandparents did a century ago.

But... I also love technology. I love flipping a switch to turn my lights on and turning a faucet for the right temperature of running water.

And, I love the internet. I love my techie gadgets. I love being able to quickly look up what to do when a hen is egg bound instead of having to thumb through pages of books and magazines. I love being able to search for a new recipe or watch a video to help me understand a new knitting technique. And, I love living vicariously through pictures and videos of other homesteaders with their baby goats and lambs. I also enjoy meeting new people that I would never have met without the internet. And yes, some of them I have ended up meeting in real life — not just virtually.

By embracing both worlds, I'm able to maintain a balance between the past and the future; between the physical world and the digital one.

My family moved to the country two and a half years ago in order to build a homestead. About the same time I started learning about internet marketing and online business.

While we built chicken coops and garden beds, I was also building a blog and learning how to monetize it. In the past couple of years we've grown our homestead to include a large flock of chickens, guineas, and

Muscovy ducks. We also raise meat rabbits and alpacas for fiber. During that time, I've also grown a following using social media and am now helping other homesteaders to build their own businesses online.

Technology can be a beneficial tool that not only makes life easier, but can also be used to pass along knowledge and skills. I've learned much from the internet that has benefited not just my business, but my homesteading knowledge as well.

Since many of our own parents or grandparents left the farms, much of that essential knowledge was never passed down to us. The internet has allowed more people to revive long-forgotten skills and even improve upon ideas. Sustainable farming methods, permaculture, and homesteading has gained traction and popularity due to the power of the internet.

So yes, as homesteaders, we're basically living simultaneously in two very different worlds. But that doesn't mean there needs to be friction between the two. Technology is fast paced and always changing, while the fundamentals of food and clothing never changes. Technology can be used to enhance our knowledge and skills and make life a bit easier. Staying grounded in the unchanging, basic human needs keeps us from getting lost in the fast-paced modern world. 🌱

*Tami Graham lives with her family on 28 acres in Central Missouri. She also helps other homesteaders build a business online through her website [www.homespunchick.com](http://www.homespunchick.com).*



## Country neighbors:

# In praise of the dark

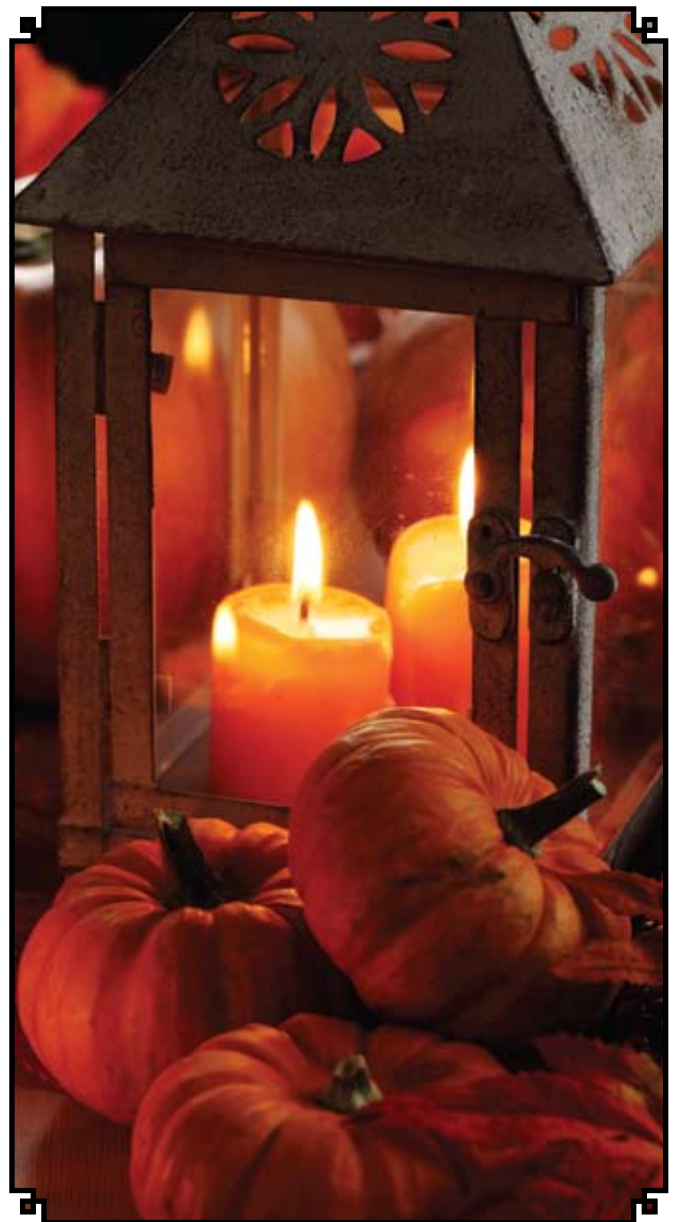
BY PATRICIA GREENE  
NEW HAMPSHIRE

Last night it was below zero—again. It's been cloudy for days. Low amperage on our off-grid solar system begged either the growl of the generator or an energy fast, so for the first time we chose the fast. We turned off computers and electric lights, and lit candles in the kitchen and on the table at dinnertime. As we ate, everything seemed to soften into its true form and mystery in the golden light. Details disappeared, edges blended, shadows deepened. Our aging faces took on new beauty in the glow and even the plain healthy food tasted better. It was cozy magic, like being held gently within the natural cycle of the long winter night.

After dinner my partner and I brought a candle back to the kitchen counter to wash dishes, then carried our traveling light to the living room and curled up together on the sofa. "Let's read to each other," I suggested as we decided how to occupy our evening, and we did, holding the book in the light and resisting the impulse to slip on the handy LED brightness of our battery headlamps.

It felt like stepping back into slow time as the pace and distractions of electric life melted away. We don't have the distraction of television, but the evening compulsion to check the plethora of emails that arrive each day, catch up with the alternative news sites or watch a DVD disappeared. I packed logs into the cook stove while my partner yawned and taking a candle with him climbed to the loft to go to bed early, which he never ordinarily does.

Not ready for sleep, I pulled the rocker close to the wood stove and sat staring into the changing orange flames—caught in the age-old trancelike human fascination with fire. Even with our sparse electrical lives here on this New England homestead, the short chance to live beyond electricity proved unexpectedly calming,



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clearing and natural.

As I rocked with darkness gathered around me, I experienced a glorious sense of freedom and a deep connection to the long view of human history. Over the last hundred years—a mere two or three generations along a chain of 10 thousand—we have been lured deeper and deeper still into the electrical web until we now think of its convenience as absolute necessity. The fact is my own mother, born in 1912, grew up without it on a farm in rural North Carolina. In her stories of childhood I never felt any sense of deprivation.

But when the grid goes down today, panic ensues. It's front page news. People scramble around wondering how to keep warm and how to cool food or cook it, and what about water? Most survive with the temporary electrical transfusion of a gas generator or if the lack of electricity persists, they give up and head for a shelter. Few sit back and view the forced reversion to more natural cycles of human experience as positive and even magical.

**L**ight and dark. It's been that way on our turning Earth forever. I remember being afraid of the dark as a child. Like most kids, I invented monsters who lived under the bed. But maybe this early face-to-face relationship with darkness was a healthy thing. In his bedroom today, my grandson has a night-light, plastic stars that shine on the wall, and a magic turtle that stays lit all night casting its watery green reflections over the ceiling. When I walked hand-in-hand with him into the night woods that surround our house, he hung back wide-eyed and frightened. His relationship with the dark will need some mending.

Maybe that's true for most of us. We often think of the dark, whether the dark of the moon or the dark winter time of the year, as a negative, a time of contraction, of secrets, of the unknown, the irrational, of death. And yet it also contains within it the mystery

of regeneration and rebirth, of inspiration, visions and insight. It is the time when the veils between the worlds grow thin. The creative womb of darkness is as necessary to the complete cycle of life as the light.

Electricity has helped us to obliterate the dark and its gifts. Everywhere we go we see the lights of a commercial culture. The use of electricity, as wonderful as it can be, forces us into a state of separation, whether we choose to know it or not.

**W**e live at the end of a sparsely populated dirt road up a half-mile driveway. It's solar or nothing for us, but I will say that my partner lived with a few gaslights and a hand water pump for 30 years before I came along and demanded some basic conveniences. I sometimes wonder if it might be healthy for the world to begin to experience the disconnect from electric lights little by little? Kind of like Meatless Mondays. Turn off the computer. Go to bed earlier. Have candlelight dinners. Use the microwave and wide screen less.

I yawned as I rocked, the night fire settling down to burn for hours.

Before bed I crossed the dark living room and stood at the windows. When the lights are on, the windows only give us back our own reflections. It's a kind of encirclement. With the lights off, I was able to see out into the wide world beyond the house—see the blue lace of shadows on the snow as the moon rose among the trees and the stars twinkling on bare branches. I heard how the low rush of windy winter silence compares to noisy summer evenings filled with the call of loons, the song of crickets and the conversation of barred owls. I thought about the deer hunkered down in their lay under the hemlocks that I discovered when snowshoeing the other day.

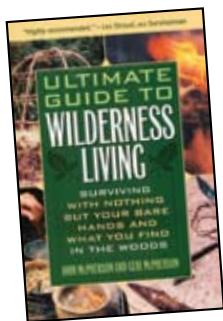
For us, we've headed out into the dark, a choice that no longer seems radical, but rational. And who can say that respect and praise for the fertile mystery of darkness is not a good thing? ❁

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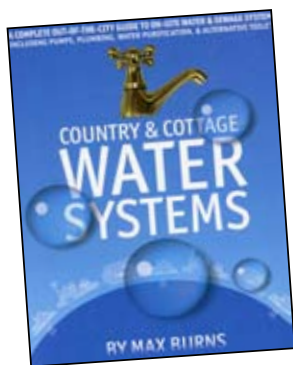
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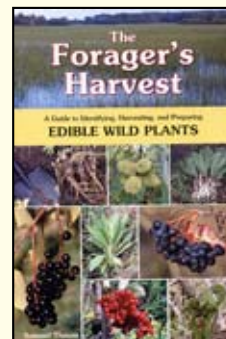
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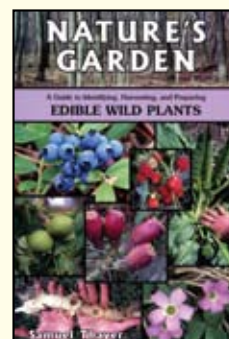
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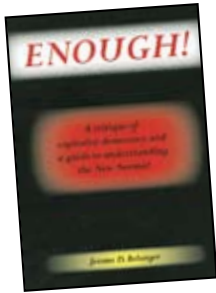
We are surrounded by free groceries—gourmet, organic, super-nutritious foods that we have never tasted and do not recognize. This book not only identifies these fruits, nuts, grains and vegetables for you, it also teaches you where to find them and shows you how to prepare them. *Nature's Garden* is a continuation of the work begun in *The Foragers Harvest*, and covers 41 new plants, similar format with better photography and better printing quality. **512 pages, \$24.95**

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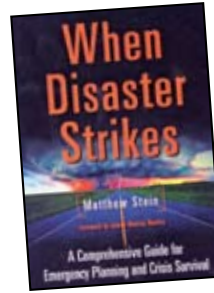
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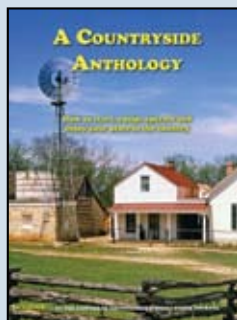
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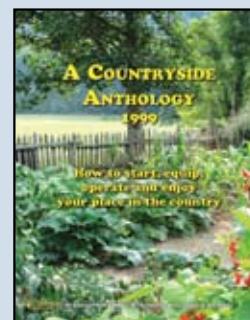
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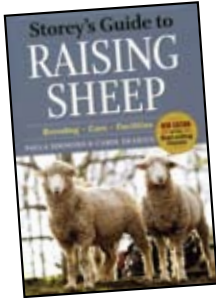


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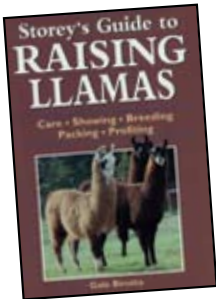


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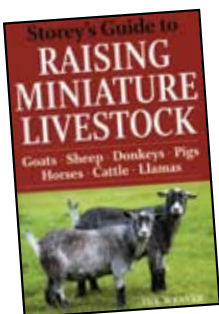


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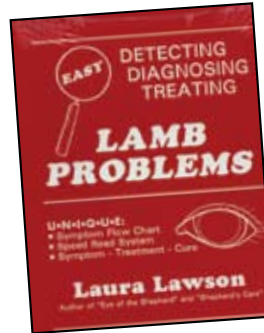
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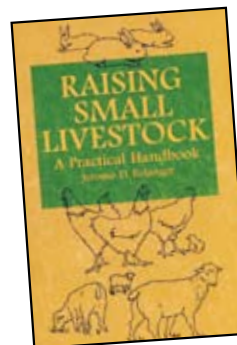
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246 pages, \$9.95



Country neighbors:

# Happiness is...

## Lisa's life recipes

BY LISA JANSEN  
3PIGGAL@GMAIL.COM  
FAROUTFARMS.NET

**H**appiness is a complete sentence. It is a statement. And it is true. What more do you need to know? All you need to do is make it so. Like Captain Piccard in *Star Trek, the Next Generation*. Make it so. I believe homesteaders and us folks that live in the middle of nowhere are doing just that, we find our own happiness. We create happiness, peace of mind, and a healthy and independent lifestyle. A sociology class text once defined happiness as an attitude, a chosen state of mind, and it has been proven in my life over and over. These are some of the ways I do it.

### The history of an outlook.

I was born with one leg turned backwards. The medical profession knew to set and brace the legs and feet, but they did not know to check my back. I have curvature of the spine: Scoliosis. At 26 I was told I should apply for disability. I did not. I went to college. I loved learning and studied Nutrition Research and so much more. I was born with a vision condition. My brain accepted two different messages of vision, one from each eye. It made a printed page of text look like the words were moving up and down in jerky movements. My eyes and their images were so



Lisa Jansen

different, because I had a very strong and a very weak eye. I did not learn to read beyond third grade level until I was 19. I grew up in a small town and it was not until the eye doctor died and a new one moved in that my eye condition was properly diagnosed. There was no knowledge of that condition when the former eye doctor was in practice. The new doctor had just graduated from The University of California at Berkeley and when he realized my glasses were not working he sent me there.

After hours and hours of tests and at least a dozen doctors, they advised I stop wearing my glasses and let the left eye go blind. In two years my left eye went blind. Then my brain only received one sight message and I learned to read. My first book was J.R.R. Tolken's *The Hobbit*. Life went from black and white to color. I still love to read. It makes me happy!

I was raised on my grandparents' farm and my aunts' and uncles' homes. My mother was so ill she could not raise me. My dad worked several jobs to pay her medical expenses and was a volunteer firefighter in our small farming town for over 50 years. My parents and grandparents were people worthy of much respect. Most of my family were farmers. They all worked hard and were intelligent and independent folks. They were stellar examples of how to be a hard-working and good person. They were all responsible, good family people and very ethical and community involved. I always say that my up-bringing made Andy and Opie (from the Andy Griffith Show) look dysfunctional. But, at 14 I fell off the turnip truck. I was very naive and was raped repeatedly before having consensual sex. They were strangers; criminals. Both men later went to prison for killing a 14-year-old boy. However, I was alive. I have led a blessed life. It was hard at the time of the rape, but I am happy!

Remember that backwards foot? The doctors set it in a position known

in ballet as “half-toe.” Due to that I was able to dance in *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker* productions with my teenage son at the Woodland Opera House. It was a highlight in my life. Anything can turn out for the good, no matter what you believe. I do very much believe in God. You may not; but good is good. Anything can become or be viewed as good. It is a state of mind, just like happiness.

If I had never been raped I'd have become a drunk or drug addict. I am a “sixties’ girl.” I was born in 1956. I was a flower child. I could have gone the way of Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin, but I did not. Being raped made me dislike feeling vulnerable to attack or being taken advantage of. Those men did me a favor from a point of view I choose to take to heart. Yes, they took something they should never have taken. They took my innocence and dignity and more. But they gave me the desire to be independent and in control of my own life and well-being. I have forgiven them. They both died in prison. Child molesters don't fare well, I'm told. I turned out with a bright life and future that is still blooming. At the time I did not know my father, bless his soul, was an alcoholic. My mother was addicted to tranquilizers. I had addiction on both sides of the family. It is much about genes, the old nature versus nurture argument. Well I had it from all sides. I had the genes and the examples whether I knew it or not. I am proud to say I am not an alcoholic or drug addict. I tried everything at least once growing up in the 1960s, but thanks to a couple rapists I did not like any of it. I did smoke for a few years to look cool and walked around with a can of beer at parties. I was a typical teen in those years. Did you know that most house plants like beer? I had to get rid of it some way. I dislike the taste of beer to this day.

Take time to stay in touch with yourself and your loved ones. One of the great advantages of living on and owning an off-grid, all solar, micro organic research farm in the middle of the Tahoe National Forest is that I live by my own schedule. I'll



**This is the outhouse. The place was named the Far Outhouse because the outhouse was far from the house. Just a little trivia Lisa learned from an old miner that has lived in the area for over 60 years.**

admit I can tell time by looking at the sun, but it does not display the day of the week. I have no television and cell phones don't work out here. The campground that shares a property line with me is full of people wandering around waving their cell phones in the air and looking disgruntled! I'm used to it.

I do go into my RV occasionally and look at my (one) clock. I live in an RV because my cabin burned down 2 1/2 years ago. I'll tell you more about that blessing as we talk. I do mean talk. I always put my email and website in the by-line and enjoy feedback from readers. I've been writing for 16 years. I started writing after having a stroke in my 40s. Another blessing. Remember, state of mind, the way you frame life is critical to your happiness today and tomorrow. Life is not easy. My mom used to say, “You have to take the bad with the good.” She is a very wise and loving woman. She too, prepared me for a successful and happy life. Parent/child communication is 20% verbal and 80% example. Wow, did I learn from her and Dad.

My RV was being thrown away. Nothing works in it and it was filthy and unsanitary when it was delivered. I have an old clothes dryer drum that I use as a fire pit outside. My estranged and abusive husband of 15 years is still holding the insurance money for the cabin fire. He had not lived here for years or made

any kind of payment. However, the insurance company gave him the money. They did not even tell me they were settling. Nothing in the house belonged to him. He was removed for violence several years before. I know this is somehow a blessing. I'm just waiting on God to learn more.

Anyway, I sit around the campfire at night and look at the gorgeous stars and treetops. I center myself in my universe. I pray and I am always blessed. Life out here is so good. I always keep a landline and satellite internet, that way I can talk to my family and friends that I love. They complete me, just like my relationship with God. Relationships, not things, make me happy. There we are again: happy! It's not hard to do once you learn to do it. This life is very real and satisfying with a healthy point of view.

### Listen to your morals and ethics.

I think 1960s folks spent a bunch of time finding themselves individually and collectively. It was a time of discovery. We found out we did not like war. We did like civil rights. We wanted freedom of speech. I love Madea, one of Tyler Perry's movie characters. She was chewing out some of her family members in one of the movies and said, “Old people died for your dumb ass.” Or something to that affect. Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy and others in the 1960s and 70s worked, suffered and died to give us living examples of good morals and ethics. No, they were not perfect people. Yes, they were as human as you and me, but they stood up! Once you figure out what you believe, live it. Don't compromise and you'll be happy.

### Make and take time for what you believe.

Don't just preach it, brother. Walk your talk. If you go to faroutfarms.net you will find I believe that no one in the United States should go hungry. I also believe there is no need for homelessness. My farm business is

dedicated to helping in those areas. We feed the hungry and house the poor. I've done that for at least three years in one way or another. I believe in community involvement, always. I may not want to live in your face, but I want to make sure it is fed and housed. Every person deserves dignity and respect and a chance for a healthy life. I've taught everything from poultry care to Sunday School. We can teach each other to be happier and healthier and more independent people if we choose to do so. Join me and make the whole world happier. That's a challenge. It will make you happy.

**Hold the Earth near.**

I feel God gave us this Earth, but He does not want us to screw it up, pollute it or waste it. He gave us a finite amount of resources, and what are we doing with it? We are trying to use and throw it away like a disposable cell phone. Grandpa was farming organically before there was organic farming. He was humane to all animals before there was a humane effort or movement. I learned from him. I'm working daily towards more sustainability. I plan to be around a few more years since women in my family live past 100 and usually keep all their marbles, so I want to live on an Earth where I can farm, hunt and fish safely. I like to eat. It's a habit that makes me happy!

**Live the seasons.**

There is spring, summer, fall and winter for a reason. It keeps life from becoming boring and gives us structure at the same time. Spring is when the whole world comes to life after long cold, seemingly dead, winters. Summer is time to grow and change. Enjoy the sun and the bounty of a garden and fruit trees. Fall is harvest time to pick, cook, can, freeze and prepare for the coming of winter. Winter is time for family and good books. It is a happy time. After all that work in the previous three seasons it is time to snuggle. This is the time to hold loved ones near. Grab a grandkid (or a puppy if you have no grandkids). Hold those you

love close, read to them. Write about them. Reflect and share in healthy happy communication. Remember it is about relationships, not stuff. That is the blessing I learned losing my home, car, guest cabin, and well house to a fire. We were made to be together. All the stuff in the world will not make you happy. Togetherness can make you happy!

**Rejoice**

Rejoicing is being happy and celebrating being happy. It may be being quietly happy in your soul all day long. It may be throwing a huge birthday party for someone (or even yourself), but by all means rejoice. Feel your happiness and share it with others. Grumpiness is not the only emotion that is contagious. Tell someone happy or funny stories or jokes. Spread that good stuff around. It will make you and others happy year round!

**Repeat**

Do these things again and again,

and you will find one day that you've been happy all day. It might even happen the next day, too. Keep it up. If you're feeling sad or angry take some time with yourself to find out why. Don't be afraid of apologizing when needed. Know how to accept apologies, too. And really mean what you say in your heart. Keep in touch with your heart and the hearts of those you love and value. Value everyone. Be happy and repeat daily! ✿

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Country neighbors:

# Say goodbye to city life

BY LORI DEMERETZ

*Writing about my personal life really isn't something I wanted to do. However, I decided to write about how I met my husband and how we almost didn't have a first date.*

It was the beginning of April, 2008 and I had just visited with my cousin. We had been talking about how I was getting sick of eating out all the time but didn't want to cook for myself. The next day, she was at work talking to a patient who was complaining of almost the exact same thing. She decided to play matchmaker and set us up. Turns out, he and I went to school together and just seemed to miss each other, every time our paths should have crossed. She told me who he was and when I went home and looked in my yearbook, I believe my exact words were "Oh no! I am *not* dating Opie Taylor!" I almost did not call him.

After a week of debating and deciding what I should do, I broke down and called. He had been out buying his three-year-old daughter a fish and was driving home as we talked. Once he got home, I could hear a rooster crowing. My response to the cock a doodle doo, was "Please tell me that was not a rooster crowing." I informed him I was a city girl and I was not really the country girl type. He informed me it was nice talking to me and we almost hung up. After a few more minutes of talking, we set up our first date. I called my cousin to ask her how much of a "redneck" he was. She lied to me and told me he really wasn't.

To my surprise, he drove a big ol' pickup truck, wore cowboy boots, and owned a few cowboy hats. All I could think of when he showed up, was at least if the date goes bad, he's easy on the eyes. After the indoor football game we attended ended, we drove around and talked for a long while. He had asked me about gathering eggs, my response was something along the lines of "Sure, as long as I get to take my car to the store." I also found out there wasn't just one rooster, there were five!

Flash forward a few months, I was now watching the chickens run through the yard and taking long walks into

the woods to gather sticks for a nighttime bonfire. Maybe it was that I was falling in love with Paul or maybe I was realizing, I'm not the city girl I thought I was.

I will never forget one weekend when his three-year-old daughter was visiting. One of the roosters flapped his wings at her and got aggressive. I decided the bird had to go. I looked at him and said, "I want him gone!" He looked at me and told me he had no idea how to butcher a chicken. That weekend, we bought a book and I learned how to butcher and clean chickens. I look back and find it hard to believe that was so long ago.

I eventually moved in with Paul and we made a home together. For reasons too long to get into, we had to re-home the chickens. Eventually, we ended up getting more birds. I picked out some that I thought were cute and some that would be good egg layers and of course, we had to raise meat birds. Turns out, it's nice not having to drive my car to the store to get eggs. When Paul finally decided to propose, he used a dozen eggs to pop the question and a man with the last name Chick married us.

We have been married for four years now and have been blessed with another daughter. She is learning what it is to grow up with farm animals in her backyard. It is funny when other children get excited about the animals at a petting zoo. She will politely tell the person running it that we have most of the animals there at home.

I have turned out to be a bigger farm girl than he could have imagined. We now have over 30 chickens, five ducks, two goats, bunnies, and a bull calf that lives behind our rental house. My hens are like my babies, some of them have names and if it were up to me, would be allowed in the house after all, Ellie May did it, right? We raise the chicks in our basement until they are big enough to go outside with the rest of the gang and fend for themselves. I have taken my goat for a ride in my truck, he got to ride shotgun and I really didn't seem to mind all of the funny looks I got once people realized it wasn't a dog with me.

Yes, this is not what I had planned for my life, however looking back I would not change it for the world. Well, maybe I would add a few more farm critters. 🐾



# COUNTRYSIDE Survey 2013 Results

There isn't space to run the complete survey results, but here are the highlights.

**Results Key:**  
**Question:**  
 Print survey results: In green  
 Online survey results: In black  
 (xxx) = Number of responses

**1. Have you looked at a copy of COUNTRYSIDE in the past 60 days?**

Yes: 98.2% (1,1060) 88.7% (961)  
 No: 1.8% (20) 11.3% (122)

**2. How many people—other than yourself—read the same copy of COUNTRYSIDE & SMALL STOCK JOURNAL?**

1 person:	31.4% (351)	34.2% (369)
2 people:	23.3% (260)	21.9% (236)
3:	12.2% (136)	8.3% (90)
4:	6.2% (36)	4.5% (49)
5-9:	3.2% (36)	1.1% (12)
10 or more:	0.8% (9)	0%
No one else:	22.7% (254)	27.3% (294)
I have not read it:	0.3% (3)	2.6% (28)

**3. How much time do you typically take to read or look through your copy of COUNTRYSIDE & SMALL STOCK JOURNAL?**

Less than 1 hour:	3.0% (34)	4.6% (49)
1-2 hrs:	32.3% (363)	36.9% (396)
3-4 hrs:	37.4% (421)	32.1% (344)
More than 4:	27.0% (304)	23.2% (249)
I have not read it:	0.3% (3)	3.2% (34)

**4. How long have you subscribed to COUNTRYSIDE & SMALL STOCK JOURNAL?**

Less than a year	11.3% (127)	14.7% (156)
1-2 years:	17.4% (195)	16.3% (173)
3-4 years:	20.0% (224)	17.8% (189)
5-6 years:	13.8% (155)	15.1% (160)
7-10 years:	12.0% (134)	9.5% (101)
10 or more:	20.1% (225)	13.1% (139)
I don't subscribe:	5.4% (60)	13.6% (145)

**6. What other similar magazines do you subscribe to? Please check all that apply.**

Top 5 answers (MEN=Mother Earth News):  
 MEN: 53.9% (497);

Grit: 31.2% (288);  
 Backwoods Home: 24.1% (222);  
 Backyard Poultry: 23.3% (215)  
 Country Living: 19.0% (175)

MEN: 50.7% (525)  
 Backwoods Home: 24.6% (255)  
 Grit: 23.7% (245)  
 Backyard Poultry: 23.5% (243)  
 Hobby Farm: 20.0% (207)

**7. How interested are you in reading about the following topics in COUNTRYSIDE?**

Top 10 answers, print:

Gardening:	71.4% (792)
Preserving food:	65.3% (716)
Self-reliant living:	64.1% (701)
Survival/emergency preparedness:	50.9% (553)
Crops & soils:	48.6% (527)
Chickens/poultry:	43.3% (472)
Country kitchen:	42.0% (464)
Livestock:	38.7% (415)
Water:	36.9% (391)
Alternative energy:	36.4% (397)

Top 10 online:

Gardening	70.9% (718)
Self-reliance:	69% (695)
Preserving:	65.3% (658)
Chickens/poultry:	50.5% (510)
Survival/preparedness:	48.7% (490)
Livestock:	46.4% (468)
Crops & soils:	45.9% (464) tied with
Alternative energy	45.9% (465)
Country kitchen:	43.0% (431)
Water:	37.6% (377)
Homestead business:	33.1% (331)

No interest in (top 5):

1. Alternative housing	17.8% (189)
2. Finance	16.9% (177)
3. Homestead business	12.5% (132)
4. Homestead construction	10.3% (108)
5. Crafts	9.4% (100)
1. Alternative housing	11.5% (115)

2. Finance	8.2%	(82)
3. Crafts	5.6%	(56)
4. Homestead business	5.4%	(54)
5. Construction	5.3%	(53)

**14. In what type of community do you live?**

Urban:	4.1%	6.3%
Suburban:	9.0%	14.8%
Small town:	21.7%	17.7%
Rural:	65.2%	61.2%

**15. Do you own or raise livestock?**

Yes:	56.4%	54.7%
No:	43.6%	45.3%
Skipped question: 44/71		

**16. If you raise livestock, what types of livestock?**

Beef cattle:	29.2%	28.1%
Dairy:	10.8%	9.7%
Chickens:	85.5%	89.2%
Ducks:	23.1%	27.3%
Turkeys:	18.8%	24.3%
Guineas:	7%	15.3%
Other poultry:	11.9%	12.1%
Dairy goats:	19.6%	28.6%
Meat goats:	17%	18.2%
Horses:	28.3%	23.7%
Llamas:	3.8%	2.7%
Alpacas:	1.7%	2.3%
Pigs:	23.5%	26.4%
Rabbits:	27.8%	25.4%
Sheep:	15%	15.3%
Rare/exotic breeds:	4.8%	5.6%

**17. If you raise livestock, why do you raise livestock?**

Meat:	62.8%	70.8%
Dairy:	26.7%	37.4%
Income:	33%	37.9%
4-H/showing:	8.4%	10.6%
Hobby:	55.2%	57.8%

**18. Please describe your level of gardening involvement.**

Avid:	72.8%	66.7%
Occasional:	23.6%	31.0%
None:	3.6%	2.3%

**19. How much of your garden harvest do you preserve?**

None:	10.1%	9.7%
Less than 10%:	13.1%	17.6%
10-25%:	17.3%	20.7%
25-50%:	23.9%	23.6%
More than 50%:	35.6%	28.3%
Answered: 988/1091		
Skipped: 95/49		

**20. How much land do you have devoted to agriculture?**

Less than 1/2 acre:	30.9%	32.7%	330
1/2 - 1 acre:	19.7%	17.6%	178
2 - 5 acres:	13.6%	17.5%	177
6 - 10 acres:	5.4%	6.3%	64
11 - 20 acres:	3.8%	4.4%	44
21 - 40 acres:	6.4%	4.7%	47
More than 40 acres:	10.1%	7.1%	72
I do not have any land devoted to agriculture: 10.1% 9.7% 98			
Answered question: 1,109/1,010			
Skipped question: 31/73			

**21. About how much money, in U.S. dollars, did you spend on your property (such as gardening, livestock, backyard poultry, etc.) last year?**

Less than \$1,000:	47.0%	39.9%
\$1,000 - \$5,000:	33.0%	37.8%
\$5,000 - \$10,000:	7.9%	9.5%
More than \$10,000:	4.7%	7.0%
I did not spend any money on these items last year: 7.4% 5.8%		
Answered question: 1,093/1,007		
Skipped question: 47/76		

**23. In which format would you prefer to read COUNTRYSIDE & SMALL STOCK JOURNAL?**

Print:	98.6%	92%
Online/laptop:	0.4%	2.9%
Tablet:	0.6%	3.4%
Smartphone:	0.2%	0.3%
Haven't read COUNTRYSIDE:	0.3%	1.4%

**23. In which format would you prefer to read COUNTRYSIDE & SMALL STOCK JOURNAL?**

Twitter:	1.9%	6.8%
Facebook:	25.2%	58.7%
LinkedIn:	4.2%	14.4%
Pinterest:	7.4%	20.4%
Google+:	17.0%	17.5%
Flickr:	0.4%	1.0%
Instagram:	1.0%	2.6%
I do not use any of these websites: 64.4%/31.7%		

**Are you: Male/female**

Male:	40.7%	46.2%
Female:	59.3%	53.8%
Answered: 1,107/ 997		
Skipped: 33/ 86		

Married:	65.6%	78.9%
Single:	34.4%	21.1%
Answered: 1,088/995		
Skipped: 52/ 88		

**What's your age?**

Under 25:	1.3%	1.5%
-----------	------	------

25-34:	3.5%	6.3%
35-44:	5.8%	15.7%
45-54:	15.7%	29.9%
55-64:	28.7%	29.7%
65-74:	30.1%	13.3%
75-84:	12.8%	3.3%
Over 85:	2.3%	0.2%

Answered question: 1,111/995

Skipped question: 29/88

**31. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?**

Less than high school degree:	7.0%	0.8%
High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED):	26.6%	12.9%
Some college but no degree:	21.1%	23.1%
Technical or specialty school:	11.4%	12.8%
Associate degree:	9.2%	10.7%
Bachelor degree:	14.7%	24.9%
Graduate degree:	9.8%	4.7%

Answered question: 1,107/978

Skipped question: 33/105

**32. Do you have children at home? What are their ages?**

No: children at home	81.4%	68.4%
Under two years old:	3.4%	4.7%
2 - 5 years old:	5.1%	8.7%
6 -12 years old:	8.2%	16.5%
13 - 17 years old:	10.9%	17.7%

Answered question: 1,043/977

Skipped question: 97/106

**33. If you have children at home, do you home school?**

Yes:	11.9%	11.6%	113
No:	63.8%	23.1%	226

Answered question: 536/977

Skipped question: 604/106

**34. What is your employment status?**

I am unemployed:	5.3%	4.8%
I am retired:	48.4%	25.5%
Full-time homemaker:	11.8%	12.4%
Part-time employment:	12.3%	11.1%
Full-time employment:	22.0%	44.6%
Part-time student:	0.2%	0.6%
Full-time student:	0.0%	1.0%

Answered question: 1,117/977

Skipped question: 23/106

**35. How many years have you lived at your primary home? (This question wasn't on the print version.)**

One year or less:	10.2%
More than one year and less than 5 years:	22.4%
More than 5 years and less than 15 years:	36.9%
More than 15 years and less than 25 years:	16.7%

More than 25 years:	3.7%
Answered question:	976
Skipped question:	107

**37. If you are employed, which of the following best describes your job function?**

*(Many people said there weren't enough choices here. For instance there was no space for self-employment.)*

I am unemployed/retired/a homemaker:	39.9%	38.9%
Accounting/Auditing:	1.8%	1.4%
Administrative:	2.4%	4.0%
Advertising/Marketing:	0.7%	0.8%
Analys:	0.4%	0.5%
Art/Creative Design:	1.0%	0.5%
Business Development:	0.6%	0.3%
Consulting:	0.6%	0.6%
Customer Service:	5.3%	4.8%
Distribution:	1.1%	1.1%
Doctor:	0.7%	0.4%
Educator (E.g., teacher, lecturer, professor) :	4.5%	5.3%
Engineering :	1.4%	2.8%
Farming/Agriculture:	13.1%	6.1%
Finance:	0.7%	0.8%
General Business:	3.1%	3.2%
Health Care Provider (other than doctor or nurse):	5.3%	4.5%
Human Resources:	0.4%	0.5%
Information Technology:	0.7%	3.0%
Legal:	1.1%	1.9%
Management:	1.7%	4.0%
Nurse:	3.5%	2.6%
Production:	2.9%	3.8%
Product Management:	0.4%	0.3%
Project Management:	0.1%	0.2%
Public Relations:	0.3%	0.3%
Purchasing:	---	0.1%
Quality Assurance:	0.8%	0.9%
Research:	0.1%	0.4%
Sales:	2.7%	2.0%
Science:	0.1%	0.9%
Strategy/Planning:	---	0.5%
Supply Chain:	0.4%	1.3%
Training:	0.3%	0.6%
Writing:	1.7%	0.4%

Answered question: 712/970

Skipped question: 428/113

***Thanks to all of you who participated in this survey!***

# Poor Will's COUNTRYSIDE Almanack for Early & Middle Autumn

BY W. L. FELKER

Thustimes doshift; each thing histurn  
does hold;  
New things succeed as former things  
grow old.

—Robert Herrick

## The Ephemeris for September and October The Sun's Progress

The sun moves toward fall at a little more than one degree every three days until it reaches equinox at 10:29 p.m. (EDT) on September 22, entering the sign of Libra at the same moment.

On October 23, a partial eclipse of the sun will be visible in most of North America during the late afternoon, check local sources for exact times.

## The phases of the Puffball Mushroom Moon, the Hickory Nutting Moon, and the Toad and Frog Migration Moon

September's moon is the Puffball Mushroom Moon that presides over the autumn growth of mushrooms, as well as the corn harvest, the start of soybean harvest, and the peak of spider web abundance in the woods. Besides the puffballs, look for hickory nuts, acorns and black walnuts as the Hickory Nutting Moon swells

and ebbs. Throughout the early fall, toads and frogs migrate, reaching their winter quarters under the Frog and Toad Migration Moon

August 25: The Puffball Mushroom Moon is new at 9:13 a.m. In traditional moon naming, this is the Harvest Moon.

September 2: The moon enters its second quarter at 6:11 a.m.

8: The moon is full at 8:38 p.m., reaching Perigee (its position closest to Earth) at the same time.

15: The moon enters its last quarter at 9:05 p.m.

20: Lunar Apogee (the moon's position farthest from Earth).

24: The Hickory Nutting Moon is new at 1:14 a.m.

October 1: The moon enters its second quarter at 2:33 p.m.

6: Lunar Perigee.

8: The moon is full at 5:51 a.m. A total eclipse of the moon, visible in all parts of the United States except much of the Northeast, occurs in the morning.

15: The moon enters its final phase at 2:12 p.m.

18: Lunar Apogee.

23: The Toad and Frog Migration Moon is new at 4:57 p.m.

30: The moon enters its second quarter at 9:48 p.m.

## The Planets

Venus, hiding in Leo, remains out of sight through September, October and November, finally returning as the evening star in Sagittarius on December 5. Jupiter rises well before dawn in Cancer, then moves into Leo, remaining the morning star throughout September and October. Mars is an evening star, visible in the southwest throughout these months, in Scorpio and then in Ophiucus. Saturn in Libra will be too close to the sun for easy observation in early and middle autumn.

## The Stars

The evening sky of September and October tells the story of the season: The Summer Triangle of Cyngus, Lyra and Aquila ripens all the remaining vegetables and field crops

as it moves into the west. Aquarius, Capricorn and Sagittarius along the southern horizon accompany the great grain harvest. Aries and Perseus in the eastern sky bring down the leaves.

## The Shooting Stars

The Alpha Aurigid meteors pass overhead between August 28 and September 9. The Piscid meteors fall through Pisces, in the southern sky, at their best on the night of September 21. The Draconid meteors arrive in the late evenings of October 7 and 8. The Orionids peak on October 17.

## Meteorology

Weather history suggests that cold waves usually cross the Mississippi River on or about the following dates: September 2, 8, 12, 15, 20, 24 and 29; October 2, 7, 13, 17, 23, and 30. Storms can occur prior to the passage of each major front. The period between the 19th through the 25th of September and the same period in October historically bring an increased chance for dangerous weather. Full moon on September 8 and new moon on September 24, full moon on October 8 and new moon on October 23 increase the likelihood of a hurricane coming ashore along the East Coast or a strong frost-bearing cold wave moving across the Plains around those dates. Fish, game, livestock and people tend to feed more and are more active (and more troublesome) as the barometer falls one to three days before these weather systems.

## The Almanack Daybook September

**1:** This is the last week of late summer, and the final tier of wildflowers starts opening throughout the country. Perhaps inspired by the flowers, sheep and goats often begin estrus at this time.

**2:** The moon's entry into its second quarter today increases the chances that the first front of September will be relatively gentle, reducing the chance of frost in the North.

**3:** The last young hummingbirds

leave their nests. Cedar waxwings fly south; bobolinks and woodcocks follow.

4: Bees are awkward and stiff in the cool mornings (a good time to check the hives). Sometimes on sunny days, woolly bear caterpillars swarm across the warm black roads. Bright patches of scarlet sumac and Virginia creeper mark the fencerows.

6: Cobwebs are everywhere in the woods, and on the colder nights, the katydids refuse to chant, and the frogs are silent.

7: The full September moon and changes in the weather could have a negative influence on the joints of mammals.

8: Today's full moon, combined with lunar perigee, today makes frost highly likely in the northern tier of states.

9: Put in root crops and spring bulbs, divide perennials and dig in shrubs and trees in the first week of September under the moon's third quarter.

10: Watch for foot rot to increase

in your herd or flock with wet September pastures.

11: Squirrels scatter buckeye hulls along the trails; locust pods fall beside them. The rich scent of late summer pollen is almost gone by end of the week.

12: Today marks the beginning of a decline in the percentage of daily sunshine, a downward shift that continues in the whole country through December (the year's darkest month).

13: In northern fields, the planting of winter wheat gets underway. Throughout the South, cotton growers defoliate their cotton plants.

14: Doves stop calling in the morning until late winter.

15: When the mid-September weather system moves along the 40<sup>th</sup> Parallel, brisk afternoons in the 50s or 60s are four times as likely to occur as during the first week of the month.

16: The dark waning moon of September's third week favors vaccinations, surgery, and general livestock care.

17: In the final two weeks of September, a rapid deterioration occurs in all the wildflowers except the goldenrod and asters

18: Most black walnuts have fallen.

19: April foliage revives as the canopy thins, beginning Second Spring.

20: Pollen season declines quickly from now on, and lunar apogee today decreases the likelihood of seasonal affective disorders.

21: Buzzards gather to ponder migration. Above the Mason-Dixon Line, the cobwebs that blocked summer paths become rare.

22: The first tier of trees, which includes the ashes, cottonwoods, box elders, hickories, and locusts, turns quickly after equinox.

23: Prepare cold frames in northern states, and then seed your late-autumn greens for salads.

24: Today's new moon increases the chances for freezing temperatures deep into the Lower Midwest.

25: The waxing Hickory Nutting

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Moon favors the seeding of winter grains.

**26:** Also as the moon waxes, plant fall peas. Set out cabbage, kale and collard sets. Seed the lawn.

**27:** Insects become less common in the field and garden as the number of pollen-bearing flowers dwindles.

**28:** In Wisconsin, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon and Washington State, the cranberry harvest begins as berries darken in the cooler weather.

**29:** Average temperatures now start to fall at the rate of four degrees per week almost everywhere in the nation.

**30:** Milkweed pods burst in the wind, prelude to middle fall.

## October

**1:** Take advantage of the moon's weak position today (as it enters its second quarter) to work with livestock and talk to your children and spouse.

**2:** Check the weight of your beehives to insure that bees have enough honey to make it through the winter.

**3:** Test your soil after harvest and fertilize as needed.

**4:** Along the 40<sup>th</sup> Parallel, tulip trees, sassafras, elms, and sweet gums change to full deep yellow.

**5:** The Hindu feast of Navaratri or Navadurga begins today and ends on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Kids and lambs born in the late winter and spring may be suitable for this market.

**6:** Lunar perigee today greatly increases the chance for freezing temperatures all across the northern tier of states.

**7:** Lunar stress increases throughout the country as perigee combines with full moon.

**8:** Full moon today increases the chance for cold and precipitation. But don't forget to look for the lunar eclipse this morning as the moon rises.

**9:** Favorable October lunar times for planting root crops, setting spring flower bulbs and transplanting perennials occur as the Hickory Nutting Moon wanes throughout the next



two weeks.

**10:** Middle fall comes to the Great Plains, the lower Midwest, and the Middle Atlantic area this week. The maples are transformed, and the ash, locust, hickory, red mulberry, cottonwood, crab apple, redbud, box elder, buckeye and walnut leaves come down in average years.

**11:** Best lunar grain harvest conditions, as well as the most propitious lunar times for clipping hair, trimming hooves, worming livestock, and having surgery, should occur between now and the 23rd as the moon wanes.

**12:** The tips of many spruce trees are putting on pale fresh growth

**13:** Deer rutting season has opened in many areas.

**14:** The Muslim feast of Eid Al-Adha (the Festival of Sacrifice) takes place between today and the 16<sup>th</sup>. Consider selling kids and lambs to this market.

**15:** Light frost starts to touch

down at higher elevations across the South. Snow season spreads across the northern states.

**16:** Almost all the hickory nuts, acorns and Osage fruits have fallen, tempting squirrels to leave the high branches.

**17:** Before new moon, dig up cannas, caladiums, tuberous begonias and gladiolus bulbs to avoid damage from the cold.

**18:** You may want to set up your own impromptu roadside stand for your Halloween crops. Some people use the "honor system" and have their customers serve themselves and put money in a locked container.

**19:** The darkening moon will lie overhead during the middle of the day, favoring daytime hunting. Since the moon will be below the county near midnight, raccoons and opossums could be moving more at that time.

**20:** Deer are in estrus throughout central states, more likely than usual

to appear suddenly in front of your car.

**21:** Vast flocks of robins are fluttering, chattering, whinnying, and moving south through the high trees along the river valleys.

**22:** Tomorrow's new moon is expected to increase the likelihood for cold and wet weather.

**23:** Don't forget to watch for the partial eclipse of the sun during the late afternoon.

**24:** Seed winter greens under the new Frog and Toad Migration Moon.

**25:** The dark of the October moon is a fine time for dividing and transplanting your perennials.

**26:** Gradually increase feeding of grain and free choice hay as the weather cools. This is especially important for pregnant livestock; an undernourished animal not only may develop health problems but will probably pass problems on to offspring. Improper feeding can also cause premature births.

**27:** Finish the fences and outbuilding repairs before the weather turns mean in November. Feed your trees after all their leaves are down.

**28:** In the cranberry regions of the country, most of the berries have been brought in from the bogs.

**29:** This week's dark moon is the best lunar time this month for pruning shrubs and trees to retard growth, and for killing weeds.

**30:** As the leaves come down, scouting the canopy for squirrels may become more rewarding.

**31:** Rutting activity for deer in most areas should increase now and peak during in the middle of November, sometimes coinciding with the thinning of foliage in the undergrowth.

**Lunar feeding patterns for people and beasts**

Best hunting and fishing should occur with the moon above the earth. The second-best time occurs with the moon below the earth.

**Date: Above; Below**

August 25–September 2: Afternoons; Midnight to Dawn

3–8: Evenings; Mornings  
9–15: Midnight to Dawn; Afternoons

16–23: Mornings; Evenings  
September 24–October 1: Afternoons; Midnight to Dawn

2–8 : Evenings; Mornings  
9–15: Midnight to Dawn; Afternoons

16–23: Mornings; Evenings  
24–31: Afternoons; Midnight to Dawn

**Winners of the July-August Sckrambler Sweepstakes**

Exactly 66 readers solved the last puzzle, and a prize of \$5 was promised to the 1st, the 10th, the 25th and the 66th to reply correctly. The 1st correct respondent was Juanita Troyer of Mack, Colorado; the 10th was Marcia Delacerda of Lakewood, New York; the 25th was Donald Rose of Newberry, South Carolina; and the 66th was Mrs. John Herschburger of Westby, Wisconsin. Congratulations to all the winners and to those who helped them win by entering!

**Answers to the July-August Sckrambler**

TAN	ANT
GBU	BUG
TCENSI	INSECT
DIPSRE	SPIDER
QUITOSOM	MOSQUITO
LYF	FLY
EBE	BEE
NMTSAI	MANTIS
LOYR-PLYO	ROLY-POLY
CRCKTEI	CRICKET
AIDDYTK	KATYDID
DACCIA	CICADA
EEELTB	BEETLE
PHIDA	APHID
TERBUTYLF	BUTTERFLY
GGCHRIE	CHIGGER
OEULS	LOUSE
LAFE	FLEA
CAROH	ROACH
TIME	MITE

**The September-October Sckrambler: Rodents!**

If you are the 2nd, the 21st, the 42nd, the 62nd, the 100th or the 150th person to return your correct Sckrambler solutions by my deadline

of August 25 to Poor Will, P.O. Box 431, Yellow Springs, OH 45387, you will win \$5. If you happen to find a typo, you may simply skip that word without penalty.

TAR  
AEAH  
VEABRE  
MOTRAM  
SERTHMA  
RODO SEMOU  
UIEANGA GIP  
LMMNGEI  
LOVE  
AIRPREI DGO  
BBRATI  
RRIUQLES  
LDFIE SEMOU  
ROPCUPENI  
CHHCNLLIIA  
PHOGRE  
KUMNHCP  
TTOONCLAIT  
REWHS  
SKRATUM

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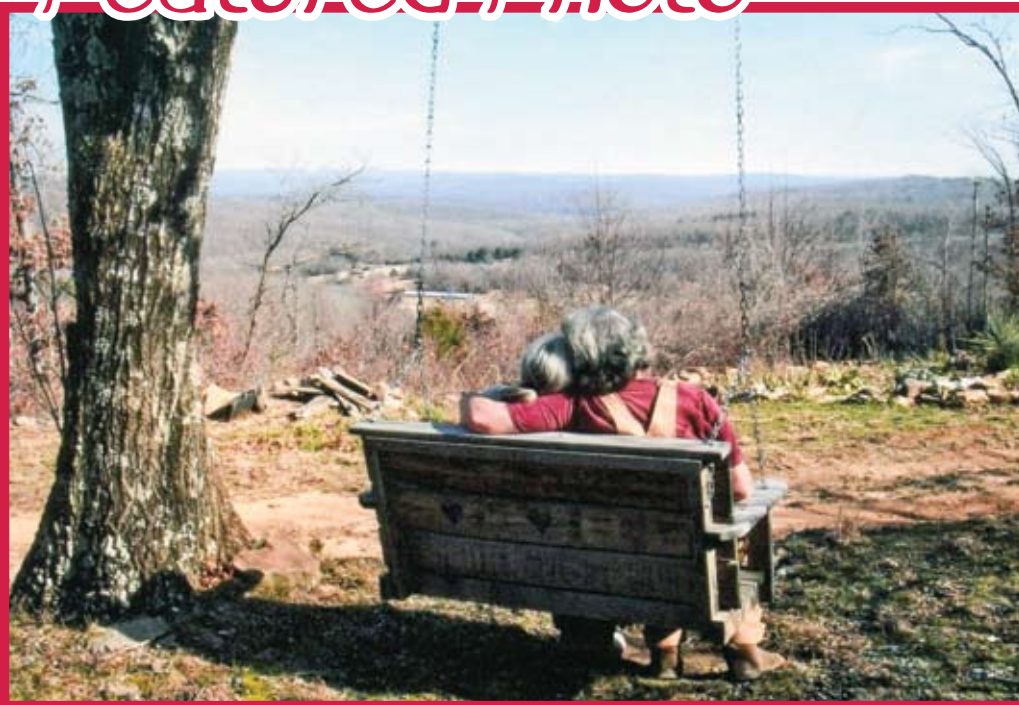
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*Any photos received will become the property of Countryside Publications and can be used at anytime. Countryside Publications retains the right to publish and/or reproduce any and all photos submitted in future issues or publicity, with or without mention of source.*

## Featured Photo



This is where we sit for breaks here at Sunrise Slope. Our little piece of heaven. – Larry Anderson & Vicki Gorrell, Arkansas



A male Woodpecker drilling an entrance hole into our front palm tree. – Brenda Crispen, Florida



These fox live under my shed. Each March one of the females comes to raise her litter, this is the 3rd year now. – Karen Edwards, Indiana



Haying the old-fashioned way! – Sarah Cangialosi, Virginia



Brother and sisterly love. – Terri Thornton, Kansas



This is Hilda – she kept me company in the garden last summer and may, or may not, have scared away any crows. – Cindy Rasely, Indiana



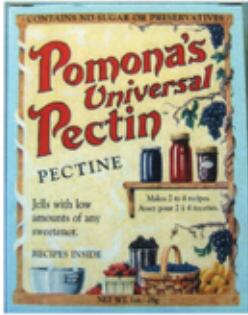
Two of my granddaughters in my country kitchen. This is where I do most of my canning. We have spent many happy hours in this kitchen. – Shirley Lasiter, Missouri



This is my granddaughter Katelyn picking raspberries in Grandma's secret spot. – Robin Smiley, Michigan



A shot from our homestead. – Joy Hoskin, Nova Scotia, Canada



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THE ROCKING ROBIN RANCH, Prescott, Arizona. 928-925-6886. <www.kunekunepig.com> Registered: Heritage KuneKune pigs, mini Jersey cattle, Nubian goats & Bulldoggers.

### Arkansas

FARMERS HEREFORD HOGS, Thomas Hardin, 13776 E. Hwy 56, Ash Flat, AR 72513. 870-219-6285. Registered Hereford hogs.

### Missouri

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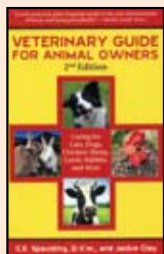
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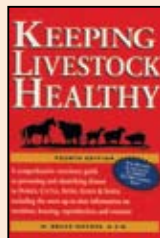
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After chores:

# A humorous look at chores

By SALLY LYN BRUNELLE  
CATUS FARM, SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

As I grow older, I find that my mobility has lessened, forcing me to use more of the available resources on the farm. Recently I had to remove some invasive grasses from the area where we are building a raised bed greenhouse. My two dogs and my daughters' dachshund all came to help and the following photoss were the result of our little work party. Hope you enjoy them.



Low impact, eco-friendly, low fume, easy on the back, new and improved Weiner Weeder!



Operator's position for the Weiner Weeder!



So easy to operate even a child can use.



Consumers report these Weeder models are not worth the price.



Testing has shown that with deep roots the back end does come off the ground, but does not interfere with efficiency. Battery life is impressive & the self cleaning of the jaws is handy. We suspect recharging will take several hours. It appears the energy is near depletion.



Initial results of test run show significant weed removal. Unit tends to wander when cycle is close to ending.



Unit preparing to shut down.



Recharging station.



Eco recycling center for green waste (matter of opinion on what is waste).

This little dog has provided hours of entertainment, is an excellent rodent control expert, and earlier this year due to a slipped disk was completely paralyzed from the middle of his back through his hindquarters. Not feeling that surgery was the right option, we gave him holistic and physical therapy, resulting in 95% recovery. "Banjo" is a happy and fearless ranch hand. 🌻

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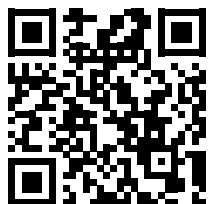
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