

The magazine of modern homesteading

# COUNTRYSIDE

*& Small Stock Journal*

Volume 105 • Number 3  
MAY/JUNE 2021

**HÜGELKULTUR  
RAISED BED**

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**COLOSTRUM FOR  
DAIRY CALVES**

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**CHICKENS AND  
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# I AM COUNTRYSIDE

GALLOWAY FARMS — FEATURING BROOKE GALLOWAY



**H**i, my name is Brooke and I live on a farm in Ohio with my husband, Chase, and five children. My husband comes from a long line of farmers, and when he was little, his dad branched off on his own and now so have we!

On top of our normal daily to-do's, Chase works outside of the home full time. The world today does not make it easy to make a living being a farmer. But we can't imagine doing anything else and we do whatever we can to make our dream work. We currently raise cattle for custom freezer beef, feeder calves for 4-H projects, and grow soybeans and corn. All of the corn we grow goes into the feed for the cattle and we bale the corn stalks for extra bedding in the winter for the cattle. The soybeans work as supplemental income for our farm.

We are busy year-round whether it's getting equipment ready for planting season, the actual planting season, harvesting, baling, spreading manure (there is lot of that to do), and everything that comes with raising cattle.

In the summer, we plant a decent-sized garden and we preserve as much as we can for the winter months. Nothing beats eating food that you raised.

We live very busy lives especially with raising five kids on a farm, but I truly believe we are teaching our kids values that will last a lifetime. And some of those values can't be taught in a classroom. Yes, some things take longer when you have the kids helping, but we are raising the next generation of American farmers and we try to teach them as much as we can about agriculture and its importance to the world.

There's no better feeling than seeing all of your hard work pay off whether it be seeing happy customers buying beef or at harvest time seeing your crops be finished. I want my children to know the feeling of pride.

Happiness is free, and even though there are a lot of stressful moments and times when money is tight running a farm, life on a farm also brings all kinds of free happiness. In this world today, we need farmers more than ever! We will continue to grow our farm as much as we can, doing what we love and growing for the generations to come. Our kids are our fortune in this life, but farming and raising cattle are our legacy to pass down to them. 🌱

---

Follow Brooke at  
Facebook: **Galloway Farms**



**Previous Page Main Photo:** America needs farmers and ranchers.

**Previous Page Inset:** Brooke, Chase, and kids. (Left to right: Maeryn, Boyd, Millie, Ryder, and Mabel.) This is the field that is behind our house. We rent multiple other fields for our crops.

**This Page Top:** Farming brings a lot of stress, hard work, and things not going the way you planned. But it also brings a lot of happiness and proud moments. We can't imagine doing anything else. Pictured: Brooke and Chase.

**This Page Bottom:** When planting season starts all depends on the weather. And when it starts, we are very busy. We plant soybeans for supplemental income and corn for feed for our cattle. There are a lot of hours that go into it. Getting equipment ready for planting, getting the fields ready, and then actually planting.



1

Happiness is free, and even though there are a lot of stressful moments and times when money is tight running a farm, life on a farm also brings all kinds of free happiness.



3

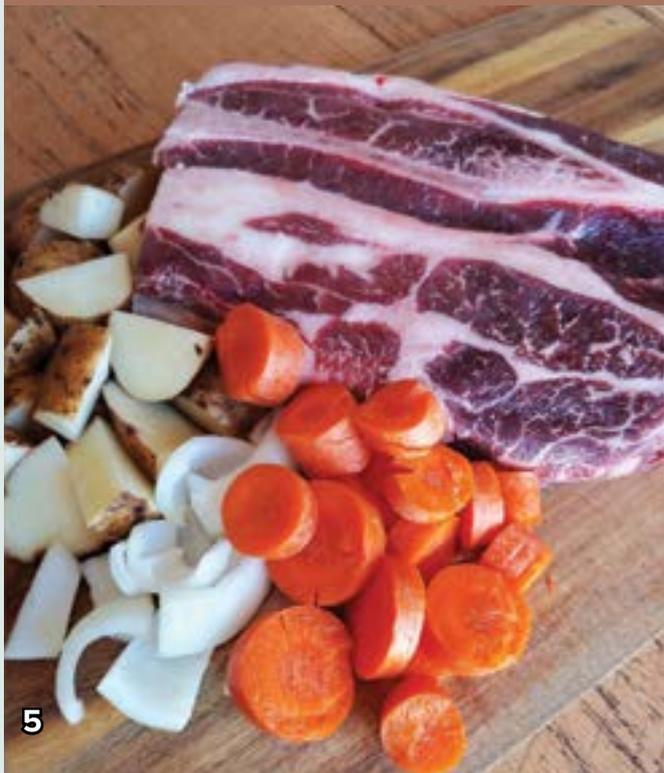


2



4

**IN A CROCKPOT ADD A BEEF CHUCK ROAST, CARROTS, ONIONS, POTATOES, AND A 1/2 CAN OF ROOTBEER (OR A WHOLE CAN). ADD YOUR FAVORITE SPICES, COOK ON LOW FOR SIX TO EIGHT HOURS AND DINNER WILL BE DONE!**



**1** Millie may only be three but she is all farm girl. She is such a big helper and loves everything about farming and cattle. Her dad is her favorite person to do it with. Pictured: Chase and Millie.

**2** Driving around checking fields is always a fun job in the summer. The kids get so much pride out of seeing the fields grow.

**3** This is our oldest, Boyd. He is so passionate about farming and agriculture. He knows so much already and I can't wait to see him grow and expand his knowledge about what he loves to do. Pictured: Brooke and Boyd.

**4** These boys are all about life on a farm. They love when we get our new groups of feeder calves, which is typically every six to eight weeks.

**5** We post beef recipes to our Facebook page so follow along for all kinds of great recipes!

**6** We sell custom freezer beef which typically gets sold by  $\frac{1}{8}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$ , and whole steers. But we also do a hamburger bundle, beef bundle, and a stew and skillet bundle. The bundles give our customers the option of trying our beef before buying a large quantity. And it also is a very affordable option and is great if you want beef from your local farmer but don't have the freezer space for the other options! If there are farms in your area that sell beef, try them out and try to buy as much as you can from your local farmers. Whether it be beef, chicken, pork, turkey, eggs, produce. Whatever is local in your area, try to support local farms as much as you can.

**7** There is a lot of work that goes into our way of living and they are right there next to us for everything.

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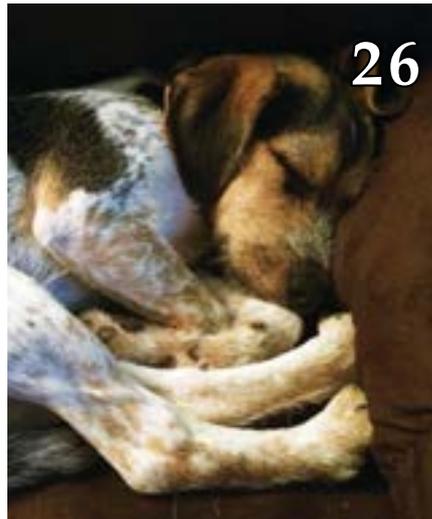
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ON THE COVER | A little down time with the bees.  
— Karli Amonite @heritagehillsfarmstead

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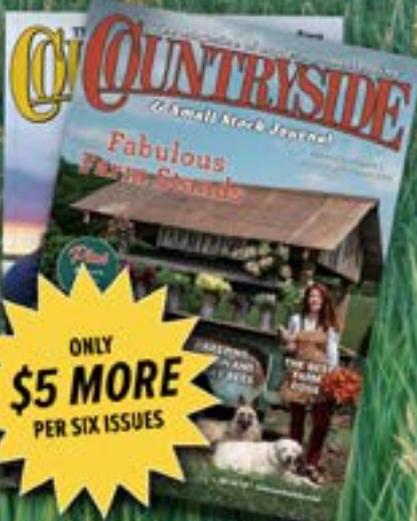
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# COUNTRYSIDE

*& Small Stock Journal*

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#### EDITORIAL

**Ann Tom, Editor**

editor@countrySIDEMAG.COM

**Steph Merkle, Content Director**

smerkle@countrySIDEMAG.COM

**Marissa Ames**

Editorial Assistant

**Samantha Ingersoll**

Publication Designer

#### ADVERTISING

**Alicia Soper, Advertising Director**

asoper@countrySIDEMAG.COM

(715) 829-7330

**Kelly Weiler**

kweiler@countrySIDEMAG.COM

(715) 965-1234

#### COUNTRYSIDE'S MAIN HOMESTEAD

**CountrySide**

P.O. Box 566, Medford, WI 54451

[iamcountryside.com](http://iamcountryside.com)

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## Our Philosophy

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

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

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

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

## Contact Us

**PHONE:** (970) 392-4419

**ADDRESS:** P.O. Box 566, Medford, WI 54451

**ADVERTISING OFFICE:** [advertising@countrySIDEMAG.COM](mailto:advertising@countrySIDEMAG.COM)

**EDITORIAL OFFICE:** [editor@countrySIDEMAG.COM](mailto:editor@countrySIDEMAG.COM)

**CUSTOMER SERVICE/BOOK ORDERS:**  
[customerservice@countrySIDEMAG.COM](mailto:customerservice@countrySIDEMAG.COM)

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## FROM THE EDITOR

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As the temperatures rise and we welcome summer, I'm excited to grab my fishing poles and head to my favorite fishing hole.

When I was a kid, my parents owned a cottage on a lake. My family and I spent a lot of time there and I spent a lot of time fishing. I fished for bluegills, crappies, walleye, northern pike, bass, musky, catfish, and occasionally I would hook into a pesky turtle.

One day, my sister and I took a little trip around the bay in my rowboat. I would row a bit, then fish a bit, and row, and fish some more. All of a sudden, I got a big snag that wouldn't let loose. I reached into the water, grabbed the line, and pulled up while the snag was slowly coming up to the surface. The big stick that I thought I had hooked into was not a stick at all. It was the biggest snapping turtle I had ever seen! And it was not happy with me at all. With it hissing and its mouth wide open (inches from my hand that was holding the

line) I screamed, my sister screamed, and I let go of the line immediately. Meanwhile, my sister was yelling at me that I could have lost my hand. Luckily the only thing that I lost was the hook at the end of my line when the line snapped and the turtle swam back to the bottom of the lake.

Although it would have made a huge pot of delicious turtle soup, I was okay with the fact that it got away. After all, there was no room in my little boat for such a beast.

Needless to say, I gained some smarts that day. Since then, I have never reached into the water not knowing what may be lurking at the end of the line.

I hope that if you're able to get out to your favorite fishing hole this summer, you have lots of luck. I would love to hear your stories, so drop me a line at the address below. I look forward to hearing from you!



Ann Tom  
Editor, *Countryside*

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

*Countryside* Editor Letter  
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# Country Conversation & Feedback

Contact us at: P.O. Box 566, Medford, WI 54451; editor@countysidemag.com

## In Response to Countryside Jan/Feb 2021

Countryside Editor,

What a nice issue (Jan./Feb. 2021)! It was packed with great articles from "Retiring on the Homestead," "A Complete Bug Out Bag List," "Soay Sheep," and "Hot and Cold Process Lard Soap Recipes."

I received a come-along ("A Salute to the Mighty Come-Along") as a Christmas gift from my daughter one year and used it for pulling cows into the hoof trimming chute, occasionally to pull a big calf during birth, and tightening an eight-foot-high elk fence. It was the best present I ever got. We wore it out!

The article on hacking sleep cycles left out something that I enjoy — reading before falling asleep. Maybe not a thrilling mystery, but a familiar book that you've read before.

Keep it up! I really enjoyed this issue!

Sincerely,

— Sue Keith, New York

Hi Sue,

Thank you for taking the time to write and share your very nice words, along with the great tip on falling asleep. Reading is something I enjoy doing to fall asleep as well. It works like a charm! I hope you find this issue just as enjoyable.

— Editor

## In Response to Hands-On Homesteading, Special Issue 2020

Hello Ann,

I hope this finds you well and busy in a good way!

I finally got around to the Hands-On Homesteading issue of *Countryside* magazine, after my husband had been hogging it ...

There are a couple of things I'd like to mention that caught my eye when leafing through the magazine to decide where to begin: the article on growing herbs in wine barrels by Romie Holl:

I've been growing vegetables and herbs in wine barrels for 15 years because our "soil" consists mostly of rocks and oak roots and I'm a Lake County UC Master Gardener.

Living in the wine country helps to have fairly easy access to these, even though the growing popularity of planting containers has driven up the price in recent years, as Romie's price quote shows.

I'm not sure where Romie lives, but here in many places in California, the air is so hot and dry that the wooden staves of the wine barrels shrink in a few days and cause the metal rings to drop and the barrel to fall apart if you do not keep it wet at all times. For this reason, I do not use a plastic liner in my barrels. The moist soil is what actually keeps the barrel from collapsing.

I do prop them up on bricks, just like Romie, to keep the bottom from rotting prematurely and to prevent the oak roots from invading the barrel and stealing the water (I learned that the hard way).

The bottom layer of pea gravel, which he recommends for better drainage, and which many people (including myself in the beginning) use for that

purpose, actually does not improve drainage, as hard as that seems to believe:

<https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=38681>

The second thing I noticed when perusing the mag was the incredibly cute pasta angel in Julia Hollister's article. I have to admit that I love the way they look and have to applaud her for her imagination!

The only problem with them is the glitter. I know, I know, who doesn't love the look of glitter? I certainly do! But I don't use it anymore, since I've been made aware of how bad it is for our environment.

It basically never goes away and causes havoc with marine life:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2017/11/glitter-plastics-ocean-pollution-environment-spd/>

And what's interesting, the so-called "biodegradable" glitter seems to be no better:

<https://news.yahoo.com/biodegradable-glitter-could-bad-environment-185440605.html>

I don't mean to be Debbie Downer, but I'm constantly learning myself, and, as a Master Gardener, I'm supposed to share what I've learned ... I appreciate your great magazine and all the intrepid homesteaders sharing their experience. Keep it up!

— Gabriele

## In Response to "Rowdy the Buffalo" (March/April 2021)

A big thank you for publishing Gina Stack's story about Rowdy the buffalo in your March/April 2021 issue of *Countryside* magazine. Reading this story left me with a warm feeling and a renewed hope in humankind that I believe has been missing for awhile. Keep 'em coming.

— John, Santa Cruz, California

I enjoy the magazine very much.  
It always brings a smile to my face  
when I pull it from my mailbox.  
I get a lot from every issue!

— Rich G., Virginia

## Homemade Seed Starters

I have been saving the plastic containers that fresh fruit comes in like strawberries, blueberries, etc. They have holes at the top and the sides so I line them with foil and place cut-to-fit cardboard egg containers inside. I fill them with potting soil, place a seed in them, water gently, close the lid, and place them in a sunny windowsill.

If I have no egg containers, I use toilet paper rolls. I cut slits on the bottom then fold under, creating a cup-like container. I cut them down to fit inside the fruit container before filling them with potting soil.

Once the seedlings grow tall enough to reach the lid of the container, I simply cut the lid off.

When ready to plant, I place the egg carton or toilet paper roll right in the ground.

— Diana Johnson, Lima, Ohio

## In Response to "Flock Files: How to Tell if Eggs are Bad" (Jan/Feb 2021)

In the real world where your free-range chickens do not always lay their eggs in your store-bought nest boxes or even your homemade ones, you are apt to find a nest in the woods, along a creek, or most anywhere else, sometimes three or four hundred feet from their coop. You hear the hens cackling and you go looking to find a nest of up to 20 eggs or so, laid over a period of days or weeks.

Take a fake egg and mark it with a pencil or marker to leave as a "nest egg" so the hens will continue to lay there.

The way I tell if the egg is good or bad is to shake it, in short passes past my ear. A bad egg will have a slosh feel to it as you shake it. Maybe even a slosh sound, but as the egg seems to reveal whether it is good or not in six to 10 strokes back and forth, in an up and down motion.

Also, how slick the shell is, compared to a newly laid egg is a good indication.

Discard the obviously bad ones, the ones that have that "slosh" feel. Crack the rest in a bowl or cup to inspect, unless they are obvious new ones.

I enjoy your magazine.

P.S. When you find a nest that the hen is setting on to hatch eggs, mark all the eggs in the nest with a pencil. That way, when a hen comes along and lays in the nest, you will know which ones are freshly laid and which ones have been sat on. Take the fresh ones out.

— Robbie Smith, Texas

## The Swing

In June of 2017, my daughter and I had a big auction and sold everything we thought we could do without and moved to a small town in Florida.

We have kept in touch with our home church and receive a church bulletin each week. I also receive a letter from Toni, a member of the Church Altar Society. It's a colored page with a poem typed on it with drawings around it to go with the poem.

One week, I was surprised to open the letter to find the poem, "The Swing," by Robert Louis Stevenson. I had not read that poem in its entirety since I was a student in Miss Grinninger's first, second, third, and fourth-grade room in Lucine, Oklahoma, more than 80 years ago.

In the back of the schoolroom was a small bookcase with three shelves and a few books on them. One small book had the poem, "The Swing," in it. I fell in love with that poem and the drawing of the little girl on the swing, with her ponytail flying. I wrote and thanked Toni for her letter.

Toni wrote back with the following:

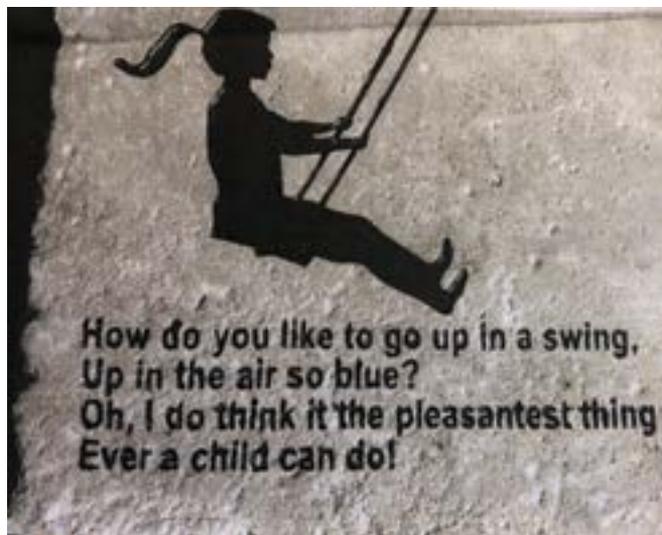
"Let me tell you about 'The Swing' poem. When my brother and I were younger, our front porch had just a big, square stone as a step up. When our parents built a new house on the same lot, they just moved the stone over to the side where it lay for more than 50 years.

"When our parents passed away, we were getting the house ready to sell and I couldn't bear to just leave the stone there. My sister's birthday was coming up in a couple of months, so I contacted our local monument place to pick it up. I had them carve into it a girl with a ponytail (my sister wore one when she was a child) on a swing, with just the first stanza of the poem.

"When my sister received the stone, she cried and I did, too. Now it's in her front yard to look at every time we go in and out.

"We didn't have much as kids but our dad made us a swing. We spent many a day swinging. Thank you for the shared memory, Toni."

— Pauline McKenzie, Florida



### THE SWING

How do you like to go up in a swing,  
Up in the air so blue?

Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing  
Ever a child can do!

Up in the air and over the wall,  
Till I can see so wide,

Rivers and trees and cattle and all  
Over the countryside —

Till I look down on the garden green,  
Down on the roof so brown —

Up in the air I go flying again,  
Up in the air and down!

— Robert Louis Stevenson

## In Response to "Skipley Farm: Making Money on a Small Orchard" (Sept/Oct 2020)

On our property in Australia, we have been losing most of our fruit to flocks of cockatoos for the last few years. They strip the fruit when it is still unripe, even green. Netting stops them but is difficult to put up and no good for large trees. We did have a fake eagle but maybe not high enough. I wish we had built a large netted area and planted dwarf varieties inside of it. They took the fruit from apples, pears, almonds, and apricots. Roselle (a parrot) prefers the cherries and plums but left the plums that are guarded by a fake owl.

— M. Child, Australia

## In Response to “DIY Cattle Panel Trellis” (Nov/Dec 2020)

I use cattle panels for a lot of gardening purposes. I too have made arches for grapes, pole beans, and cucumbers. I’ve also cut them and tied the cut ends to use as tomato supports. In a straight line, I’ve planted my thornless blackberries. Cattle panels can be used for a lot of different ideas and purposes.

Thank you for your article and for letting others know how easily arches can be used in gardening.

— Richard Souders

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## Cracked Fingers Hack

With summer coming and working outside, my hands take some abuse and get dry and cracked. When this happens, I get my Chapstick® and put a little bit on the finger that is cracked and cover it with a Band-Aid®. It works wonders on lips, so I figured maybe it would help on crack fingers. I am amazed at how good it works.

— Diana Johnson Lima, Ohio

## May/June Question of the Month

Foraging may seem daunting at first until you’re familiar with the edible food that may be growing right on your own property. Once you’ve learned about various edible plants, what are your favorites to forage?

*Send your favorites to:*

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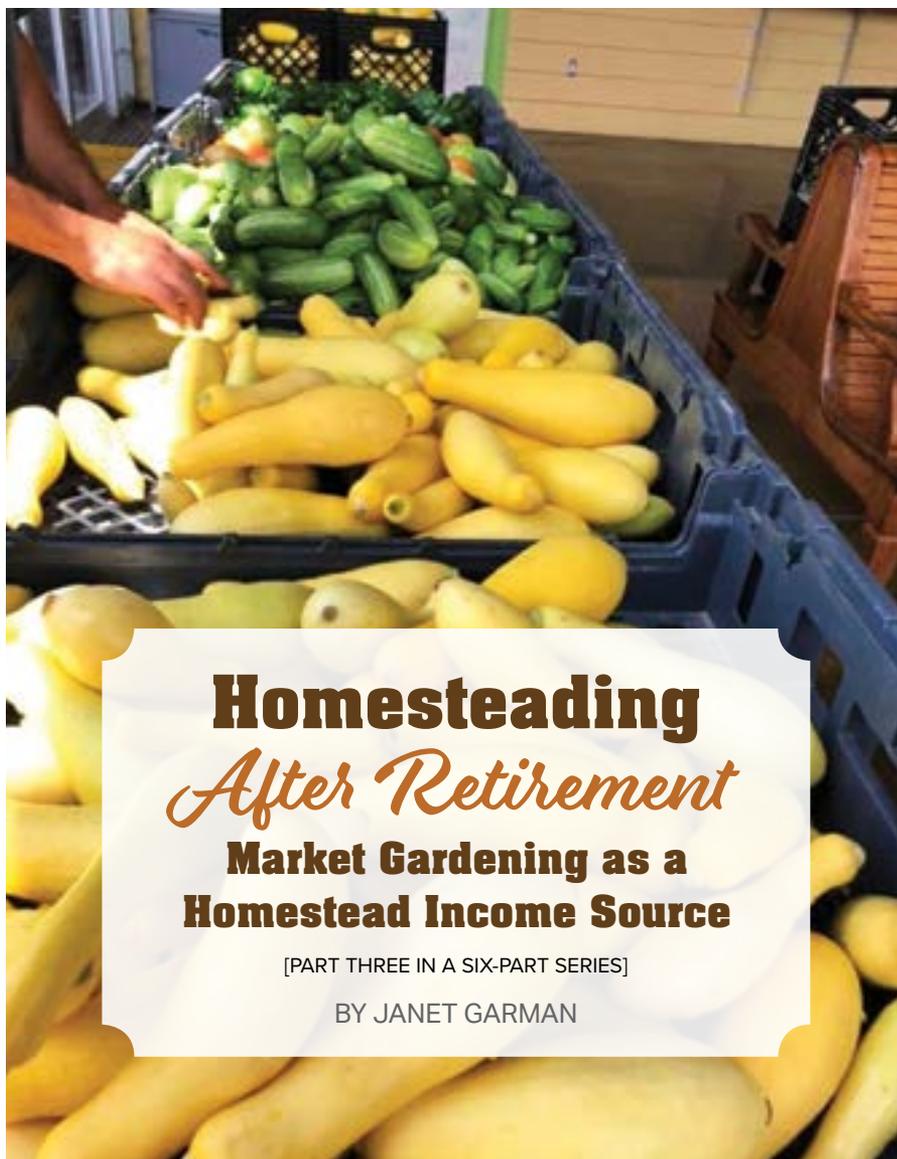
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## Homesteading *After Retirement* Market Gardening as a Homestead Income Source

[PART THREE IN A SIX-PART SERIES]

BY JANET GARMAN

Photos by Patti Alderman.

**I**S RUNNING A MARKET GARDEN BUSINESS a good fit for retirement life? This installment of the Homesteading After Retirement series involves an area of homesteading that I have absolutely no experience in doing. While we do garden and enjoy our fresh produce, we rarely grow enough to come close to selling the excess at a market. We share our surplus with family and neighbors. In addition, everything I know about selling at the weekly farmers markets has been gleaned from the customer side of the aisles. I was not dissuaded, though. After many years of interacting in the farming and homestead blogging communities, I knew I could call on some very experienced market gardeners to add market gardening to this series.

### Meet the Market Gardening Experts

The two gardening gurus I chose to talk with have decades of experience in selling produce and food items at the local markets. Let me introduce you to my experts.

Patti Alderman, of Alderman Farms, has been selling through the local

farmers markets for over 12 years. Her children grew up learning how to graciously interact with the customers and handle money. Patti began at the market selling bread and dip mixes. Eventually, the garden space grew, and she began to bring vegetables to sell. Since her customer base was well-established, it was an easier transition.

May Vang is part of a farm and market selling family. May explained to me that the family members all do what they can on the farm. Currently, they provide produce for more than one weekly market. While all families will handle the responsibilities of farming differently, May explains that everyone must be committed to the team. Flexibility and being open-minded about making changes are two factors she recommends for success.

### How to Get Started

Start small and build your clientele. The first step is to check with the market manager. Ask for guidance about what products are lacking in the market location. Look at the pricing that vendors are setting. It is important to come in as a supportive member of the market and not try to undercut other vendor's prices.

Be prepared for the slow start. Customers will need time to get to know you and your products.

May offered some history from her family. "You will need to be willing to try new produce and see if it meets the needs of your customers. My parents during their first few years grew only Asian vegetables because that's what they were used to growing. However, those vegetables did not meet the need of their customers, so after a few years, they turned their attention elsewhere. They had to learn to be willing to cater to the needs and the taste palettes of their consumers. As you build your business, customers will make it a point to ask you and let you know

what they are looking for, which will help you with the following year's crop choice."

If you are willing to answer people's questions, a trust will begin to develop. Consider offering samples or tossing in a new product sample with the items they are buying.

Patti shared the following, "You have to get to know your market where you will know what vegetables or value-added items to bring. At my market, I brought pattypan squash, and the customers were not familiar with that. It wasn't until there were not any yellow squash left that they tried it and came back for more. It is good to tell them how to cook things or give them a recipe card. The same thing happened when I grew Japanese long cucumber. They are a great cucumber, in my opinion, but they are very long, and customers thought they would have hard, big seeds. I decided to give samples and gave a few away. The next market, they came back asking for more! You have to have a plan when introducing new things, and giving samples is a good way to let people try things."

Always ask for feedback when

they come back to the market. May Vang also stressed that you should start with a small amount of good basics that you can also use, instead of an overwhelming variety.

Once you know your customers and the market's demographics, consider adding additional products to the market. Think outside of the box of veggies. Patti Alderman, who also wears the hat of market manager at her market, stresses that you need to understand the market rules. Not all markets allow non-food items.

If you get the approval, she suggests some of the following products might bring you additional revenue.

- ✓ Herbs
- ✓ Breads, muffins, and pastries
- ✓ Dairy products (check local regulations)
- ✓ Meat
- ✓ Jams and jellies
- ✓ Seasoning mixes
- ✓ Pickles
- ✓ Fresh eggs
- ✓ Flowers
- ✓ Berries
- ✓ Started vegetable plants



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### TIME AND SANITY SAVING TIPS

- ✓ Share the work and help each other with tasks.
- ✓ Do not keep track of who is doing more; work until the jobs are done.
- ✓ Make sure to stay hydrated! Eat a well-balanced diet.
- ✓ Talk to other farmers when you are having issues with crops or land. Advice might be as close as the next farm down the road.
- ✓ Weed around the plants while you are picking produce for the market.



### The Bottom Line

Gardening is not a sure bet. Weather, blight, and other natural factors can greatly impact the harvest. Some years will be bountiful, and some will be less than spectacular. Be prepared to work hard during the growing season and prepare during the off-season. If gardening is your passion, you love interacting with a customer base, and you have a good bit of energy, market gardening and selling might be the best job you have ever had.

Our experts would be happy to offer you further guidance and answer more questions about growing and selling at the markets as time permits.



May Vang resides in Washington State and can be reached by E-mail [chanewlifegarden@gmail.com](mailto:chanewlifegarden@gmail.com); <https://www.facebook.com/ChaNewLifeGarden/>

Patti Alderman resides in Mississippi and can be reached through [Aldermanfarms.net](http://Aldermanfarms.net) or E-mail [Patti@aldermanfarms.net](mailto:Patti@aldermanfarms.net) along with their popular you-tube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/user/AldermanFarms>

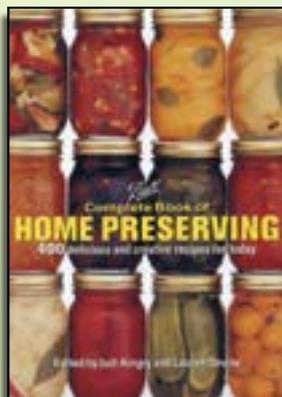
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**JANET GARMAN** is a farmer, writer, instructor, and fiber artist living in central Maryland on the family's farm. She loves all subjects related to small farms and homesteading. Raising chickens, ducks, sheep, and fiber goats led her to write her most recent books, *50 Do-It-Yourself Projects for Keeping Chickens*, (Skyhorse Publishing 2018), *The Good Living Guide to Raising Sheep and Other Fiber Animals*, (Skyhorse Publishing 2019), and *50 Do-It-Yourself Projects for Keeping Goats* (Skyhorse Publishing 2020).

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# ARE YOU STUMPED?

## Removing Your Old Stumps May Be Simpler Than You Think

BY MARK M. HALL



**W**E HAVE HAD PLENTY OF OLD TREE STUMPS on our tiny farm over the years. In fact, there have been as many as a dozen stumps scattered all around the property at one time. Some stand out like a sore thumb, while others are nearly hidden, especially when I'm mowing. No worries, though. The lawn tractor has found them on numerous occasions. Some stumps can be pleasantly incorporated into a particular landscaping scheme, but that is not our desire. Wishing to maximize our yard space instead, we seek to remove them completely in a practical way that does not break the bank or our mower! Following are four basic stump removal methods that can fit into those parameters.

First, a stump can be dug out of the ground, though I must insert a caveat. Unless one is digging with mechanical machinery, such as a backhoe, I would strongly recommend that this method be used with exceedingly small stumps only. A few years ago, I dug

up a 16" diameter stump with only an ax, a shovel, and a spud bar. Although my herculean efforts were eventually successful, the overall experience was decidedly negative. Spending three full days of paid vacation digging, root-chopping, and prying on one stump was quite ridiculous and tiring! At least the procedure was supremely cost-effective (free, in fact), and I enjoyed a high degree of satisfaction and relief when I was finished. I was even able to stand up straight after a couple of days.

Another stump removal method is to simply burn it. To do so, many holes must be drilled into the top surface of the stump, no more than two inches apart. The holes should be, at minimum, one inch in diameter by six inches deep. Additionally, many of them should be drilled from the outside of the stump, angling down toward the center. By connecting with some from the top surface, much-needed oxygen will be introduced to the fire. Kerosene is then poured into the upper holes and allowed to fully soak into the wood for one week. After this time, any leaves and all other flammable material are removed from the area, and fire is set to the stump. It should burn for the next few hours, so it is important to stay somewhere nearby with the garden hose close at hand as a precaution. After the fire goes out, the stump can be chopped up, removed, and replaced with soil.

A third method for removing stumps is to accelerate their decomposition naturally by turning them into compost. To do so, the framework for a small, wooden bin is built around the stump and covered with wire mesh (a five-gallon barrel placed over the top of the stump works just as well). Inside, a layer of carbon material, such as shredded leaves, straw, or wood chips should be piled onto and around the stump. Nitrogen-rich material, such as old coffee grounds, grass clippings, or tea leaves, is then added. Finally, the same layering is done once more, and the whole clump is moistened, although not saturated. The process should be continued whenever new material is acquired, and the pile should be stirred every week. This approach can take a few years to complete, but the stump is eventually turned into soft, black organic material, ready for fertilizing the garden or the flower beds.

The fourth stump removal method features the use of a gas-powered stump grinder. With its sharp grinding wheel, it is highly effective at reducing a stump to a mere pile of sawdust in a short length of time. This convenience does indeed come at a considerably higher cost, with daily rental fees ranging from \$125 to \$250, plus a refundable deposit. However, the total expenditure can be reduced dramatically with a little more work and the willingness of a few neighbors to pay for the removal of their own stumps. For example, in one morning, an individual can pay a \$250 rental fee, bring the stump grinder home, and quickly chop up his/her own stump(s). Then, after lunch, a strategic

trip through the neighborhood can be made, chopping the stumps of others at, perhaps, \$50/stump. If four neighbors have only one stump each, the individual will return the stump grinder to the store that evening with a net outlay of only \$50! While this plan can necessitate a lengthy search, it is certainly possible for a well-planned strategy to make this method viable for those of us on a tight budget. It also provides a great way to meet many of your neighbors.

Do you have unwanted stumps? Have you been wondering how in the world to get rid of them yourself? As you can see, it should not be a problem, so don't "stump" around, worrying about it. You have many options, and the costs are not prohibitive. Decide which removal method is best for your situation, and then go take them out! You'll be glad you did, and so will your mower! 🌱



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

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# BROWN RECLUSE

## FACTS OVER MYTHS

### Misdiagnosis Leads to Mistreatment



BY REBECCA SANDERSON

**M**OST PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES know of the brown recluse spider and its infamous venom, which can cause necrotic wounds. Many will even claim to either have been bitten or know someone who has been bitten by one. The horror stories of decaying flesh strike fear in the hearts of arachnophobes everywhere. While there is truth in these stories, they are quite riddled with myth and exaggeration.

True, the venom from a brown recluse spider can have serious effects, including wounds that become necrotic or possessing dead tissue. However, only about 10% of brown recluse bites end up with necrosis; most heal on their own with little treatment necessary. More severe signs and symptoms of a brown recluse spider bite include fever, redness at the bite site often followed by a blister, nausea, intense

itching at the bite, rash, chills, sweating, and general discomfort. You should probably go to the hospital if you are experiencing these symptoms after a spider bite. Young children and the elderly are much more likely to have adverse reactions.

Because brown recluse spiders have small fangs, the initial bite is usually painless, and you may not develop any symptoms for several hours. Usually, a bite will completely heal within three weeks, even as little as three to five days, if you are healthy and a bit lucky to get less venom. The brown recluse's venom contains a substance called sphingomyelinase D, a rare toxin that destroys blood vessels, thereby killing the nerves and tissue in the area due to lack of blood supply. A more severe bite has visible breaking down of the skin after a couple of days to a week. The classic necrosis

is a blue-gray or blue-white sunken circular patch of skin with irregular edges and redness around it. Often there is a blister in the center, and the area may eventually turn black.

While the brown recluse spider bite has a very classic sign, it is not the only cause of tissue death and is often confused with other conditions. Several causes could lead to a similar-looking or easily confused mark on the skin, including bites from other insects, spiders, or centipedes. Some health conditions could include pyoderma gangrenosum (inflammatory skin disease), medication reaction, ulcer from diabetes or bed sore, polyarteritis nodosa (a blood vessel disease), anthrax, and necrotizing fasciitis (flesh-eating bacteria) among others. Many of these alternative causes of sores that may necrotize can be fatal if not treated properly. Therefore, it is concerning



A brown recluse spider is brown or tan and only about a quarter's size, including the outstretched legs. The legs do not have any stripes and are not visibly hairy. There is a darker brown mark on the back of the spider's back right behind the head that looks like a violin with the neck pointing toward the body.

when doctors or the general public misdiagnose a wound as a bite from a brown recluse spider.

Brown recluse spiders have a specific region of the United States where they are endemic. This region extends from Kentucky west to Nebraska, north to the bottom of Ohio, and south to the Gulf Coast. I give you the outermost boundaries of where the brown recluse is found, but they are much more prevalent inward of these boundaries. Because there are many calls to poison control about brown recluse bites from all over the nation, entomologists often request spider samples of what people believe to be brown recluse spiders. The boundaries given have been proven many times by these entomologists, and the few exceptions have been directly connected to a recent move or shipment from places where the spiders live.

Despite the brown recluse spider being only found in a specific region, wounds are commonly misdiagnosed as being a bite. This leads to improper treatment of the wound, which can lead to a worsening of the wound or even fatality. Even if a spider is caught and brought to the doctor, they are not entomologists and especially not arachnologists. The fact is: there are many types of brown spiders in the United States and the world, and most are harmless. While some

spiders of the same family live in places such as South-Eastern California and Nevada or Southern Arizona, these are either the desert recluse or Arizona recluse. Unfortunately, they do possess the same venom but are not found as often near populated areas. They prefer the unpopulated deserts.

Another fact to note is that the

brown recluse spider is true to its name. It is a non-aggressive spider, preferring to hide in dark, secluded places away from humans and animals. They typically come out to hunt at night and do not use their webs to catch prey. Most confirmed bites happen either from a person rolling over in a bed that the spider happened to cross or someone

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NOT a recluse.

putting on a shoe or clothing that has been on the floor for some time. The spider only bites when it feels the threat of being squished. If you live in the brown recluse region, be sure to shake out clothing on the floor and check shoes before putting them on.

A brown recluse spider is brown or tan and only about a quarter's size, including the outstretched legs. The legs do not have any stripes and are not visibly hairy. There is a darker brown mark on the back of the spider's back right behind the head that looks like a violin with the neck pointing toward the body. The most distinctive feature of the brown recluse and all in the recluse family is that they have six eyes, one pair in the middle with a pair on either side, while most spiders have eight eyes. However, you will need a good magnifying glass to see this detail.

The good news: the spider has a limited range where it lives. It does

not want to bite you, and often people live in infested houses without ever being bitten. Only a small fraction of the bites are severe enough to have necrosis or tissue death. The bites do not happen nearly as often as people think.

It may not be as exciting to just say that you were bit by an unknown spider rather than a brown recluse, but could we put the fear to rest just a little? 🕷️

**REBECCA SANDERSON** grew up in a very small town in Idaho with a backyard full of chickens, goats, sometimes sheep and ducks, and other random animals in addition to the cats and dogs. She is now married with two little girls and loves the homesteading life! Her husband is very supportive (tolerant) of her continued experiments in making many items from scratch and he even helps sometimes.

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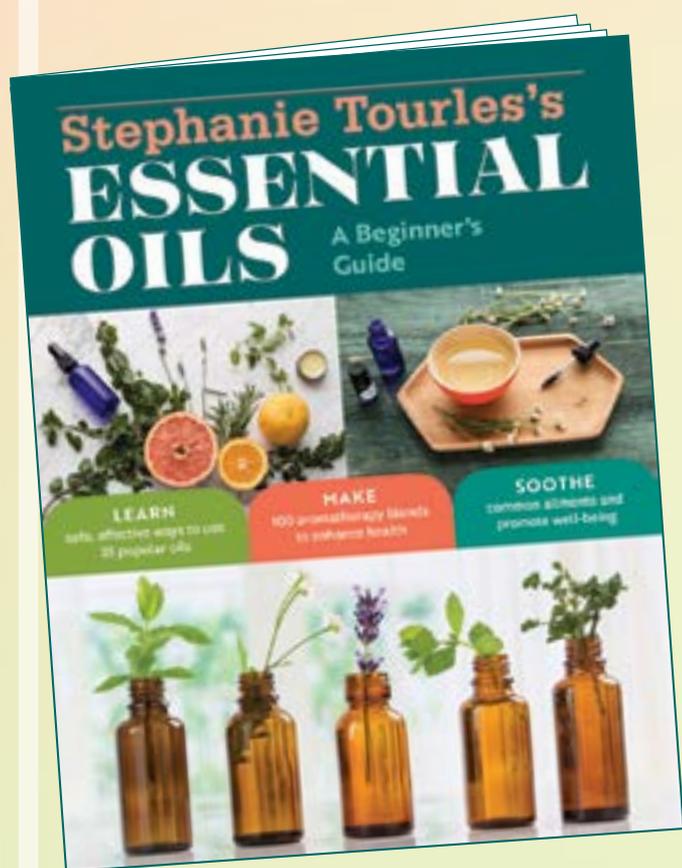
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# 3 DOG SLEEPING POSITIONS

## What They Mean



BY JOHN WOODS

**W**E ALL LOVE TO WATCH OUR DOGS SLEEP — from tiny twitches to full-out sprints, their adorable mannerisms can bring a ton of joy. But have you ever wondered about dog sleeping positions and what your dogs might be signaling by their naptime postures?

**Here are three of the most common dog sleeping positions and what they can say about your dogs.**

### 1. CURLED UP

Curled up into a ball with nose and tail tucked in is one of the most common positions in which you will find sleeping dogs. Traditionally, this is how their wolf ancestors slept in the wild — curling up not only conserves body heat but defensively, it protects all of their internal organs inside the belly and chest. You usually won't see your dog twitch as much

in this position, as their movement is slightly restricted.

Before they curl themselves up, it is common for dogs to circle the area or even dig at the ground or bed. In the wild, this served two purposes. First, dogs often dig small holes to sleep in to keep them cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Second, a dog paw pad contains scent glands, and by digging and pawing at their bed, they are attempting to “mark” it as their own.

If your dogs turn themselves into a ball when it's naptime, it doesn't exactly mean that they're trying to connect to their great, great, wild grandparents. They could just be chilly, cozy, or a bit apprehensive about their surroundings.

### 2. STRETCHED OUT

Instead of curling up tightly, some dogs sprawl out and seem to take up as much space as possible!

If your dogs sleep on their side, this could be a sign that they feel comfortable and safe in their surroundings, as their vital organs are exposed, and it takes them slightly longer to be back up on all fours.

It's great news if your pups are comfortable being vulnerable. It means they are likely to be happy, laid-back, and loyal to you. You are also likely to see more sleep movement in this position since their legs are not restricted in any way. The majority of twitching, flopping, and soft woofing occurs during the REM phase of sleep.

Like humans, dogs dream during the REM, or rapid-eye-movement, cycle of sleep. No one knows exactly what dogs dream about (and alas, their sleep positions can only tell us so much!) but sideways running and even wagging tails observable in this position might suggest dreams of chasing squirrels, a favorite tennis ball, or chasing a rodent.

Dogs sprawled on their back, all



If your dogs sleep on their back, they may be trying to cool themselves.



If your dogs sleep on their stomach, it may be they are not fully relaxed.

four paws in the air, and happily snoring can be quite a sight to behold. If you notice your dogs in this position, it means not only that they trust you, but that they could be trying to cool themselves off.

Dogs have thinner hair on their stomachs than on the rest of their bodies, and some hypoallergenic dogs don't have any, from which body heat can more easily escape. So, by exposing their belly, your pups might be letting you know you should turn the air conditioning up!

### 3. ON THEIR STOMACH

Perhaps your pups prefer to sleep on their stomach, with their paws underneath them, or splayed out to the side. With paws outstretched, this is known as the superman position. Stomach-sleepers in all forms are found for a few different reasons.

This position makes it easy for your dogs to jump up and be on their feet in just a moment. For this reason,

Watching a dog gain confidence over time is one of the most rewarding aspects of adopting from a shelter or animal rescue.

puppies and high-energy dogs often sleep on their stomachs so as to transition from naptime to playtime at a moment's notice!

Sometimes, especially with younger dogs, you will see them fall asleep almost as they are still standing up, and they'll plop down on their bellies before they can even think about curling up or circling the area to find a more comfortable position.

If your dogs are older and frequently sleep on their stomach, it might mean that they are apprehensive, anxious, or uncomfortable. Like in the curled-up position, they are shielding their internal organs by laying down on them. If they are ready to pop up to all fours even in their sleep, it could be a sign that they are not fully relaxed.

Some rescue dogs, when they first come into their new homes, sleep only on their stomachs. As they begin to trust the family and become more comfortable, they will slowly begin to sleep on their sides and expose their bellies. Watching a dog gain confidence over time is one of the most rewarding aspects of adopting from a shelter or animal rescue.

Many dogs nap or doze in the superman position during the day if they are bored or need a quick rest. They may look still and even snore softly, but check their ears and eyes for signs of alertness — dogs who've nodded off in this position don't usually sleep deeply in it and can be up and ready for a walk or play in a moment's notice.

### Summary

Analyzing dogs' sleeping positions is not an exact science. Your dogs may feel completely comfortable around you even if you never see them sleeping on their side or back. Sometimes, it can simply be a matter of what's most comfortable on a given day. However, more often than not, you can learn at least a little something about your dogs based on the way they sleep — and who wouldn't want that level of insight into their four-legged companion? 🐾

**JOHN WOODS** is the founder of All Things Dogs, a member of the Association of Professional Dog Trainers, a graduate in animal welfare and behavior, and a recognized author by the Dog Writers Association of America.

# A Shortlist for Long-term Beekeeping Success

BY RUSTY BURLEW



When the bottom of a queen cell is cut perfectly round with a hinged disk on one side, you know a virgin queen has emerged. An opening on the side of the cell means the virgin queen was killed.

**W**HAT COULD BE MORE EXCITING? You've installed your first package of honey bees into a freshly painted hive. During the winter you read a beginner book, so you know how to find your queen and how to mix sugar syrup. And just now, you've taken a seat in the audience of your local bee club, eager to learn. People greet you warmly and welcome you into the fold. You are totally chuffed.

Before long, however, you hear worrisome things. You scribble some notes, but the words are alarming and the list is long. You stop writing as the babble of weird-sounding afflictions washes over you, leading you from effervescent to frantic. In a matter of moments, the speaker warns you of wax moths, starvation, excessive shade, mice, cold temperatures, brood diseases, bears, wind, nosema, and pesticides.

## NOT ALL HAZARDS ARE EQUAL

When we don't know better, all these beekeeping problems seem equally scary. To a newbie, varroa mites appear no more or less dangerous than a cold hive or a regiment of beetles. But that simply is not true. Most problems are so minor we shouldn't dwell on them. Beginners should learn the basics and save the nuances for later.

My shortlist has just three items that every beekeeper needs to address. The shortlist works because, by some estimates, over 90% of all colony losses are caused by three things: queen failure, starvation, or varroa mites. That means that all the other beekeeping problems added together account for less than 10% of losses. The 10% includes nosema, pesticides, tracheal mites, brood diseases, dysentery, and even cold weather.

Most beekeepers would be happy to average a 90% success rate, something that is possible by concentrating on the basics. In fact, except for an unfortunate pesticide incident, I don't think I've ever lost a colony to something that's not on the shortlist. My losses were caused by queen failure, varroa mites, and at least one striking example of starvation.

## EVALUATE THE DANGERS

A healthy honey bee colony is incredibly resilient, which is why the species has been so successful throughout the millennia. Unfortunately, a few things can destroy a colony — and those are the things that you, as a beekeeper, need to manage. A colony depends on a healthy queen and an adequate food supply. And, unfortunately, honey bees cannot resist the ravages of the varroa mite, a parasite that recently jumped species from *Apis cerana*. Even the mite would be tolerable if it didn't carry a trove of viruses, most notably the deformed wing virus (DWW).

Many of the opportunistic predators such as small hive beetles, wax moths, and wasps can only breach a colony that is already weak. Most of the large predators are not common, such as bears and vandals, and many of the pests are just that — pests. Birds may eat some of your bees, as will lizards, spiders, and even mice. But most often, they don't eat enough to destroy a colony.

To add to beekeeper confusion, many of the warnings we hear from beekeepers, such as “avoid shady locations” and “face your hive to the south,” are not for the benefit of the bees but for the benefit of the beekeeper who is trying to maximize honey production. If you learn the reason for a piece of advice, you can decide whether to follow it.

### THE BIG THREE BEEKEEPING PROBLEMS

Whether you are a beginner or a seasoned beekeeper, you need to put your efforts where they will do the most good. So let's focus on the big three.

Every colony relies on a strong queen. Not only is a mated queen the source of fertilized eggs that are needed to produce workers, but her pheromones keep the colony functioning as a unit rather than a random mass of bees. But like any other living thing, queens can fail, become ill, or die, so it's your job to check on her. At every inspection, look for the queen or her eggs. Learn to evaluate a brood pattern and keep alert for queenlessness and signs of laying workers. But also remember that queens don't lay all year long — you don't want to replace a queen that was simply taking a break. A dead or failing queen needs to be replaced either by you or the workers; otherwise, the colony will perish.

Any engineer will tell you a triangle is the strongest geometric shape, which is why triangles are used in bridges and buildings. Likewise, I like to think of these three facets of beekeeping — healthy queen, varroa control, food supply — as a triangle of support for all other colony functions.

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If keeping bees were as simple as choosing the right pollen substitute, feeding stimulant, or type of sugar, our beekeeping problems would have disappeared long ago.

All living things need a nutritious supply of food, so make sure your bees always have plenty to eat. Be especially attentive during times of nectar dearth such as mid-summer, winter, and early spring. Feeding bees is easy, but it is often overlooked when bees are collecting lots of pollen but no nectar. Don't be misled by those colorful legs. Without carbohydrates, honey bees cannot defend their hive, fight disease, or protect themselves from predators.

None of us like to treat varroa mites, but for now, they are a beekeeping fact of life. Most colonies will have varroa at some point, along with the viral diseases they carry. Both the mite and the viruses weaken the bees until they can no longer care for themselves. Mite control cannot be delayed, so new beekeepers need to learn how to diagnose mite problems and learn how to treat them when necessary.

### CREATING NEW PROBLEMS

Unfortunately, it's tempting to blame colony loss on things we can see, so when we open a hive that's filled with moths or beetles, we point and say, "Moths killed my bees!" or beetles or ants. When that happens, we haven't discovered the real problem, so it's bound to happen again.

Instead of doing the hard work, beekeepers frequently latch onto miracle cures for weak hives in the same way we search for miracle diets. If keeping bees were as simple as choosing the right pollen substitute, feeding stimulant, or type of sugar, our beekeeping problems would have disappeared long ago.

It's easier to buy a new product than go through the laborious process of inspecting, mite counting, treating, and feeding. But simple answers don't exist, and many of the so-called easy fixes we use can create hard-to-fix problems. For example:

- Beekeepers often choose organic sugar over refined white sugar, assuming if it's better for us, it's better for them. But organic sugar is high in the type of solids (ash) that cause honey bee dysentery.
- Beekeepers feed essential oils to bees, probably misunderstanding the word. "Essential" means the oil contains the essence of a plant's fragrance, not that it's essential to living things. Essential oils can draw robbers from miles away and may even mask queen and brood pheromones.
- Pollen supplements are often unnecessary, especially in the fall, and they can attract small hive beetles and delay the formation of winter bees.
- Hive wraps without proper ventilation can cause excessive moisture buildup and mold growth in an overwintering hive. Left on their own, honey bees are masters at staying warm, but moisture can be a problem.



Do not equate pollen collection with nectar collection. To see if your bees have plenty of stored honey, you need to look inside the hive.

- Internal hive heaters can cause bees to think the outside air is warm, so they fly out into the cold and die.
- Bananas fed to bees can cause honey bee dysentery when fiber collects in their excretory systems. Bananas can also draw ants, beetles, and flies.
- We go to great lengths to keep our bees in the sun, but feral colonies invariably choose a nice shady tree. Why force our ideas on them?
- Rhubarb leaves or hop flowers piled in the hive will not kill varroa but can easily decompose and become a source of mold spores, insects, spiders, and bacteria.
- Nothing in the biology of honey bees suggests they need vitamin C tablets, magic mushrooms, red solar roofs, cannabis, seaweed supplements, or any of the other stuff we inflict on them.

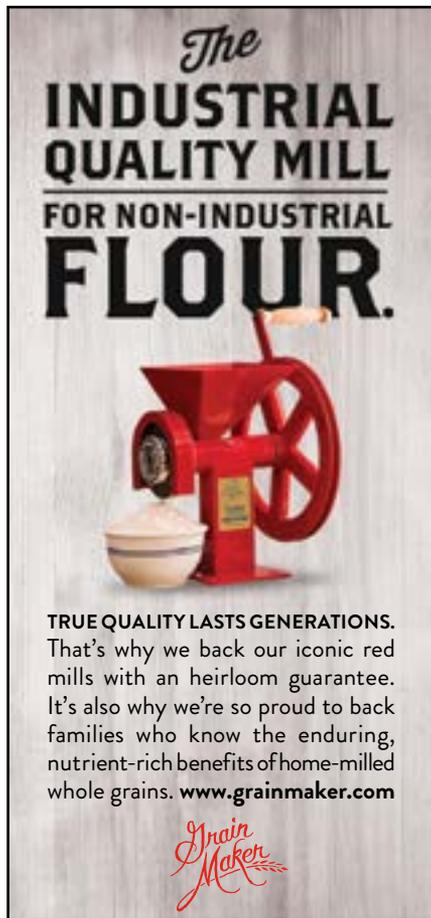
I believe in science and innovation, so experimenting with new ideas is fine. But before you can understand how to design an experiment and draw conclusions from it, you need to know the basics of bees and beekeeping. Just as you learned arithmetic before calculus, you need to know how a colony functions before you can fix it.

### A STURDY TRIANGLE

Any engineer will tell you a triangle is the strongest geometric shape, which is why triangles are used in bridges and buildings. Likewise, I like to think of these three facets of beekeeping — healthy queen, varroa control, food supply — as a triangle of support for all other colony functions.

When you mind the basics, you build a fortress that helps the bees help themselves. When your colony is strong and healthy, you can let them take care of the day-to-day problems as they arise. Above all, with only three things to watch, beekeeping becomes much more fun. 🍯

**RUSTY BURLEW** is a master beekeeper in Washington State with an undergraduate degree in agronomic crops and a master's degree in environmental studies with an emphasis on pollination ecology. Rusty owns HoneyBeeSuite.com, and is the director of the Native Bee Conservancy of Washington State.



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# What's in Your Beehive Smoker?

BY ANGI SCHNEIDER

**W**HEN OUR SON FIRST STARTED KEEPING BEES I had no idea what a beekeeping smoker was used for or what to put in the smoker. The smoker is a beekeeper's best friend but there is a learning curve to using it. There is also a wide variety of items you can use in your smoker; many of them are probably already growing on your property.

The beekeeping smoker hasn't changed much in the last 100 years. It's basically a metal can which is called the fire chamber. The can has a hinged, directional spout that acts like a chimney and bellows for circulating air through the fire chamber.

Smoking a beehive allows a beekeeper to work in the hive in relative peace.

## Why a Smoker is Important

Smoking a beehive allows a beekeeper to work in the hive in relative peace. That's the reason for the smoke. Honeybees communicate by releasing pheromones which are chemical substances that have a distinct odor. The smoke covers up the odor and the bees cannot communicate.

When the beehive is being smoked, some bees will retreat into the farthest corners of the hive away from the smoke. For some bees, the smoke will cause them to find uncapped honey and start eating. That way if the hive is destroyed the bee will have some food for survival. The guard bees will usually just fly around over the hive.

The smoke will confuse the bees for a while but after some time they'll start flying again. Try to keep the hive open for no more than 10-15 minutes, even less if the temperatures are below 55 degrees F.

## Lighting the Smoker

When you light the smoker, you want to have fuel in it that will produce smoke, not something that just catches on fire and burns up quickly. You will want the smoke to be cool, not hot when you smoke the bees.

To start with, you need something that will act as a tinder and light easily. Some people like to use a bit of newspaper, hay, or dried pine needles. Put the lit newspaper or a handful of lit dried pine needles into the smoker and give the bellows a couple of puffs. You can also use sawdust, leaves, or punk wood which is rotted wood that will crumble in your hand. Untreated burlap or baling twine are also good choices.

Once the tinder is lit, put something in the smoker to act as coal. It doesn't need to be big. It can be twigs, wood chips, or even a pine cone. This will help it burn slower. Make sure that you give the bellows

a couple of puffs after adding anything into the smoker. This will keep oxygen running through the smoker and keep the fire lit.

Lastly, pack the smoker tight with something like leaves or pine needles. Allow the smoker to sit for five to 10 minutes, puffing every few minutes. Once the smoke is cool, it's ready to use.

Resinous materials will also help the smoker burn longer. You can use pine needles, eucalyptus leaves, rosemary, lavender, or even orange peels.

Some people like to add herbs to the smoker for a pleasant aroma. Herbs such as basil, oregano, sage, rose, fennel, dill, or coriander are great choices.

If the smoker was packed tightly it should smolder for quite a while. If it seems to go out, give it a few rapid puffs which should get the smoldering coals going again.

There are some things you should not ever use in a smoker. You should not ever use anything that is synthetic or has been treated with chemicals. If you use burlap or baling twine, make sure you know if it's been treated against rotting quickly. Be sure not to use treated wood or wood from pallets unless you know for sure it's untreated wood. Don't use gasoline or any kind of petroleum product.

### Using the Smoker

Once the smoker is lit and is producing cool, white smoke it's ready to use.

It's best to use slow, long puffs instead of short, quick puffs to smoke the bees. First, smoke the opening and then raise the cover and smoke the top of the hive.

It should only take a few puffs to subdue the bees. It is possible to use too much smoke and wind up with smoky honey and smoky comb. Avoiding over-smoking is especially important if you are using a DIY honey extractor and crushing the comb. Heavy smoking can cause

## Smoker Instructions



1

**1.** Start with tinder, something that will light easily: Newspaper, hay, dried pine needles, sawdust, leaves, punk wood, untreated burlap or baling twine. Put the tinder into the smoker and give the bellows a couple of puffs.



2

**2.** Once the tinder is lit, put something in the smoker to act as coal. It can be twigs, wood chips, or even a pine cone. This will help it burn slower. Give the bellows a couple of puffs after adding anything into the smoker. This will keep oxygen running through the smoker and keep the fire lit.



3

**3.** Lastly, pack the smoker tight with something like leaves or pine needles.

**4 and 5.** Allow the smoker to sit for five to 10 minutes, puffing every few minutes. Once the smoke is cool, it's ready to use.

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Some people like to add herbs to the smoker for a pleasant aroma. Herbs such as basil, oregano, sage, rose, fennel, dill, or coriander are great choices.



4



5



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soot particles to stick to freshly capped comb which will mix with the honey when it's crushed.

You can also puff some smoke on yourself if the bees are a little too interested in you.

When learning how to start a honey bee farm, it's easy to overlook the need to learn new skills before we actually need to use them. Lighting a smoker and keeping it lit can take some practice so if you don't get it right the first time, just dump out the contents

of the smoker and try again. It's best to practice a few times before you need to use the smoker so you know you can keep it lit for at least 10 minutes when you need to.

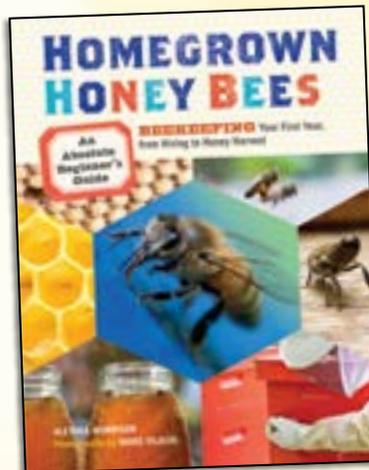
When you're done working with the smoker and it's still lit and smoking, you can snuff it out by putting a cork in the chimney. Without oxygen, the fire will go out in few minutes. Once the smoker is completely cooled off, you can safely empty the smoker and put it away. 🍯

**ANGI SCHNEIDER** lives with her family along the Texas Gulf Coast on 1.5 acres where they keep chickens and bees along with gardens and an orchard. Angi shares her simple living journey at:

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## BACKYARD BEEKEEPING

### ASK THE EXPERT: RUSTY BURLEW



### Can I Feed Bees Honey from Another Hive?

Bill from Washington writes: *I have a five-gallon bucket of raw honey a friend found when he bought a place owned by an old survivalist. Can bees use that in the spring to start the year or even fill frames with it?*

Rusty Burlew replies:

The worst problem with an old bucket of honey isn't age or crystallization. Even though older honey usually has higher levels of hydroxymethylfurfural (HMF) than fresh honey, the amount is usually negligible as a factor in bee health. Crystallized honey is easy to feed and save, so that's not an issue either.

The real question is whether the honey is contaminated with spores of American foulbrood (AFB). If any of the colonies that produced it had AFB, the honey can easily become contaminated. And when you have a large bucket, the honey is likely from multiple colonies, which increases the chances of contamination.

The spores of AFB have been found viable after 70 years, and they may survive even longer than that. If bees eat that honey, the disease could break out in

the colony. The worst problem for beekeepers is not the loss of the colony but the necessity of burning at least the frames, scorching the boxes, and sanitizing all the equipment that may have come into contact with the infected bees. Burning diseased hives is still the recommended treatment because the disease is so highly contagious among colonies and the spores live for so long.

The antibiotics that were once widely used to suppress AFB, such as Terramycin and tylosin, now require a prescription or veterinary directive, an expensive and time-consuming process.

All-in-all, it's better not to feed the honey to bees, although you could still use it for personal consumption. AFB spores do not affect humans. They only germinate in bee brood that are less than three days old. 🐝

### Ask the Bee Expert!

Visit [backyardbeekeeping.iamcountryside.com](http://backyardbeekeeping.iamcountryside.com) and get answers to your beekeeping challenges through our live interactive chat. You can also email us at [editor@countrysidemag.com](mailto:editor@countrysidemag.com) or mail your inquiries to **P.O. Box 566, Medford, WI 54451**.

## BACKYARD BEEKEEPING

### ASK THE EXPERT: RUSTY BURLEW



## Ankle-Biter Bees

Carl L writes: *I'm looking to buy three nucs this spring and saw an ad for ankle biters. Any input on these?*

Rusty Burlew replies:

What are ankle-biters? Purdue ankle-biters are a type of honey bee developed at Purdue University after beekeepers noticed that some honey bees bit the legs off dislodged varroa mites. Individual bees with this hygienic trait were inbred to increase the incidence of the genetic alleles that produced the behavior. The result of this breeding program yielded the so-called ankle-biters.

Blind studies, in which beekeepers didn't know which breed they kept, proved that ankle-biters had better overwintering success than other bees, even without being treated for varroa. This trait is like VSH (varroa sensitive hygiene) and SMR (suppressed mite reproduction) because it provides at least some genetically based defense against varroa.

The thing beekeepers must understand is that these traits are usually the result of double recessive genes, which means inbreeding is necessary to make the trait appear. After inbreeding repeatedly and selecting for the desired traits, special queens — called breeder queens — are instrumentally inseminated from populations of drones that also carry the gene. Inseminated breeder queens, if they are available at all, are very expensive — hundreds or even thousands of dollars apiece, depending on the type.

The queens that beekeepers buy are the offspring of mated breeder queens. These daughter queens are not

instrumentally inseminated. Instead, they are open-mated, meaning they fly and mate with random drones.

This means that although your queen has the ankle-biting genes, those genes are unlikely to show up as often as you might like in her offspring. If the queen was open-mated in areas where lots of ankle-biting drones are living (which is likely in breeding yards), a good deal of ankle-biting behavior will show up in your colony.

But if your queen dies, swarms, or becomes superseded, most of that genetic trait will disappear from your colony. It will still exist in the genetics of the daughter bees, but it may simply be a recessive gene that does nothing unless a virgin queen mates with a drone with the same recessive gene. But since a new queen will mate with many far-flung drones, the chances of her mating with an ankle-biting drone are slim. And even if she mates with one or two ankle-biting drones out of, say, 12 matings, that trait will manifest in only a small percentage of the brood nest.

For that reason, isolated apiaries miles away from other honey bees are apt to maintain the desired traits much longer than apiaries that are within flying distance of colonies lacking those traits.

I don't want to discourage anyone from trying a unique breeding line. If you want to try it, you should, but it's important to understand why you might not get the results you're hoping for. 🍷

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## BACKYARD BEEKEEPING

### ASK THE EXPERT: RUSTY BURLEW



## Can Beehives Open Toward a Fence?

Arnie asks: *I am in Zone 8. I have three Langstroth hives next to a solid board fence. Can I turn the opening toward the fence, and how far away should the opening be from the fence?*



Rusty Burlew replies:

Facing a beehive toward a barrier results in the honey bees gaining altitude very quickly, instead of the gentle slope that is usual. This placement actually has advantages, especially if the beekeeper has close neighbors. If you can get the bees to fly high, they are not nearly so noticeable.

But how close is too close is harder to answer. I have a hive that faces our driveway and sometimes when we are trying to get the vehicles out of our way, we park the pickup very close to the hive opening, between two to three feet away. The bees continue to come and go without a problem. Generally, they just go up at a steeper angle, but some tend to fly to the side, and then up. In other words, instead of leaving the hive and going straight out, they leave the hive and go to the left or the right before going up.

Based on watching this, I assume that your bees will do something similar. I also think that the closer the opening is to the barrier, the more likely the bees will go to the left or right before they gain altitude.

Honey bees are very adaptable and they will be able to figure this out. On the other hand, you don't want to crowd them to the point where coming and going becomes difficult, especially in the busy honey-making season. I think at least a three-foot separation would be best for the long term. That provides you, the beekeeper, with room to maneuver as well. 🍯

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# HOW TO PLANT AND GROW SWEET POTATOES



Beauregard sweet potatoes offer high yields and sweet-tasting flesh. Lightly fill burlap sacks or breathable totes and crates for winter storage.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY KRISTI COOK

**S**WEET POTATOES ARE ABOUT AS VERSATILE of a vegetable as one can get, making this tasty root the perfect garden staple in nearly any USDA planting zone. Sweet potato pie, marshmallow covered casseroles, and sweet potato bread are but a few of the mouthwatering dishes made possible by this humble root. And much to a gardener's delight, growing sweet potatoes is, well, easy as pie.

## Sweet potatoes or yams?

Sadly, the sweet potato is a victim of mistaken identity.

Dating as far back as colonial times, orange-fleshed varieties have been routinely labeled as yams, yet they're not yams at all. Sweet potatoes (*Ipomoea batatas*) belong to the morning glory family (*Convolvulaceae*), while true yams (*Dioscorea L*) reside in the aptly named yam family (*Dioscoreaceae*). In the United States, only sweet potatoes are grown commercially, with yams being relegated to specialty growers and markets. So, despite names such as "candied yams" or "fresh, local yams," most often, these tasty treats are still the common sweet potato. No matter,

though, the dishes these little roots create are simply mouthwatering, no matter what they're called.

## Start with Slips

Sweet potatoes are not grown from seed. Instead, small shoots called slips are sprouted from a sweet potato from the previous year's harvest. Once slips reach the desired length, they are "slipped" off the root tuber and then planted in the ground. You can either purchase ready-to-plant slips from local nurseries, catalogs, or other growers, or you can sprout slips yourself from a sweet potato

purchased at the supermarket. If going the grocery store route, select only organic varieties as conventionally grown sweet potatoes are often treated to prevent sprouting.

Starting your own slips is simple, though it does require a bit of planning because the process takes four to six weeks. Most sweet potatoes require 90 to 110 days to reach harvest size, so slips should be ready to plant as soon as soil temps reach 60 degrees F and all danger of frost has passed. For

example, in my zone 7 garden, planting dates generally range from mid-April to the end of May, making the best times to start the slip growing process sometime between the end of February to the first week in April.

Several methods exist to sprout slips, but the two most common are the water jar and sandbox methods. The water jar method is likely the most familiar as many of us unwittingly grew slips in our elementary science classes. Simply skewer any disease-free sweet

potato midway down with three or four toothpicks around the root's circumference. Balance the potato in a water-filled jar and set it in a window or under grow lights. Make sure to change the water every few days to avoid stagnant, stinky jars, which can also affect slip growth.

Just as easy, and quite possibly my favorite way to start slips, the sandbox method offers the winter-weary gardener an opportunity to dig in the dirt. Fill a small tote, box, or flower pot with moist sand or potting soil. Nestle the sweet potato on its side in the planting medium, leaving up to half of the top exposed. To increase heat and moisture retention, cover the top with plastic wrap to create a greenhouse effect, especially if placing in a window instead of on a propagation heating pad as the roots

The following varieties do quite well in many types of gardens. However, don't be afraid to experiment with other options as sweet potatoes adapt very easily.

## BEAUREGARD

Is one variety commonly found in garden centers and produces a high yield. It has a light rose skin with deep orange flesh.

## CENTENNIAL

Tolerates clay soil well with good disease resistance.

## JEWEL

Common supermarket variety and heavy producer even in home gardens.

## PORTO RICO

This variety produces compact vines, instead of the typical trailing vines, making it a good choice for small gardens.

## YELLOW JERSEY

An old-fashioned sweet potato with yellow skin and white flesh.



Fill a container with sand, potting soil, chopped leaves, or sawdust. Place roots close together, but not touching, into medium. Cover with plastic wrap and place on a heat mat to speed the process when getting a late start. Uncover once sprouts appear.



The water jar method is as simple as poking a couple of toothpicks in the sides of the potato and partially submerging in a jar of water. Place in a sunny window or under grow lights to encourage the growth of slips.

need consistent warmth to allow for slip production. It's also a good idea to poke a few slits in the wrap to allow some moisture to escape slowly. This helps prevent mold issues but is not always necessary. However, regular monitoring of the container's moisture and heat level is necessary to ensure all is going well. You can also forgo the plastic wrap entirely by simply covering the entire root with one to two inches of sand/soil which acts as insulation and more closely mimics garden conditions. As always, keep the root and medium moist but not wet at all times.

Both methods will sprout slips within a week or so with a single potato producing up to 20 slips over three or four weeks. Once slips reach six to nine inches, cut or "slip" them off at the root. The slips are now ready to plant if garden conditions are right, or you can place the new slips in a jar of water to allow roots to develop before planting. It's not necessary to have roots prior to planting as the slips will continue to develop once in the ground. However, there is one drawback that I've found when transplanting without a decent number of roots. That is the tendency for the slips to dry out very quickly and die on that random early spring day that reaches higher than normal temps or when a drying wind is present.

Because of this, I tend to opt for a longer transplant growth time and allow several inches of roots to develop prior to transplanting.

### Planting Time

While sweet potatoes are not fussy, they do require consistently warm (60-65 degrees F) soil at planting time. Once soil temps are stable, plant slips three to four inches deep, 10 to 18 inches apart in well-drained soil (sandy loam is best for uniform root development) with a pH of 5.7-6.7. If possible, use raised beds to provide good drainage during heavy spring rains. In dry weather, provide one inch of water weekly as needed.

### Harvest and Cure

Dig roots with a spade fork before soil cools to 50 degrees F and before the first hard frost hits. Allow soil to dry on roots. Cure in a shaded, well-ventilated area between 85-90 degrees F for seven to 10 days. Then store at 55-60 degrees F in a dark location such as a closet or pantry in baskets or burlap sacks. Allow three to four weeks for the full flavor to develop before enjoying.

Easily adaptable to a variety of growing conditions, every garden has a place for a few sweet potatoes. If you start your slips now, you'll be enjoying homegrown candied yams by Thanksgiving! 🍠



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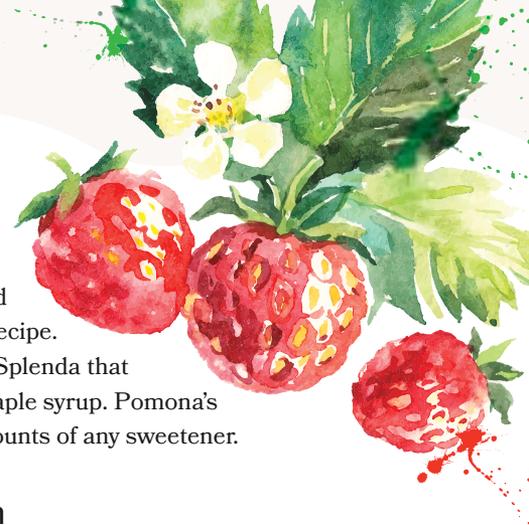
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**KRISTI COOK** lives in Arkansas, where every year brings something new to her family's journey for a more sustainable lifestyle. She keeps a flock of laying hens, dairy goats, a rapidly growing apiary, a large garden, and more. When she's not busy with the critters and veggies, you can find her sharing sustainable living skills through her workshops, articles, and blog at [tenderheartshomestead.com](http://tenderheartshomestead.com).

# Pomona's Strawberry-Rhubarb Jam

Strawberry-Rhubarb Jam is an early summer classic – nice combination of tart and sweet. Feel free to use other sweeteners that measure like sugar or honey in this recipe. For example, Stevia in the Raw or any stevia product that measures like sugar, or Splenda that measures like sugar. You can also use a different liquid sweetener, like agave or maple syrup. Pomona's Universal Pectin contains no sugar or preservatives and jells reliably with low amounts of any sweetener.



## Ingredients

- 2 cups mashed strawberries (about 4 cups whole strawberries)
- 2 cups cooked rhubarb (chop rhubarb, add a little water, cook until soft, measure)
- 3 teaspoons calcium water
- 2 Tablespoons lemon juice
- ½ cup up to 1 cup honey or ¾ cup up to 2 cups sugar
- 3 teaspoons Pomona's pectin powder

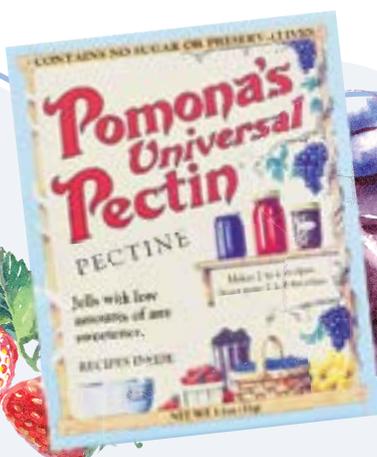
## Before You Begin

*Prepare calcium water. To do this, combine ½ teaspoon calcium powder (in the small packet in your box of Pomona's pectin) with ½ cup water in a small, clear jar with a lid. Shake well. Extra calcium water should be stored in the refrigerator for future use.*

## Directions

- 1 Wash jars, lids, and bands. Place jars in canner, fill canner 2/3 full with water, bring to a boil. Turn off heat, cover, and keep jars in hot canner water until ready to use. Place lids in water in a small sauce pan; cover and heat to a simmer. Turn off heat and keep lids in hot water until ready to use.
- 2 Wash, remove hulls, and mash strawberries. Prepare rhubarb. Measure fruit into sauce pan.
- 3 Add calcium water and lemon juice and mix well.
- 4 Measure sugar or room temperature honey into a bowl. Thoroughly mix pectin powder into sweetener. Set aside.
- 5 Bring fruit mixture to a full boil. Add pectin-sweetener mixture, stirring vigorously for 1 to 2 minutes to dissolve the pectin while the jam comes back up to a boil. Once the jam returns to a full boil, remove it from the heat.
- 6 Fill hot jars to ¼" of top. Wipe rims clean. Screw on 2-piece lids. Put filled jars in boiling water to cover. Boil 10 minutes (add 1 minute more for every 1,000 ft. above sea level). Remove from water. Let jars cool. Check seals; lids should be sucked down. Eat within 1 year. Lasts 3 weeks once opened.

Note: If you're not sure if your jam is sweet enough, taste it after the pectin is dissolved and jam has come back up to a boil. Not sweet enough? Add more sweetener and stir 1 minute at full boil.



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Steel fence posts and chicken wire make for an easy fence.

# A Step-by-Step Guide to Building a HÜGELKULTUR RAISED BED

BY STACY BENJAMIN

**D**O YOU WISH THAT YOU HAD more gardening space, but you don't want to add more summer watering chores to your to-do list? Then a hügelkultur raised bed may be the perfect solution for you. What is a hügelkultur, you may ask? Hügelkultur (pronounced HOO-gul-culture) is a German word meaning hill culture or mound culture and is a traditional farming technique used for centuries in Eastern Europe and Germany. It utilizes large pieces of wood and plant waste to build a deep, nutrient-rich bed requiring minimal irrigation and fertilization. The technique's basic premise is that as the wood and other biomass decays, it retains moisture and supplies nutrients to the mound.

## Selecting a Location

The size of the hügelkultur can vary depending upon your space. A rectangular bed that is at least three feet wide and six feet long is a good size, or you can build a round bed that is six feet in diameter. You will want to

find a large enough location for constructing a big mound with room around the mound for the plants growing in it to thrive and spread out. As with most gardens, you'll want to find a sunny location for your hügelkultur. Hügelkultur beds are well-suited for use in areas with compacted or poorly draining soils that can pose a gardening challenge. I use my hügelkultur to grow pumpkins, so I selected a site in full sun in a neglected area of the yard with heavy clay soils.

## Planning Ahead for Your Hügelkultur

It takes at least a couple of seasons for a newly built hügelkultur to begin settling and breaking down the organic materials that are necessary to form the deep, moisture-retentive soils. These soils are key to the success of this technique. The end of summer is a good time to assemble a hügelkultur so that it will be ready for next year's gardening season. As you are chopping firewood, pruning trees, and trimming the garden in the summer, you can set these materials aside so that

you'll have everything you need when it's time to build the hügelkultur.

### Materials and Assembly

The hügelkultur is constructed in layers using varying sizes of organic materials. The bottom layer is constructed with the largest-sized materials, and it should be built with logs or thick branches. This is a great use for odd sizes or shapes of woody debris. Partially rotten wood that may not be ideal for using as firewood is also a good choice for building a hügelkultur. Avoid using species known to inhibit other plants' growth through allelopathy, such as walnut, and avoid species that are slow to decompose, such as cedar.

The second layer is built with smaller-diameter branches and twigs. Leaves and wood chips can also be used for the smaller-sized materials. The third layer should consist of nitrogen-rich materials that will break down quickly to provide nutrients and retain water. A variety of materials can be used in this layer, such as manure or compost, kitchen waste, grass clippings, or garden trimmings. Be sure to avoid anything containing weed seeds.

When the hügelkultur is finished, it should be a minimum of three feet tall, so keep this in mind as you are building the bed. The bottom layers should contain a substantial amount of woody material. As you add each layer to the hügelkultur, try to nestle the materials together and push them down a bit. Water each layer after it is placed on the hügelkultur to start the decomposition process.

The third layer should contain a few inches of topsoil or dirt to cover the other materials in the bed. Finally, cover the whole mound with mulch. You can also use straw or wood shavings — whatever you typically use for mulch in your garden will work. Now that you've assembled the hügelkultur, you will leave it to sit over the fall and winter to settle and start decomposing.

### Planting and Maintenance

In the spring or summer, when you are ready to plant, be sure to check that the materials have settled sufficiently so that there are no large gaps or air pockets in the upper portion that could leave your seedlings high and dry. You can use a stick or a trowel to tamp down the planting area before planting, and you may also want to press a little bit of compost in and around your plantings or seeds to ensure good root contact with the soil/compost in the upper layer of the hügelkultur.

Although the ultimate goal of a hügelkultur is not to have to water it, or only water minimally, I recommend watering it occasionally during its first year. This is because it takes time for the organic materials to break down sufficiently to provide deep moisture-retentive soils.



The first layer of the hügelkultur is made with logs and large pieces of wood.



Smaller branches and twigs comprise the second layer of the hügelkultur.



Add compost, cut grass and other easily compostable nitrogen rich materials to the third layer of the hügelkultur.



Coop shavings and manure make a great addition to the hügelkultur.

It takes at least a couple of seasons for a newly built hügelkultur to begin settling and breaking down the organic materials that are necessary to form the deep, moisture-retentive soils.



Water each layer of the hügelkultur as you assemble it.

If deer are a problem in your garden or if you have free-range chickens, you may want to protect your hügelkultur by putting up a fence around it. You can make an easy fence using steel posts and chicken wire. Fasten the two ends of the chicken wire together loosely so that the fence can be easily opened as needed. My hügelkultur pumpkin patch was a huge success last year, so much so, in fact, that we added a second hügelkultur this year. I hope you will find this traditional agricultural technique a welcome addition to your garden! 🍂

**STACY BENJAMIN** lives on four and a half acres in St. Helens, Oregon, with her husband and her flock of four dozen-ish chickens and heritage Narragansett turkeys. She is an avid gardener who enjoys preserving her garden harvest, as well as making handmade soaps and other natural products. Find her on Instagram @5farmoregon and @5farmsoap and on her website [www.5farm.com](http://www.5farm.com)



Cover the finished hügelkultur with mulch and let it sit over the fall and winter.



You may need a fence around your hügelkultur to keep the chickens from rearranging it!



Pumpkins are a great choice for growing in your hügelkultur bed.

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# Why That Homemade Insecticidal Soap Might Kill Your Garden

*Don't spray plants with dish soap!*

BY REBECCA SANDERSON



**W**E ALL WANT AN EASIER, cheaper way of gardening. There are plenty of websites and blogs that are willing to give you unproven remedies based upon anecdotal evidence. Some of these remedies even have some remnants of actual science in their basis but are not practical in most situations. One of the most prevalent DIY gardening "hacks" is to make homemade insecticidal soap, but I am here to tell you that it just might kill your garden.

## How Insecticide Soap Works

Commercial insecticidal soap is made of the potassium salts of fatty acids. That's a fancy way of saying that it's a soap made from potassium hydroxide (as opposed to sodium hydroxide) and isolated fatty acid parts of oils. These oils may be palm, coconut, olive, castor, or cottonseed (Potassium Salts of Fatty Acids — General Fact Sheet, 2001). The insecticidal soap kills soft-bodied insects such as aphids by penetrating their body and breaking open their cell membranes, causing them to

dehydrate. This doesn't work against insects with harder bodies such as ladybugs or bees. It also doesn't work against caterpillars. Even though these products are rigorously tested, some plants are too sensitive and will be damaged if sprayed with insecticidal soap. These include plants with fleshy or hairy leaves that will hold the insecticide longer. Any commercial bottle should list sensitive plants, so be sure to read the bottle entirely before using it.

## Why Homemade Recipes Don't Measure Up

Most homemade recipes are liquid dish soap and water. A few also incorporate some vegetable oil to try to help it stick to the leaves longer. First off, liquid dish soap is rarely actual soap. It is typically synthetic detergent meant to cut through grease on dishes and pans. That means it is also cutting through the waxy coating on your plants, leaving them vulnerable. This is incredibly harsh on your sensitive plants, even in very low doses, and is very harmful to the soil microorganisms (Kuhnt, 1993). The recipes that incorporate oil don't realize that the plants need to breathe just as much as the insects do. While the oil would help the solution stick to the leaves longer and can help kill the insects by suffocating them, do you really want to suffocate your plant as well? Not to mention that the sun can heat those oils on your plants' leaves hot enough to scorch your tender plant. It also further breaks down the waxy coating that helps protect your plant from dehydrating. While there are horticultural oils that are used in aphid control, that is more applicable to dormant fruit trees, not your vegetable or flower garden (Flint, 2014). William Habblett, a horticulturist, says, "Homemade sprays are hard to ensure that you have the appropriate dilution

and mix, and results can vary. Some ingredients also may not be as soluble as others, and the mix may not be stable. We also don't necessarily know what the long term impact is of introducing the different chemicals from the soaps that people want to use or have available." In case you haven't noticed, nearly every recipe for homemade insecticidal soap is a little different from the last in percentages of soap, the addition of oil, etc. There is no regulation like in commercial products.

### What About My Homemade Soap?

You would think that since synthetic detergent (dish soap) is terrible, then maybe you can make your own soap that is good? Well, first off, you can't make sodium hydroxide soap for plant use. The sodium part is very detrimental to plants. Isn't it all used up in the soap making process? Well, technically, yes, but there will always be a few free-floating ions in most chemical reactions. There is still a little bit of the soap ingredients left in the finished product. What about a soap using potassium hydroxide? Shouldn't that be the same? While yes, you would be a lot closer to the same potassium salts of fatty acids, remember that the commercial product is made from the isolated fatty acids, not the whole oil. Some of the fatty acids that are isolated for use are oleic, lauric, myristic, and ricinoleic (Potassium Salts of Fatty Acids — Technical Fact Sheet, 2001). One thing these particular fatty acids have in common is that they are all long-chain fatty acids. Most of the cooking oils used in soapmaking are short-chain fatty acids and not good for plants. The same problem occurs even with the recommendation to use plain castile soap in your homemade insecticidal soap recipe. This castile soap is still made from whole oils, not isolated fatty acids, and often contains



oils and additives that would be harmful to your plants.

### Consider the Legalities

The last part to consider is that off-label use of dish soap as a pesticide is technically illegal, as is promoting its use. Printed on the label it says that it is a violation of federal law to use the product in a way in which it was not intended. While the EPA probably will not bother most home gardeners who choose to make homemade insecticidal soap, those who promote its use might want to reconsider. Yes, people have been cited and fined for misuse

of registered pesticides and other products.

Why is homemade insecticidal soap so often recommended when it's bad for your plants? Well, because we all want to save money and be more self-sufficient. And even though many people have gotten lucky when their homemade recipe didn't kill their plants, perhaps they blamed the damaged leaves on the very insects they were trying to kill instead of the killing agent? Yes, it may work; you may be one of the lucky ones with the proper dilution, but would you rather risk your garden or trust the experts? 🌱

#### RESOURCES

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# Chickens and Compost

## *A Match Made in Heaven*

BY PATRICE LEWIS

**C**ONSIDER THIS: TWO 20-ACRE PARCELS right next to each other. Both families have flocks of chickens. Both families feed their chickens identical layer crumbles. But one family has fat hens, the other has skinny hens. Why the difference?

Very likely, the difference is compost. The family with fat hens has cows that produce manure, which is piled in a generous heap (along with hay and other residues) to break down into compost for the garden. The chickens spend most of their waking hours on this compost pile, scratching for worms and maggots, taking dust baths along the edges, and otherwise behaving as chickens are supposed to act.

While compost piles are not a critical element for healthy hens, it is undoubtedly a match made in heaven. It's not just the extra protein the birds get from their foraging. Believe it or not, there is also a psychological benefit for

the birds. Confined birds are bored birds, and bored birds are likely to get into trouble (pecking each other, eating their eggs, etc.). Scratching for food is what chickens are born to do. Why not give them what they want?

### Types of Compost

Not everyone can keep larger livestock to provide convenient quantities of manure for chickens' benefit. Fortunately, chickens aren't fussy. They'll scratch in anything that attracts worms, flies, and other protein sources (collectively called biota). Compost can be made from a wide variety of organic debris, even in suburban settings.

If you don't want to be slavishly scientific about your compost pile — if your primary goal is to give your chickens something to do and supplement their feed — then you can dump organic waste into a pile and provide the chickens with free access. Yard waste, leaves, kitchen

scraps (carrot peelings, onion skins, etc.), and other organic material forms are all grist to a compost pile. The action of scratching hens naturally sifts smaller particles lower in a pile, where it breaks down and can then be used on a garden. Avoid putting meat scraps, citrus, fats, dairy, or dog and cat feces into a compost pile.

For a tidier approach, three pallets wired together with one open side make an ideal area for corralling compost, though some wily hens have learned to use the pallets as a jumping-off point to escape their pen. Try confining the compost to an open-sided chicken-wire enclosure held up with T-posts within your chicken yard if this happens.

For a quicker and more scientific approach — where the pile generates heat and rapidly breaks down to produce compost suitable for gardens — you will need a least a cubic yard of material enclosed on

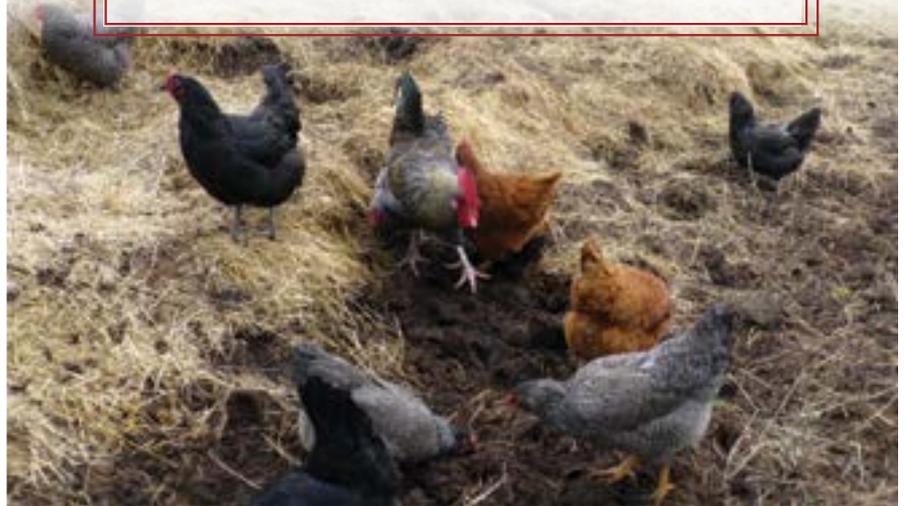
all four sides. It should consist of both carbon "brown" and nitrogen "green" material. The majority of the pile should be "brown" matter (such as leaves, sawdust, wood chips, coffee and tea grounds, dead plants, straw) with a generous layering of "green" material (livestock manure, aquatic leaves, eggshells, garden weeds, grass clippings, kitchen scraps). Layered together, the pile should be moist but not soggy. For obvious reasons, the compost heap must be accessible to the birds if they are to eat biota. Some people provide "ladders" for the ladies to climb inside.

Compost pile components — whether formal or informal — should be diverse enough that materials don't become matted or waterlogged. Grass clippings piled together are famous for becoming a slimy mat that even chickens can't penetrate. Make sure the clippings are mixed with other "brown" matter.

It never hurts to sprinkle a calcium source, such as ground-up oyster shells, among the other materials in a compost pile — not necessarily for composting down but also giving the hens a nutritional boost. Eggshells also work but make sure they're crushed, or the hens may learn to eat their eggs.

Keep in mind some foods are toxic to chickens, notably avocados and dried beans, which should never be fed directly to poultry. However, chickens have a pretty good idea of what they shouldn't eat. Besides, the birds are unlikely to eat the compost itself, though they may pick at various vegetable scraps. What chickens love are the insects and worms — the biota — attracted to the waste. These provide a high-protein snack as well as healthy habits such as scratching through the material. They also reduce the compost pile by shredding and scratching it to bits, which in turn enhances how fast it

The chickens spend most of their waking hours on this compost pile, scratching for worms and maggots, taking dust baths along the edges, and otherwise behaving as chickens are supposed to act.



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breaks down while saving you the trouble of turning over the compost pile. It's a win-win scenario.

### Raising Worms

It's one thing to dump organic waste into a pile to compost down, providing worms and other biotas as a sort of secondary benefit.

It's another thing to deliberately cultivate worms in the first place for the benefit of chickens.

The easiest worms to cultivate are red worms (*Eisenia fetida*), the critter most commonly used in indoor vermiculture compost bins. Red worms are small, but they're hardy, prolific, and voracious (they eat about half their body weight each day).

They're also sociable and live in colonies. Finding a writhing mass of wiggling worms around a food source is not unusual.

Red worms differ from typical

garden worms by their preference for topsoil and ground litter's upper layer and ground litter (as opposed to burrowing deep). When hungry, they climb up rather than burrow down, which is why they work so well in stackable compost systems where food is added to the top.

Enterprising chicken owners

Keep in mind some foods are toxic to chickens, but the birds are unlikely to eat the compost itself. What chickens love is the insects and worms — the biota — attracted to the waste.

can take advantage of red worms' prolific breeding to supplement their fowl. Keep in mind chickens need a variety of different foods, not just red worms. It would take

something like 100 worms (or more) per bird per day to keep them on a worm diet, so cultivating enough worms to sustain this level of consumption would be difficult. Worms should be considered, at most, a dietary supplement.

Vermiculture is a science unto itself and is usually geared toward managing household organic waste rather than feeding chickens, but nothing says you can't ramp up worm production to benefit your poultry. Worms can be cultivated both indoors (stackable bins) and outdoors (deep litter, compost piles). Outdoor piles can be "planted" or "inoculated" with red worms, allowing them to breed and expand before letting the chickens at

the piles.

### Balance is Key

Happy chickens need protection from predators and weather, fresh water, proper food, and a job. Their job is to obtain food, which they do by scratching. Give your hens a job by providing them with compost to scratch through. Not only will this take care of your organic food waste, but it makes for fat, healthy, happy egg-laying hens. Chickens with a job — who are entertained — are less likely to engage in bad behaviors.

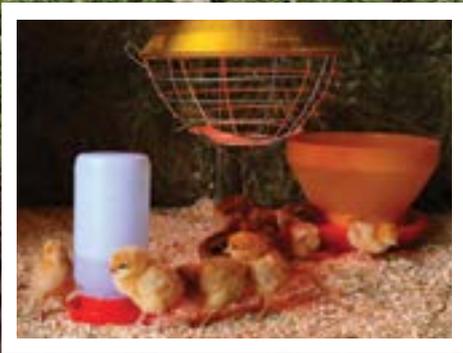
Chickens and compost: Truly a match made in heaven. 🌱



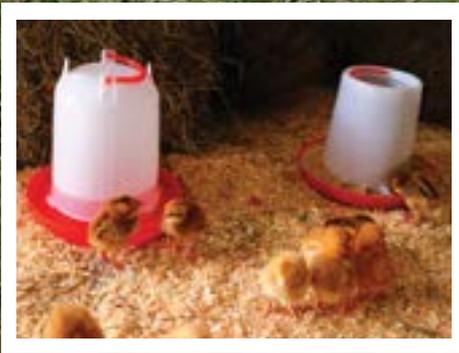
**PATRICE LEWIS** is a wife, mother, homesteader, homeschooler, author, blogger, columnist, and speaker. An advocate of simple living and self-sufficiency, she has practiced and written about self-reliance and preparedness for almost 30 years. She is experienced in homestead animal husbandry and small-scale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

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# Efficiently Hatching Eggs with a Broody Hen

BY AMY FEWELL

**H**AVING A BROODY HEN is one of the most exciting things one can discover in their coop. While it depends on the breed and the bird's genetics, more than likely, you'll experience a hen that is broody at least once in your life. When you do, you'll need to know how to set your hen efficiently for optimal success.

## Broody Chicken Breeds

While barnyard mixes and random hens can certainly go broody, some breeds tend to go more broody than others. Some of the best broody hens you'll find are the Brahma, Cochin, Orpington, Silkie, Marans, and Sussex. My favorite broodies are landrace breeds, such as the Icelandic chicken. A landrace breed is not really a breed at all. A landrace is a group of animals that have been mostly kept in the wild and adapted to the ever-changing environment around it with little help or alterations to the breed by humans. Think of the term "survival of the fittest," and that's what a landrace is. Their natural instincts are impeccable.

## Signs of a Good Broody

Some hens will just go broody, period. When they do, there are a few tell-tale signs to know if she's truly broody, or if she'd just like to think that she is. Giving your hen a few days in the nesting box, or wherever she originally decides to set, is best in order to know if you have a hardcore broody or not. Here are some things to look for while she's setting:

- ✓ She's a permanent sitter. Your hen will only get up to leave the nest to eat, drink water, and take a quick dust bath. She will not get up to roost in the evening with the other chickens when there are eggs in the nest. She'll return to the nest after only 10 to 15 minutes of being off of it to eat and drink.

- ✓ She pulls feathers. To fluff her nest and create a long-term environment for her to hang out in, she will often pull feathers to feather her nest with.

- ✓ She screams at you. If you go into the coop to remove her from the nest, and she puffs up her feathers and starts screaming a shrill sound towards you, chances are, she's broody.

- ✓ Broody poop. Broody poop is the worst. It is chicken poop times five, in every way. And it normally comes out as soon as she gets off of her nest and into her regular living area.

- ✓ She lays fairly flat. Broodies like to settle into a naturally relaxed state. This means that their bodies will tend to lay flatter on the nest than a regular chicken laying an egg or sleeping.

If all of these signs are happening, then you're ready for the next step — setting up a safe environment for your broody for the next couple of weeks.

## Setting Up Your Broody Space

Once you have your broody, you need to decide whether or not you want to allow your broody to hatch her chicks in your coop or in a separate area away from the flock. You can either leave her be in the nesting box, move her to a secluded area in the coop, or move her completely out of the coop. We prefer to leave her in the coop but in a secure area. This way she can raise her chicks right beside the rest of the flock, which ensures easier transition.

How a broody hen hatches chicks is an extremely delicate process. If at any time that process is hindered, it can mean losing the entire clutch of eggs. If this happens, you can buy chicks to place under her if she loses her clutch if you'd like, or just leave her alone and remove the eggs. Maybe you have ducklings available but not chicks when a hatch fails. We've done this a few times with success by placing the ducklings under the broody hen at night. We've even had chickens hatch ducklings for us. Whether it's ducklings or chicks, however, there is always the risk that she'll simply reject them and go about her way.

Here are some things you can use as a separate broody area away from the coop:

- An old dog house (protected)
- An enclosed (with sides) pet carrier/dog crate
- Rabbit hutch (or any type of hutch)
- Small portable chicken coop with run
- Create your own area with reusable resources

While these are all great options, we prefer to set up a separate space inside the actual coop. You can do this by building a specific broody pen (or even a rabbit hutch) in the coop or using a large dog crate. As long as the flock can't get to the nest, you're good to go!



## Steps to Efficiently Hatching with a Broody Chicken

It's time to set your broody! Here are the steps to take when you're ready to move her. It's important to follow these so that she will stay on the nest instead of trying to get back to her old nest.

- Move your broody at night. This helps her adjust easier and makes her think she's still on her original nest.
- Make sure her eggs are good. How many eggs can a broody hen sit on, anyway? A standard-size chicken can sit on a clutch of six to 12 eggs. This ensures she doesn't crack any eggs from over-crowding while trying to keep them all warm.
- Give her food and water. Make sure you have given her a big enough space to put a small bowl of food and water away from the nest but in her general area.
- Make sure she gets back on her nest. Whether she's in the coop without security or within her own separate area, make sure she gets back on her nest successfully. You'll also want to make sure no other chickens are raiding her nest while she's off.

If you're able to make sure these simple steps take place, you'll be on your way to a successful hatch with your broody chicken!

There's nothing like watching your hen hatch and raise her sweet babies. There truly is nothing quite as enjoyable on your homestead. With these simple steps, you're sure to enjoy your broody hen for years to come without ever having to pull out the incubator! 🌱

**AMY FEWELL** is the head chicken wrangler and homesteader at The Fewell Homestead. Along with her family, she resides in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia. She is the founder of the Homesteaders of America conference and organization and the author of the books, *The Homesteader's Herbal Companion* and *The Homesteader's Natural Chicken Keeping Handbook*. [thefewellhomestead.com](http://thefewellhomestead.com)

# Plants Toxic to Chickens

BY ANN ACCETTA-SCOTT

Free-range poultry fed a well-balanced diet will have a strong instinct to avoid toxic plants if more delicious items are available, such as bugs, worms, and fresh grass. Also, a peck or two from all but the most toxic vegetation will usually not cause harm. Poultry kept in enclosures are bored and may consume any vegetation onsite, especially if they are not allowed free-range time. Do not plant ornamental plants and flowers within a run.

The following lists contain plants toxic for chickens and other poultry. The degree of toxicity ranges from slightly toxic to deadly. Much vegetation found in a pasture can be toxic to poultry when consumed.

## FROM THE GARDEN

Many plants in the garden are safe for chickens to consume raw. Also, many items listed here can be offered as a treat, once thoroughly cooked.

- ☛ apricot leaves and pits; flesh is okay;
- ☛ avocado skin and stone; flesh is okay;
- ☛ citrus skin;
- ☛ fruit seeds — apples\*, cherry;
- ☛ green beans; okay once cooked;
- ☛ horseradish, leaves and root;
- ☛ nightshade vegetables; okay once cooked;
- ☛ onions; okay once cooked;
- ☛ potato; okay once cooked. Avoid offering green tubers.
- ☛ rhubarb leaves;
- ☛ unripe berries;
- ☛ unripe green tomatoes; ripe green heirloom tomatoes are okay.

*\*Apple seeds contain cyanide, but a bird must consume a substantial quantity to become ill.*

## RAW NUTS

Much like humans, poultry should not consume nuts until they have been crushed or husked.

- ☛ acorns;
- ☛ black walnuts;

- ☛ hazelnuts;
- ☛ hickory;
- ☛ pecans;
- ☛ walnuts.

## ORNAMENTAL PLANTS AND FLOWERS

Avoid planting these items in or around a run.

- ☛ azalea;
- ☛ boxwood;
- ☛ buttercup family (*Ranunculaceae*); this family includes anemone, clematis, delphinium, and ranunculus;
- ☛ cherry laurel;
- ☛ curly dock;
- ☛ daffodil;
- ☛ daphne;
- ☛ fern;
- ☛ foxglove;
- ☛ holly;
- ☛ honeysuckle;
- ☛ hydrangea;
- ☛ ivy;
- ☛ jasmine;
- ☛ lantana;
- ☛ lily of the valley;
- ☛ lobelia;
- ☛ lupine;
- ☛ Mexican poppy;
- ☛ monkshood;
- ☛ mountain laurel;

- ☛ periwinkle;
- ☛ oleander;
- ☛ rhododendron;
- ☛ St. John's wort;
- ☛ sweet pea;
- ☛ tobacco;
- ☛ tulip and other bulb flowers;
- ☛ wisteria;
- ☛ yew, also known as the Tree of Death.

## TOXIC PLANTS IN THE PASTURE

Possible toxic pasture plants include:

- ☛ black locust;
- ☛ bladderpod;
- ☛ death camas;
- ☛ castor bean;
- ☛ European black nightshade;
- ☛ corn cockle;
- ☛ horsetrill;
- ☛ milkweed — *Asclepias tuberosa* and other varieties;
- ☛ mushrooms — especially Death Cap, Destroying Angel, and Panther Cap;
- ☛ jimsonweed;
- ☛ poison hemlock;
- ☛ pokeberry;
- ☛ rosary pea;
- ☛ water hemlock;
- ☛ white snakeroot.

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## Idaho Pasture Pigs

BY JODI CRONAUER

**T**HE NEW PIG IN THE PASTURE! The Idaho Pasture Pig breed has taken the homesteading community by storm this year. Developed by Gary and Shelly Farris in Idaho to be a medium-sized grazing pig, they are becoming a favorite among homesteaders and families alike.

The Idaho Pasture Pig (IPP) is composed of Duroc, Old Berkshire, and Kunekune pigs. They are true grazing pigs that are very gentle-natured and have great personalities. Idaho Pasture Pigs are smaller than traditional pigs with the sows maturing to 250–350 pounds and boars maturing to 350–450 pounds. This smaller size makes them ideal for families as well as anyone looking to raise a

more manageable sized pig. The IPP was developed with grazing being a primary concern and developing a breed that has a medium-sized, upturned snout that gives them the ability to eat grass. The traditional long, straight snouts of other breeds make it physically impossible for those pigs to get to the grass to graze. Along with a medium, upturned snout, the IPP should have a well-developed shoulder area leading into a long and level back. The hams of an IPP should be proportional to the rest of the body. Older boars will normally develop a shield along their shoulder region at about two years of age. The average litter size for an IPP gilt (first-time mom) is five to seven and the average size litter for a sow

is eight to 10 piglets. The smaller litter sizes are desirable because the piglets don't deplete the sow like larger litters tend to do.

Idaho Pasture Pigs are great mothers and have a very good maternal instinct. They do not require farrowing crates or creep feeders. There are many different ways to raise pigs outdoors and depending on what your goals are, your property layout, pasture areas, and quantity of pigs raised, will determine what farrowing method works the best for you, but almost all will work great for the IPP. Their gentle and relaxed personality allows you to be with your girls when they farrow and sit in the pasture with the sow and her litter. Keep in mind, her job is to protect her babies, so if they are picked up

and squealing, it is her job to come and check on them. That is a good mother!

A concern when raising IPPs is their nutritional health. They not only can eat grass but can thrive on a diet of primarily grass. The level of nutrients found in your soil will directly determine both the types and amounts of nutrients in your pasture grasses. For example, if your soil is deficient in selenium, then all of the grass grown in that ground is also deficient. Minerals are found in the ground, so if you have an IPP that becomes deficient in a mineral, you will start to see it rooting in the ground to find more minerals. You will need to supplement their diet with the necessary minerals to ensure happy, grazing pigs.

Having a pig that can thrive on grass as their primary diet does not mean that they do not need any grains at all. Pigs are not like cows or bison. They require some grains in their diet to get the proper nutrition and have their digestive systems work properly. The best and most effective way to get them the necessary minerals they need is to mix them into their feed in the correct amounts.

Traditional pigs are usually fed free-choice feed, so feed mixed for traditional feeding is going to be lower in minerals than the primarily grass-fed IPPs require. Figuring out what the nutrient level is in your soil will help you determine what the correct minerals will be necessary for your pigs.

We have found that Idaho Pasture Pigs do not like stalky hay and do not do well with timothy for that reason. They love soft grass hay as well as alfalfa hay that has been harvested at the correct time. Keeping their protein levels up in the cold temperatures will aid in their overall health. Not all parts of the United States have the same weather and conditions, so providing hay for your pigs as



supplemental feed when needed is going to not only allow you to have primarily grass-fed pigs year-round but also cut down on overall feed costs. In the Southern states where the temperatures are

hot and they do not have as much grass during the summer months, feeding hay for those months will benefit not only the pigs but the farmer alike. The same holds true of the Northern states, but feeding hay

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in the cold, snowy winter months is when they will benefit from hay the most.

Idaho Pasture Pigs are typically raised outside all year-round where they enjoy both lush green pastures in the growing seasons as well as room to roam and graze. IPPs do well in both warm weather as well as cold weather. Like all pigs, IPPs do require wallows to cool off in and this is especially important in really hot temperatures. Having shelter from both the sun as well as the elements is also extremely important. Wooded areas for the pigs to get shade will also be appreciated, but keep in mind, the ground in the wooded areas is naturally cooler, so they tend to make additional wallows in those areas. Being primarily grass-fed and outdoors all-year-round also means there is almost no smell associated with the pigs.

Let's talk about pork. When you have an animal that is eating primarily grass, you will have pork that is

redder in color, well marbled, and has a buttery fat that almost melts in your mouth. The grass diet also gives the meat a sweeter flavor. We have sold a lot of pork and one of the common things we hear is "this pork tastes like what my Grandma used to cook!" A foodie friend of ours, Jon, has stated that he "has eaten a lot of pork in his lifetime and none of it compares to these excellent cuts of meat." The flavor and quality speak for themselves! One thing to consider is the length of time it will take you to raise your pork. When raising the Idaho Pasture Pigs and having the primary bulk of their diet come from grass and hay, it will naturally take longer to raise the pig to butcher. We typically see a butcher weight of about 230–250 in 10 months. This is slower than the traditional pig, but the flavor and quality are worth the wait. Planning ahead will ensure you have ample time to raise the pigs to butcher and also help you determine the best time to start raising your pigs. If you can finish them on the fresh, green grass of spring and summer, that is going to increase the flavor and marbling of your pork.

Smaller sizes, great disposition, and a grazing pig raised primarily on grass that has some of the most amazing pork you have ever tasted is what you get when you raise an Idaho Pasture Pig.

For additional information, please visit [idahopasturepigregistry.com](http://idahopasturepigregistry.com).

**JODI CRONAUER** lives in Wisconsin with her husband and her three sons. They raise Idaho Pasture pigs, Kunekune pigs, and American bison as well as Gypsy Vanner horses. The meat from their pigs and bison is rich in essential nutrients because they eat grass as their primary diet. Jodi is the author of *Raising Pigs on Green Pastures* (Dorrance Publishing, 2021). <https://shop.iamcountryside.com/products/raising-pigs-on-green-pastures>

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## The Fruits of Integrity: Artisanal Sheep Cheese from Shepherds Manor Creamery

### Part 2 of 2

BY JACQUELINE HARP

In the March/April issue, we introduced you to Colleen and Michael Histon and their sheep cheese dairy, Shepherds Manor Creamery. Read on for the rest of their story.



of cheese per gallon of milk. The Fetina and Colbere cheeses, which are softer, yield approximately 1.4 pounds per gallon. A fresh cheese, called "Ewe Crème," which is the softest, yields approximately 3.5 pounds per gallon.

A cheesemaker's rule of thumb is that softer cheeses, especially fresh cheeses, hold more moisture; the more moisture a cheese holds, the more cheese that is produced. The harder cheeses yield less because they are allowed to age, and they become dryer and harder, and shrink from the moisture loss over the aging process.

The Tomme is a semi-hard, washed-rind cheese, and it is Colleen's most popular cheese, across-the-board, among chefs, wineries, and retail customers. It was her classic "Tomae" which took first place in the 2017 American Cheese Society's Competition, "Sheeps Milk Cheese Aged over 60 Days" category, which is an amazing accomplishment and speaks to the incredible level of her craftsmanship, as well as the exceptional quality of the sheep milk being used.

### Meet the Cheeses

The Histons considered producing "mixed milk" cheese (where goat or cow milk is added to the sheep milk), but have found that their niche in sheep is what makes them stand out. All the cheeses produced at Shepherds Manor Creamery are made from 100% sheep milk.

Colleen currently produces nine cheeses, of four types: Tomme (five, distinct varieties), Fetina, Colbere, and Ewe Crème.

The yield of cheese per gallon will vary depending on the cheese style, the method used to make the cheese, and the moisture content of the cheese. One gallon of sheep milk at Shepherds Manor Creamery weighs 8.6 pounds. The harder cheeses, such as the Tomme, will yield approximately one pound

To inspire and to awe, with respect to the range of artisanal sheep's milk cheese created by Colleen, listed here is the cheese list and descriptions:



**TOMAE (Prize-Winning Cheese):** Raw milk sheep milk cheese, semi-hard, washed rind, white Italian-style cheese, aged on shelf with a developed rind; strongest flavors of the ewe; use sliced or grated on your favorite Italian dishes. Aged two to nine months.

**HERB TOMAE:** Raw milk sheep milk cheese, washed rind, basil and lemon peel, aged on shelf with a developed hard rind; dry, harder, textured cheese, Italian Style. Aged three to nine months.



**COCOA TOMAE:** Raw milk sheep milk Cheese, made in a larger, 8-lb wheel, creating a different variation, with a cocoa, olive oil-smear rind; artisanal aging on shelf.

**DOTTIES TOMME:** Pasteurized, young, semi-hard sheep milk cheese, golden rind, lightly developed, mild-flavored, Reisling-washed rind; used sliced or grated. Aged two to nine months.

**WINDSOR TOMME:** Aged, raw, young, semi-hard sheep milk cheese; vegetarian with plant rennet; similar to Tomae in flavor and texture.

**FETINA:** Using raw sheep milk, it is inspired by European style salty feta-style cheese; for slicing and crumbling on salads; aged in salt brine no less than 60 days, up to one year.



**COLBERE:** Raw milk sheep milk cheese, mild-flavored, slight sharpness; soft, white slicing cheese; use in place of cheddar, sliced on crackers, or on a burger, as a melting cheese; aged like cheddar in shrink wrap no less than 60 days.

**HERB COLBERE:** Raw milk sheep milk cheese; contains rosemary, thyme, basil, chive, marjoram, parsley; mild-flavored, Colby-style, white soft slicing cheese; use on crackers or on a burger; aged like cheddar in shrink wrap no less than 60 days.

**EWÉ CRÉME:** Soft-style, ricotta/farmer's style cheese; use in place of cream cheese, crème fraiche, mascarpone, chevre; very versatile, add fresh or dried herbs; serve on crackers, bagels, in eggs, baked potato, sandwiches, pizza topping, and in Italian style dishes — stuffed shells, peppers, or lasagna.



## A Cheese is Born

Before Colleen adds another type of sheep cheese to her offerings, she conducts extensive research, attends many cheesemaking symposiums, and acquires hands-on experience under the tutelage of cheesemakers of the target cheese. Only after this process does Colleen attempt to make the first batch of test cheese.

With every batch of test cheese, she takes notes on everything — from texture, taste profile, what starter culture was used and how it behaved, to how long it takes for a cheese to spoil.

Once a test batch is suitable for consumption, she brings it to a cheesemaking symposium, where experts in that particular cheese provide feedback and advice. Practice makes perfect, and even if a test cheese is produced consistently and is saleable, Colleen will not stop testing and refining the recipe until she thinks it is just right. Once she makes a test cheese that tastes delicious and can be replicated consistently, she will submit the perfected recipe, and the standard operating procedures used to make the cheese, to the proper regulatory authorities. Once the recipe is approved, she can then make and sell this new cheese to the public.

## Sheep Milk Soap

Colleen handcrafts a popular, artisanal sheep milk soap. It is an excellent way to avoid wasting milk. Excess milk is carefully frozen in gallon-sized bags for use in soap, or for feeding bottle lambs. Each year, there is enough milk for over 60 batches of soap!



She developed her own, proprietary soap recipe using six basic ingredients: sheep milk, olive oil, palm oil, essential oils, and lye. She offers a word of caution about using lye; a dangerous situation could easily arise if not handled knowledgeably and with the utmost of care. She started her soapmaking journey with a class, to make sure she could make lye soap safely. She follows basic safety procedures without fail.

Colleen likes to point out that she puts a lot of milk into her soaps. Goat milk soap is very popular, but many people are unaware that the actual amount of goat milk used is often quite small. She puts in three times as much sheep milk than what is found in a typical goat milk soap.

Each oval soap bar weighs about three and a half ounces and is stamped with the Shepherds Manor Creamery logo for a unique, finished look. The soap is made in the manor kitchen and is covered by product liability insurance.

The soaps come in an amazing array of scents, appealing to a wide range of customers. The varieties include rosebud, rosemary peppermint, lavender, coconut lime, orange cinnamon clove, apple spice, eucalyptus, sandalwood, English lavender, harvest, gingerbread, oatmeal and honey, and unscented for those who have sensitivities to essential oils. Although all of the soaps move at a steady rate, the top sellers are lavender, oatmeal and honey, coconut lime, and apple spice.

Sheep milk soap attracts loyal buyers for many different

reasons. Sheep milk soap is highly moisturizing; the fat content is higher than that of goat or cow milk. Most customers find her via the farmers markets, where people are looking for a handmade product. Some people appreciate the lack of abrasive additives, like salt. Quite a few people have issues with their skin, such as eczema, or intolerance for commercial soap, and this draws them to sheep milk soap.

### Marketing Tips

The Histons believe that most of their customers find them through word-of-mouth, but are always actively looking for opportunities to market their products. They regularly attend seven farmers markets in Maryland and the District of Columbia. In recent years, the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival has been one of their largest venues.

Their cheese is featured on the menu of eight, fine-dining restaurants in the D.C. metropolitan area. In marketing to restaurants, Colleen has learned that they are highly price-motivated and usually will settle for cheeses from commercial food wholesalers because of price. So, she has had to seek out the special, motivated restaurants that see her farm story as part of their marketing strategy, because their customers demand a super-high level of sourcing and quality.

Four wineries currently stock Shepherds Manor Creamery cheese all year long. When working with wineries several years ago, the wineries were only open seasonally, therefore, they only bought cheese for that season. Now, those wineries are open and buy cheese year-round, which is great for the creamery. Wineries are often skeptical, at first, until they sample the sheep cheese. The quality and ability to pair beautifully with the wines wins them over, and they become steady customers.

Another great way to gain customers is by hosting cheese tastings, especially at local farmers

markets. After getting all the permits required for their location, they follow a strict set of protocols, which can vary by state:

- 1) All samples are pre-cut in the cheese room at the Shepherds Manor Creamery and taken to the tasting location;
- 2) Samples are stored in a dedicated sampling box;
- 3) Unused toothpicks and/or spoons are provided, depending on the type of cheese being sampled.

### PRO TIP

The Histons have found it best to hand each sample directly to the customer, instead of leaving out samples for people to self-serve. Otherwise, people are tempted to eat too many samples, and therefore, fewer people can try the cheese. That defeats the purpose of having samples and is not cost-effective.

She has explored selling her cheeses wholesale to local grocery stores, but the wholesale percentages are not feasible. The wholesale prices do not even cover the cost of making the cheese.

### Online Sales

Shepherds Manor Creamery maintains a website (<http://www.shepherdsmanorcreamery.com>) and a Facebook business page. These platforms provide a way for customers looking to buy sheep cheeses to find Shepherds Manor Creamery. Customers range from adventurous home cooks to Executive Chefs looking to source a high-quality, specialty item like sheep cheese. Customers call or email to purchase cheese directly from Colleen, and she responds to all inquiries promptly.

Shipping cheeses can be an expensive endeavor, not only for the buyer but for the seller as well. The current shipping costs do not include any charge for packing materials. A large amount of her shipping material comes from friends and family who want to recycle their unneeded office supplies. Buying shipping materials would substantially increase the cost of the transaction, making it unaffordable.

### **Regulations: Be Informed. Be Diligent.**

Shepherds Manor Creamery was the first sheep dairy in the state of Maryland, which presented novel and unique issues in navigating the regulatory systems, especially at the start. Three different state and local agencies had jurisdiction over the operation, and there were growing pains for all involved. It was with great trepidation, but also with great determination that Colleen and Michael approached the regulatory issues.

First, most of the regulatory rules were intended to apply to dairy cows and had never contemplated sheep. Apart from the obvious differences between cows and sheep, the lack of certainty in applying the regulations to sheep was a challenge; no precedent or history existed for parties to rely on for guidance.

One example is the fact that many medications, even when prescribed by a veterinarian, are utilized in an “off label” manner for sheep; anyone who has raised smaller ruminants such as sheep and goats is familiar with this phenomenon. This poses a hurdle in terms of applying health rules to sheep, since the label alone would not, on its face, list sheep as a species to be treated, or address issues of dosing for sheep.

Another dilemma came up when seeking to calibrate equipment measurements and regulatory intentions concerning cleanliness, with specifications created for cows, not sheep. Sheep are nowhere near

the size of cows, and sheep are substantially cleaner than cows. Some requirements simply were impossible to implement for sheep. Imagine having to make stalls for an animal over 10 times bigger than a sheep — it makes no sense and is economically and practically impossible.

Colleen and Michael had to work in little steps, carefully proving each point, and making good arguments about why the dairy needed to be designed in the way they requested. In sum, most of the issues brought up by the Histons were accepted because of good reasoning, or in some cases, they had to hire an expert to testify to the efficacy of the recommendation.

A few more examples will help illustrate the regulatory issues that cropped up.

The county authorities categorized the dairy not as a milk processing facility, but rather, as a food service facility, which would include restaurants. As such, the county wanted to require drains to have a grease trap, which is designed to capture cooking oil and grease coming from fryers and cookers typical of most restaurants. Michael had to explain that a grease trap is completely unnecessary in a dairy, not to mention an added expense. Fortunately, the authorities agreed and they did not have to install grease traps.

Waste management is often overlooked when starting a dairy or other food-oriented business, but it can be a make-or-break issue. On one matter, the Histons had to hire a certified nutrient management specialist to show that whey — a by-product of the cheesemaking process — should not go into a septic tank, despite the regulations. The whey would solidify, clogging the septic tank. They were able to get a special exemption for an alternate protocol for handling the whey.

### **Parting Thoughts**

When asked what they thought of the sheep dairy industry today,

Colleen and Michael observed that there is a slow, but growing market interest in sheep milk and all the delightful products that can be made from it. There is a possibility that it could move into the mainstream, as people seek alternatives to typical, commercial cheeses and products made from cow milk. The challenge for sheep dairies in America is getting the word out about its existence as a delicious, culinary option, and for people to understand the differences between artisanal cheese and commodity cheese.

Around the world, artisanal cheese is appreciated and consumed regularly; there is an art to integrating such flavorful and powerful aromatics into a dish, that has yet to be explored in American culture. The sheep cheeses produced at Shepherds Manor Creamery are remarkable — the cheeses are not pumped with air, fillers are absent, no sawdust is added as an anticaking agent — there is no cheating. Having tasted the cheeses personally, the author can attest to being able to taste the subtleties of the terroir that can only emerge when the ewes have access to the best nutrition and the cheesemaker’s splendid skill captures those elements in the final product. When tasting Shepherds Manor Creamery cheeses, you can truly taste the happiness of the sheep! 🌿

*Read the first installment of this series online:*

*[iamcountryside.com/sheep/artisanal-sheep-cheese-shepherds-manor-creamery-part-1-of-2/](https://iamcountryside.com/sheep/artisanal-sheep-cheese-shepherds-manor-creamery-part-1-of-2/)*

Writer **JACQUELINE HARP** is a fiber artist and certified Master Sorter of Wool Fibers through the State Univ. of N.Y. (Cobleskill) Sorter-Grader-Classer (SGC) Program.

## IMPORTANCE OF COLOSTRUM FOR DAIRY CALVES



BY HEATHER SMITH THOMAS

**E**VERY NEWBORN CALF NEEDS TO SUCKLE its dam soon after birth or be fed colostrum within the first couple of hours to obtain antibodies that will protect the calf from diseases that will soon be encountered. Dr. Pete Erickson, Extension Dairy Specialist at the University of New Hampshire says the most important thing for any calf is to get colostrum as soon as possible.

“We mainly think about colostrum in terms of immunity, but the other important ingredient (besides the fluid) is the fat,” he says. This is especially important in cold weather, to give the newborn calf energy and calories to help keep warm. Colostrum has nearly twice the fat (and calories) of regular milk.

“Baby calves have a lower critical temperature of about 55 degrees F (the ambient temperature at which they readily become chilled and have trouble maintaining their own body temperature). If it’s a cool day, below 55 degrees F, and they are still wet and haven’t suckled yet, they may become chilled and stressed. Dairy calves are less hardy than beef calves and may need a little more attention in cold weather. A newborn calf has only about 18 hours of internal fat stores. It is important to get colostrum into that calf soon,” he says.

“We also need to get the calf dried off and warm. Many dairies in our region have calf warmers — a box with a heat lamp. We dry the calf, dip the navel — everything you’d normally do regardless of the time of year — but the more colostrum you give, the better. Data from Switzerland indicates that the more colostrum we give a calf, the better she will perform later. We need to provide at least a gallon. Some people give it all at once, some give  $\frac{2}{3}$  at birth and  $\frac{1}{3}$  a little later, but our data says the gallon needs to be provided before the calf is 12 hours old,” says Erickson.

Traditional wisdom was that colostrum needs to be provided in the first 24 hours, but gut closure begins immediately after birth. It’s a race against time, and it’s also a race between the antibodies in the colostrum and the pathogens that the calf encounters. It’s crucial to get the optimum amount of colostrum into the calf as soon as possible.

This is especially important in situations where there’s stress since stress also hastens gut closure. Calves may not be able to absorb enough antibodies if they are already cold and stressed by the time they get the colostrum. If the calf is born in a blizzard, or cold weather, or even in a cold barn, it will be stressed. A difficult birth is also a stress.

“Ideally, colostrum should be tested with a colostrometer or refractometer. The fat content of colostrum varies a bit. I’ve seen fat content in Holsteins as low as 4.5% and up to around 7% or a little better.” The fat and antibody levels are a bit lower in Holsteins than in some of the other dairy breeds just because of the large volume of fluid.

“The colored breeds have better quality colostrum from an IgG standpoint and fat standpoint (less total volume, and more concentrated solids) but sometimes we run into problems, especially with Jerseys, since they often don’t produce much colostrum in the winter,” says Erickson.

“We are doing a research study evaluating this issue. My first experience with this problem was with a 250-cow Jersey herd in Maine. The dairy farm wasn’t sure what was happening; some people thought it was genetic, or diet (they’d just put in new corn silage). A very interesting study was done at the veterinary school at Washington State University, working with a dairy in Texas. They looked at colostrum production in Jerseys throughout the year and found that it varied with the seasons. During winter months, the aged cows (multiparous cows that had already had calves) produced a lot less colostrum than first-calf heifers. In December, 48% of those older cows produced zero colostrum. Those researchers think it had to do with photoperiod and less daylight,” he says.

“Here in New Hampshire we are close to 45 degrees latitude (45th parallel, halfway between the equator and the North Pole), so the days are fairly short during

December. We have two dairy herds at UNH and one of them is Jerseys, and our Jersey herd stops producing colostrum about November. The problem with that herd is that it's an organic herd, and up until this past year there was no organic colostrum replacer on the market. So we bank frozen colostrum the rest of the year, for use in the winter," says Erickson.

"Now Saskatoon Colostrum, which is a great company in Saskatchewan, has an organic colostrum that recently came out on the market. It's very expensive, but it is now available for organic dairies," he says.

The lack of colostrum in winter is an interesting phenomenon with Jerseys. Some folks think it has to do with diet, and what the cows are fed before calving. "Currently we have a graduate student doing three studies. The first study is looking at the pre-fresh diet, and the second study will look at photoperiod. We will put one group of cows in a barn and give them 16 hours of light daily." This is similar to putting mares under lights starting in November, to influence the body to think it is spring, so the mares in anestrus will start cycling earlier, for earlier breeding.

"The other group of cows will only get eight hours of light each day, to see if there is an impact on colostrum production. There is some data from Maryland and Illinois on lactating cows, showing some very positive response to more daylight hours. It works commercially, from a lactating cow perspective, so we want to see if it affects colostrum production," says Erickson.

The third study will involve collaboration with several dairy farms in New England. "One of the members of this graduate student's committee is on the faculty at Utah State University, so she may also go to Utah, and maybe also to some Jersey herds in Idaho, to collect data, as well."

Since colostrum is so important to newborn calves, it is imperative to have a plan to provide it for any calves that might be born in cold

weather, and especially for a Jersey calf whose dam may not have adequate colostrum during the winter months. One solution is to have the cows bred to calve in warmer weather. Calves will be less stressed, less likely to chill, and the longer

daylight hours will be beneficial in Jerseys for proper colostrum production. If your cow or cows might calve in winter, however, be prepared to deal with the possibility of problems and know how to deal with them. 🌱

**HEATHER SMITH THOMAS** ranches with her husband near Salmon, Idaho, raising cattle and a few horses. She has a B.A. in English and history. She has raised and trained horses for 50 years, and has been writing freelance articles and books nearly that long, publishing 20 books and more than 9,000 articles for horse and livestock publications. Find Heather online at [heathersmiththomas.blogspot.com](http://heathersmiththomas.blogspot.com).

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# INTRODUCING NEW GOATS

BY TAMSIN COOPER

**G**oat relationships are crucial for maintaining harmony. Introducing unfamiliar goats can be traumatic, and fighting and stress lead to health risks and drops in productivity. Even after a short separation, goats will fight to re-establish hierarchy. It is important to get this right from the start.

## Existing Companionship

When starting your herd, try to get goats who are already long-term companions:

- female relatives (sisters or mother and daughters);
- wethers from the same nursery group;
- a buck with wethers from his nursery group.

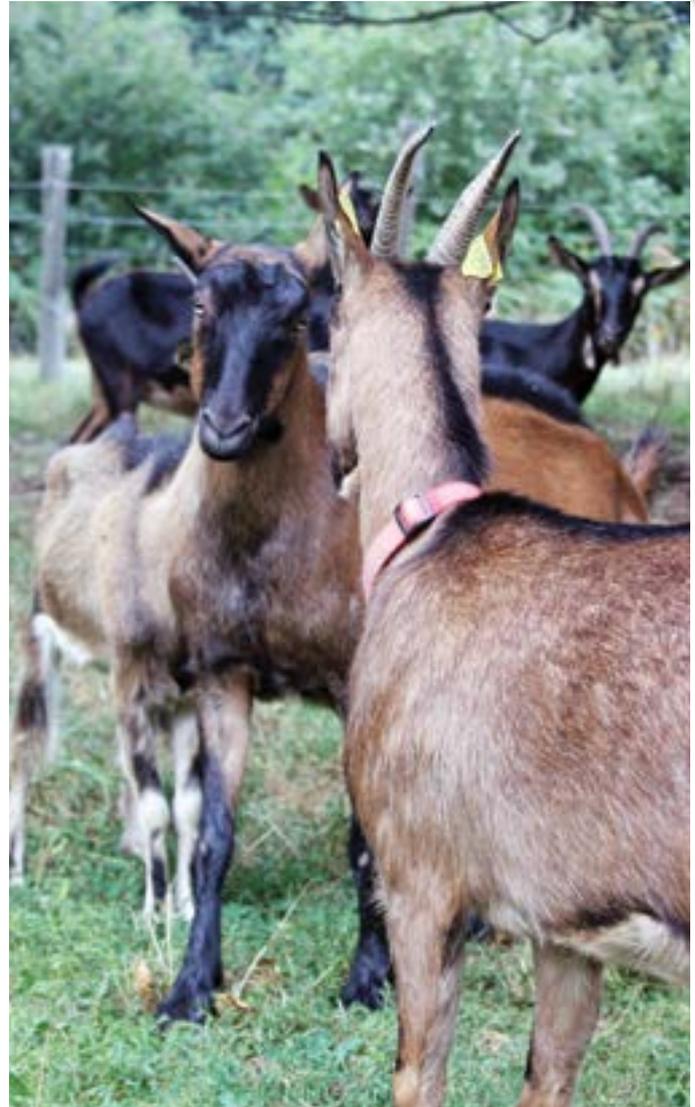
## Unfamiliar Goats

Two lone goats may accept each other due to loneliness, or one may bully the other mercilessly. Experiences vary based on personality, age, sex, past experience, and unique herd dynamics. Goats of similar breed/appearance may tolerate one another more easily. Gentler breeds tend to be more accommodating than goats highly bred for production.

Whereas kids readily befriend each other, adults are more hostile, and an adult female may viciously reject an unknown kid. Bucks and wethers are normally tolerant of new kids. A wether may welcome a female, but she may not be keen on him. Does normally welcome new bucks if they are in season, and bucks are always happy to have new does! Goats used to lower ranks slip easier into a low-profile position, but bullied goats can turn into bullies given the chance. Nursing mothers direct less aggression toward newcomers than dry, pregnant does.

When two or more companion goats are introduced into an established herd, the new goats receive fewer attacks and injuries than a single new goat.

Introducing goats at pasture allows newcomers to still feed without confronting residents; separate pastures allow goats to familiarize through a fence beforehand.



## TIPS FOR LEAST STRESSFUL INTRODUCTIONS

- ✓ Introduce newcomers in groups of companions;
- ✓ Introduce after kidding;
- ✓ First familiarize across a barrier;
- ✓ Introduce at pasture;
- ✓ Provide raised areas and hiding places;
- ✓ Allow space to escape conflict;
- ✓ Spread out food, water, and beds;
- ✓ Monitor behavior.



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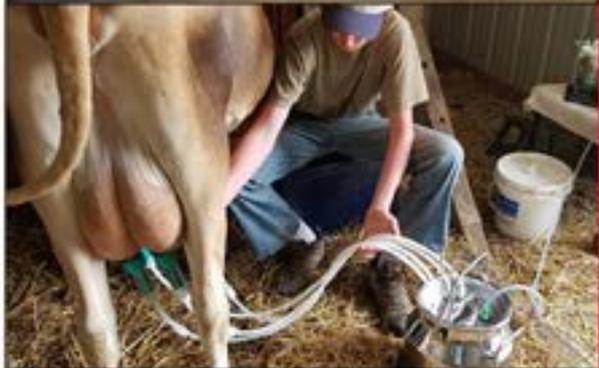


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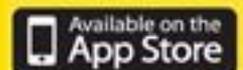
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# MAKE GARLIC POWDER BY DEHYDRATING GARLIC



BY ANN ACCETTA-SCOTT

**T**HERE IS NO NEED TO LET GARLIC go to waste once it begins to show signs of aging. Learn how to make garlic powder by dehydrating garlic cloves. This method is extremely easy, and an excellent way for preserving garlic.

## SELECTING THE BEST GARLIC VARIETY

Garlic is a bulb that is planted in the fall and spring by gardeners worldwide. Aside from being a delicious ingredient for many dishes, it also holds strong medicinal qualities for both humans and animals.

Choosing the best variety to plant will depend on whether you plant to preserve or use it fresh. All varieties can be dried to make garlic powder, canned, and fermented. However, only one type of garlic stores best long-term.

## VARIETY SELECTION

There are two types of garlic that can be planted. With each type, there is a plethora of varieties to choose from. Select a variety that provides the flavor you seek, depending on whether it is intended to store long-term.

**Hard-neck garlic** (*Allium ophioscorodon*) varieties store best long-term. In addition to this, hard-neck varieties provide edible flowers known as garlic scapes. Garlic scape pesto is an excellent way to preserve and enjoy the scapes throughout the winter months.

**Soft-neck garlic** (*Allium sativum*) is incredible in flavor. Unfortunately, it does not store as long as the hard-neck variety.

**Elephant garlic**, in appearance, strongly resembles the garlic types mentioned above. However, elephant garlic belongs to the leek family (*Allium ampeloprasum*). The flavor is very similar to leeks, and when cured and stored properly, it can keep through the early parts of winter.

## THE BEST TIME TO PLANT GARLIC

### Fall Planting

Planting garlic in the fall allows for a mid-summer harvest and the bulb to reach maturity. Fall planting allows the cloves to establish roots prior to cold winter months settling in. From spring to mid-summer the bulbs will mature, providing bountiful harvest between July and August.

### Spring Planting

Depending on your location, garlic can be planted in the spring. There are minor hiccups to planting garlic during this time. Spring garlic runs the risk of flowering when the weather warms, slowing the growth of the bulb. Hence, it will produce a smaller bulb. To maximize the size of the bulb, it is best to plant garlic in the fall.

## PRESERVING GARLIC

There are many methods available for preserving garlic. Over the years, I have preserved garlic using the following methods:

- ❖ Pickled and canned
- ❖ Canned in vinegar
- ❖ Infused in olive oil
- ❖ Fermented in honey
- ❖ Cured and stored fresh
- ❖ Dehydrated to make garlic powder

Whatever method chosen to preserve garlic, you will not be disappointed. Garlic preserves nicely regardless of the method. However, out of all the methods presented, cured fresh garlic and garlic powder are most popular.

Utilize garlic powder for:

- ❖ Flavoring meat, fish, vegetables, soups, stews, bread, and eggs
- ❖ Marinades and dressings
- ❖ Home-canned goods and ferments
- ❖ Creating seasoning mixes
- ❖ Making seasoning salts



The most convenient way to use garlic powder is to substitute it where fresh garlic is required.

## DEHYDRATING GARLIC AND OTHER DRYING METHODS

Any type of dehydrator will work for dehydrating garlic. Because of the long drying time, it is best to select a dehydrator with a rear-facing fan. This will prevent you from rotating trays to ensure the cloves are thoroughly dried.

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## AIR-DRYING

In addition to dehydrating garlic, air-drying is another option. Choose a warm location out of direct sunlight with good airflow. Utilizing the air-drying method requires air to be able to circulate around the item being dried. Place the garlic onto a screened drying tray. Do not to allow the garlic slices to touch each other. How long it will take to dry will depend on the humidity and temperature where the garlic is being dried.

## OVEN-DRYING

Another way to dry garlic is in the oven using the lowest possible heat setting. Much like the other methods, evenly lay the garlic on a baking sheet, making sure to not stack the garlic on top of each other. The drying time is roughly 12 hours.

## STEPS TO DEHYDRATING GARLIC CLOVES

The smell of garlic dehydrating is strong, and it will infiltrate your home. If you love the smell, awesome! If not, move the dehydrator to a well-ventilated location, such as the garage or porch.

**ONE OTHER TIP:** It is important to allow the garlic to dry slowly and at a low temperature to retain its flavor. Attempting to speed up the process will cause the garlic to become bitter in flavor. The garlic should exit the dehydrator similar in color as to when it was put in. Garlic slices which are brown in color tend to be bitter in flavor.

1. Using a mandolin or garlic slicer, slice the garlic evenly into uniform pieces. This allows the garlic to dry at the same rate.
2. Set your dehydrator to 125 degrees F.
3. Dehydrate the garlic for 12 hours, check the process often throughout the day. Depending on the humidity level and how thinly sliced the garlic is, the drying time will vary.
4. To keep dried garlic long-term, store it in a vacuum-sealed canning jar. Adding an oxygen absorber will help minimize the moisture within the jar.

## NOTES

- ❖ If garlic slices were inconsistent, check the dehydrator often, remove and properly store finished pieces. Allow the thicker slices to continue drying until they have completely dried.
- ❖ Regardless of the method — dehydrator, air-drying or oven drying — garlic is completely dried when it is crispy and snaps when bent.
- ❖ Dehydrated garlic slices rehydrate nicely when introduced to liquid, making them ideal to cook with.



## HOW TO MAKE GARLIC POWDER

1. Grind the dried garlic slices into powder using a spice or coffee grinder, mortar and pestle, or a blender.
2. For those seeking a fine powder, sift the ground garlic powder through a fine-mesh strainer. The larger garlic pieces can be ground once again or reserved for cooking.
3. As with storing garlic slices, store garlic powder long-term in a vacuum-sealed canning jar. Adding an oxygen absorber to the jar prior to sealing it helps to minimize the moisture within the jar.

## NOTE

- ❖ Add a small amount of dried, uncooked rice to the container to absorb any moisture within the jar and to prevent the garlic powder from clumping. Make sure to remove the grains of rice prior to cooking. 🌱

**ANN ACCETTA-SCOTT** homesteads on two acres in Washington State, raising poultry, goats, and rabbits. She is an educator and encourager of all who are seeking to live a more sustainable lifestyle. Ann is also the face behind the website *A Farm Girl in the Making* and author of *The Farm Girl's Guide to Preserving the Harvest*.

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# The Perfect Blueberry Muffin Recipe

BY HANNAH MCCLURE

**A** FEW YEARS BACK, MY BOYS AND I STARTED an early summer tradition of blueberry picking at a local family-owned blueberry farm. After four sets of hands picked and filled buckets, I quickly realized I needed some good blueberry recipes, and muffins were my first choice. After playing with a couple of recipes I found online, I adjusted, added, and modified to our liking until I had the perfect (and I do mean perfect) blueberry muffin recipe. This led to my boys asking, “Are you going to make muffins and cake with these blueberries?” Why yes, I am. And I hope you enjoy this full-flavored, fresh blueberry muffin recipe as much as my boys and I do.

What you will need:

½ cup (1 stick) butter  
 1 cup granulated sugar  
 2 large eggs  
 2 teaspoons baking powder  
 ½ teaspoon sea salt  
 1 ½ teaspoons vanilla extract  
 ¼ teaspoon almond extract  
 2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour  
 1 tablespoon ground flaxseed  
 ½ cup buttermilk  
 3 cups fresh blueberries (¾ cup mashed, 2 ¼ cup whole)  
 Raw cane sugar for topping

In a large mixing bowl:

Beat together butter and sugar until well combined.  
 Add in eggs one at a time, being sure to each is blended well before adding the next.  
 Mix in baking powder, salt, flaxseed, and extracts.  
 Add flour alternatively with the milk starting and ending with flour.  
 Add in ¾ cup mashed blueberries and mix until well blended.

With a wooden spoon, gently add in whole fresh blueberries until combined.

Spoon batter into lined or greased cupcake tins and top with 1 teaspoon of raw cane sugar.

Bake at 375 degrees F for 20-25 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean.

NOTE: Frozen berries can be used, though it will affect the consistency of the batter. Fresh is best 🍷

**HANNAH N. MCCLURE** is an old soul homemaker and mother of four from Ohio. Gardening, keeping bees, sewing, raising chickens/seasonal hogs, and baking/cooking from scratch are a few things she enjoys in her homemaking. Always learning and always chasing her littles.

# TIPS FOR SELLING SOAP

## Regulations and Best Practices



BY MELANIE TEEGARDEN

**S**ELLING SOAP CAN BE A REWARDING AND potentially lucrative part of your homesteading income streams. When it comes to selling soap, there are many factors to consider. Keeping prices of raw materials under control, advertising, packaging, and delivering to the customer all have a long list of possible choices to customize your business to your needs and the needs of your customers. But what if you are just getting started with selling? Perhaps you've spent the last year perfecting your recipe, sourcing your ingredients, and creating your packaging concept. What else remains to be done to prepare you for the world of selling soap?

When selling homemade soap, regulations for small business must be taken into account. At the very least, you need a business license as a sole proprietor, operating with your social security number as your tax ID number. While a social security number is perfectly acceptable as a tax ID for a sole proprietorship, there are times when you will still need to obtain an Employer Identification Number — especially if your business grows enough to employ others. All of this information and more can be found on your state's Department of Revenue website. The business license is usually dispensed at the office of the County Clerk.

So, you have been to the County Clerk's office and obtained your

business license. What is next? Consider pricing and taxes on your soaps. Are you going to charge tax as an extra amount, or include the sales tax in the pricing structure of the soap? You will have to submit sales tax quarterly in most cases. Quarterly sales tax forms, usually available online at your state's Department of Revenue website, can often be either printed and filled out or filed online. If selling soap through an online site, such as selling soap on Etsy, Shopify, or Zazzle, you will need to develop your shipping prices in advance for each product listed. Using an online shipping service such as Pirate Ship can save you money on postage. It's also good to know that the major shipping company websites offer the option of scheduling package pickups at your home or business.

When developing your packaging concept, it is important to follow all of the applicable laws, both federal and local, regarding soap selling. One important rule to follow is that every single ingredient in the soap needs to be listed, in order of prevalence, on the label. This includes the ingredients used for scent and color, as well as any herbs or other additives. Another important rule to remember is to never, ever make any sort of claims about your product being able to treat, cure, or prevent any kind of condition. For instance, you can say your soap is gentle. You cannot say it is good for eczema. That is a medical claim and makes your soap subject to cosmetic rules and regulations, which are much stricter. This is also important to remember when you are talking to potential customers. If a customer discusses a condition with you and asks whether or not the soap can help, it is important to be careful what you say in order to avoid making any kind of a medical claim. In any event, soap is a wash-off product and not intended to treat any

condition. The main purpose of a handmade soap is to be as gentle and non-irritating as possible while also providing cleansing properties. With a high enough superfat, a soap can also be a mild emollient. That’s about all the claims you can make.

Marketing and advertising your product are other aspects to consider. Luckily, good soap tends to sell itself in many ways — customers tell other customers and word gets around. Friends and family are an excellent base when you start out selling your first soaps and while you are getting the recipe figured out. But once you are ready to move past that, there are really two main formats for selling: online or in person. In-person sales may look like farmers markets and craft shows attended throughout the season. Online sales require an online presence for your company to build brand recognition.

Consider starting a company Instagram and Facebook page. A website is another good venue for selling online, and many shopping cart/credit card acceptance systems such as Square also offer basic website hosting services. In a lot of ways, in-person sales are easiest, because the customer is presented with the product and can touch and smell it immediately. Once they smell it, they often buy it. Sanitary packaging is critical in this scenario. If you are using soap boxes, set aside one soap of each fragrance as your sample bar. Change out the soap box often to keep it clean. If using shrink wrap packaging, frequent wipe downs with a sanitizing cloth are a good idea. If you sell your soap naked, it is best if the customer is not allowed to handle it at all. Set them further back on the table to discourage handling, or consider placing small sample bars on dishes or paper plates that can be lifted and smelled without touching the product. When selling online,

photography is very important. You may want to invest in a small lightbox for photographing your soaps in their best light. A fancy camera is not needed, but good lighting and a pleasant, non-distracting backdrop are essential.

Selling soap can be a rewarding way to earn money while indulging in your creativity and using the resources you have on your homestead. In a short period of time, it is easy to obtain a business license and establish tax-free status with your soap suppliers using your Tax ID number. Whether you choose to sell in person at farmers markets or events, or online through a website such as Etsy, there are endless possibilities in terms of customizing your business to suit your needs and resources. While there is a lot of new information to learn to start any business, once you

have a good quality recipe, soap seems to sell itself to some extent. Everyone wants comfortable, well-moisturized, non-irritated skin, and handmade soaps provide that in a luxurious, enjoyable way. 🌿

**MELANIE TEEGARDEN** has been proprietor of Althaea Soaps & Herbals for 14 years. She has run an international website selling bath and body products to individuals and spas since 2006. In addition to her home-based business, Melanie also teaches soapmaking classes in her community of Johnson City, Tennessee, and is the resident soapmaking expert for Home Soapmaking at iamcountryside.com.

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# JEWELWEED SOAP

## An Effective Poison Ivy Remedy

BY MELANIE TEEGARDEN



**J**EWELWEED SOAP IS FUN to make this time of year when the plant is just starting to send up tender, young shoots full of soothing juice. Jewelweed uses lots of water to make this wonderful juice and is often found in very wet environments near running water. Jewelweed soap is an excellent natural poison ivy remedy, one of many skin-loving jewelweed uses. It is the fresh juice that is the most active component of the jewelweed plant, so one of the major soap ingredients is an oil infusion using jewelweed and olive oil. This jewelweed infusion is then used in a batch of soap, and is a deep, brownish-olive color.

When making jewelweed soap, there are special procedures to follow. There is the preliminary step of creating a jewelweed infusion. Next, use ice cubes to hydrate your lye instead of cold water. Also, it is best to make jewelweed soap with room temperature soap ingredients, rather than the usual soaping temperatures of 120-130 degrees F. Finally, to ensure the soap does not overheat, I recommend that you place the finished soap into the freezer immediately after pouring into the mold. Being frozen will not affect the saponification process. Freezing soap has the added benefit of making it very easy to pop the soap out of the mold.



Jewelweed

## JEWELWEED SOAP WITH TEA TREE OIL

Makes approx. 48 ounces of soap, about 10 large bars

### Ingredients

- Palm oil, 20% — 6.4 oz
- Coconut oil, 25% — 8 oz
- Olive oil, 40% — 12.8 oz TOTAL, using the olive oil infused with jewelweed first
- Castor oil, 15% — 4.8 oz
- Sodium Hydroxide — 4.25 oz
- Water (ice cubes) — 12.15 oz
- Tea Tree Essential Oil — 1-2 ounces, as desired
- Optional — 2 Tbsp. dried jewelweed plant powder

### Directions

First, make the oil infusion with the fresh plant matter. Chop three cups of fresh, clean jewelweed leaves and stems and place in a slow cooker on Low with three cups of olive oil. Allow this mixture to cook for about eight hours, or overnight. Strain and cool the olive oil before use. It will give the soap a deep brownish-olive color.

When you are ready to make jewelweed soap, mix 4.25 ounces of lye with 12.15 ounces of ice, stirring gently until the lye has dissolved. Sometimes there are bits of crystallized lye that are stubborn about dissolving; in that case, allow the lye water to sit for several minutes and stir again. The lye should dissolve completely. Set aside.

My best recommendation is that you have some basic soapmaking experience before attempting to make jewelweed soap. My experience has been that the plant matter causes the soap tracing process to speed up, and also causes the soap mixture to superheat to very high temperatures, which can lead to heat tunnels in the finished soap. This is the reasoning behind the extra precautions mentioned above. Below, the basic recipe for a three-pound loaf of soap.

In a small container, weigh 6.4 ounces of palm oil. Place the oil in a large, nonreactive mixing bowl. Reuse the smaller container to weigh out 8 ounces of coconut oil. Pour the coconut oil into the larger container. Heat the solid oils in a microwave or on the stovetop as gently as possible, just until melted. Allow the oils to cool once again to room temperature, about 75 degrees F. To the hard oils, add 12.8 ounces of olive oil, using the infused olive oil first and making up the balance with regular olive oil. Finally, add 4.8 ounces of castor oil and mix the base oils well.

Before proceeding further, make sure your mold is ready for the pour. Weigh out the tea tree oil and set it aside. With all tasks complete, pour the lye water through a strainer into the base oils. Use a nonreactive spoon to stir the mixture thoroughly by hand before processing with the immersion blender. Then, with the immersion blender, blend in short, one-minute bursts until a thin trace is reached. Add half of the tea tree oil, stir well, and then add more as desired to achieve the scent concentration you prefer. Continue processing with the immersion blender until medium trace is reached. Check the temperature of your soap batter. Is it getting warmer? Give the soap batter another good stir and then pour into the mold. Immediately place the finished soap in a freezer for the first 24-48 hours to prevent overheating.

Allow the soap to thaw out and dry off for several hours on a piece of waxed paper before cutting into bars with a cheese wire, dough cutter, or long, sharp knife. As with most soap varieties, this soap is best after a four to six week cure time, although it is safe to use as soon as the pH tests at 9. 🌿

# Natural Hacks for Fleas and Ticks on Cats and Dogs

BY JENNIFER VANBENSCHOTEN



**W**HEN I WAS A VETERINARY TECHNICIAN back in the early 90s, the number one complaint we had from pet owners was ... you guessed it ... fleas. And we used to tell folks that by the time they started seeing fleas on their pets, their house was most likely already infested. Back then, all we did was recommend lots of chemical soaps, powders, collars, and sprays for the house. Most of the time, these were ineffective at best, and after years of studying natural remedies and bug repellents, I was relieved to learn that there are lots of chemical-free alternatives to preventing and treating fleas and ticks on your cats and dogs.

A quick word about essential oils: While several essential oils are great for repelling fleas and ticks on your furry friends, don't use any essential oils on cats or dogs that are under a year old. Because they're so highly concentrated, they can cause accidental poisoning if accidentally ingested. Essential oils should be used sparingly with cats because even adult cats are extremely sensitive to them. Cats will absorb essential oils more rapidly through the skin than dogs, and they can easily suffer toxicity from essential oils. If you have cats, you can also use powdered herbs of anything mentioned here — lavender, cedarwood, etc. — that are readily available from herbalists and maybe even your local co-op.

## How can you tell if your pet has fleas?

If you suspect that you have a flea problem in your house or on your cat or dog, the first thing to do is to run a fine-tooth comb through your pet's hair. Take a close look at the fur that comes off, and examine it for any little black specks. If you notice any little black specks, put them on a white paper towel or washcloth and get it damp — if it dissolves and turns reddish,

that's most likely flea poop and a sign that your pet is playing host to a few unwelcome critters.

If you have fleas already present in your home, a thorough cleaning is the first step to solving the problem. Wash all bedding where your pet sleeps (including your own) in hot, soapy water. Regularly washing bedding is important to break the flea life cycle, because if you have fleas in your home, they're

most likely laying eggs in the places where you and your pets sleep.

Vacuum as much of your living space as you can, including chairs, couches, and any place where your pet likes to spend time. Throw away the vacuum bag when you're done. Just like with the bedding, you might have to do this several times to help break the flea life cycle. You can also add a bit of diatomaceous earth and a few drops of either lavender oil or geranium oil to the vacuum bag before you start — they'll help kill any critters you get with the vacuum, and as a bonus, your house will smell pretty good when you're done vacuuming.

If you have hardwood floors, a simple solution of four parts water to two parts white vinegar with some essential oil is a must for repelling and killing fleas and ticks. Any combination of lemon oil, sweet orange, thyme, rosemary, eucalyptus, lavender, cedarwood (my personal favorite), lemongrass, or geranium will work.

Once you've thoroughly cleaned, you can keep the bugs at bay with a few easy hacks.

Since we spend so much time outside during the warm months, we do a weekly dog dusting with a homemade powder. It's easy to make with just a few ingredients, all of which I can find at my local natural foods store and co-op:

- 1 ½ cups diatomaceous earth
- ¼ cup ground lemongrass powder
- ¼ cup neem leaf powder
- 8-10 drops geranium or lemongrass oil

Remember, if your pet is under a year old, don't use the essential oil — this powder will work without it, but it just adds an extra element of protection if your pet is over a year old.

When dusting your pet with this mixture, make sure you avoid the head — diatomaceous earth should

never be inhaled or applied to the eyes.

Herbal sachets in your bedding and tucked into your couch and chair cushions are another fabulous hack to repel ticks and fleas in your house. Just use a regular muslin bag (about 4"x6", or the size of a postcard), filled with dried herbs.

**FOR DOGS:** Use two parts dried lavender flowers, one part cedar shavings, one part dried orange peel and/or one part dried lemon peel, one part cinnamon chips, and 15 drops of cedarwood essential oil.

**FOR CATS:** Use two parts dried catnip leaves and flowers, two parts dried sage leaves, one cup dried rosemary leaves, and one part dried thyme leaves.

You can change out the herbs about every two months or so, or whenever you feel that the sachets need freshening up. For puppies that like to chew, you can grind these into a powder and simply dust the bedding with them so that they don't eat the entire muslin sachet.

**GARLIC FOR DOGS:** There is some truth to the old remedy of feeding your dog garlic as a flea repellent. When fleas bite, they'll get a whiff of the garlic in your dog's blood and quickly leave to find another host. However, using fresh garlic should be done sparingly, as

it can cause major stomach upset including diarrhea and vomiting. Dogs with digestive problems, puppies, and senior dogs should avoid using garlic as a hack for fleas. If you want to try giving your dog garlic for fleas, use no more than ¼ tsp of crushed fresh garlic in their food a few times a week for a smaller dog (under 20 lbs), or up to one whole clove for dogs around 100 lbs. You can also try one capsule of garlic oil no more than two to three times a week. Make sure you observe for any gastric distress before you continue this treatment.

Last but not least, don't be discouraged by a flea or tick infestation. It might take a little bit of effort on your part to outsmart these irritating insects, but it's well worth it to keep our pets and ourselves healthy. 🌿

In the heart of the Adirondack mountains, **JENNIFER VANBENSCHOTEN** raises chickens for eggs, keeps bees for honey, and grows her own food. She discovered home remedies for anxiety after conventional medicine didn't work for her, and since then she's been educating herself about herbal remedies for common ailments. Jennifer enjoys scratch cooking, writing creative nonfiction and poetry, teaching yoga, and creating handmade beaded jewelry.



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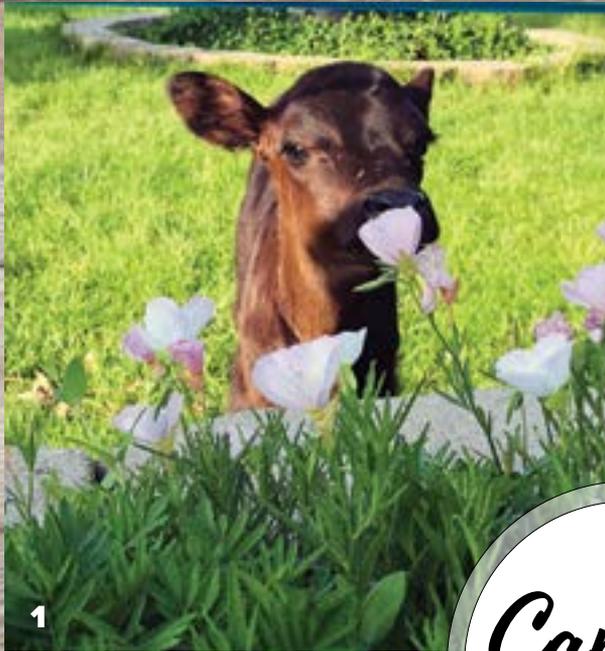
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- 3 Bessie helping with yard work. 📍 Ann Tom, *Countryside* Editor
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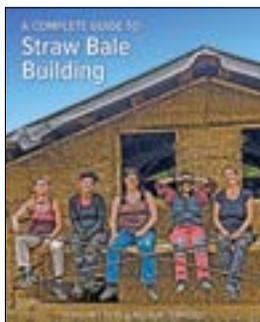
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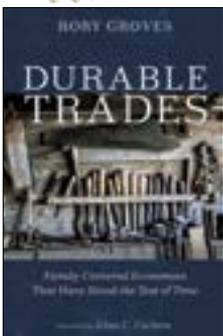
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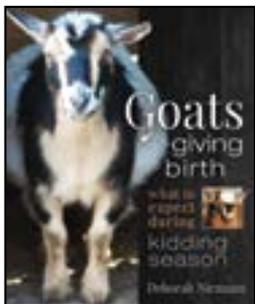
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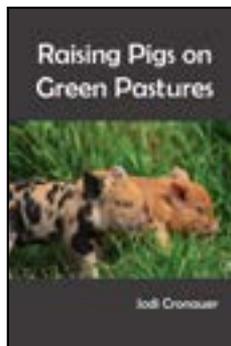
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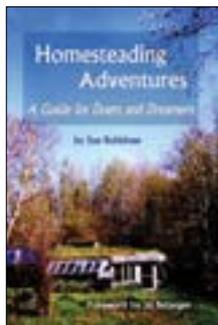
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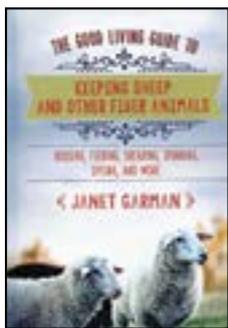


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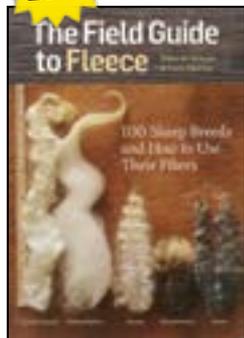
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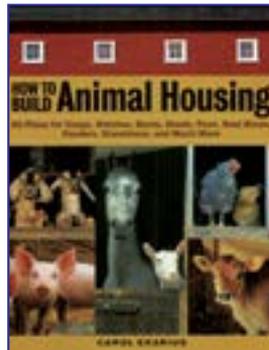
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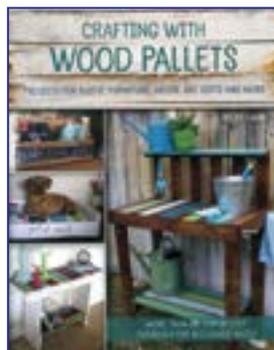
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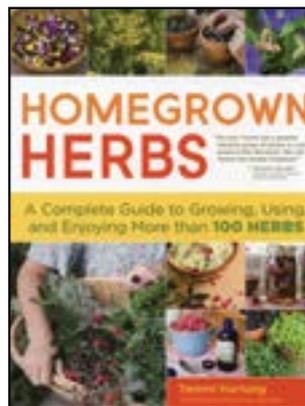
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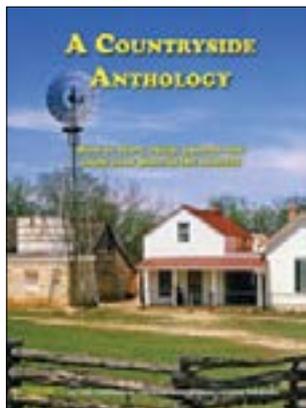
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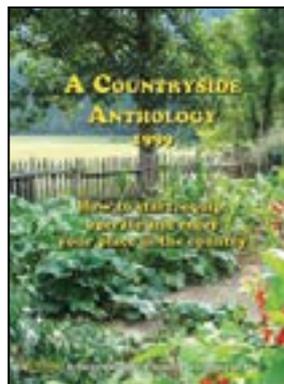
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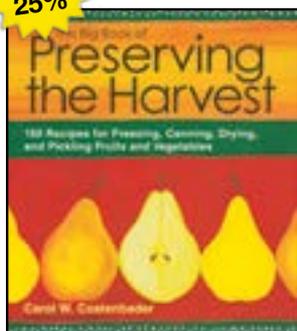


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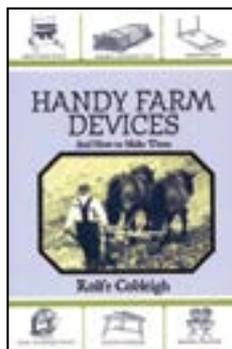
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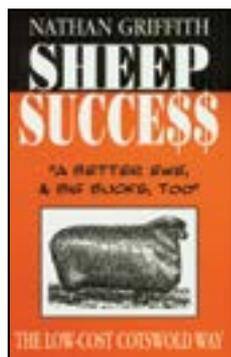
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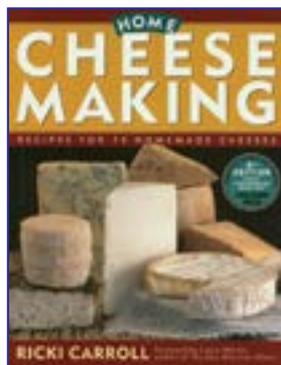


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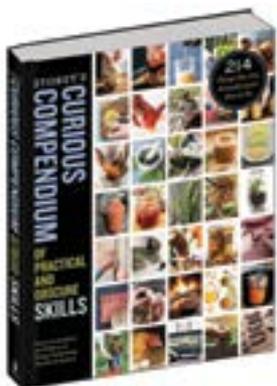
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B A R W L E C I E T N S W D Q P S K N U N K Z G  
C T G O U L S Q P S C F V U Z P I N J J J M Y E  
T O Z D U P D Z Z A P Q S E K R A P Y L Q D K L  
M T Y S S T U M P P R X W S T F R J X Y O B J K  
L X E V O S M Y D I C G J E W H E N W O K K X U  
V T G S R G E R L V H B Y E U I F S R B Z T K L  
A T Y P G I L Q W M Q E K H Y L Q B R D B L I T  
A V Z Z T P I B O Z S W N C H F B E V B X M I U  
Y U L P K E M X S S G O D L H F C Y X K A T J R

INSECTICIDAL   RAISED BED   SELLING SOAP   BLUEBERRY   GARLIC   DOGS  
SPIDER   RECLUSE   STUMP   MARKET GARDENING   HUGELKULTUR   SWEET POTATOES  
GOAT   CALVES   DAIRY   SHEEP   CHEESE   IDAHO   PASTURE   PIGS  
TOXIC   CHICKEN   BROODY   COMPOST

The winner will be chosen randomly from all of the submissions returned by June 1, 2021. The winner of the January/February Reader Contest was Chelsea Flanders, Virginia. Congratulations to you, Chelsea! Enjoy your new camp mug.



**Win a Countryside Mug! To submit, either:**

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Countryside Reader Contest  
P.O. Box 566, Medford, WI 54451

**Print, fill out, then take a  
picture and email to:**  
editor@countrysidemag.com

**Be sure to include your contact information so we can  
inform you if you won the Countryside mug. Available  
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SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

Poor Will's COUNTRYSIDE  
**almanack**  
 GUIDE TO FARMING AND GARDENING  
 BY W. L. FELKER

May is the peak time for marketing your bedding plants. Have your flats and potted varieties at every farmers market you can find.

1

|   |  |   |  |   |   |   |
|---|--|---|--|---|---|---|
| <p>Today is Orthodox Easter. Animals for this feast should be milk-fed. They can be bigger than the Roman Easter lambs and should be fat.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>2</b></p>              | <p>The dark moon will favor your spring worming. Wean lambs and kids, do your landscape planting, seed root crops then, too.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>3</b></p>                        | <p>Bees will swarm after the dandelion bloom is over. In Southern states, the canopy closes overhead, giving shade to newly shorn sheep and clipped goats.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>4</b></p>         | <p>Today is Cinco de Mayo. Suckling kids are in demand for cabrito. Armyworms and corn borers are at work. Fleas infest your pets and sheep.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>5</b></p>          | <p>A three-week cycle of deworming, combined with every three-week pasture rotation, is often effective in eliminating worms early in the summer.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>6</b></p>        | <p>Now flea beetles eat corn. Bagworms and powdery mildew strike wheat. Cutworms attack field and garden crops. Weevils build up in alfalfa.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>7</b></p>                     | <p>Clover bloom kicks off honey flow, making or breaking a beekeeper's season. If the queens have raised enough bees, a hive can make surplus.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>8</b></p>                 |
| <p>May's new moon time (now) is the last best time for garden seeding and transplanting throughout the central states.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>9</b></p>                                 | <p>"Lilac Winter" often arrives the first days of May. Tomorrow's new moon can increase the chance of light frost in the northern half of the U.S.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>10</b></p> | <p>Today is Eid al Fitr, the Islamic Festival of the Breaking of the Ramadan Fast. Older sheep and goats often command higher prices now.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>11</b></p>                         | <p>The weather may stagnate between the chilly May 10-20 front causing a mild heat wave. Complete setting out tobacco plants as the moon waxes.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>12</b></p>      | <p>Feed requirements may increase in your livestock. Use silage and hay supplements to take up the feeding slack if pastures are too wet.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>13</b></p>               | <p>Keep your chickens' water clean and cool. Consider two paddocks for your pigs, having the second for when the first one gets dug up.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>14</b></p>                         | <p>Feeding sheep alfalfa pellets, instead of hay, typically results in cleaner wool. Finish clipping your goats' hair and feet before June's first heat wave.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>15</b></p> |
| <p>The Strawberry Rains (late May rainy period) can increase internal parasites. Use stool sample analysis to ensure that worming has been effective.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>16</b></p> | <p>Check for foot rot, especially if the weather has been rainy and the pastures and runs are muddy.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>17</b></p>   | <p>Shear the scrotum of your rams and bucks for hot weather; keep them in a cool place with lots of shade.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>18</b></p>  | <p>May and June may bring nice weather, but can bring goat and sheep bloat from legume pasture, toxicity from moldy clover, and parasitic pneumonia!</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>19</b></p> | <p>Plan to meet demands for lambs and kids on Eid al-Adha (July 20), Jamaican Independence Day (August 6), and Ecuadorian Independence Day (August 10).</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>20</b></p> | <p>When you hear the first field crickets sing, look for leafhoppers in the garden. In Southern gardens, squash bugs and Japanese beetles are out in force.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>21</b></p>     | <p>Your mulch color or soil can influence the development of your crops. Ground that is brick red, or bricks themselves, seem to encourage growth.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>22</b></p>            |
| <p>Advantages to spring vaccinations include an improved selling edge and ease in registering your animals before show time.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>23</b></p>                          | <p>May can bring bacteria which contribute to spoiled milk. Make sure all of your equipment is extra clean as the warmer months get underway.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>24</b></p>      | <p>Today's lunar perigee will combine with tomorrow's full moon creating a Supermoon increasing the chance of "Blackberry Winter," with frost in northern states.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>25</b></p> | <p>Learn to make products from sheep and goat milk. Add organic soaps and lotions to your farmers market display and roadside stand.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>26</b></p>                 | <p>Shear sheep as early as weather allows so that any imperfections will have healed by the time fly and show times come around.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>27</b></p>                        | <p>Keep kids/lambs from pasture if diarrhea starts when weaning. Offer free-choice hay. Coccidiosis may be present if they don't improve or if stool is bloody.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>28</b></p> | <p>Check your horses' hooves for chipping or cracking. Also be aware that soggy pastures can contribute to foot problems in all of your livestock.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>29</b></p>            |
| <p>Protection from weather, plenty of water, and adequate feed and supplements may help to reduce weight loss during heat stress in livestock.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>30</b></p>        | <p>Today is Memorial Day, an important time for plant sales. If you don't have plants to sell, watch what is selling for next year.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>31</b></p>                | <h1>May</h1>  |  |   |   |   |

**Then let us, one and all, be contented with our lot;  
The June is here this morning, and the sun is shining hot!**

*James Whitcomb Riley*

| SUNDAY  | MONDAY  | TUESDAY  | WEDNESDAY   | THURSDAY  | FRIDAY   | SATURDAY  |
|---|---|--|---|---|--|---|
|   |   | The darkening Moon is right for all kinds of animal care, planting root crops, shrubs and trees, and for weeding/mulching. Also, for insect and parasite hunting. <b>1</b> | The rains of early June will increase the danger of bloat in livestock that feed on wet legume pastures. Easy access to salt and hay can prevent this. <b>2</b> | As the weather heats up, water consumption needs for livestock are between two and three times that of dry food. <b>3</b>                               | How are you progressing with training the animals you intend to show? How is their weight? Conformation? Are they close to the ideal for their breed? <b>4</b> | Consider the use of muzzles on your horses in order to guard against overeating in fresh pastures. <b>5</b>   |
| June sees increasing numbers of lambs at market, especially in the Western states. Plan ahead for dropping prices to accompany all those lambs! <b>6</b>      | Traditional worm control methods (liming the pasture and planting garlic and mustard) are good but pasture rotation, regular testing, and worming are best. <b>7</b>      | Be ready to watch partial solar eclipse on June 10, visible in the Northeast of the U.S. near sunrise. <b>8</b>  | The week surrounding tomorrow's new moon is the last best lunar period for planting flowers and vegetables in the central and Northern states. <b>9</b>         | Today's new moon increases chances of storms and cooler temps. New moon time is favorable for pruning shrubs and trees that flowered earlier. <b>10</b> | Make plans for fall marketing of kids/lambs: Al Hijrah (Aug 9-Sept 6), Ashura (Aug 18), Rosh Hashanah (Sept 6), Harvest Moon Festival (Sept 20). <b>11</b>     | Warm weather increases bacteria growth. Keep goats' udders neatly clipped and disinfected before milking. Clean equipment is important at this time. <b>12</b>  |
| Fawns have been born and does are hungry. Treat vegetables and flowers against marauding deer. Or prepare tall fences. <b>13</b>                              | Rotate pastures, including sections allotted to winter wheat, after harvest is over. While this is haying time, you may want to limit hay access to wool sheep. <b>14</b> | Feed your goats twice a day before they transition to pasture in order to head off their urge to overeat. <b>15</b>  | Making sheep or goat cheese may require a Grade A dairy, other goat and sheep products can be sold without that kind of certification. <b>16</b>                | Chinch bugs hatch in the lawn. Rose slugs attack ornamentals. Powdery mildew becomes a problem in the phlox. <b>17</b>                                  | Timely clipping, shearing, and dipping can help keep your animals from blow-fly eggs as well as from ticks, lice, and mites. <b>18</b>                         | Since mosquitoes can spread disease in your flock and herd, keep your farm free of insect breeding areas. <b>19</b>   |
| Think ahead to breeding time. Finalize all spring culling. Make tentative notes about which animals to breed to which. Schedule breeding dates now. <b>20</b> | A tetanus antitoxin can help guard your goats against infections from cuts on udders, feet, and legs caused by plants and sharp objects in grazing areas. <b>21</b>       | Today is summer solstice. Sycamore bark starts to shed and thistle flowers change to down, marking the middle of the year. <b>22</b>                                       | Lunar perigee today and full moon tomorrow cause a Supermoon bringing stress in animals, thunderstorms in U.S., and a hurricane in the Caribbean. <b>23</b>     | Keep your hogs cool as the Dog Days of summer approach. It may be time to install water misters for them. <b>24</b>                                     | Grasses harvested in middle summer can have lesser nutritional value than May's harvest. You may need to finish lambs/kids on a concentrate ration. <b>25</b>  | When elderberry flowers turn to fruit, dig garlic before heads break apart. Garlic digging time is the time to plant autumn vegetable/flower gardens. <b>26</b> |
| Adolescent coyotes are hunting now. Check fences, have the guard animals in place, and bright night lighting. <b>27</b>                                       | June's final weather system is often followed by the Corn Tassel Rains, a two-week period of intermittent rain that accompanies the Dog Days of middle summer. <b>28</b>  | Prepare for mold in the hay stall and in the feed storage area when humidity levels rise after the CornTassel Rains arrive. <b>29</b>                                      | With fall coming, plan on marketing lambs/kids for Navaratri (Oct. 7 – 14), Mawlid Al-Nabi (Oct. 19), Hanukkah (Nov. 28 – Dec. 6) and Christmas. <b>30</b>      | <h1>June</h1>   |  |   |

**THE SUN**

The Sun enters Taurus on May 20, reaching a declination of 20 degrees and nine minutes, almost 90% of the way to summer solstice.

Solstice occurs on June 22 at 4:44 p.m. The Sun enters Cancer at the same time. The Sun holds steady at its highest noontime height above the horizon (a declination of +23.26) for four days, June 19–23, after which it slowly begins to descend toward December’s winter solstice.

An annular eclipse of the Sun occurs on June 10, visible in northern North America.

**THE PLANETS**

Jupiter rises after midnight in Aquarius, becoming the prominent Morning Star in the middle of the southern sky before dawn. Venus moves retrograde into Gemini during Early Summer, too close to the sun for morning viewing, but it reappears in the evening close to the horizon at last light. Mars follows Venus into the northwestern horizon after dark.

**THE STARS**

The main landmarks of an Early Summer night are Regulus in the western portion of the sky, Arcturus and the Corona Borealis overhead, and Vega in the east. The Milky Way lies along the eastern horizon, along with Cygnus the Swan, otherwise known as the Northern Cross. As the Dog Days and July approach, the Milky Way becomes more and more prominent above you before midnight. When you get up early in the morning for chores, Taurus will be rising in the east, and the Milky Way will have shifted into the far west.

**THE SHOOTING STARS**

The Eta Aquarid meteor shower began during the third week of April and runs through May 28. Its peak will be on the night of May 5-6, when you may be able to see up to 30 shooting stars in an hour, low in the eastern sky after midnight.

**METEOROLOGY**

The cold fronts of Late Spring usually cross the Mississippi on or about May 2, 7, 12, 15, 21, 24, and 29. The last days of May and the first week of June are often soaked by the Strawberry Rains, and climate change is expected to increase the

chances of precipitation. As in April, the 11th of this month is new moon day, and the chance of frost will increase with the traditional Mother’s Day cold front.

A Supermoon on May 25-26 will definitely bring frost to the northern tier of states and threaten the country to the 40th Parallel. If spring planting is not complete by the end of the third week of May, precipitation is likely to delay it even further, due to lunar position and phase in May’s fourth week, combined with the traditional Strawberry Rains.

The cool fronts associated with Early Summer typically cross the Mississippi on or about June 2, 6, 10, 15, 23, and 29. New moon on June 10 is likely to bring a brief cool spell. Lunar perigee on June 23 and full moon on the 24th combine for a Supermoon that will encourage thunderstorms throughout the country as well as the formation of an early hurricane in the Caribbean.

Lunar lore suggests that the moon’s weakest position as it enters its second and fourth quarters (May 3, 19, June 2, and 17) are the best days for herd and flock foot care, for worming, disbudding, clipping wattles, castrating, spraying for external parasites, giving vaccinations, and for taking your animals to the vet or to the fair.

**LUNAR FEEDING PATTERNS FOR PEOPLE AND BEASTS**

When the Moon is above the continental United States, creatures are typically most active.

The second-most-active times occur when the Moon is below the Earth.

| DATE         | BEST             | SECOND-BEST      |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| May 1 – 3    | Midnight to Dawn | Afternoons       |
| May 4 – 11   | Mornings         | Evenings         |
| May 12 – 19  | Afternoons       | Midnight to Dawn |
| May 20 – 26  | Evenings         | Mornings         |
| May 27 – 31  | Midnight to Dawn | Afternoons       |
| June 1 – 2   | Midnight to Dawn | Afternoons       |
| June 3 – 10  | Mornings         | Evenings         |
| June 11 – 17 | Afternoons       | Midnight to Dawn |
| June 18 – 24 | Evenings         | Mornings         |
| June 25 – 30 | Midnight to Dawn | Afternoons       |

**PHASES OF THE COWS SWITCHING THEIR TAILS MOON**

As Late Spring becomes Early Summer, the last trees flower, among them the cottonwoods. You may see wisps of cottonwood cotton floating in the wind like the delicate seeds of dandelions. Even as cottonwood seeds continue to fall, milkweed bugs gather on milkweed to mate in the deeply sweet smell of the new milkweed flowers.

**May 3** | The Cows Switching Their Tails Moon enters its last quarter: 2:50 p.m.

**May 11** | The Cottonwood Cotton Moon is new at 2:00 p.m. Lunar Apogee (when the Moon is farthest from Earth) at 5:00 p.m.

**May 19** | The Moon enters its Second Quarter at 2:13 p.m.

**May 25** | Lunar Perigee (when the Moon is closest to Earth) occurs at 9:00 p.m.

**May 26** | Full Moon: 6:14 a.m. Total Lunar Eclipse visible in the western United States. Supermoon (Full Moon and lunar perigee very close together).

**June 2** | The Cottonwood Cotton Moon enters its last quarter at 2:34 a.m.

**June 7** | Lunar Apogee (when the Moon is farthest from Earth) occurs at 9:00 p.m.

**June 10** | The Mating Milkweed Bug Moon is new at 5:53 a.m.

**June 17** | The Moon enters its Second Quarter at 5:11 a.m.

**June 23** | Lunar Perigee (when the Moon is closest to Earth) occurs at 5:00 a.m.

**June 24** | Full Moon occurs at 1:40 p.m. Supermoon (Full Moon and perigee very close together).

**THE SCKRAMBLER**  
MAY/JUNE

GOOD NUTRITION IS ESSENTIAL FOR YOUR ANIMALS. DO YOU FEED THEM SOME OF THE FOLLOWING?

- SOTA
- EYR
- ORCN
- UOMHGRS
- ETAHW
- SNAEBYOS
- YOIHTMT
- LEYRAB
- ETEBS
- SSSLMEAO
- ROVELC
- AAALLFF
- AYH
- SLEGMAN
- EOURWLFNS EDSSE
- ETESW OESTATOP
- EKAL
- RICLAG
- LEPAPS
- GRUEBLSAS

The 5th, 9th, 26th, and 34th correct answers will win their entrants a copy of *Poor Will’s Almanack* for 2021, a \$12.95 value! Send your answers to

Poor Will  
P.O. Box 431

Yellow Springs, OH 45387

There should be no typos in this puzzle, and no typo prize will be awarded. If you happen to find a typo, however, you may simply skip that word without penalty.

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**WINNERS & ANSWERS**

**JANUARY-FEBRUARY SCKRAMBLER**

Poor Will promised a Poor Will’s Almanack for 2021 to the 3rd, 7th, 24th, and 40th persons who unscrambled the Sckrambler words before the answers appeared in *Countryside*.

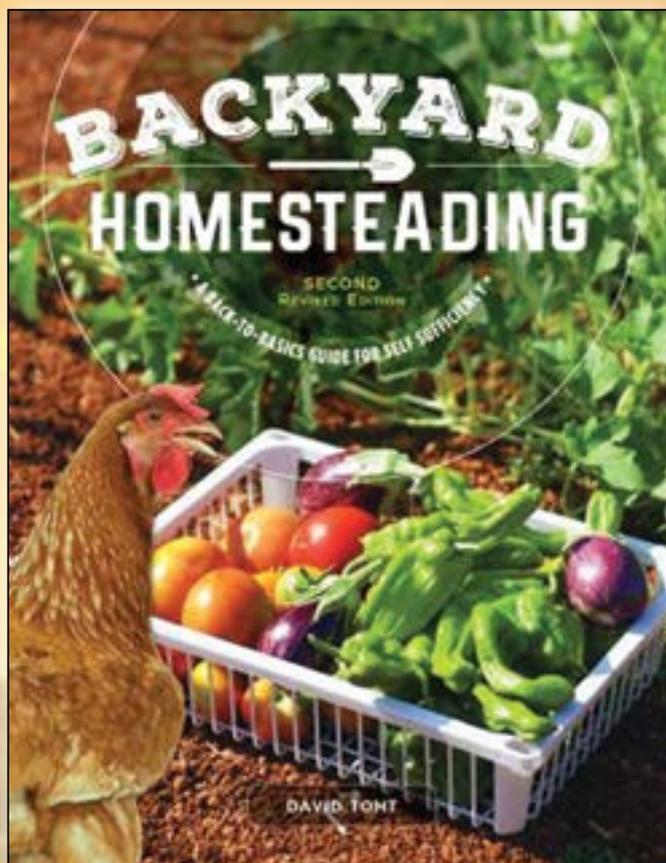
Twenty-nine correct responses were received. The 3rd solution was submitted by Carolyn Peck of Nowata, OK. The 7th solution belonged to Allen Eberle of Hague, ND and the 24th to Jeffery Goss, Jr. of Hurley, MO. They all win the Almanacks!

- IRIS/IISR
- ROSE/SEOR
- VIOLET/OIEVLT
- PEONY/NYEOP
- CAMELLIA/MACAIELL
- POPPY/PPPOY
- PEACH BLOSSOM/EPAHC BLSSMOO
- AZALEA/ZAAALE
- GOLDENROD/RODDENDLGO
- LADY SLIPPER/YDLA LSPPIER
- CARNATION/IONCARNAT
- JESSAMINE/JSSMNEAIE
- BLUE BONNET/LEBU TNNBOE
- RED CLOVER/DRE LOVERC
- RHODODENDRON/DODHORNENORD
- DOGWOOD/OWODOGD
- YUCCA FLOWER/UYCAC WOLFRE
- LILAC/CAILL
- SAGEBRUSH/BEGURHSSA
- BITTERROOT/BTTTRRIEEO

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### Ohio

Dexter Cattle For Sale. The Dexter Marketplace — Where Buyers and Breeders Connect. www.DexterMarketplace.com

## DOGS

### Louisiana

Imperial Kennels. 19457 Rolling Pines Rd, Amite, LA 70422. ph 985-474-0384. Collies Lassie type Sable, Tri, Blue Merle, Sable Merle, Shelties, Bichon Frise, Maltese, Shit tzu, Yorkies & Poodles. CKC registered. 45 years breeding. Call or Text for pictures.

## GAME BIRDS

### Minnesota

OAKWOOD GAME FARM, INC., PO Box 274, Princeton, MN 55371. 800-328-6647. <www.oakwoodgamefarm.com> Ringneck Pheasant eggs or one day old chicks. Available April thru July. Call or write for price list.

## GOATS

### Iowa

D & E DAIRY GOATS, 2977 Linn Buchanan Rd., Coggon, IA 52218. 319-350-5819. <ranch@iowatelecom.net> Facebook: d&edairygoat. Alpine, Saanen. Selling 200 head annually.

### Pennsylvania

FOREST VIEW GOATS, Samuel & Lydia Fisher, 92 McIlvaine Rd, Paradise, PA 17562. 717-875-9016. Nigerian Dwarf & Alpine Dairy Goats.

STOLTFUS GOATS, Stephen & Anna Stoltfus, 1407 Beaver Dam Rd., Honeybrook, PA 19344. 484-798-7326. Nigerian Dwarf Dairy Goats.

## HOGS

### Wisconsin

WHITE BISON FARM, Dave & Jodi Cronauer, 5711 Karls Ln., Laona, WI 54541. 715-674-2287. <apache\_jc@yahoo.com> <www.whitebisonfarm.com> Idaho Pasture Pigs, KuneKune Pigs, American Bison, Gypsy Vanner Horses.

## LEICESTER LONGWOOL

### Virginia

PEACE HILL FARM, Susan Wise Bauer, 18101 The Glebe Ln., Charles City, VA 23030. 804-337-3468. <www.historicpeacehill.com> Leicester Longwool and registered Angora goats.

## MINIATURE LIVESTOCK

### Alabama

LNL MINIFARM, Levon & Lynn Sargent, 663 Hulsey Rd., Henagar, AL 35978. 256-657-6545. <www.lnminifarm.com> <lnlsargent@farmerstel.com> AMJA % Miniature Jersey & Lowline crossbred mini beef cattle.

## NIGERIAN DWARF

### Pennsylvania

GIBSON FARM, Joe & Stephanie Gibson, Blairsville, PA 15717. 724-422-0304. <www.gibsongoatfarm.com> <gibsonfarm.steph@gmail.com> Nigerian Dwarf & Alpine Dairy Goats.

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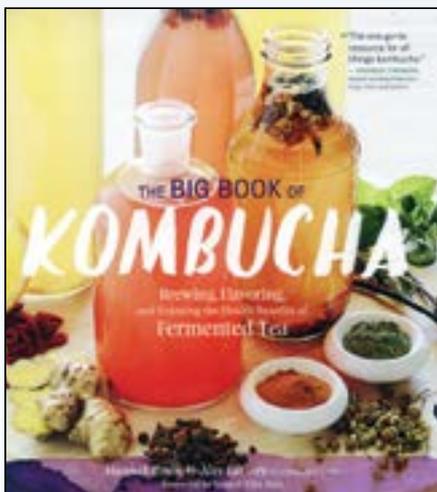
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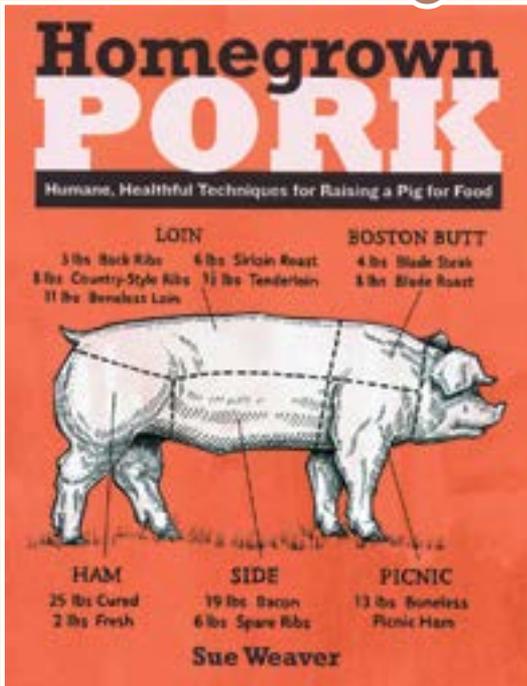
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