

The magazine of modern homesteading

# COUNTRYSIDE

*& Small Stock Journal*

Volume 107 • Number 1  
JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2023

*Do You Need  
Some Dough?*

**DIY BUILDING  
PROJECTS FOR  
YOUR HOMESTEAD**

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**PULLING A  
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**SWEET,  
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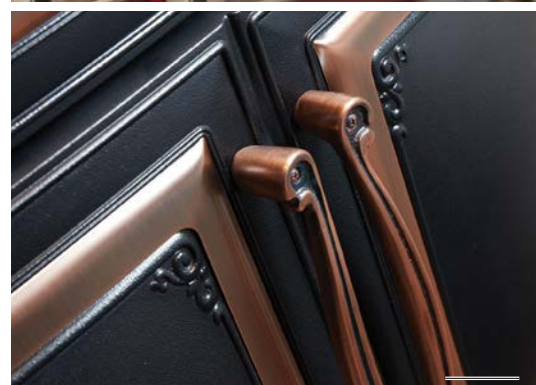
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I AM COUNTRYSIDE

# FRENCHIE FARM

BY COLLEEN HINDS



Colleen and Ben began homesteading with the goal of teaching their kids the value of knowing where their food comes from.





**F**RENCHIE FARM IS A SMALL, family-owned and operated farm located in the Chicago suburbs. Colleen and Ben Hinds raise Nigerian Dwarf dairy goats, chickens, ducks, livestock guardian dogs, cattle, and guinea fowl, alongside raising their three farm kids.

Colleen and Ben began homesteading with the goal of teaching their kids the value of knowing where their food comes from. With a strong family history of autoimmune diseases, they decided to make a shift not only for themselves but also for their kids. What started as a small hobby quickly evolved into a lifestyle that could be integrated into their community. Colleen, formally a child and adolescent therapist, now has the wonderful opportunity to teach hundreds of local children each week about growing and raising their own food in her Farm Classes for Kids. Ben is the manager of his family construction company by day, and a full-time farmer by evening and weekend.

You can usually find Colleen with a baby strapped to her back and her older children “helping” with farm chores. Homesteading with kids isn’t always an easy task, but Colleen has found it helpful to remove expectations for chores going perfectly, planning for the inevitable chaos that accompanies having young children on the farm, and simply encouraging little ones to explore and play rather than “work” during chores.

Colleen's favorite parts of homesteading are milking her goats, producing raw dairy products for her family, and teaching little ones to have a love and appreciation for farming. Ben's favorite parts of homesteading are raw dairy and spending time outside on the farm. Their kiddos share that their favorite parts of homesteading are “playing on the hay bales and loving my chickens” and “having my whole family with me and playing with chickens.”

And why Frenchie Farm? Well, this little farm family of ours all started with a French bulldog named Henry. Henry sparked our love for animals and encouraged us to step outside the box to pursue holistic healing for his allergy-ridden body. Henry has since passed, but his legacy sure does live on. 🍀





You can usually find Colleen with a baby strapped to her back and her older children “helping” with farm chores.







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<http://www.thefrenchiefarm.com>





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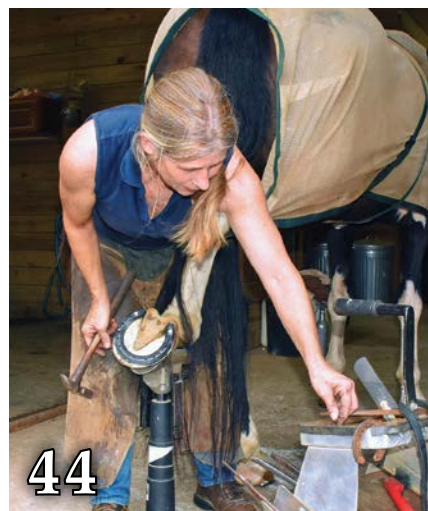
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#### **EDITORIAL**

**Ann Tom, Lead Editor**  
editor@countrySIDEMAG.COM

**Marissa Ames**  
Editorial Director

**Karmin Garrison**  
Copy Editor

**Carla Tilghman**  
Associate Editor

#### **AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT**

**Ana Skemp**

#### **PUBLICATION DESIGNER**

**Samantha Ingersoll**

#### **ADVERTISING**

**Advertising Director**  
adinfo@ogdenpubs.com  
800-678-5779

#### **COUNTRYSIDE'S MAIN HOMESTEAD**

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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 practioners.

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:** 1503 SW 42nd Street, Topeka, KS 66609

**ADVERTISING OFFICE:** adinfo@ogdenpubs.com

**EDITORIAL OFFICE:** editor@countrySIDEMAG.COM

**CUSTOMER SERVICE/BOOK ORDERS:**  
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## FROM THE EDITOR

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# Snow Days

A day that I will never forget is February 21, 2014. It was nearing the end of the week, and for several days prior, weather forecasters went on and on about a potential winter storm heading toward Wisconsin. I usually heed the warnings and am so happy I did this time, as I made sure to stock up on milk, bread, and a few other necessities. (A dear friend always jokes, "When a storm is brewing, why do people stock up on milk and bread? Are they going to make milk sandwiches?")

As Friday drew nearer, the skies got darker, and the warnings ran steadily across the television screen. With the shovels within reach just outside the back door, I braced for what turned out to be a monster of a storm.

The wind howled, and the snow piled up quickly. Trying to clear the driveway was a chore, to say the least. Living in the country with fields on three sides of the yard makes a perfect place for the snow to whirl and land into drifts. Shoveling every half hour was becoming worthless as the wind and snowfall rates picked up. I threw in the "shovel" for the night and snuggled into bed with hopes the storm would soon end.

Through the night, I could hear the wind whipping and thought I would lose power. Although I prepared

for a power outage, it never did happen, thank goodness.

By morning, the wind had died, and the sun appeared. Looking at the deep drifts, I knew a shovel wouldn't be the answer. My plowman called and said he wouldn't be able to tackle the driveway drifts with his truck, and he was making calls to get a front end-loader over to do the job.

After two days of waiting, the end loader and dump truck arrived, and I was finally free!

Some folks laugh at me for stocking up and hunkering down when a storm is forecasted, but knowing how quickly situations can change for the worse, I'm the one laughing in the end. ©



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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Or email: [editor@countrysidemag.com](mailto:editor@countrysidemag.com)





# Country Conversation & Feedback

Contact us at:

1503 SW 42nd Street, Topeka, KS 66609; editor@countysidemag.com

## Inspiration

*Countryside* is like soul food to me. We are homeschoolers and homesteaders finding the way and enjoying every minute. Yes, it's hard work, but the satisfaction is worth it. Thank you for being another inspiring rung on the ladder up.

Thanks,

— Emma Miller, Fresno, California

## A Letter to Fellow Subscribers

Years ago, I wrote a letter that *Countryside* published and I am hoping to have another one published.

I wrote that we were a Christian homeschool family who were homeschooling our children and desired to make connections with other homeschool Christian families. The response was pretty good.

We moved to the country to avoid the deleterious effect suburbia seemed to have on the character of youth. I think that as a result of farm chores, our children have grown to have commendable character. Our son is 25 and daughter is 22. We live in South Dakota.

Because we are fairly isolated, I thought I would take advantage of this medium again to see if there might be anyone interested in getting to know our children. I would welcome all inquiries, however, to be honest,

while our children are pretty intelligent, we are not college or urban oriented.

— Tim Froehlke, [timf@emssensors.com](mailto:timf@emssensors.com)

## Apple Cake Recipe

Hello,

I just made this recipe with my apples off my tree and wanted to share it with you.

### OLD-FASHIONED APPLE CAKE WITH BROWN SUGAR FROSTING

Grease 9-by-13-inch baking pan, set aside.  
In large bowl, mix all ingredients except apples.

- 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> cups flour
- 1<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 1½ teaspoon apple pie spice, or use 1 teaspoon cinnamon, ¼ teaspoon ginger, and ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 eggs
- 8 tablespoons soft butter
- 4 cups peeled, finely chopped apples. (I used Gala and diced them small, about the size of a dime. I used 5 or 6 apples. If I diced 6 and I was almost at my 4 cups, I went ahead and added them.)
- 1 cup chopped walnuts or pecans





When ingredients are mixed well, stir in apples. Spread into pan. Bake at 325 degrees Fahrenheit for 45 minutes.

#### *Frosting*

7 tablespoons butter  
2/3 cup brown sugar  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1/4 cup milk  
2 1/4 cup powdered sugar  
3/4 teaspoon vanilla

Melt butter in saucepan, stir in brown sugar and salt. Cook until smooth. Add milk and bring to boil. Stir in powdered sugar then add vanilla. Whisk fast, will set up quick. Pour over warm cake.

— Diana Johnson, Lima, Ohio

We want to hear from you!  
**January/February Question of the Month:**

**It seems every time we turn around, the price of nearly everything rises, with no end in sight. How has your life changed, if at all, during the recent months of continued inflation?**

Send your responses to:  
Countryside Editor  
1503 SW 42nd Street,  
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Or email: [editor@countrysidemag.com](mailto:editor@countrysidemag.com)

## **In Response to the November/December Question of the Month: What is your favorite way to relax on a cold winter's night?**

My favorite way to relax on a cold winter's night after being outside shoveling snow and cleaning and fixing dinner/supper is making doll houses. I have made over 30 since COVID hit. It is so relaxing and fun to do. My houses have battery-powered working lights, and most have a music box.



The ones I have made so far include Chinese houses, a camper, a coffee house, and a greenhouse, to name a few. I have a shelf in my bedroom made just for the houses.

— Diana Johnson, Lima, Ohio



# DIY BUILDING PROJECTS Around the Homestead



BY JENNY UNDERWOOD

**T**HERE is a never-ending list of things we need around our homestead. It ranges from the simple to the more complex. But one thing is certain: most of them can be made much more inexpensively if I do it myself, and with the rising cost of everything, that is something that can benefit us all!

This year saw our gardens produce a large number of potatoes, and we needed a convenient way to store them. I wasn't impressed with plastic totes since the price, quality, and lack of airflow were all negatives. When my husband brought some dumpster-bound lumber home, I knew I had



Side view of slatted box.



Join the corners of the boxes together as shown.



Inside view of joints.



The bottom is slatted also.



found the answer. And for about an hour's work, we had several large crates that worked perfectly to hold approximately 60 pounds of potatoes. Here's how to make them:

#### Materials:

- Sideboards (8) (16 inches by 3½ inches)
- Bottom boards (4) (17½ inches by 3½ inches)
- Braces (4) (9 inches by 1 inch)
- Screws or nails

You will need either repurposed lumber or new lumber (pallets are excellent). Be creative. Are you or a neighbor tearing down a structure? If possible, take that lumber and make something with it. Don't worry if the dimensions aren't "perfect." You can either readjust or use a saw to rip the boards to your desired width. We cut our boards 16 inches long for the sides. There were 8 boards total for the sides (16 inches long x 3½ inches wide) and 4 boards for the bottom. You can use whatever type of saw you have available; however, we used a chop-saw which made short work of that job!

Consider how large you want your crates. Don't make them too large if you will be carrying them. If you're simply putting them in a root cellar and then filling them, that's not as big of an issue. Our crates have airflow, so the boards are not touching on the sides. This will save you material; however, if you need something to hold a vegetable such as carrots, which are usually stored in sand, then you will want your sides solid.

After you have your boards cut, then you will need to fasten them together. The easiest way is an air gun, but you can also use a screw gun or hammer and nails. Pre-drilling your holes will help to prevent the wood from splitting. Build the sides by laying down 2 short boards (these are the braces that will attach your sides together). Place them the

distance apart your sideboards are. Fasten your boards on the braces at each end. Do this for 2 opposite sides. Now fasten all of your sides together by joining the corners and either nailing or screwing them together. Flip the four walls over and fasten the bottom on. You can make a solid bottom or a slatted one for airflow.

Another project that will save you money is building your own garden cover structures. We have multiple raised beds in our garden, and it's simple to build a hoop house to get an early start on the season. The hoop can be covered with either clear plastic to extend or jump-start your season or mesh netting to prevent bug infestations.

#### Materials:

- PVC
- Plastic covering
- Netting
- Screws

To build the hoops, you'll need PVC pipe. Measure how tall you want your hoop to be. Then add approximately 70 inches to that. (For example, ours is 50 inches tall, so the length we cut was 120 inches.) If you have an existing raised bed, you may be able to do what we did and drill holes in the boards along the sides. Then simply slide your PVC pipe down into the holes and run a screw through them to hold them securely. Place them every 2 feet for a durable structure. We ran ours through the top and bottom boards to make a sturdier fit. If you don't have this capability, then you'll need to make a simple frame to attach your PVC to. Again, drilling holes slightly larger than the pipe will allow you to fasten them together.

And speaking of raised beds, it's super simple to make your own. Raised beds can be made from just about any material, but we prefer

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either plain wood or a barn roofing metal and wood strip combo. The plain, untreated wood will last for years, but the metal and wood combo will last much longer. I recommend making your raised beds no wider than what you can comfortably reach from each side to the middle. Ours are 8 feet by 4 feet. This uses exactly one piece of metal (12 feet by 3 feet) with zero waste. As the price of metal has increased, these are obviously more expensive than they were 10 years ago when we built our first ones. However, given their durability, we still feel these are an excellent investment.

**Materials:**

- 1 piece sheet metal (36 inches by 12 feet)
- (3) 2x4s, 8 feet long (ripped in half)
- Screws

To begin, cut your sheet metal in half widthwise. This will give you two 12-foot-long pieces that are each 1½ feet wide. Then cut two 8-foot lengths. This will give you two 4-foot-long pieces left over. The long pieces are for your sides, and the short ones are for your ends. If you don't want your beds this large, then adjust as needed. We then ripped 2x4s in half to give us 1x2s. You will need 1½-foot 1x2s (8), 4-foot 1x2s (4), and 8-foot 1x2s (4).

Fasten the 1x2s to the metal on the outside of each piece. Make sure you do the sides and tops of all pieces. Then attach braces on each side and ends. Screw the end of one long piece to the end of one short piece. Continue around the bed. We dug down to level our beds (though this is nice and attractive, isn't absolutely necessary). Then we filled our raised beds with good dirt.

**Some options are:**

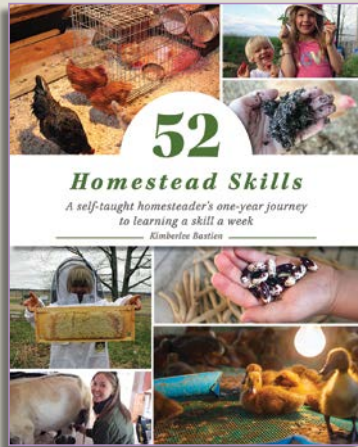
- Topsoil
- Compost
- Rotted manure
- Potting soil

Ask around if your neighbors feed livestock or horses, and perhaps they'll bring you some dirt where they feed their animals, as this is usually rich and full of nutrients.

No homestead is complete without a compost bin of your own! These can be elaborate or extremely simple. Ours are made from repurposed pallets. This creates a double-sided compost bin with open fronts. (Think a capital E shape.) Place your bin close enough to the house where it's convenient to dump vegetable and fruit scraps but far enough away that bugs and smells won't bother you!

**Materials:**

- 5 wooden pallets
- 7 or 8 T-posts
- Wire



**52 Homestead Skills**

One Homesteader's Journey to Learning a Skill a Week

MOTHER EARTH NEWS 52 Homestead Skills follows homesteader Kimberlee Bastien as she learns one homesteading skill per week over an entire

year. The book details Bastien's adventures, from building a beehive and becoming a beekeeper to creating her own laundry and dish soap. Packed with skills such as making deodorant, building a chicken chunnel, and freezing jam, the 52 projects in this book will provide you fun and creative outlets, as well as homesteading knowledge that can help turn your dreams into a life worth living.

**This title is available at: [Shop.IAmCountryside.com](http://Shop.IAmCountryside.com) or by calling 970-392-4419.**

Mention promo code MCSPANZ6. Item #9058.





To begin, mark out your area and drive your first T-post. Either slide your pallet over the top or attach it from the side with wire. At the other end of the pallet, do the same thing. At a 45-degree angle, attach a second pallet and two more T-posts. Then attach a third pallet at a 45-degree angle from that one. Go to the back of the third one at a 45-degree angle and attach a fourth pallet and two more posts. Then,

at another 45-degree angle, attach your last pallet and T-posts. Wire all of your pallet joints together for a sturdy structure.

So, remember, even though prices are increasing, there are many things you can make yourself around the homestead to save you money and make your life a little easier! Happy building! 🍷

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



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 - Mike Anderson, W.Va.

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- Shery Goodman, Sunspring Ranch, Provo, Utan.



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# BE A GOOD COUNTRY NEIGHBOR

BY WREN EVERETT



**I**N THE CITY, LIFE IS FAST AND often impersonal. We live next door to neighbors with whom we have never had a conversation beyond a brief nod while fetching the mail. If they did hang over the fence while we were trying to get yard work done and chat, it might be somewhat annoying or odd. Our typical expectation for most city neighbors is to mind their own business and remember to bring their garbage cans back from the street on Monday afternoon.

But if you ever decide to leave it all and move to the country, you're in for some culture shock. Folks out here aren't accustomed to numbing themselves to some endless stream of strangers in traffic — they insist on engaging with their fellow humans. As you'll eventually find, you'll start recognizing a face or two at the local grocery store and finding folks sticking out a friendly wave as they pass your car. The neighbors will become far more than

brief nods over the daily junk mail retrieval.

As new arrivals to their neck of the woods, you'll very likely become aware that there's a sort of unwritten "code" to how neighbors are expected to act with each other. If you're a reasonably decent person, you'll likely want to know how to speak that code as soon as possible, because both being and having a good country neighbor can be a massive asset to your "settlin'-in."

As someone who left the city nearly six years ago, I've learned some of that code and would like to share a bit of what it takes to be a good country neighbor.

## Keep Your Dogs on Your Property

In the cities, dogs are precious family members with names, personalized beds, and monogrammed leashes. But if you bring Prince Floofy with you on

the move to the country, you'll also find that he needs to learn how to be a good neighbor. Folks don't take too kindly to a wandering mutt, no matter how harmless you promise he is.

"Shoot, Shovel, Shut Up" is the advice many country people follow when a rampaging dog is found on their property. Any dog running wild can destroy a flock of chickens,





run cattle to death, and needlessly butcher newborn lambs as a fun "game." Therefore, if a strange canine is sighted within their boundaries, many farmers quietly eliminate it before it does damage; not a great neighbor situation and one easily avoided by keeping your dog where he belongs.

### Handle Your Garbage Thoughtfully

Burning garbage is an acceptable manner of eliminating waste in many parts of the rural world and, honestly, a necessary evil. Many of us live on those gravel and dirt roads endlessly mentioned in country songs. If we don't handle our garbage ourselves, it won't get handled. Many people have dedicated burn pits or barrels, and the smell of aerosolized plastic on the breeze isn't out of the ordinary. However, when and how you destroy your garbage can publicly declare how thoughtful a neighbor you are.

Some folks carelessly throw kerosene on a messy pile of trash bags on a beautiful morning, toss a match, and leave the mess to slowly burn all ... stinking ... day. These folks often don't check local weather conditions; their unattended burns can and do start wildfires.

Others wait until the workday is complete, check the local fire danger level, build a careful fire in the late evening, and attentively ensure that their pile burns hot, fast, and under control. This usually sends about 10 minutes of smoke straight into the sky if they were thoughtful about choosing a windless hour.

### Don't be a Mooch

A battered green truck rolled up our driveway only a few days after we moved in, and a neighbor emerged. "Don't give them there anything." He pointed to the rundown trailer closest to ours, surrounded by garbage piles and mangy, underfed dogs. "Give them

a loaf of bread or a cup of sugar, and they'll never stop comin' back, asking for more. Mooches. I know you're new. You seem nice. Just don't want you gettin' taken advantage of like they did t'us."

I soon learned that most country folks are incredibly generous but eventually draw the line when they know they're being exploited. As such, don't endlessly borrow

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supplies. It's one thing to ask a knowledgeable neighbor to teach you the ropes of an unfamiliar tool — many of them are delighted for the chance to share their wisdom. But regularly borrowing other folks' tools or using their goods rather than buying your own comes off as rude and irresponsible.

### Work Hard

"Folks before you? Locusts." My neighbor spat out the word with a curl of the lip. "Took Hugh's (the original owner) beautiful land, logged it, and trashed it. Broke m'heart. Then they moved back to..." he paused for terrible effect, "California."

He appraised the gardens we'd installed, the clean chicken coop, the just-laid path between the barn and the house, and the fledgling orchard. "But ... it's gettin' better, now."



In country terms, that small recognition of our years of hard work cleaning up and revitalizing the admittedly "trashed" land we'd bought was a huge compliment. At that moment, we knew we'd finally transcended the mysterious "observation" period allotted to newcomers and begun proving that we had what it took to live there. Though some may always refer to our property as "Hugh's land," at least we weren't "locusts."

Outsiders, especially those originally from the city, aren't naturally endowed with respect or trust by the locals. The only way to "naturalize," in many of their eyes, is through years of proving that you don't mind working with your hands, getting dirty, and improving your land. The fruits of your labor will speak far more volumes than any of your words.

As new arrivals to their neck of the woods, you'll very likely become aware that there's a sort of unwritten "code" to how neighbors are expected to act with each other.

### Have the Time to Talk

If your neighbor emerges from his field while you're at your fence line, he'll likely talk with you for 20 minutes or more. If you drop off a crate of tomatoes and zucchini to an elderly neighbor, she'll invite you in for an hour-long "visit." Your city habits will nag at you that this is taking too long but not give a reason why. Resist it and take the time to chat. These interactions are invaluable, full of local lore, bits of wisdom, ridiculous anecdotes, and the social glue that links country folks and starts slowly weaving you into the fabric of the community.

With that said, I recommend listening and asking questions more than talking about yourself. Though important, your views on politics, land management, guns, or religion are best kept to yourself for the time being. You're already at a disadvantage as the local newcomer from the city. It's better that people know little about you and get to know you slowly through your positive actions than to acquire divisive factoids that will only load up the local gossip mill.

As you can see, most of what it takes to become part of the social fabric of your country neighborhood is little more than courtesy, patience, and a listening ear. Keep at it; slowly but surely, you'll understand what it is to be and know good country neighbors. 🍷

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





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# USING FORAGING TO TEACH PLANT BIOLOGY

## (and more)

BY WREN EVERETT

FOR THE HOMESCHOOLING parent, some topics may seem intimidating. If we struggled with math or science in school, attempting to adequately equip our own young wards may seem like an insurmountable task. Teaching biology may hold that anxiety for you, especially if you don't feel like you have a firm understanding of life outdoors beyond "green growing things" and "some sorta critter."

Thankfully, kids are often naturally attracted to animals and want to learn about them. That enthusiasm, however, doesn't always extend to plants, which makes the plant anatomy portions of the lessons a real bore. There are only so many petunias you can dissect before your porch plantings look depleted, and the kids are wondering what the point

is anyway. So, I'd like to offer a unique spin on teaching young people about plants that is almost guaranteed to get them interested and engaged: foraging!

Whether your students are in kindergarten or their senior year, the practical and delicious skill of finding food in the fields and forests is a great way to get students to observe, explore, and understand how important and fascinating the botanical world can be. Plants get a lot more exciting when you get to eat them.

### Textbooks

Good reference books will be imperative for this edible adventure. For the family looking to add wild plants to both their lesson and dinner plans, I can't recommend the following highly enough:

***Newcomb's Guide to Wildflowers*, Lawrence Newcomb:** This field guide offers an advanced level of plant identification. That said, it's one of the best references for flower ID I've ever found.

***Botany In A Day*, Thomas Elpel:** This book teaches about plants in terms of their family traits, making identification instinctive. You may not be able to say what species a certain plant is, but you'll definitely know where to start searching.

***The Forager's Harvest, Nature's Garden, and Incredible Wild Edibles*, Samuel Thayer:** Leagues beyond any other foraging book series I've found. Thayer explains and explores edible plants with the knowledge and enthusiasm that only comes from years of eating them himself.

***Stalking the Wild Asparagus*, Euell Gibbons:** Like walking in the woods with a knowledgeable, lovable grandpa, this book was the foraging gateway for many folks.

### Getting Started

The best place to start looking for wild edibles is the backyard. And the best plants to start with are the plants you likely already know. There's a surprising amount of edible goodness growing as "weeds" in your garden and shade trees overhead. (Of course, these plants will only be safe to consume if you don't spray your lawn with chemicals.)

Some prime candidates for backyard food-gathering are these common weeds and trees. They have no toxic look-alikes, are easy to identify, and can help build up your confidence.

- **Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinalis*):** Edible leaves, flowers, taproot
- **Chickweed (*Stellaria media*):** Edible leaves, stems, flowers



- **Broadleaf Plantain, English Plantain** (*Plantago major*, *Plantago lanceolata*): Edible leaves
- **Common Violet** (*Viola sororia*): Edible leaves and flowers
- **Oak** (*Quercus spp.*): Edible seeds (acorns, when prepared properly)
- **Wild Spinach** (*Chenopodium album*): Edible leaves

Even if you know the identity of a plant you've found, take the opportunity to identify it using at least two field guides (any two of the books I've listed above would work fine). Identify each part of the plant using the botanical language used in the descriptions in the books. This will get you and your students learning terms such as alternate, composite, petiole, or basal rosette almost instinctively (much more fun than memorizing vocabulary terms!). Furthermore, getting a solid grasp of these identification terms will allow you to soon branch out and start identifying less familiar plants with confidence. When it comes to plant identification, especially when foraging, details really matter. Don't gloss over this part, even if the plants are "easy." The last thing anyone wants is young people emboldened to indiscriminately (and potentially dangerously) graze on just any plant!

Once identification is assured, it's time to gather! You'll find, depending on what time of year you go out, that different plants will be available at different times. Dandelions are usually best in spring, wild spinach is a card-carrying summer plant, and acorns only begin to drop once fall arrives. Students can start to naturally anticipate the seasonal shift of plant life cycles when they're looking forward to the arrival of a wild edible.

This whole endeavor, of course, now leads to the kitchen. If you allow your students to cook alongside you, these lessons will soon transcend science and build domestic life skills as well. Try a spring frittata of dandelion and violet greens, topped with cheese; a summer sauté of savory wild spinach with garlic and ginger over rice; and some spicy cinnamon-acorn pancakes to warm you up on a cool fall morning.

For the interested parent, it is very easy to continue branching out from science and adding more interdisciplinary elements to this botanical adventure. Conservation goes hand-in-hand with foraging, as some plants are sensitive natives that should be gathered sparingly, while others are invasive spreaders that can't be eradicated no matter how many of them you pick.

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LEFT: Picking chickweed. RIGHT: Broadleaf plantain.



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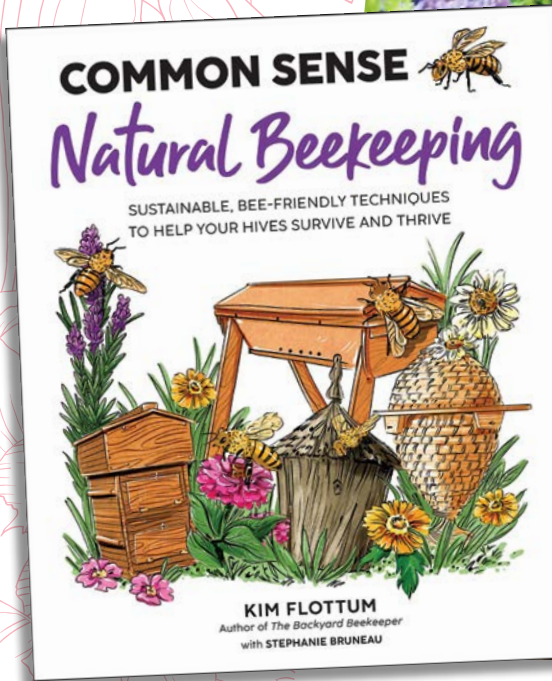
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History is also waiting in the wings with traditional Native American uses and pioneer lore easily accessed through the plants that sustained the past. Art can also be foraged from pressed leaves, wild dyes, and natural inks.

You could even literally bind all these elements together and write your own homemade family foraging book. Have your students draw detailed illustrations of each plant they forage, describe it botanically accurately, and give seasonal tips and notes for when and how to gather. Include any fascinating background information you discovered about the historical uses of the plant. Then, record your favorite recipe for eating it. Whether you decide to add pages to a dedicated binder or get a glossy book printed through an online service, within a few years, you'll have a beautiful, memory-full, and useful tome as proof of your botanically edible adventures together.

This is a brief, incomplete introduction to a deep and complex topic. But I also hope that this whets your appetite to explore and teach with the world of edible plants that are bursting out of every corner beyond your door. ©





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# What to do Before Buying Your First Bees

STORY AND PHOTOS BY KRISTI COOK



Beginning beekeeping classes often take place in January and February, only a few months before the typical time to pick up your first bees. It is here that many discover if beekeeping is right for them.

I'M NOT GOING TO LIE. KEEPING BEES is one of the best adult hobbies ever because where else can a grownup play with bugs, carry around fire, and play mad scientist all at the same time? Even better is the built-in fortress beekeepers have for those times we want a little peace and quiet — after all, how many non-beekeepers do you know who're willing to follow a beekeeper into the bee yard unprotected? And, of course, there's all that luscious honey, too. But before you run out and buy your first set of bees, there are a few things you should do to ensure your venture into beekeeping is a success loaded with honey and lots of fun, too.

## Attend a Beginner's Class

Most beginner beekeeping classes are conducted by the local beekeeping association and often include the club's membership dues and access to their monthly meetings and publications in the registration fees. Usually, these classes are posted months in advance and range from a short four-

hour course to eight or more hours in length, each covering varying amounts of information. These classes show you what to expect before you begin handing over hard-earned cash for honey bees and equipment that you may later discover you don't want or need.

## Locate a Bee Club

The value of the bee club cannot be overstated. Countless times, novice beekeepers wander into our monthly meetings not only frustrated with beekeeping after only a season or two, but considering giving up their hobby entirely. These folks have often never attended a bee meeting or a bee conference, and perhaps they've watched a few videos online or read a book on beekeeping. But absent from their toolbox of beekeeping skills is the community and knowledge gained from regular attendance at their local bee association.

Why is a club so important? Two reasons. First, in this location, you discover what only those beekeepers in your region can know — how to keep

bees in your area. Beekeeping is highly region-specific as many factors outside the beehive affect how any colony behaves. The timings of seasonal changes, forage availability, and farming practices all affect the timing of key beekeeping best practices as described in the literature. And timing is one key factor that can make or break your entire beekeeping adventure.

Secondly, it is also at the local bee club where you will have the most incredible opportunity to find a mentor or someone else who will talk with you beyond the classroom walls to guide you as you discover your own beekeeping style. I cannot begin to tell you the number of folks

who have helped me along the way, and it was at these bee associations that I met all but one of my

Beekeeping is highly region-specific as many factors outside the beehive affect how any colony behaves.



mentors. And I have had many. So, your local beekeeping association is arguably one of the most significant factors if you want to succeed from the beginning of your journey.

### Read Quality Sources

Many excellent beginner beekeeping publications are available to suit anyone's reading style. Nearly all these resources are available in any format you desire — hard copy, digital format, and audiobooks. The knowledge gleaned from quality resources is the foundational information every beekeeper needs to know to keep their bees alive beyond the first season. In these books, each novice learns the importance of each aspect of beekeeping while simultaneously discovering the various methods for each task. It is the knowledge gained from these books and other publications that helps each beekeeper learn to time their actions properly and how to apply their methods correctly in their specific region.

Your local beekeeping association is arguably one of the most significant factors if you want to succeed from the beginning of your journey.

### Be Judicious With Online Videos

The internet, of course, is an excellent tool to use when first discovering the world of honeybees. It is in these videos that we are allowed access into a beekeeper's bee yard. These videos enable us to see what the inside of a colony looks like. We learn how to light a smoker three ways while discovering what a queen cell looks like. We can even see honeybee diseases up close and personal through the lens of a knowledgeable beekeeper.

What we can't see, however, is the flow of beekeeping practices that keep honeybees alive year in and year out. We can't see that the beekeeping practices for the state of Maine vary dramatically from those practices best used in Texas.

Floridians keep bees a bit differently than those in Arkansas, partly due to small hive beetles. Dysentery is a more significant issue up north than down south, so spring and winter practices often vary for this reason.

Even better, some regions require pollen supplementation to survive, while in other areas, pollen supplementation can wipe out entire colonies in a matter of days. So, use these videos in conjunction with the science and practices learned via your local association and science-based beginner beekeeping books, as these videos are never intended to be a standalone resource.

Before buying your first set of bees, slow down and do some information gathering. Take the time to meet up with folks from your local bee club, visit the library and read a book or two, and take a beginner's class while watching a few videos to see if you really want to jump into the exciting world of beekeeping. The success of your beekeeping journey depends on it. 🍯



This mentee has joined our local bee club and is now being mentored all season as he learns to move frames, read comb, and more. In just a few years, he'll be mentoring the next round of "NewBees."

**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. You can find her sharing sustainable living skills through her workshops and articles when she's not busy with the critters and veggies.





# MULTIFLORA ROSE

BY MARK M. HALL

**H**OMESTEADERS ARE perpetually waging war with something, whether it is bugs, weeds, or weather. Often, there is open conflict with all three of these adversaries at one time. As a longtime homesteader, my father fought

countless skirmishes over the years against many such foes. However, the toughest aggressor was the dreaded *Rosa multiflora*, more commonly known as the multiflora rose.

Multiflora rose is a thorny shrub in the *Rosaceae* family that rapidly

forms a dense thicket up to 10 feet in height. Unfortunately, it thrives in virtually any soil and can climb into the lower branches of trees. A horde of bright green stems, or canes, extend as far as 15 feet, bend down to the ground, and establish legions of new root systems. Thanks to this continuous cycle, multiple layers of growth are added at seemingly breakneck speed, making the formidable thicket virtually impenetrable. Incredibly, these thickets can expand at the alarming rate of two feet per week in mid-summer.

Not only does this prolific shrub increase quickly in size, but also in number. On average, a multiflora rose plant produces an eye-popping one million seeds per year, and their viability in the ground lasts up to 20 years. Birds dine on the seeds and ultimately populate the landscape far and wide with their droppings. Consumed also are its small, red





fruits called hips, in which the seeds are found. Turning leathery in the fall, hips persist all winter long, protecting seeds from the cold, and continuing to attract birds.

To avoid the onset of these huge brambles, it is beneficial to know how to correctly identify the multiflora rose. Its many fragrant clusters of white or white-pink flowers bloom from May to June. Each one measures roughly an inch across, is supported by a stalk, and has notched petals. Its alternate, pinnately compound leaves consist of many sharply toothed, football-shaped leaflets. Also, it has multiple bright green stems, which are usually armed with curved thorns. Because of the thorny thickets and speedy growth habits of the multiflora rose, it is sometimes confused with other roses and prickly shrubs. However, the plant can always be differentiated by fringed leaflike projections, or stipules, at the leaf base, the bunches of small hips that stay around during winter, and the upright, curving stems.

Multiflora rose has drawn plenty of negative attention from state and local governments. It is officially classified as an invasive species and/or a noxious weed in numerous states, including my home state of Ohio. Taken together, this means it is widely considered to be a non-native plant that is detrimental to animals or the environment. Often, the use of this plant is severely restricted, and in at least four states, it is banned outright. Here, a licensed nursery may use multiflora rose as rootstocks for other plants, but a permit must be obtained from the Ohio Department of Agriculture for any other usage.

The multiflora rose did not always cause so many problems. In fact, early impressions in America of this undesirable plant were quite

favorable. Arriving from Japan in the 1860s, the multiflora rose was first introduced to the United States as a rootstock for garden roses. In the 1930s, farmers were encouraged by the United States Soil Conservation Service to plant them for the purpose of erosion

control. In time, it was repurposed in some highway medians as a barrier for avoiding crashes and for reducing headlight glare.

Control of the multiflora rose is imperative. Because of the harmful results of its rapid growth, complete removal of the plant is



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recommended. To do so is not a quick or easy undertaking, but with a combination of tactics, superiority over the threatening shrub can indeed be gained. A winning strategy begins with frequent cuttings with a brush hog over a 2- to 4-year period.

On average, a multiflora rose plant produces an eye-popping one million seeds per year, and their viability in the ground lasts up to 20 years.

In locations without desired vegetation nearby, this mechanical method can be followed by the application of a translocated herbicide, such as triclopyr or glyphosate. Absorbed during photosynthesis, this treatment effectively results in the demise of the plant. The final part of the plan is a vigilant, painstaking effort to identify and pull seedlings by hand, making sure to remove the roots in their entirety.

There is an alternative shrub-cutting option to consider also. A herd of hungry goats gladly makes a meal out of even the worst multiflora rose thickets. For individuals desiring the use of this method yet not interested in purchasing these nannies, goat rental is an option in many areas. Although, at several hundred dollars apiece per acre, their rental charge is not cheap.

After several decades, I am ready to rumble with our own multiflora rose plant. It was once a barely noticeable little

shrub nestled among the foliage along the side of our creek. Not surprisingly, however, it soon exploded into a nasty thicket. Now, years later, it has annexed a sizable portion of the yard and has taken prisoner the bushes on either side. The thorns snag me every time I pass nearby on the riding lawn mower. Its removal has been put off far too long, resulting in a lot of extra work in doing so. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm going to thin out the thicket with the brush hog and get to the root of the problem. 🌱

#### RESOURCES

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







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# GROWING SWEET, SEDUCTIVE MINT

BY ANDREW WEIDMAN



**R**EFRESHING MINT HAS SO MANY USES and qualities, and it deserves a place in every garden. Mint is medicinal, culinary, and aesthetic. Even better, it's a pollinator favorite in the garden. The problem is mint usually forgets its place. Literally.

Greek mythology tells the tale of the nymph known as Minthe, daughter of a river god of Hell — and proud mistress to Hades, Lord of the Dead. Upon hearing Minthe's boasts about having Hades' favor, Persephone, the wife of Hades, transformed her into a lowly herb growing in spring-fed meadows beside the Gates of the Underworld. To this day, mint still grows in the open streamside, sweet, seductive, and forever reaching beyond its station.

On a more practical vein, mint has the distinction of being one of humanity's earliest and most prized herbs. Its name appears in the most ancient medicinal writings, both Egyptian and Asian. In Israel, taxes and tithes could be paid in mint. (It's tempting to imagine a connection to the minting of money, but no, they don't quite share a link.) Ancient burial preparations called for fragrant bunches of mint because of mint's air-freshening properties and perhaps in honor of poor, scorned Minthe. Later, churches and temples took to strewing fresh mint stems over their floors, where footsteps of the faithful would release aromatic oils, helping to mask the odors of unwashed bodies.

Medicinally, mint has been used as a digestive aid (after-dinner mint, anyone?) to soothe stomachaches and abdominal cramps, both intestinal and menstrual. Medieval herbalists recommended mint for stimulating appetites and calming lusts, as a treatment for the bites of rabid dogs, and as a vermifuge for expelling mice. They may have been on to something with that last application; you can buy potently mint-scented garbage bags to keep your trash cans vermin-free. Anyone suffering from colds and stuffed sinuses is familiar with the ventilating power of menthol, the "pepper" in peppermint. Mints also soothe muscle aches and strains, showing up in sports creams and rubs.

Mint also belongs in the kitchen, making tasty tea, hot or cold, and freshening up many adult beverages. More than just a drink or a garnish, mint also finds its way into salads and sauces, jellies, flavoring for candies, chewing gum, peppermint sticks, and, well, mints. Many Mediterranean dishes make use of mint's cooling flavor to take the edge off otherwise hotter, spicier dishes. And let's not forget the happy marriage of mint and chocolate.

What is the flavor of "fresh?" Mint, of course! From toothpaste and mouthwash to flavored floss and dental polish, the flavor of mint reigns supreme in the battle against halitosis and bad breath in general. This is in addition to breath fresheners and certain "curiously strong" breath mints. If you prefer, you can even chew a sprig of mint for the same effect. In the same vein, bundles



of fresh mint make wonderful air fresheners when hung in a doorway where a fresh breeze can waft past them.

Botanically, the mint family is massive, even global in scale. Family members include rosemary, lavender, horehound, thyme, basil, lemon balm, bee balm, catnip, and many more. You may have noticed a trend: they're all strongly aromatic, in some cases pungent, herbs.

The true mints, including spearmint, peppermint, apple mint, and many more species, along with their hybrid "flavored" mints, all belong to the genus *Mentha*. They all bring varying degrees of "mint" flavor, some stronger, others milder. The family resemblance is reinforced by the common physical characteristic of square stems and opposite leaves. Opposite, in this case, means there are always two leaves grouped together on opposite sides of the stem. Each pair of leaves alternates with the pair above it and below it, a bit like the cardinal points on a compass. The leaves vary in shape from round or oval to lance or spearhead shapes. Their texture varies from flat to crinkled, smooth to furry or velvety, depending on the variety. Keep these characteristics in mind if you find yourself in a sunny meadow by a stream bank; you may just find a mint treasure growing wild there.

As herbaceous perennials, mints range in height from low-growing ground covers to upright stems reaching as high as four feet, depending on species and variety. Most grow upright and largely unbranching, although pruning and harvesting will promote a bushier growth habit. Their small flowers form in clusters, either whorled around leaf nodes or in a terminal spike. They're usually white, pink, or pale purple.

Most mints also form horizontal stems, called stolons, either above ground or just under the surface of the soil. These stolons are the source of a gardener's greatest headache with mint: The plant NEVER stays where you want it. Each joint or "node" on a stolon will readily take root and start a new plant in neighboring garden beds, regardless of what might already be growing there. On the upside, this characteristic also makes mint incredibly easy to share and start in your own garden.



MEADOW MINT



UNIDENTIFIED WILD MINT



SPEARMINT



APPLE MINT



CHOCOLATE MINT



PEPPERMINT



GINGER MINT



But which mint do you want? That depends entirely upon your tastes. Peppermint is the strongest, menthol giving it an extra kick. Spearmint is more of an “everyman’s mint,” with a gentler, smoother mint flavor. Apple mint, with its large, round, fuzzy leaves, is said to make the best mojitos, and a sprig of it makes a fine garnish in any summer drink.

The best selection method is to trust your nose and tastebuds. Even among named varieties and labeled species, there’s a lot of variation. It’s almost impossible to tell the differences between a mild peppermint and strong spearmint, or which is “mojito” or just basic apple mint. It’s no wonder gardeners often give up and just call their patch

“mint” or “meadow tea.” Find a friend with a patch of mint you enjoy, or go to your local nursery to see what varieties they have. Brush the leaves of each variety to get a sense of its fragrance. If you like what you smell, pinch a leaf and give it a nibble. You may find that many of the flavored mints, such as chocolate mint or pineapple mint, really aren’t flavored so much as scented. They still taste like mint.

You can find mint seed, but there’s no guarantee about what you’ll get. Mint seed may seem like an economical way to start a patch, but unless you’re willing to start the entire packet and sample each seeding, you’re better off buying or trading a plant or two. If another gardener is sharing with you, all you really need is a few rooted stolons, and your mint patch is off and running.

Start your mint patch in late spring, after the threat of frost has passed. Mint grows best in organically rich, moist, well-drained soil in sun to part-shade. Variegated varieties such as pineapple mint will appreciate some afternoon shade, especially in northern states. Mint likes regular moisture, but it doesn’t appreciate wet feet; that’s when diseases such as black stem rot and leaf spot show up. You can grow mint in hot, dry rain-shadow areas such as the south side of a house foundation, but it won’t be happy there; the patch will slowly dwindle and eventually fade away.

Planted in better conditions, your patch will thrive — and invade nearby beds. Why else did you think your friend was so happy to share their mint with you? There are a few ways to contain your mint patch, some more effective than others. First: never plant mint among your other herbs in the herb garden; mint will get its own bed, — whether you give it one or it takes over the one it’s “sharing.” Select a spot with built-in barriers, such as the strip of ground between the sidewalk and the curb. Another option is to plant it in a spot where the lawnmower will keep it in its place. As an added benefit, nothing smells quite so sweet as fresh-mown mint.

Mint can also be planted in large pots, either free-standing or buried in the ground. Just be sure to keep the soil level in the pot a few inches below the rim to help contain wandering stolons, and be prepared to trim off those that try escaping anyway. If you bury the pot in the ground, cut out the bottom to allow good drainage. Buried five-gallon buckets with their bottoms cut out also make good mint containment, as long as you watch for escaping stolons. In late fall, after the plants have gone dormant, cover the bed with an inch or two of finished compost for winter protection and fertilizing. Even in above-ground pots, mint is reliably winter-hardy to at least USDA Zone 6, and at least Zone 5 growing in-ground.

## Making the Perfect Pitcher of Mint Tea

For me, one of the most refreshing drinks of summer is mint, or “meadow” tea. You can use any variety of mint, or, even better, a blend of mints.

1. Gather a handful (a dozen stalks or so) of fresh mint.
2. Place the mint in a heat-resistant pitcher or mixing bowl. Some people prefer to strip the leaves from the stems. I leave them on the stems.
3. Pour a gallon of hot water, brought just to a boil, over the mint. Do not boil the mint; this gives the tea a bitter taste.
4. Allow tea to steep for 15 to 30 minutes; remove mint and discard. The tea will be a pale golden-green color.
5. If desired, sweeten with sugar or honey while still hot.
6. Chill, pour over ice, and enjoy! (A mint sprig garnish doesn’t hurt, either.)







You can harvest fresh mint any time throughout the season, and nipping off tender tips, such as the top 6 inches, will encourage bushier growth. Harvest mint for drying just as the plants begin to form flower blossoms. Don't wait too long, as oil levels drop as the plants bloom. Leave a small patch to bloom; the bees will thank you for it.

Cut the plants a few inches above the ground in the morning while the day is still cool. Use about a dozen stalks for each bundle. Secure the bundles with rubber bands; as the stems dry down, they'll shrink, loosening and dropping out of the bundle if tied with twine. Avoid washing the cut mint; washing strips away the volatile oils, drastically reducing the dried mint's potency. Hang the bundles in a warm, dry, shady place to dry. The optimum temperature range is from 95 to 105 degrees Fahrenheit. Your garden shed will serve well as long as you open the windows for airflow. When the bundles are brittle-dry, crumble the leaves off the stems, bagging them for storage in the freezer or in a cool, dark place.

Pour boiling water over a tablespoon or so of dried leaves for a steaming cup of refreshing mint tea, using more or less to suit your tastes. Fortify it with a shot of whiskey, bourbon, or brandy and some honey and lemon to help stave off the effects of the inevitable winter colds. Try adding your mint to homemade vinaigrettes and salad dressings or sprinkled over steamed vegetables for a little something different. And maybe save a bundle of mint just to hang in the kitchen as an air freshener and rustic ornamentation.

Consider making a spot for mint in your garden this year. Give it a rich, well-watered spot in the sun, and it will repay you sweetly. Just make sure to keep it controlled, or you may find it seducing its way across your garden. 🍃



**ANDY WEIDMAN** is a self-styled naturalist, curious about all things wild, living in Lebanon, Pennsylvania. His day job is in maintenance support for an international aluminum manufacturer. His hobbies include wildlife photography, birding, tropical fish, backyard fruit culture, and generally spending time outdoors with his wife (they're empty nesters). He's also part of a local grass-roots organization dedicated to sharing information on home fruit growing, the Backyard Fruit Growers based in Lancaster PA. He is a former Penn State Master Gardener, having served from 2008 to 2011.



# How Do 24-Year-Old Beans Taste?

BY PATRICE LEWIS



**M**UCH ADO IS MADE OVER THE PROPER requirements for long-term food storage. Woe betide anyone who dares to defy the mandated wisdom of Mylar bags and oxygen absorbers for their bucketed food. The implication, of course, is storing beans, rice, and other dry goods without proper preparation will render the food items inedible.

It's worth noting most long-term dry foods don't last forever and lose viability year by year. Fortunately, we've learned through experience that "shelf-life" is vastly overrated.

Most (though not all) dry foods are good for years of storage when protected from heat, light, moisture, and pests. They might lose a fraction of their nutritional value, but in a crisis, who cares?

Dry beans are

usually given a shelf-life of 3 to 6 years under optimal storage conditions. But sometimes, as we learned, things can turn out better than hoped.

Back in 1999, as earnest and novice Y2K preppers, we filled a five-gallon bucket with black beans and screwed on a gasket lid. That's it. No oxygen absorbers, no Mylar bags. Just beans in a bucket.

We never used those beans. Now here it is, 2023, and these beans are nearly a quarter-century old. We opened the bucket once or twice just to make sure they weren't moldy or eaten up by bugs, but otherwise, we didn't use them. The last time we opened the bucket eight years ago, quite by accident, we didn't screw the lid down correctly. The beans were likely bug-tight but certainly not air-tight for eight of those 24 years, please note.

By all accounts — and especially since we stored them in what could only charitably be described as suboptimal conditions — the beans should be rock-hard and entirely inedible because they would never soften. Right?

Wrong.





I scooped out about two cups last year and ran the beans through a basic cooking test. I soaked them overnight in water, then put them in a pot with fresh water and boiled them for about 30 minutes. The result? Soft and ready for a chili cook-off.

We didn't use a pressure cooker or baking soda as a soaking aid; we simply soaked them overnight in water like any dry bean and cooked them as we would any soaked beans.

How can this be? All conventional wisdom says the beans would be like little pebbles under these conditions, especially since they weren't stored with any packing aids.

For a bit of enlightenment, my husband was able to locate a 1991 master's thesis written by a fellow named Scott Myers at Brigham Young University, titled, *The Effects of Packaging Gas, Temperature and Storage Time on Germination, Loaf Volume and Protein Solubility of Wheat*.

Granted, this study involved wheat, not beans; but the gist is as follows: during the 18 months of the study, the packing gas used for each of the wheat samples (air, carbon dioxide, nitrogen) made little difference in the wheat's ability to become a loaf of bread. What did make a difference was temperature. The higher the long-term storage temps (topping 100 degrees Fahrenheit), the less likely the wheat was to make bread.

We haven't been able to locate a similar study for beans, but our anecdotal experiment illustrated that quarter-century-old beans can be very forgiving.

As an additional experiment, we

wondered if beans this old were still viable. In other words, could they be grown? There was only one way to find out. I planted some.

Not only did these 24-year-old beans grow, but they grew very well.

I started them in pots on the windowsill and later hardened them off and transplanted them to the garden, where they grew splendidly until the ding-dang deer decided to decimate them (a story for another day).

However, growing 24-year-old beans shouldn't come as a surprise. I know a woman who

used to live in New Mexico. One day, a neighboring rancher's cows trampled an area and uncovered a clay pot with a wooden stopper, sealed with pine pitch. The rancher took the pot to the archeology department of a nearby university, where some large, white, dry beans were discovered inside. The beans were carbon-dated to 1,500 years ago and later christened Folsom Indian Ruin beans. Our friend was given a couple of the beans, and she planted them. They grew splendidly, and my friend continues to plant and grow these beans each year.

So yes, beans are very forgiving.

Admittedly, our friend's 1,500-year-old beans had been stored (accidentally) in a dry, low-humidity environment. As it turns out, our 24-year-old black beans were also (accidentally) stored in a low-humidity environment since we live in a fairly dry climate. If you live in an area with lots of humidity, your dry-storage needs will be different.

The enemy of dry food storage is heat, light, moisture, and pests. These are the issues you need to address for your own long-term food storage, especially if your climate is humid.



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I would never suggest duplicating the same haphazard storage conditions we used for long-term food storage. Nor am I putting down Mylar bags or oxygen absorbers, which perform their functions superbly. Instead, it's to point out it is still possible to successfully store dry foods

long-term under less-than-ideal conditions. In other words, don't despair if your storage conditions aren't perfect.

The enemy of dry food storage is heat, light, moisture, and pests. These are the issues you need to address for your own long-term food storage, especially if your climate is humid. To this end, some people place their bulk foods in the freezer for a few days (to kill off any pests) before storing them. Others dust the contents with a small amount of food-grade diatomaceous earth, which is vicious on insects but harmless to people. (Make sure the diatomaceous earth is food grade.) After that, place the food in jars or food-grade buckets with tight lids and store in a cool, dark, dry place. And yes, Mylar bags and oxygen absorbers aren't a bad idea, either.

More and more people are engaging in long-term food storage, which is a decidedly encouraging trend. While I hope you don't make the same food-storage mistakes we did, it's nice to know you can still eat (and grow) 24-year-old beans. ©



**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/>.

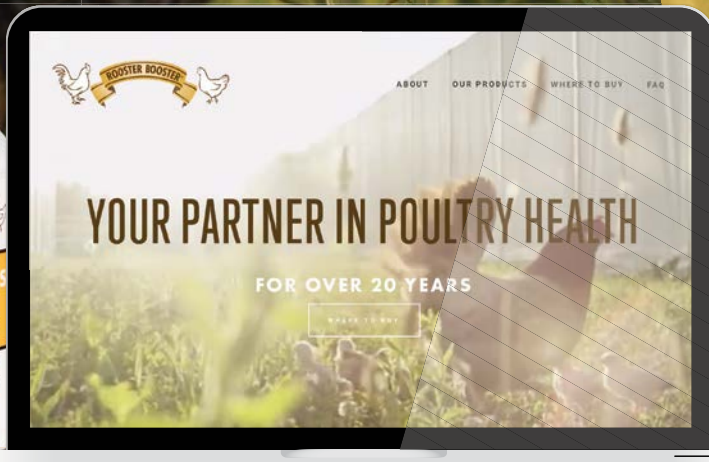




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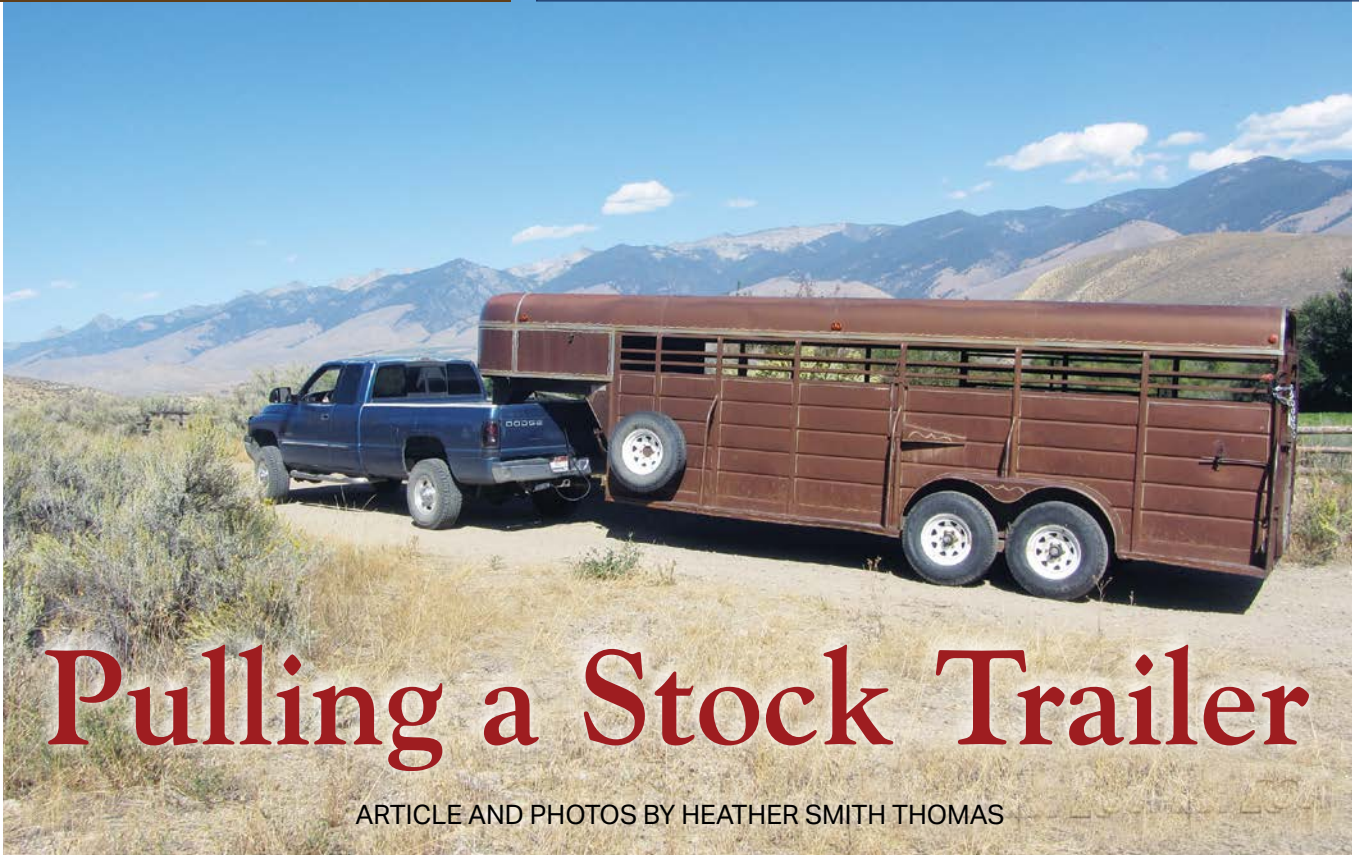
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# Pulling a Stock Trailer

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY HEATHER SMITH THOMAS

**H**AULING LIVESTOCK OR horses can be easy and safe — or risky, depending on the experience and judgment of the person driving the rig. Even if you've never pulled a trailer before, it's not difficult if you're a good driver and pay attention to factors that change when pulling a trailer.

The main thing to remember is that your vehicle is now much longer and heavier and contains animals that should not be jostled around. Pulling a trailer will affect your acceleration, stopping distance, etc. Always start slowly and gradually to create a smooth start.

The extra weight of the trailer and animals makes everything different. A 20-foot trailer with five or six horses or a load of cattle or sheep will affect acceleration and stopping distance more than a two-horse trailer. There is also a big difference between empty and loaded. Even empty, allow extra stopping distance. If you allowed 300 yards to slow down and negotiate an intersection with just

your truck, now you should double that. With a full 20-foot trailer traveling 50 mph, allow as much as  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a mile to slow down so you can negotiate the turn at about 5 to 10 miles per hour.

It's essential to have trailer brakes set correctly. If brakes are adjusted without animals in the trailer, they won't be adequate when loaded. Learn how to adjust the brake setting because you may be hauling horses or cattle on one trip, and the next time you may be empty — picking up animals.

Michael Thomas, an Idaho horseman/rancher who has been hauling horses, cattle, and fencing materials for 30 years, says brakes are not something you set once and forget. "You need to reset the control unit for the current load. If you pull empty and forget to change it (set for hauling livestock), you'll drag the tires when you put on the brakes — which may result in a slide-off, jackknife, or some other kind of wreck. Conversely, if you set it for empty and forget to change it when hauling a load when

you are rolling down the highway and need to slow down and turn, the timing is off. The truck brakes are now doing all the work, and the trailer isn't doing any; you won't be able to slow down enough to make the turn even if you allowed  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a mile for slowing down," says Thomas.

The greater the weight and length of your rig, the longer it takes to get to traveling speed and the greater time needed to merge with traffic or accelerate. "You'll need to use all your gears and run up to maximum torque rpm (revolutions per minute) on a diesel truck before you shift. If you usually need 100 yards to merge with traffic in your truck (without a trailer), make sure you have at least four times that length when pulling a loaded trailer. Even then, don't pull into a lane where traffic is also coming in the other direction because the person you pull out in front of will need to pass while you're getting up to speed," he said.

It will take time to get used to using side mirrors. "You need



mirrors that extend out farther, designed for use with trailers since they give a better view of your whole trailer. You won't have as many blind spots as you'd have with regular pickup mirrors. Glance in the mirror at all your trailer tires periodically while traveling to make sure none are going flat," says Thomas.

"Know where your truck tires are on both sides, front and back, and how they track on a tight corner or through a gate. You need a feel for where your tires are without having to look. When pulling a trailer, also learn where your trailer tires track. They usually stick out a little wider than the pickup tires unless it's a narrow two-horse trailer. Always allow a little extra room for the trailer."

Slow down for bumps. Make sure the trailer is past the bump before you speed up again. Always think about where your trailer is and what the animals will encounter. A bumper-pull trailer rides rougher than a gooseneck.

"Practice turning before you have to do it on the road to find out how your trailer tracks; it will always make a sharper turn than your truck, so you need to allow for that. The longer the trailer, the more the tail end will move inside the radius of your truck, cutting the corner. A longer trailer will pull in farther, and a gooseneck cuts the corner even more than a bumper-pull," explains Thomas.

"When turning at an intersection, always allow extra room. The tighter the turn, the farther the trailer pulls in. On a 90-degree turn, a 20-foot trailer may come in 6 feet — and more on a tighter turn. You should overdrive the turn by at least that many feet," Thomas says.

Learn your blind spots. There are places along your trailer (and behind it) you can't see with your side mirrors. Check mirrors often, especially when turning. If you haven't driven a truck and trailer



before, have a person walk around the rig at different distances while you check the mirrors to find out where your blind spots are, and keep these in mind.

### Driving in Traffic

Allow plenty of space between yourself and the vehicle in front. If pulling a heavy load, stay well back — so that if you have to stop, you can do it gradually. "In town, a safe bet is to allow at least a 4-car space between you and the next vehicle (especially when approaching an intersection). Then, if the vehicle in front of you slams on the brakes, you'll have time to stop without throwing the animals against the trailer or having one fall down," says Thomas.

As your speed increases, spacing must increase. "Determine the stopping distance of your loaded vehicle because each rig will be a little different depending on weight, speed, condition of your brakes, etc. Do this out on a road with sparse traffic. Drive at various speeds, practice a controlled stop without upsetting the animals, and determine the distance it took and



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mark it. Pick a spot on the road as a starting point and then go back to see how far you went," he says.

"As a ball-park example, a 20-foot trailer with five horses, pulled by a diesel pickup and traveling 65 mph, takes between  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a mile to come to a complete stop without tipping horses over. On the freeway, ensure at least 100 yards between you and the vehicle in front. This gives you time to either change lanes or stop if that vehicle slows or stops," explains Thomas.

With several lanes of traffic, travel with the lane going closest to your speed, so you won't have to change lanes often or cause people to have

to pass you. If you'll be turning off, get into the turning lane well in advance so you won't have a problem finding room at the last minute. Check mirrors often when moving in multi-lane traffic because you now have more blind spots with traffic on both sides of you.

"Don't just look in your mirrors once and go; make sure another vehicle has not come up behind or beside you in a blind spot. Use your turn signal well in advance of where you'll turn to give adequate warning. Tap your brakes gently a couple of times to give the following vehicle notice you are about to do something and to give the animals a little notice." They will be more prepared to brace themselves or balance. This is especially important if it's been a long, straight haul and the animals might be relaxed.

"On a mountainous two-lane road, you may be going slower than the regular traffic. Be aware of cars behind you, and let them pass wherever you can. If you have to pass a vehicle, ensure you have plenty of room. Make certain you are clear of the vehicle before you swing back into your lane," he says. Most mirrors make objects look farther away than they are.

Whenever you make a turn, steer wide. Remember that the trailer will

cut the corner on the inside, making a sharper turn than your pickup.

"If you don't swing wide to allow enough room, it may hit a stop sign or a parked vehicle or run over the curb on a street," says Thomas.

At an intersection, when making a 90-degree turn to the right, do not swing into the left lane to give yourself room to make the turn. "You always have a blind spot between your mirror and the back of your trailer, and a car might be trying to pass as you swing out. It is illegal to swing into that left lane to make a turn," he says.

"The correct way is to stay in your lane until making the corner, swinging into the oncoming traffic lane on the road you are turning onto after the intersection. Oncoming drivers can see you making the turn and can slow down, allowing you to swing and get back into your lane. This is the only legal way for a big truck/trailer combo to make a turn at an intersection," says Thomas.

"By contrast, if you change lanes to the left (before you pull through the intersection) to initiate a right-hand turn, there's the possibility that a little car might be directly behind in your blind spot, and it might pull up alongside you on the right. An impatient driver trying to pass you on the right (as you are swinging to the left) could get run over when you make your turn," he explains. 🍏



#### 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 for 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).



# Winter's Delight Jam



## Ingredients

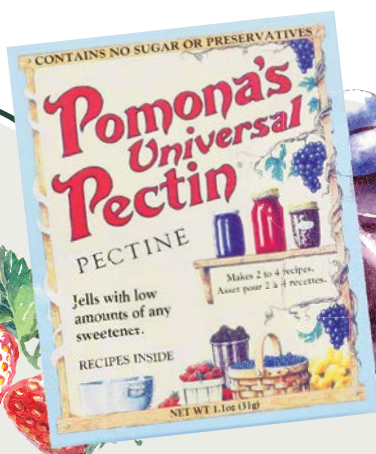
- 3 cups whole cranberries
- 1 orange, peeled, seeded, and sections separated
- 2 teaspoons grated orange zest, from the above orange
- 2 cups frozen, slightly thawed, sliced strawberries
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons calcium water
- 2 cups sugar, divided
- 2 teaspoons Pomona's Universal 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. 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 low boil. Turn off heat and keep lids in hot water until ready to use.
- 2 Rinse cranberries and combine cranberries and orange sections in a food processor. Pulse until coarsely chopped.
- 3 Add strawberries, orange zest, cloves, and cinnamon. Process until finely chopped, but not pureed.
- 4 Put processed fruit mixture into sauce pan.
- 5 Cook mixture for 2 minutes over low heat, stirring constantly.
- 6 Add calcium water, and mix well.
- 7 Measure 1 cup sugar into a bowl. Thoroughly mix pectin powder into sugar. Set aside.
- 8 Bring fruit mixture to a full boil. Add pectin-sugar mixture, stirring vigorously for 1 to 2 minutes to dissolve the pectin.
- 9 Add remaining 1 cup sugar once pectin is dissolved. Stir well and return to a boil. Once the jam returns to a full boil, remove it from the heat. Skim off any foam.
- 10 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.



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# Finding a Farrier

BY STEPHENIE SLAHOR, PH.D.

**T**HE OLD SAYING IS “NO HOOF; NO HORSE,” and whether you have a horse, mule, or donkey, your equines need good hoof care. And it must be regular care — averaging every 6 to 8 weeks.

Whether you want your equines shod or not, a good farrier is necessary because, by the nature of the work, it's the farrier who finds hoof and even leg problems that you might not see or even realize.

Finding a farrier is often an “ask around” task. Your feed store, other owners of equines, and veterinarians may know farriers to choose — or not choose. Ask about prices, of course, but also be sure to ask about: reliability and efficiency, promptness and regularity in keeping and scheduling appointments, competent care and handling of the equine, quality of work, availability during a situation needing immediate attention, and how long they have been in business. Some farriers attend schooling to learn their trade, while others learn from a pro in the field. Be aware that some farriers prefer working only on certain breeds or in a specific specialization.

For most visits, the farrier will

examine the necessary trimming, shaping, and shoeing. A good farrier will check the equine's gait to see if there is any limping or favoring of a particular leg. The farrier will examine and possibly sniff the hooves closely for signs or smells of abscess from a severe bruise or an injury from a foreign object that might have been in the corral, pasture, or along the trail. The farrier will feel the animal's legs and hooves for unusually warm or hot spots. And the exam will check for cracks in the hoof wall, signs of brittleness, or conditions such as thrush, laminitis, or infection.

Often, hoof problems are handled by the farrier rather than seeking veterinary care because drawing agents for abscesses, hoof clips, and tools for correct trimming and shaping are often in the “kit bag” of a farrier. You might even get some recommendations for suitable feed, bedding material, boots that will help a barefoot equine, sprays, and supplements that can help improve your equine's leg and hoof health.

Although the farrier with whom you build a good working relationship has “been there, done that” with all sorts of equines, farriers also expect

and deserve a little help from you. Have the equine ready for the farrier's visit — caught, haltered, and cleaned up on the legs and hooves. Yes, some equines don't like their legs or hooves handled, but you can usually overcome that by making it a daily habit to use a hoof pick for stones or dirt and accustom the animal to having the legs and hooves handled.

Be sure the farrier has a comfortable, well-lighted, and safe area to work in and that you can give assistance if needed. And, by the way, have the check, cash, or credit card ready at the end of the farrier's session with your stock. The worker is worthy of the hire, indeed!

Let's talk about horseshoes and why they are considered good luck. It all probably goes back to the art of blacksmithing — a trade that used iron and fire, both of which were considered “magical” by some of the old lore and cultures. So important was the blacksmith to a community that, in some realms, they were actually authorized to perform marriages.

One famous farrier was a member of the de Ferrers family that served William the Conqueror at the Battle



of Hastings. To honor the farrier's service, the family coat of arms could bear the images of six black horseshoes on a silver background.

How to "use" a horseshoe other than on an equine has some interesting trivia. Many believe the theory that a horseshoe should be hung or displayed with the points upward to hold in the good luck. If the points are down, the luck is pouring out and away.

Even the finding of a horseshoe has some lore. Many believe the newly-found horseshoe should be picked up, spat upon, and then tossed with the right hand over the left shoulder to land behind. Then it can be picked up to keep, use, or decorate that door, fence post, wall, horseshoe "tree," or other spots.

Ancient Rome once conquered what's now England, and "hipposandals" were more common for draft horses than nailed horseshoes, where draft horses had to travel on London's metal-reinforced road surfaces. The shoe was like a slip-on sandal, bound onto each hoof.

Later in history, most horses wore shoes made of iron and sometimes rawhide. These days, horseshoes are also made of plastic, rubber, steel, or aluminum; some even have nubs welded to grip the ice.

Hoof care is necessary, and your farrier can be a substantial and vital part of your equine's good health! 🐾

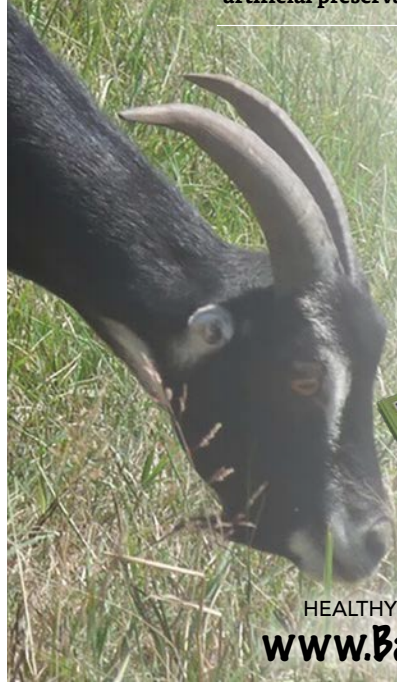
**DR. STEPHENIE SLAHOR'S**

farm and ranch background includes cattle, horses, mules, donkeys, dogs, cats, sheep, goats, rabbits, birds, chickens, geese, turkeys, and tortoises — but not necessarily all at the same time! She would be one of the first to agree that, indeed, "Variety is the spice of life!" Her degrees are a Ph.D. and a J.D., which, she says, "cost a fortune in time and money, but well worth it!"

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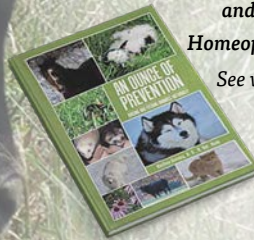
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# Wintering Calves With Their Mothers

BY HEATHER SMITH THOMAS



**T**RADITIONALLY, COW-CALF PRODUCERS calve in the spring and wean in the fall. This works for people who calve in February and March (or even April) or seed-stock producers who calve in January (to have bull calves old enough to sell as yearlings in a spring bull sale). In recent years, however, more cattlemen are trying to calve in sync with nature on green grass — when cow/calf pairs don't need hay, and the weather is better for newborns, saving on hay and labor.

Calving in May and June (or even July) works great, but those calves may be too young for weaning in October or November, so some people are leaving calves with the cows into winter, sometimes weaning as late as March.

This works well if the pairs can graze through winter on crop aftermath, cornstalks, stockpiled pastures, windrowed forage, or bale grazing (eating bales left in the field for winter use or bales placed on a pasture that needs more litter/fertilizer to improve soil health and fertility). If calves can be out on

pasture with their mothers — even if the herd is being fed hay — rather than confined, they do better and stay healthier.

Some people think calves won't grow well in cold weather, wintered with their mothers on forage, but they actually do quite well. If the cows won't be calving again until May or later, they have adequate time to recover from lactation even if calves are weaned as late as March. At weaning, the calves can be fed good forage, and the cows can go back to the winter feed program (cornstalks, bale grazing, windrows, or whatever they were grazing before) until green grass. Calves experience less stress when weaning at about 10 months; they don't miss their mothers as much, and the cows have already weaned some.

Even if the cows have lost a little weight by the time the calves are weaned, they fatten up again before they calve. Cows only need about 45 to 60 days of "dry time" before calving again.

Weaning summer-born calves at a young age, in late fall/winter

weather, often results in more sickness, primarily if the calves are confined in a corral. It's better to leave them out on pasture with the cows. Calves learn from their mothers how to graze through snow, seek out forage, find windbreaks, etc., and the heifer calves become better cows. Calving in May/June means selling light calves if you are marketing calves in October/November. But if you leave them on the cows and run them on grass the next year to sell in August or September, they are a good weight, bring a reasonable price, and you don't have much feed investment.

Wintering pairs can save on feed and labor. This makes winter chores easier — with just one herd to deal with instead of a herd of cows and a pen of weaned calves. In a grass-based system, working with nature, keeping calves on their mothers, is better than grain-feeding to develop their rumens, so they become efficient on grass. If the pasture, cornstalks, or bale grazing is poor quality forage for calves, a creep area can be provided. It's not for feeding grain; it's a place they can get in, and





the cows can't, and the calves can have higher-quality hay. The cows can be on a cheap straw-based or poor-quality hay ration and protein supplement, but calves do better with higher-quality forage.

During severe winter weather, windbreak and bedding in the creep area will be beneficial if there's no brush to provide adequate shelter. One rancher uses his main corral as a creep area; the cattle come into the corral for water and protein pellets, and the calves can go into another pen through a creep gate. There are hay bales and bedding for the calves, and they can come and go as they wish. When it's time to wean, it's just a matter of closing the gate when they are all in that creep corral eating hay. This is stress-free weaning; the calves are in a familiar place with familiar feed and haven't been stressed by being sorted. The cows are nearby, through the fence.

### Late Weaning is Natural

By 9 or 10 months, calves don't need milk anymore, and the cows are not producing much. By that age, the calves are also very independent and ready to wean. Mother Nature programmed cattle, like bison, to spend their first winter with their mothers. In nature, cows suckle calves through winter, then kick off the big calf the following spring before giving birth to the next calf. The older calf tags along, stays with mama and the new baby for awhile, and is never stressed.

Even with good feed for an early-weaned calf, we can't do as much for them as their mother can. She may lose weight, lactating through winter, but if she isn't calving again until May or June, it doesn't matter if she loses 200 pounds. If she has 45 days of green grass before she calves again, she will put on enough weight to have a healthy calf and breed back within 80 days after calving.

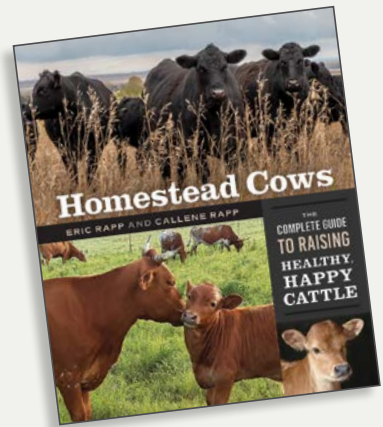
Whether a cow is on stockpiled grass pasture or hay during

winter, it contains all the necessary micronutrients she needs but very little actual energy. However, it doesn't take much energy for a cow to produce butterfat; all she needs is adequate digestible fiber. Her rumen microbes create energy during the breakdown of fiber. In winter, her milk has more fat and less protein. She is giving less volume than she would on green grass, but the milk quality is very high.

The evolutionary function of milk produced by mammals is to supplement their young until those babies can consume adult food, so why wean calves before when they can live off forage? There's no reason to wean early (unless you are in severe drought and cows don't have adequate forage) if it means you have to provide calves with more energy and protein to keep them growing. That's what milk does for them.

It is easier to supplement calves through winter via their mother's milk than to supplement them with grain. The natural lactation curve matches the needs of a growing calf; the closer the calf gets to adulthood (and the closer the cow gets to the next calf being born), the less milk is produced.

Before domestication or selective breeding, cows gave a moderate amount of milk and fed their calves through winter without problems. By selecting for heavier weaning weights in beef cattle, we indirectly selected for heavier-milking cows. They become too thin on poor pasture if lactation continues into winter. On many ranches, it is better to have efficient cows that keep some nutrients for themselves without getting too thin during lactation. Weaning time can be delayed until spring, but keeping calves on the cows may not be a good option for a heavy milking herd since this puts more nutritional stress on the cows. It all comes down to a management



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decision to have that kind of cow. A heavy-milking cow is not as efficient in many ways as a more moderate-milking cow.

But if cows are average in milk production and winter feed is adequate (grass or hay), it may be more cost-effective to leave calves on the cows longer or even leave them together through winter if the calves were born in summer rather than early spring. 🌱



# Soay Domestication

BY SHERRI TALBOT



**W**HEN ONE LOOKS AT a Soay sheep, it isn't uncommon for those unfamiliar with the breed to believe they are looking at a strange goat. Their tiny stature, delicate legs, and horns tend to lend them a look that — to most people — says "goat." By today's standards, Soay are incredibly dainty, with a much finer, softer coat than one would get from most modern-day sheep.

The Soay is a sheep, producing wool rather than cashmere in the springtime. They are a primitive, semi-feral breed, and their development is designed for survival rather than enhanced production. Slender legs and light bone structures allow them to move

amazingly quickly, but they only produce about a pound or two of wool per animal each year.

The specifics of sheep domestication have been lost over the centuries, so theories on the

years ago — at least 2,000 years after dogs and at about the same time as goats.

Mouflon were probably the first sheep domesticated — or at least used — by humans. Mouflon are

not wool sheep, however, and were used only for their hides.

Other, more productive modern-day sheep developed centuries later with more advanced breeding techniques to create the sheep we have now.

Today, Soay are described as

"feral" rather than "wild" because evidence suggests these sheep did not evolve on the island of Soay and were likely a result of some earlier domestication. Their isolation on

Soay tend to be a vigorous breed, showing parasite resistance and producing lambs without assistance.

details can vary. It is undisputed that sheep were one of the first domesticated species. The general belief is that the first sheep breeds were domesticated about 10,000



the island of Soay is estimated to be sometime in the mid 19th century.

As with so much else, why the Soay were abandoned on their island is speculation. Speculations revolve around the introduction of other, more profitable sheep to the St. Kilda islands. Since the incredibly hardy Soay would have been tough competition for these newer but more productive breeds, experts believe that they were moved to the island to allow the new breed more leisurely grazing.

Evidence suggests inhabitants of the main island returned once a year or less. Soay island was difficult to access, meaning long periods between visits. These trips may have been for visitors to collect the fleece of the Soay or to hunt them. Whatever the reasons for the trips, humans were not present enough to selectively breed or care for the sheep. Even without human intervention,



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with the lack of predators and their adaptability, the Soay thrived.

Soay were only rediscovered on Soay island in fairly recent history, and it wasn't until the 1920s and 30s that they began to be transported off the island and spread throughout the world. They weren't available in North America until the 1990s. The introduction of the Soay to small homesteads and conservation programs has helped increase the population but can have its pros and cons for breeders when compared to common, domestic breeds.

Soay are one of the last wool breeds to shed their coat. They rub themselves on branches, bushes, and other available objects to pull the old winter fleece off each year. This means that homesteaders without the desire or ability to shear sheep are still able to produce fiber. Today, it is more common for shepherds to "roo" or pluck the wool from their Soay when it starts to shed, so it isn't necessary to wait for them to shed in bits and pieces. Non-breeding ewes and castrated rams will not shed, however, since they lack the hormonal changes needed to lose their winter coats. In these cases, shearing is still necessary.

Each animal also produces much less wool than its modern counterparts. For those who are looking to support themselves financially with fiber, the tiny amount of fiber a Soay produces pales in comparison to the production of a contemporary fleece, which can be up to 30 pounds.

Soay are also used as a meat breed, producing a small carcass, but one that is incredibly lean. Soay meat — even young animals — possesses a distinct, intense flavor that does not match what we often think of as "lamb." It is more suited to a hearty stew than a leg of lamb

in most cases. This means that for those sensitive to "gamey" or strongly flavored meats, Soay might be a difficult dish to adapt to.

They are generally easy to care for, however. Soay tend to be a vigorous breed, showing parasite resistance and producing lambs without assistance. Even first-time birthing ewes will deliver

Soay are one of the last wool breeds to shed their coat. This means that homesteaders without the desire or ability to shear sheep are still able to produce fiber.

without intervention and usually have excellent mothering instincts. Tails do not require docking, and Soay do well on pasture and fresh water. Shepherds often use grains only to get the sheep conditioned to coming in for health checks or sometimes for pregnant ewes in the winter. However, the wild nature of the Soay does mean that lambs are likely to be bred in their first fall if not separated, and ram lambs become active very young.

The change in environment between the island Soay sheep was adapted to, and mainland areas can also require breeders to adapt for the sake of the sheep. For instance, the island of Soay does not have blowflies, making flystrike a non-existent concern on the island but a significant concern for those raising sheep elsewhere. Also, many shepherds use dogs to move and contain sheep, but the feral breeds often don't flock in the same way that modern breeds do. This means that if dogs are used, they need to be specifically trained to deal with the Soay tendency to scatter and regroup when frightened.

The main barrier to conservation is the lack of available animals. New

breeders may be reluctant to expend the cost and effort on an animal that may be difficult to replace, and experienced breeders may give up after years of struggling to find new genetics. This results in numbers dwindling due to the available animals being scattered too far to make breeding reasonable.

Here in the United States, there are the additional challenges of registering animals "across the pond" in the UK and finding available British Soay. Since there are also "American Soay" — a cross between true Soay and other breeds — registered animals are necessary to verify

they are purebreds. Previously, registration and oversight of rare UK breeds was done exclusively by the Rare Breed Survival Trust out of Europe. This also led to complications for new breeders interested in raising stock and finding breeding animals.

Hopefully, the introduction of the Soay to the Livestock Conservancy will make this process easier for conservation breeders in North America. For those interested in conservation breeding and rare breeds — or even simply interested in having a small, manageable animal on their homestead — the Soay can be a fantastic addition to anyone's program. We have indeed found them well worth what little effort they have required. ©

**SHERRI TALBOT** is the co-owner and operator of Saffron and Honey Homestead in Windsor, Maine. She raises endangered livestock breeds and educates on heritage breeds, sustainable living, and the importance of eating locally.



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# A DIFFERENT KIND OF PROCESSING WITH PIGS

BY MATT ROBEN

PHOTOS BY LAURIE HATCH PHOTOGRAPHY

**I**N JANUARY OF 2022, my wife, Emily, and I adopted four potbellied pigs that were taken to the county animal shelter because of neglect in their previous home. We brought them home to our 12-acre farm, Rancho Roben Rescues, where we provide a forever home to over 80 farm animals in need of a loving and safe space.

We had no idea what their actual history was or even their ages, but they were all roughly the same size and the county shelter vet thought they might be around 6 months of age. We knew that with three boys and one girl, we were fast approaching the age of sexual maturity if it hadn't already happened, and we didn't want to add more pigs to the world that needed homes, so we took them to

our livestock veterinarian to have the boys neutered and get everyone vaccinated.

When we came back to pick them up, our vet told us the good news — the boys did just fine and their neutering was a success without complications. The not-so-good news was that they had been neutered a few months too late as an ultrasound confirmed that there were at least three developing pigs inside of the female, who we had named Lady. Based on the stage of development he saw, he estimated that she was around three months pregnant, which meant we had about three weeks and three days until some little pigs would be born.

Researching pig pregnancy became my full-time job for a few days, but we quickly learned what

we needed to know. We had all of our necessary first aid supplies: colostrum powder in case they couldn't nurse mom, supplemental heat, and a safe space ready for Lady when she would finally have those babies. The date approached ... and nothing happened. A few more days went by ... and nothing happened. Then a few weeks went by ... and nothing. Since there was no crystal ball to tell us the exact date, all we could do was continue to look for the signs that birth was imminent — a milk line developing in the teats, a swollen vulva, nesting behavior, and a bout of restlessness followed by sleep.

Every day, I would give a little squeeze to her teats but nothing would come out. I thought to myself, "She is clearly still days away." No source could definitively say how many days before the birthing event. A day, a few days, a week; each article I read seemed to provide general information but no specific timeline. Her milk line seemed to be developing but even a lengthy massage and squeezing of her teats was only able to produce a pinhead-size drop of milk. She was still rooting around in the pasture all day, following the ponies and the mare, nosing at the dogs, and like usual, dozing with the pig boys: Captain, Major, and Atlas.

When we first brought them home, I had the pigs in their own portion of the paddock, just off the



Above: Lady expecting. Right: Newborn Miss Moses.



barn, but everyone got along so great it didn't seem to be necessary to maintain that separation. Only a few days ago, I took down the fence between their barn stall and the section of the paddock where they used to spend their days, as it had been many weeks now that they were in the large pasture full-time. In the past, I would close them up at night so the horses and dogs wouldn't disturb them while they were sleeping but it was never an issue, so I even stopped doing that. All the animals would come and go as they pleased, in and out of the barn, but still securely closed into a ¼-acre paddock so the livestock guardian dogs could do their job of protecting everyone from predators at night.

A complication arose when a long-planned trip for us humans came around in early May. We would be headed to a family event in Southern California for a weekend, but this was fully two weeks after her original anticipated due date, and either way this trip had been scheduled for a year. Since she still hadn't had any babies, I was beyond nervous to leave her, not wanting her to have those babies while we were gone. But again, there were no real signs of that birth day being upon us, so we chose to go on our trip and have our dear friends and neighbor keep an eye on everyone. I personally hadn't spent more than a few hours away from the farm in months, and now the one weekend I must leave means I might miss that exciting birthing moment.

The morning of our trip, Lady was acting just like she usually does. We made the decision to leave and hoped for the best. We provided lengthy instructions on what to do to take care of all of our other animals and especially what to look for with Lady. We checked in multiple times throughout the day with our friends; no milk dripping, even when squeezing



teats; no restlessness, just a nap in the weeds, basically the usual activity. Before bedtime, another squeeze and nothing. I even checked our barn camera and the usual nighttime sleeping positions were on screen, all four pigs lying next to each other. Dogs and horses were doing what they do. All was calm and there were no babies. We might just make it home to be a part of this experience!

All of that calmness changed when I woke up the next morning and checked the camera. My heart fell out of my chest. I immediately called my friend and frantically told him to get outside to the barn. One of our LGDs was in the area where the pigs normally sleep and he was barking and pacing around.

A promotional graphic for the Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International. It features two goats: a brown goat on the left and a black goat with large horns on the right. The text reads: "Bold and Beautiful", "Barbados Blackbelly", "American Blackbelly", "Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International", and "www.blackbellsheep.org".



I started to watch some footage from the camera from the night before, which took little clips of movement throughout the night. In a video marked 11:15 p.m., I was able to see the first baby make its appearance. Then, in a video from



a short while later, I could see that there were two more babies.

It was at that point it seemed the dogs came over to check on the commotion. From the best I could figure, the dogs chased the pigs out of the barn stall, seeing these new "bloody" squealing creatures as intruders, and decided to protect Lady and the boys from any harm. My friend made it outside moments after I called him at 6 a.m., which means it had been nearly seven hours from the time the babies were born. They were subjected to the cool temperatures of the night, in the 50s (Fahrenheit) but it was nothing close to the 95 degrees F that newborn baby pigs require.

My friends told me they found one already-dead baby, one barely-breathing baby, and one

stronger live baby hiding in the straw. They quickly began to warm the two living babies and tried to get them to drink powdered colostrum that they mixed up. They tried to get Lady back to the barn, but she would not have it. She was absolutely traumatized and wasn't going to be a part of this anymore. They wrapped up the dead baby and placed it to the side. Sadly, the second weak one did not make it and died shortly after, thankfully with human love and care during its final moments of life. The third one that was still alive was warming up, eating, and making some positive signs of recovery.

The baby was brought inside the house and for the rest of the day, she had three loving humans tending to every single one of her needs. Three hours of swaddling, warming, and offering a bottle. They then created a safe enclosure for her to be in, and placed towels and heat lamps to continue warming her when she wasn't being held. Anytime she seemed to want food, they picked her up and bottle-fed her. Then she began walking around and exploring. She left her warm space to go pee in a corner for the first time. She showed her strength and continued to make it through the day. Knowing there was nothing we could do from afar and that she had the best care possible, we made the difficult decision to stay for the entire event.

As soon as the family event ended, we began the long, 6-hour drive home. My wife and I spent the car ride talking about and trying to process all the feelings we had about what happened with Lady. Recognizing we could not change the past, we made the decision to focus on the things we could change moving forward. Hindsight being 20/20 as they say, these are some of the things we recognized we could have changed to produce a different

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all of the breeds that can be grown outdoors on fields. The author hopes this book guides many people interested in raising pigs outside on green pastures.

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outcome: We should have separated Lady for these last few days, just in case, knowing that any possible temporary discomfort and boredom would be offset by her safety. We should have left the fence in place within the paddock and continued to close up the barn stall at night to keep the pigs away from the dogs and horses. We should have realized that the tiny drop of milk was all we were going to see, that her nap in the weeds was her saying it was time, but we didn't realize that. I may never forgive myself, but at least we can learn, and hopefully, we never make these mistakes again.

When we finally got home that night, we found our friends and neighbor inside of the house giving so much love to this baby. They were all seated in the warm and cozy room, sharing the responsibilities of ensuring this little one made it. We could not have walked into a happier and more loving place. Eventually, our neighbor went home, our friends

went to sleep, and we just spent time with this sweet little baby, whom our friends named Moses because they had found her spared from death, hiding amongst a pile of straw.

My wife and I took turns holding her and feeding her. She was drinking her replacement formula which our veterinarian suggested instead of the powdered colostrum. He told us the powdered colostrum can cause diarrhea, so instead, she was drinking a mixture of 16 ounces of goat milk heated up with 1 ounce of Karo syrup. She was pooping, peeing, grunting, and squealing. Unfortunately, just as the vet warned, she was starting to have diarrhea, which was very concerning. Per his suggestion, we transitioned her to water, glucose, and electrolytes which seemed to help.

We might not have been able to save all of the piglets that first day, but with the love of five humans, we can hopefully save just this one, giving us one more animal

to provide a forever home at Rancho Roben Rescues. No matter how many animals we care for, sometimes it makes me wonder who is actually saving who.

As it is said in the scriptures: "Whomever saves a single life is considered by scripture to have saved the entire universe."

### Article Update:

Nearly five months have gone by and little Miss Moses is thriving! She quickly outgrew her indoor quarters and took up residence in a large enclosed space behind our home and has three rescue rabbits to spend her days with. Her personality is strong and gentle and she enjoys naps in the sun. Moses loves eating anything she can fit into her mouth and will let you rub her belly until your hand falls off. She will soon make her way into the main barn with the other large animals, but the limiting factor is that Moses is still a smaller pig and could easily slip under the electric poly rope fence in the fields where her mom, dad, and uncles live alongside three sheep, two ponies, and her LGD protectors, Altan and Emre. 🌱



**MATT ROBEN** and his wife, Emily, run Rancho Roben Rescues, a 12-acre, non-profit farm animal rescue in San Jose California, working alongside their farmhand Lindsay Mashburn and many wonderful volunteers. They rent out a converted school bus on Airbnb and host farm tours. Matt was a professional circus performer, police officer, and loves to play bagpipes. Instagram/FB @ranchorobenrescues www.ranchorobenrescues.org



# Potential Coop Dangers (for Humans!)

BY JANET GARMAN



**M**OST OF US DON'T THINK of keeping chickens as a risky hobby, and coop dangers mainly apply to the feathered residents. When hugging and feeding chickens, are there things human caretakers should be wary of?

Breathing issues and inhaling harmful substances might be obvious when thinking about coop dangers. People with pre-existing lung issues, even those with no concerns, should be cautious when cleaning the coop. If you have smelled a dirty coop that has also become damp or wet in spots, you know how bad the ammonia odor can become. Not only is that harmful to your bird's respiratory tract but also to people who inhale a strong ammonia odor. Before cleaning a dirty coop, open it up and allow it to ventilate first.

In addition to the ammonia odor risk, several

zoonotic diseases can transmit from the dirty coop to a human. Zoonotic disease refers to pathogenic diseases that can pass from one species to another. Some of these diseases are preventable in humans with a careful approach to the time we spend in the coop.

First, here are four chicken pathogens that would love to make you ill.

## SALMONELLA

Commonly foodborne, salmonella can spread to humans from both the chickens and the coop. Salmonella is shed in the feces, becomes attached to feathers, gets on your shoes, and is present in the dust. The birds don't always show symptoms, making it even harder to determine that your birds are ill or carrying an illness.

Conditions that can increase the risk of a salmonella outbreak include an unsanitary coop and rodent infestations. Cleaning off dropping boards, patching holes, changing the water regularly, and isolating any birds that appear unwell all help reduce disease incidence in the coop.

Salmonella in humans involves the onset of symptoms six hours to four days after infection. Typically, fever, abdominal cramps, and diarrhea are the symptoms.

Salmonella infections can transport into our homes on farm boots, gloves, and on our hands. The easiest method of prevention for any pathogen is hand washing. Frequent handwashing after any farm chore will greatly reduce the zoonotic possibility of salmonella contamination and many other bacteria and viruses.

People with pre-existing lung issues, even those with no concerns, should be cautious when cleaning the coop.



## AVIAN INFLUENZA

Avian influenza sheds through saliva, nasal and respiratory secretions, and fecal droppings. If there is an avian flu outbreak in your area, take extra precautions, including keeping birds in a covered run area to reduce exposure to wild birds. It's risky to pick up birds and hold them near your face when avian flu is a possibility.

Humans with avian influenza exhibit fever, fatigue, cough, nausea, abdominal pain, diarrhea, and vomiting. More extreme cases can show myocarditis, encephalitis, and organ failure.

## CAMPYLOBACTERIA

This bacterial infection spreads through feces and food from infected birds. Symptoms in people are more often seen in very young children and older individuals. Both of those demographics have more sensitive immune systems. The symptoms are usually abdominal, including cramps, diarrhea, and vomiting. The tricky part about managing this bacterium is that birds typically show no signs of being ill. Your primary defense is vigilant handwashing after being in the coop, cleaning, or handling your chickens.

## E. COLI

*Escherichia coli*, or *E. coli*, is present in the environment, found in food, animal feces, and on equipment used in animal care. It is routinely found in both human and animal feces. Coming in contact with any of these places can lead to an *E. coli* infection. Most *E. coli* do not cause harm, but the Shiga toxin leads to severe illness and is the most common cause of *E. coli* infection.

Poultry and other animals do not show signs of illness from carrying disease-causing *E. coli*.

All people who handle birds, coops, and equipment are at risk. The illness can be severe in young children under five and older adults

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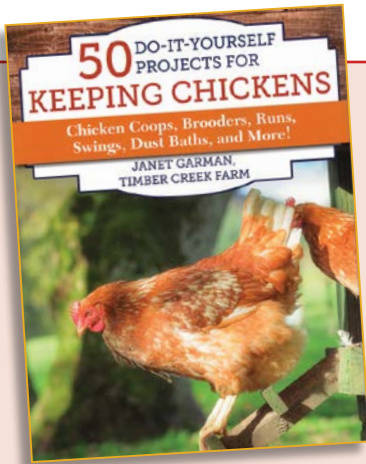
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with immune system problems. It is an unpleasant illness, to say the least. The symptoms begin 3 to 5 days after contact and include nausea, vomiting, severe, even bloody diarrhea, cramping, and fever. Extreme cases can lead to kidney failure.

### How to Avoid Zoonotic Illnesses from Chickens

Hand washing is your best defense. Monitoring small children as they participate in coop chores, frequent reminders not to touch their mouth and face, and glove-wearing for chores will help, too. Wash hands after collecting eggs, and cleaning the

dropping board, nest boxes, and roost bars.

When raising meat birds, be vigilant when processing the chickens. Follow all the food safety rules for temperature control, washing, and freezing. Cook all poultry and eggs thoroughly before eating.

If you wash the fresh eggs, they must be refrigerated. Leaving clean unwashed, eggs at room temperature for a short time is generally accepted as safe. Wash these eggs before use.

While I have never held back from picking up a friendly chicken for a snuggle, I am aware that this is a slight risk for disease transfer. I also will never suggest that we look at our flocks as nothing but germ carriers! Knowing the risks allows us to stay healthy while enjoying all the backyard chicken-keeping perks. 🐔

#### LINKS USED:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/pets/farm-animals/backyard-poultry.html>
- <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/backyard-chicken-poultry-flocks-human-health-risk-cdc-warns/>
- <https://backyardpoultry.iamcountryside.com/feed-health/a-guide-to-sick-chicken-symptoms/>
- <https://backyardpoultry.iamcountryside.com/chickens-101/are-chickens-good-pets-for-homeowners/>
- <https://timbercreekfarm.com/keeping-your-chicken-coop-smelling-fresh/>

**JANET GORMAN** 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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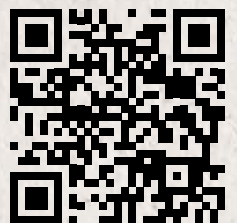
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# COLONY RAISING CAN BE GRAND

BY SHERRI TALBOT



Photo by Angela Musto.

**F**OR THOSE LOOKING FOR alternatives to cage raising their rabbits, colony raising is being recognized more frequently as an option. While not appropriate for all breeds, colony environments can be a great way to raise rabbits in a setting that allows them to be social, healthy, and live more natural lives. Rabbits have lived for years in outdoor environments, in all kinds of weather, and evolved to live in groups — called warrens or burrows — with dozens of other rabbits. While domestic rabbits have less tolerance for extreme weather, they can also survive in various temperatures and environments.

Colony raising is not a new practice. The Romans are known to have used fenced enclosures to keep groups of wild rabbits for meat and fur as early as 200 B.C. Due to the lack of things like fine

wiring, the Romans struggled to keep their animals contained, but it was colony raising that introduced the idea that rabbits could be domesticated for easier raising. Cage raising probably didn't develop until about the 5th century, making it the “new” practice for rabbit breeding.

So why are colonies better for rabbits? There are a number of answers to this question, and they can be loosely categorized into three areas: physical health, social health, and ease of caretaking.

## Physical Health

Rabbits, in the wild, are browsers. In their search for food, they cover a territory of 2 to 8 acres — the males travel further than the females — and eat whenever availability and desire happen to collide. Compare that to the recommendation by the

Rabbit Welfare Association that rabbits' cages be 6 feet by 2 feet. While most rabbit breeds can move comfortably in such a cage, even the RWA's own terminology admits this gives them only “three hops” from end to end. This is assuming that individuals raising rabbits follow these recommendations, but popular stacking rabbit cages for sale usually run about 3 feet by 3 feet.

Rabbits — especially young rabbits — are also evolved to play with one another, often chasing and wrestling like many other animal species. Rabbits are also designed to dig, and by denying these instincts, rabbits often end up bored, stressed, and, in some cases, neurotic. Rabbits may overgroom, chew on their feet, or grind their teeth when raised in a caged environment.

Rabbits under these conditions also must have carefully controlled diets. Like humans, rabbits will eat when bored or stressed. While colony raised rabbits will eat until they find something more interesting to do, caged rabbits will often overeat, gaining an unhealthy amount of weight with no way to work it off.

The result is rabbits that are often stagnant, laying in one spot for long periods of time. While this does result in large, fat rabbits in a shorter time, it doesn't result in healthy rabbits. While a cage-raised rabbit is often touted as being more tender, this is for the same reason veal is often so tender; the muscles get little use until butcher.

## Social Health

Since rabbits are designed to be social animals, there is a close connection between their physical and social health. Exercise, for instance, is often a social activity for the warren. As mentioned earlier, rabbits often play together. They also groom one another for comfort and share body heat when the temperatures drop. Without a companion to share these activities, rabbits can become anxious, leading to the previously discussed behaviors.



Having a social support system is especially important to rabbits in distress. Mothers with large litters can often get help from other nursing females. Orphaned young will often be adopted by other does. Younger females without litters (and sometimes bucks!) will sometimes assist with warming kits whose mother dies or rejects them. We often observe kits wandering into an adjoining colony, where an adult rabbit will usually hang out with them and keep them warm until we move them back home.

Older rabbits need comfort too. As rabbits age and their bodies begin to fail, it can be hard for them to clean themselves or even move around in some cases.

We currently have an older male named Gomez — the patriarch of our entire warren, in fact. He has begun to struggle with mobility, however. He still can get around, doesn't appear to be in pain, and eats and drinks well. Were he a caged rabbit, we could have euthanized him long ago since his physical condition would have made life alone miserable.

Instead, he is living out his golden years in one of our 8 feet by 8 feet "buck pens" with a young doe. He can see and smell his grandchildren in the attached colony. His companion grooms him, cuddles with him, and keeps him company. He moves around over the dirt without causing injury, whereas a metal floor would likely hurt him. He shows no sign of anxiety or upset over his condition, and one can spend hours watching the two of them relaxing together in the sun.

### Care of Colony Rabbits

Colony raising can be easier on the humans involved, too. Rather than cleaning individual cages weekly, colony-raised rabbits naturally tend to use one corner of their living space for a toilet, meaning pens can be cleaned once every month or two (depending



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on their size) using a rake and a wheelbarrow. It is important to note, though, if there are lots of new litters in a colony, it will take the adult time to "potty train" the kits, which may temporarily make for more of a mess.

Colony-raised rabbits will eat and drink from a central source, reducing the time it takes for daily caretaking. Depending on the setup, heated water bowls can make winter care especially easy. If there is no access to electricity in an area with heavy snowfall, the rabbits will often eat snow if their water dish freezes over. Some of our rabbits will even choose snow over fresh water!

Multiple does often birth together, meaning no need to hand feed should a mother have difficulties. Several does may help to keep kits corralled when they start to explore. Having a male in the pen means an extra line of defense for the kits, and most of our bucks will play with their children when they are small. Depending on your space, though, it can be important to move the grow-out bucks early, though. Dad can decide they are competition at a young age.

Colony raising also makes life easier for breeders when the weather turns cold. While rabbits tolerate cold better than heat, a

solo rabbit can regulate their body temperature only so well. However, in frigid temperatures, several rabbits will huddle together for warmth, using available shelters to hold in the heat and packing hay around themselves.

### Final Thoughts

Colony raising is by no means perfect. Like with any livestock methods, things can go wrong. However, it is frequently abandoned as an option for people because cage-raising is seen as "normal" and the benefits are not recognized. For those who are interested in a more natural way of raising rabbits, though, colony raising can be an excellent option. 🐰

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



# Do You Need Some Dough?

BY KATIE MARTIN



**L**IFE HAS BEEN HARD ON ALL OF US. We try to figure out little things to make our life simpler and better. Breadmaking is one of those things. Despite its reputation, breadmaking is both easy and fun. Making bread allows us to control the price and quality of our bread.

The next time the store is out of bread, you'll just smile. After all, you'll know how to make your own.

I always use name-brand or local mill flour. I never use generic or store brands. To me, the bread is better. In some cases, the bread won't rise as much. It might seem heavy. The fresher the flour, the better. So, if you have access to local mill flour, using it will improve the taste of your bread.

The yeast I use is regular yeast, NOT quick or fast-acting. You can buy several packages together at a reasonable price.

Don't try to shorten the time the bread needs to rise. The bread will not turn out as well.

This bread is just simple white bread.

## Simple White Bread

*Yield 2 loaves*

5 to 6 cups bread flour

3 tablespoons sugar

1 teaspoon salt

2 packages active dry yeast

2 cups water

¼ cup melted butter

1. Grease or spray two 8-by-4 inch or two 9-by-5 inch loaf pans. Use a little of the melted butter to do this. Brush on or use a paper towel to cover inside of each loaf pan.
2. Sprinkle inside of each pan with flour.
3. Mix 5 cups bread flour, sugar, salt, and yeast in a large bowl.
4. Heat water and melted butter together.
5. Add water and butter to flour mixture.
6. Stir and mix together until dough pulls away from bowl.
7. Flour the surface you will be using (countertop, cutting board, etc.)
8. Knead dough using your hands. Move it towards you and then back. Keep kneading for about 10 minutes.
9. Butter the bowl.
10. Place dough in bowl.
11. Cover with plastic wrap. Then, cover with towel.
12. Put in warm place to rise for approximately 1½ hours. Bread should double in size.
13. Knead dough again a few times. Divide into two separate parts. Roll each part into a ball.
14. Place on floured board or counter. Cover with inverted bowl.
15. Allow dough to rest 15 minutes.
16. Knead dough again. Shape each ball into a loaf.
17. Place in greased or sprayed pans.
18. Cover. Wait 1 hour or until loaves have risen to top of pan or more.
19. Preheat oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit.
20. Cook 45 to 55 minutes. Loaves will sound hollow when tapped.
21. When loaves are done, immediately take out of pans. Melted butter can be brushed on top if desired. Bread cuts better when cool, and freezes well. Cut loaf into pieces before freezing.



One of the things I learned during the pandemic was flour was in short supply. I also learned different stores had different flours available. So, the first bread was made with bread flour.

Our next bread is a Country White Bread. It is made with all-purpose flour.

If you know how to make bread with different flour, you can use whatever is available.

## Country White Bread

*Yield 2 loaves*

- 2 packages active dry yeast
- 2 cups warm water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs, room temperature
- ¼ cup butter
- 6½ to 7 cups of all-purpose flour

1. Grease or spray two 8-by-4 inch or 9-by-5 inch loaf pans. Use a little of the melted butter to do this.
2. Brush on or use a paper towel to cover the inside of each loaf pan.
3. Sprinkle the inside of each pan with flour.
4. Dissolve yeast in water.
5. Add sugar, salt, eggs, butter, and 3 cups all-purpose flour.
6. Beat.
7. Add more flour until soft dough forms.
8. Knead.
9. Place in greased bowl.
10. Turn the dough in bowl to grease top of dough.
11. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and a towel.
12. Let rise in warm place for 1 hour.
13. Divide into 2 pieces. Shape each piece into a loaf.
14. Place in greased loaf pans.
15. Cover and let rise again, 1 hour.
16. Bake in preheated 350 degree F oven 25 to 30 minutes.

- ~ When loaves are done, immediately take out of pans.
- ~ Melted butter can be brushed on top, if desired.

The third bread is a little different. It is made with self-rising flour. So, you have three breads made with three different types of flour. This bread is easy. It does not involve yeast. It can also be made right away. You do not have to wait for it to rise.



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## Beer Bread

*Yield 1 loaf*

- 3 cups self-rising flour
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 12 ounces regular beer

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.
2. Butter or spray 9-by-5 inch loaf pan.
3. Mix self-rising flour, sugar, 3 tablespoons of butter, and the beer together.
4. Stir until almost smooth. It will have some lumps.
5. Put the batter in the loaf pan.
6. Drizzle the remaining 1 tablespoon butter on top.
7. Bake 45 to 50 minutes.
8. Wait 5 minutes before taking bread out of pan.
9. Let cool before slicing (if you can wait).

So, now you have three different recipes with three different flours. As you bake bread, you will relax. It is a wonderful way to end a stressful day. You are empowering yourself to have a simpler life. Remember, breadmaking is easy. It just takes time. Mmmmm. 🍷

A day in **KATIE MARTIN'S** life begins with a vigilant eye and an open mind to the many stories that lay behind the daily events of people, places and things. A well-published writer with an appetite for life, Katie brings a warm glow to ordinary things ... making them extraordinary! Katie and her husband live in the Sauratown Mountains of North Carolina.



# RECIPES FOR THE VERSATILE, DELICIOUS POTATO

BY DOROTHY RIEKE

**O**NE OF THE MOST VALUED and widely grown vegetables is the potato. Potatoes originated in the plateaus of Peru and Bolivia. With over 200 varieties, potatoes have been a staple in the diet of Andean peoples for around 11,000 years. Small yellow, purple, and pink potatoes were harvested, then mashed and sun-dried. From these mashed bits came a light, floury substance that were used to make many dishes.

Because of this consistency of potatoes, travelers then carried this substance to eat during trips. It was a sort of “fast food in a bag.”

Spanish explorers introduced potatoes in Europe in the mid-1500s. The popularity of this vegetable spread to Italy, England, and Ireland, where it became a main food staple.

As time passed in Ireland, the potato crop failed because of a plant disease from 1845 to 1846.

Today, billions of bushels of potatoes are grown worldwide and consumed. However, they are quite different from those developed by Peruvians long ago. These tasty, nice-sized potatoes are served baked, boiled, or fried.

Are you tired of the ways of preparing potatoes? That situation forced me to try new methods of potato preparation. The following are the

results of my efforts. I have prepared these for guests and obtained their wholehearted approval. Try these; you will enjoy this popular vegetable again and again.

Even though this recipe takes butter and oil, one can splurge in search of taste and flavor.

## CRISP OVEN-ROASTED POTATOES

- 8 potatoes, peeled and cut into quarters
- ¼ cup butter, melted (may use margarine)
- ⅓ cup canola oil
- 1 envelope dry onion soup mix
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- Garlic salt to taste

Preheat oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit. In a large bowl, thoroughly blend all ingredients. Add quartered potatoes and turn to coat thoroughly. Pour into a shallow baking pan. Bake, occasionally stirring, for one hour or until potatoes are tender and golden brown. Serves 10 to 12.

I just discovered this recipe that was first given on a radio homemaker show. I served it Christmas day, much to the delight of my guests. It is worth trying.

## SURPRISE POTATOES

- 6 potatoes, peeled and cut lengthwise
- ½ cup soft margarine (low-fat works well)
- 1 package dry onion soup mix

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Peel and cut potatoes in half. Spread the cut sides with a mixture of the margarine and soup mix. Fit the potatoes back together and wrap in heavy foil. Bake for 1 hour at 375 degrees F or until done. Serves 6.

*Note: The spread is sufficient for 6 potatoes.*

The following recipe has been featured during many holiday dinners.

## PARTY POTATOES DELUXE

- 8 to 10 medium size potatoes
- ½ cup diced onion
- 8-ounce package softened cream cheese, low-calorie
- 1 cup light sour cream with chives or flavored dip
- Seasoning and butter as desired
- Paprika

Boil potatoes and onions together. Drain. Beat softened cream cheese and sour cream or dip until blended. Gradually add hot potatoes. Beat until fluffy. Add seasonings and garlic salt, if desired. Spoon this mixture into a



two-quart casserole. Brush with butter and sprinkle with paprika. Bake at 350 degrees F for 30 to 40 minutes. May be prepared ahead of time and heated when ready to serve. 6 to 8 servings.

I like to add vegetables to my potato soup. See how you like it.

## POTATO SOUP

- 1 medium onion, diced
- 1/3 cup diced celery
- 1/3 cup green pepper, diced
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 3 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 3 medium size potatoes, baked or boiled. Mash these potatoes.
- 3 cups milk
- 4 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Grated cheese, your choice

Sauté onion, celery, and green pepper in butter. Blend in flour. Add remaining ingredients except the bacon and cheese. Heat but do not boil. Simmer covered for 10 minutes. Sprinkle cheese and bacon in serving dishes. Pour soup over cheese and bacon. Serve with crackers, if desired. Serves 6.

This is my own recipe for stuffed potatoes.

## STUFFED POTATOES

- 6 large baking potatoes
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/3 cup diced onion
- 1/2 cup diced celery
- 4 strips of bacon, cooked and cut into small pieces
- 2 tablespoons margarine
- Milk or additional margarine (to desired consistency)
- Paprika

Bake the potatoes. Cut each potato in half, lengthwise, and carefully remove pulp, reserving skins. Place the margarine in a heavy skillet, letting it melt. Sauté onion, celery, and green pepper.



Combine potato pulp with cooked onion, celery, and green pepper. Add bacon pieces. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Add additional margarine or milk to make mashed potato consistency. Spoon mixture into potato skins. Sprinkle tops with paprika. Bake at 350 degrees F until heated and tops are lightly browned. Serves 6.

This recipe has many variations. I like this one best.

## SCALLOPED DELUXE HASH BROWNS

- 1 pound package frozen hash brown potatoes
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1/4 cup diced green pepper
- 1 small jar pimento, diced and drained
- 1 can cream of potato soup
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- 1 eight-ounce carton light sour cream
- Paprika

In a large bowl, pour the hash browns, onion, green pepper, pimento, soups, and sour cream. Let set 30 minutes. Stir. Pour into a 9-by-13-inch casserole. Sprinkle with paprika. Bake uncovered at 300 degrees F for one hour.

## JIM'S POTATOES

This recipe was given to me by a co-worker. He exclaimed, "If you use a large potato, this can serve as a meal."

For each person eating, select one good-sized potato. Wash potatoes well. Peel potatoes if you are concerned with spots or dirt. Cut

through each potato part way, making thin slices. If you're afraid that you will cut through the potato, use a wooden spoon placed beside the potato to stop the knife.

Heat 1/2 cup of margarine. (This is for 6 potatoes.) Pour melted margarine over the cut potatoes. You can fan out the potatoes for better access for the melted margarine. Then sprinkle flavored bread crumbs over the margarine-covered potatoes. These may be oven baked or cooked in the microwave. ©

**DOROTHY RIEKE**, living in southeast Nebraska, is married to Kenneth and has one daughter. She has lived on farms all her life and has raised both chickens and turkeys.

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# Mardi Gras King Cake

BY HANNAH MCCLURE



**A**S FAR BACK AS I CAN REMEMBER, I've wanted to experience Mardi Gras in New Orleans. Mardi Gras is a celebration held in New Orleans which begins on the Twelfth Night after Christmas (January 6th) and through Fat Tuesday. It is a pre-Lenten celebration known for its rich and fatty foods that are given up during Lent. The term Mardi Gras means "Fat Tuesday" in French.

Now, as I got older, I realized there are parts of Mardi Gras that I would be content not experiencing, but it still catches my eye and makes me smile to watch the celebration. Even raises my curiosity about the stories behind some of the traditions. I enjoy the bright colors and fun costumes that come with the celebration.

Foods like the famous King Cake pull me in. King Cake is a traditional bread or pastry-like dessert that is enjoyed from early January through Fat Tuesday and is often recognized as a must-have during Mardi Gras. To some, it is also recognized as a part of Epiphany, a Christian celebration held on January 6th. The celebration marks the arrival of the three kings who took gifts to Jesus.

King Cake originated in France and Spain. After the French introduced the cake to New Orleans in 1870, traditions evolved. In New Orleans, the cake is shaped in a circle or ring and decorated with icing and green, purple, and yellow/gold decorative sugars and sprinkles to resemble a king's crown. This version of King Cake is a lot like sweet bread and resembles the Spanish version more than it does the French version. The French version is a round cake made of puff pastry with the top scored in a decorative pattern before baking.

A small bean is hidden in the French version of King Cake. However, New Orleans replaced that bean with a small baby figurine. In the 1950s, that baby figurine was made of porcelain and baked into each cake; it was later swapped out for a plastic figurine that is hidden in the cake after it is baked.

The baby symbolizes Jesus for those of Christian faiths, and to others, it symbolizes luck and prosperity. It is said that the person who gets the baby is king for a day and will have luck and prosperity in the year to come. That person is also responsible for hosting the celebration next year and bringing the King Cake. There are many different traditions surrounding the "trinket" hidden in King Cake, but my favorite is the baby. Some other trinkets that are used across the world are a bean, a coin, or a nut, to name a few.

It is important to remember that when making your own King Cake, wait until your cake has cooled before hiding your baby. Also, make sure your guest or family knows that there is a small prize hidden. My version of King Cake is filled with a cream cheese praline mix. Some other fillings commonly seen in King Cake are cinnamon sugar, pecan praline cream, or fruit jams. This cake also requires some planning as the dough is refrigerated overnight and for a short period before baking.



## King Cake Dough

6 tablespoons shortening  
½ cup boiling scalded whole milk  
1 egg beaten  
6 tablespoons granulated sugar  
½ cup cold milk  
2¼ teaspoon yeast  
¼ cup lukewarm water  
3¾ cups unbleached all-purpose flour  
2 egg whites, beaten for egg wash (hold the yolks for praline)

### CREAM CHEESE PRALINE FILLING

1 block cream cheese (8 ounces), softened  
3 tablespoons granulated sugar  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
½ teaspoon almond extract

### PECAN PRALINE FILLING

5 tablespoons butter, softened  
2 egg yolks  
½ cup packed brown sugar  
½ teaspoon vanilla extract  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
¾ cup chopped pecans

### ICING

2 cups powdered sugar  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
¼ cup vanilla-flavored half-and-half cream

### Making the Dough: The Night Before

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine boiling milk and shortening. Stir until shortening is melted.
2. In a small bowl, mix together eggs, sugar, and salt and beat in cold water.
3. In a measuring cup, hydrate yeast with lukewarm water (measure water out before adding yeast).
4. Combine the three mixtures together in the large mixing bowl.
5. Stir in half the flour. Add in the last half, about half a cup at a time, until soft dough forms.
6. Cover dough with plastic and refrigerate overnight.
7. In a medium-small mixing bowl, beat together softened cream cheese, sugar, and extracts until smooth. Place in refrigerator until morning.
8. In another medium-small bowl, mix together softened butter, egg yolks, sugar, extract, cinnamon, and pecans together until well blended. Place in refrigerator until morning.

### The Next Morning

1. Remove fillings and dough from the fridge.
2. On a floured piece of parchment paper, roll out dough to a rectangular sheet about ½ inch thick.

3. Spoon cream cheese filling onto dough, leaving 1½ to 2 inches of dough around all edges.
4. Spoon praline over top of cream cheese filling.
5. Gently roll the longest side dough over the filling to meet the opposite edge. To close seams, gently pinch them together.
6. Refrigerate dough for 1 hour. This step can be skipped if in a hurry, but keep in mind that it makes braiding much easier when chilled.
7. Remove from fridge and transfer onto a clean parchment paper-lined baking sheet.
8. Using a sharp knife (like that used to score bread), cut rolled dough lengthwise into 3. Be sure to leave 2 inches of uncut dough at the top.
9. Braid together the three pieces and pinch together the end to reseal into one braided log.
10. Shape braided dough into a circle, cover with a light tea towel, and allow to rise for an hour before baking.
11. Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
12. Just before baking, coat with egg wash (made with the 2 egg whites, beaten).
13. Place into preheated oven and bake for 20 to 30 minutes or until golden brown. Mix together icing while your cake bakes.
14. Once baking is complete, remove from oven and allow to cool.
15. Hide the plastic baby by gently lifting the semi-cooled cake and placing the baby under a small section of the cake. Being careful not to damage the cake, press the cake back down. You may also cut a small slit into the bottom of the cake and insert the baby after the cake has cooled.
16. Drizzle the cake with icing and top with purple, green, and yellow/gold decorative sugars and sprinkles.

King Cake can be left at room temperature for 5 days. Undecorated King Cake can be wrapped tightly in plastic wrap and placed into a freezer-safe bag to freeze for later enjoyment. It can be frozen for up to 3 months. Simply remove it from the freezer, allow it to come to room temperature before decorating, and enjoy! 🍷

**HANNAH 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. Find Hannah on Instagram @ muddyoakhennhouse.

# Aluminum-Free Baking Powder

BY HANNAH MCCLURE



**H**AVE YOU EVER LOOKED at the ingredients of your baking supplies and thought, "Why is that in there?" Honestly, you could say that to almost anything if you look at what's inside. The ingredients in our foods, drinks, and even self-care items can often be alarming. I recently started looking for and trying to filter out sodium aluminum phosphate, commonly used in processed cheeses and baking powder. Food manufacturers also use it in prepackaged cookies, cakes, crackers, and tortillas, to name a few. A heat-activated acid, sodium aluminum phosphate works with other leavening agents to make baked goods rise. On the other end of the kitchen, so to speak, it helps smooth, soft processed cheeses to melt and slice easily.

It seems people try to eliminate a lot of ingredients from their diets and homes. Some do it to

live healthier and others deal with allergies and ditch certain ingredients. It can feel like a gray area knowing what to be concerned about and what is truly safe for us.

So, how do you sift through it all? Let's start with the basics. The Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act passed in 1938 by the U.S. Congress gives the FDA the authority to oversee the safety of our food, medical devices, and cosmetics. Part of these laws requires that the FDA evaluate anything going into food ... unless it is a GRAS (Generally Recognized As Safe) ingredient. The FDA recognizes sodium aluminum phosphate as a GRAS ingredient. This means the ingredient can be used in any food, medical product, or cosmetic in any amount without further FDA evaluation. So, if sodium aluminum phosphate is generally safe, why are people trying to filter it out?

Sodium aluminum phosphate

is considered a phosphorous ingredient. While phosphorous is an essential mineral to our bodies, excessive consumption of it may cause harm to the kidneys, especially in those with underlining or already existing kidney conditions. Additionally, excessive exposure to aluminum may have adverse reproductive and neurological health issues<sup>1</sup>. While aluminum is generally considered safe, it also offers no health benefits.


With this information in hand, and knowing some of my family's medical history, I decided that the harm comes in overexposure and not in under-exposure. My kitchen isn't set up as a science lab with the correct materials needed to measure our exposure daily to sodium aluminum phosphate. Therefore, it is easier to limit and even avoid it completely. By baking and cooking from scratch at home, I can control the ingredients that go into our meals and desserts. I choose baking powder that is "aluminum-free" or I make my own. If you want to reduce your exposure or eliminate it, simple homemade baking powder offers the same rise as commercial baking powder.

## Bulk Homemade Aluminum-Free Baking Powder

½ cup baking soda  
1 cup cream of tartar  
½ cup arrowroot powder

Stir together all three ingredients into a small mixing bowl.

Using a funnel, sift your baking powder mixture into a quart-size canning jar.

Store in a cool spot with an airtight lid. 

<sup>1</sup><https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/digging-deeper-sodium-aluminum-phosphate>

*Note: Arrowroot powder helps prevent clumping. You can leave it out completely or use cornstarch in its place.*



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- 1 Snowflake egg. 📷 Carli Pritchett, Washington. @petalsandposiesflowerfarm
- 2 Long live cowgirls. 📷 @pivotfarm
- 3 Sunrise on the farm. 📷 Yvonne Meier @martinsapiary
- 4 Snowy winter days on pond with Samson and Odette are truly wonderland moments. 📷 Tracy Pearson @hidden\_springs\_farm



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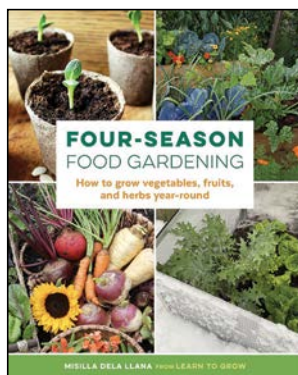
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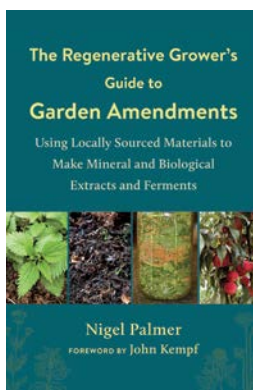
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How to grow vegetables, fruits, and herbs year-round

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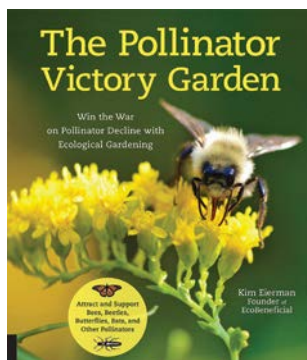
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### The Regenerative Grower's Guide to Garden Amendments

Using Locally Sourced Materials to Make Mineral and Biological Extracts and Ferments

Nigel Palmer  
Foreword by John Kempf



### The Pollinator Victory Garden

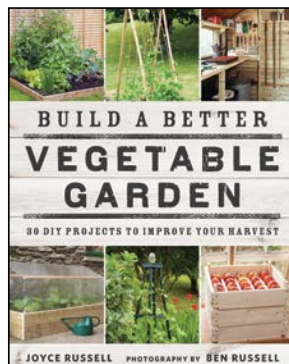
Win the War on Pollinator Decline with Ecological Gardening

Kim Eierman  
Founder - Ecoteneficial

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*The Pollinator Victory Garden* offers practical solutions for winning the war against the demise of these essential animals. Learn how to transition your landscape into a pollinator haven by creating a habitat that includes pollinator nutrition, larval host plants for butterflies and moths, and areas for egg laying, nesting, sheltering, overwintering, resting, and warming. Every yard, community garden, rooftop, porch, patio, commercial, and municipal landscape can help to win the war against pollinator decline with this special guide.

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### BUILD A BETTER VEGETABLE GARDEN

30 DIY PROJECTS TO IMPROVE YOUR HARVEST

Joyce Russell Photography by Ben Russell

### BUILD A BETTER VEGETABLE GARDEN

From a bean support to a raised bed, the 30 projects found in *Build a Better Vegetable Garden* will help you extend your season, protect crops, and improve yields. Each project has photographed step-by-step instructions, a list of materials and tools needed, and a relative skills rating. Alongside the projects are growing tips and specific advice to make the most of your crop.

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### MOTHER EARTH NEWS ORGANIC GARDENING

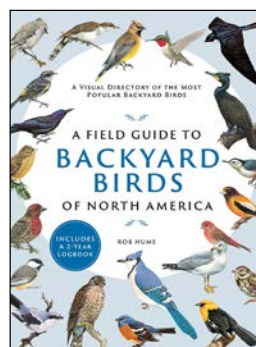
This guide explores techniques and methods for different garden types like container gardening, DIY projects like a two-wheel garden cart and rainwater collection system, and other plantings, cultivating, and harvesting information and tips. Learn ways to improve your soil and how to attract pollinators to your garden and help them flourish. Discover tips to grow flavor-packed garlic cloves and grow greens in a limited space, even in winter.

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### MOTHER EARTH NEWS ORGANIC GARDENING

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### A FIELD GUIDE TO BACKYARD BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA

A VISUAL DIRECTORY OF THE MOST POPULAR BACKYARD BIRDS

INCLUDES 65-PAGE LOGBOOK

ROB HUME

### A FIELD GUIDE TO BACKYARD BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA

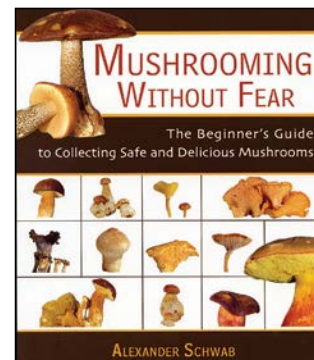
Whether you're just getting started birding or want to build on your existing knowledge, this handbook provides you with all you need, making it the companion in the field. Inside this gorgeously illustrated guide, you'll find a fascinating introduction to the world of birds, an exquisite logbook, a comprehensive catalog of the most commonly seen birds in the US, and more.

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### MUSHROOMING WITHOUT FEAR

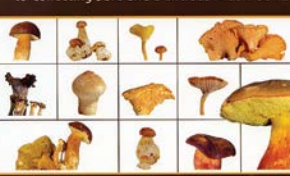
*Mushrooming Without Fear* focuses only on the mushrooms that are both safe to eat and delicious. Each mushroom covered is identified with several color photographs and an identification checklist. Plus, there's also information on mushroom season, handling, storage, and cooking, complete with recipes.

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### MUSHROOMING WITHOUT FEAR

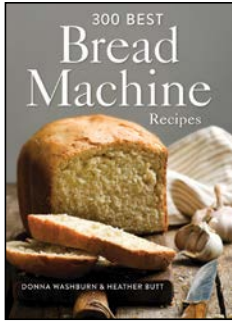
The Beginner's Guide to Collecting Safe and Delicious Mushrooms



ALEXANDER SCHWAB

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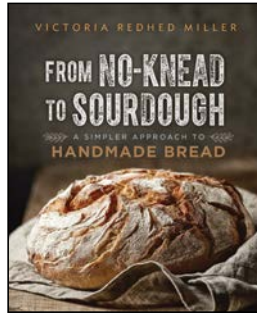




### 300 BEST BREAD MACHINE RECIPES

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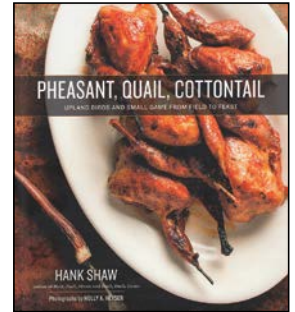
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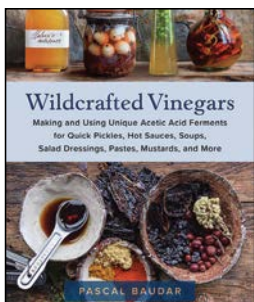
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Trusted cookbook author and pie expert Ken Haedrich delivers the only pie cookbook you'll ever need: *Pie Academy*. Novice and experienced bakers will discover the secrets to baking a pie from scratch, with recipes, crust savvy, tips and tutorials, advice about tools and ingredients, and more.

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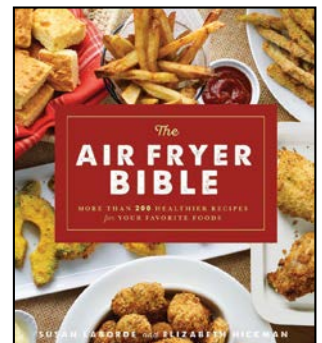
The Hamilton Beach® 3.5 Liter Digital Air Fryer will expertly air fry all your favorites and give you the crispy texture you love with little to no oil. It's easy to use, and no preheating is necessary. You can also customize air frying by selecting your preferred cooking time and temperature up to 400° F. Dimensions (inches): 12.7 H x 10.6 W x 14.1 D. Available for shipment to continental U.S. addresses only.

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**KEEPING BEES WITH A SMILE**

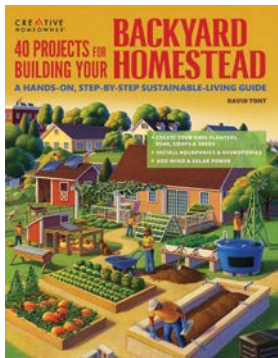
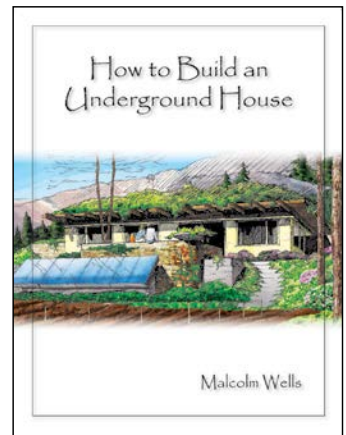
In the second edition of this bestselling beekeeping guide, Fedor Lazutin shares the bee-friendly approach to apiculture that is fun, healthful, rewarding, and accessible to all. This new edition includes dozens of color photographs, new hive management techniques, and an updated version of "Lazutin hive" plans. This guide is an invaluable resource for apiculture beginners and professionals alike, complete with plans for making horizontal hives, plus other fascinating advice you won't find anywhere else. *Also available as an e-book!*

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**40 PROJECTS FOR BUILDING YOUR BACKYARD HOMESTEAD**

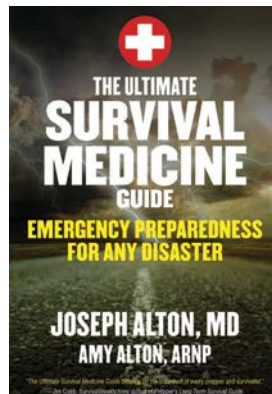
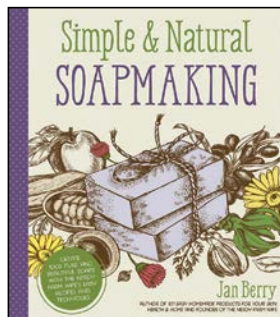
*40 Projects for Building Your Backyard Homestead* provides details on how to build more than 40 projects to enhance your sustainable living. With step-by-step instructions, tools, materials lists, exploded views, and easy-to-understand techniques, you'll discover how to build your feeders, fences, and structures, even if you are only moderately handy. In the process, you'll save money and be satisfied with doing it yourself!

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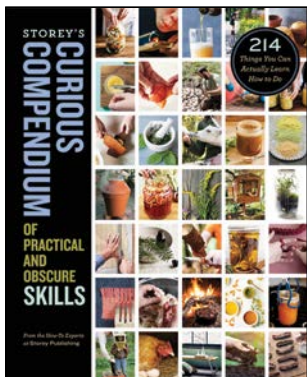
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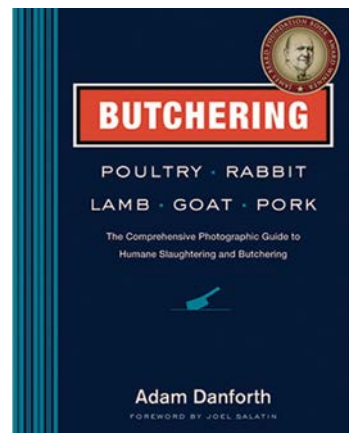
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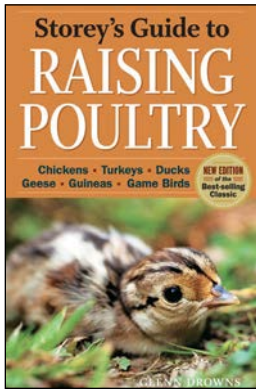
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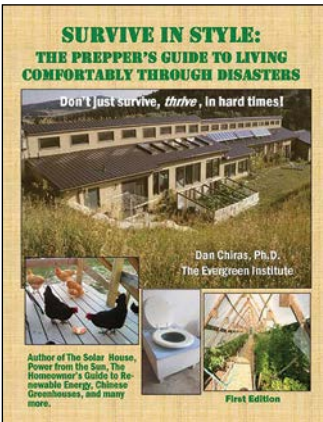
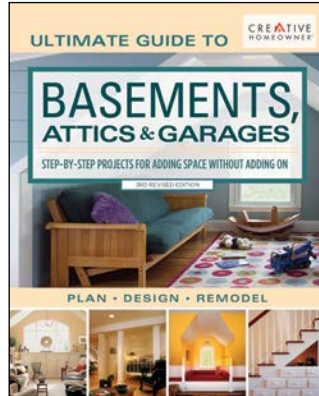
This classic resource is the only book you need to naturally and humanely raise a wide range of poultry, from chickens and turkeys to waterfowl and game birds — even uncommon species, such as pigeons, emus, doves, ostriches, peafowl, and swans. Whether you're running a farm or raising a few birds in the backyard, Glenn Drowns tells you everything you need to know about breed selection, housing, space requirements, behavior, breeding, birthing, feeding, health care, and the business of processing meat and eggs.

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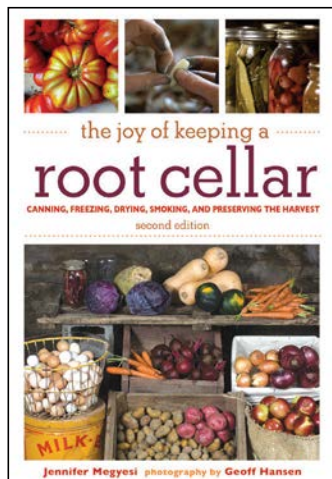
Originally written for the prepper community, *Survive in Style's* popularity has spread far and beyond due to the wealth of applicable information it provides. Whether you are looking to be prepared for a future natural disaster or are simply wanting to be more self-sufficient, each chapter provides you with actionable steps to achieve your goal. Topics covered range from food storage to building temporary toilets, and generating your own energy to producing your own food — plus so much more!

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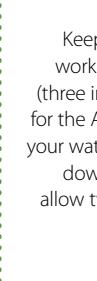
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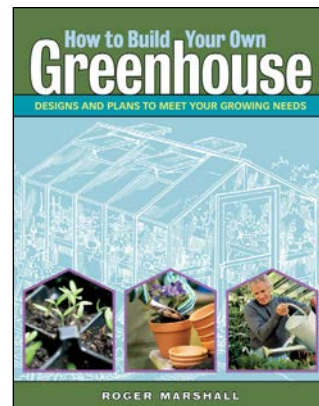
#8761 Member: \$359.99



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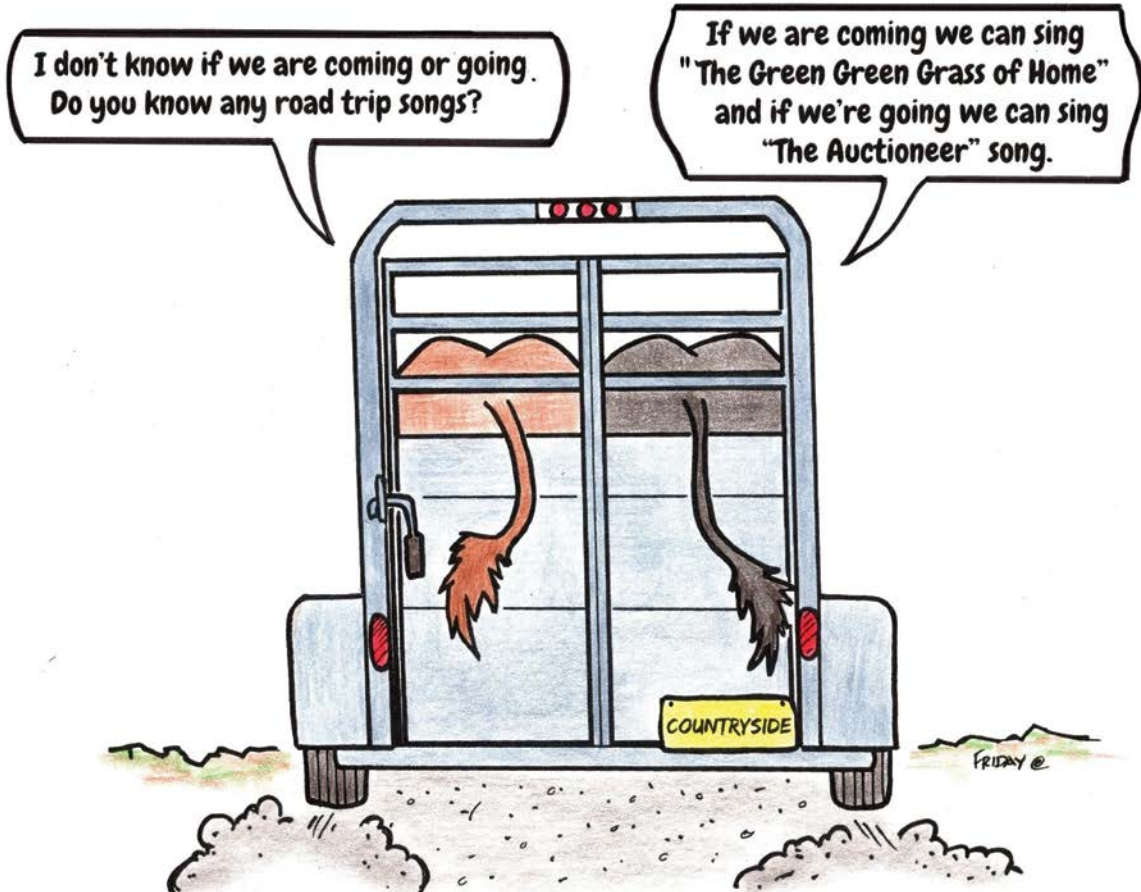
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**JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2023 READER CONTEST**  
*All words can be found within this issue of COUNTRYSIDE.*  
**HAVE FUN AND GOOD LUCK!**

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 B U B R U A H A E Y T B T C W Z B J H M Q R X H  
 X L P T T F X L C Z F R R J R Y N R B E O L P O  
 S M G N P Q H P E G B E A C H M Z E H L Q A C M  
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- COOP
- FARRIER
- POTATO

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

*The winner will be chosen randomly from all of the submissions returned by February 1, 2023. The winner of the September/October Reader Contest was Debbie Walter. Congratulations to you, Debbie! Enjoy your new camp mug.*



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

**Print, fill out, and mail to:**  
 Countryside Reader Contest  
 1503 SW 42nd Street, Topeka, KS 66609

**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 for purchase at iamcountryside.com/shop**

# Poor Will's COUNTRYSIDE almanack

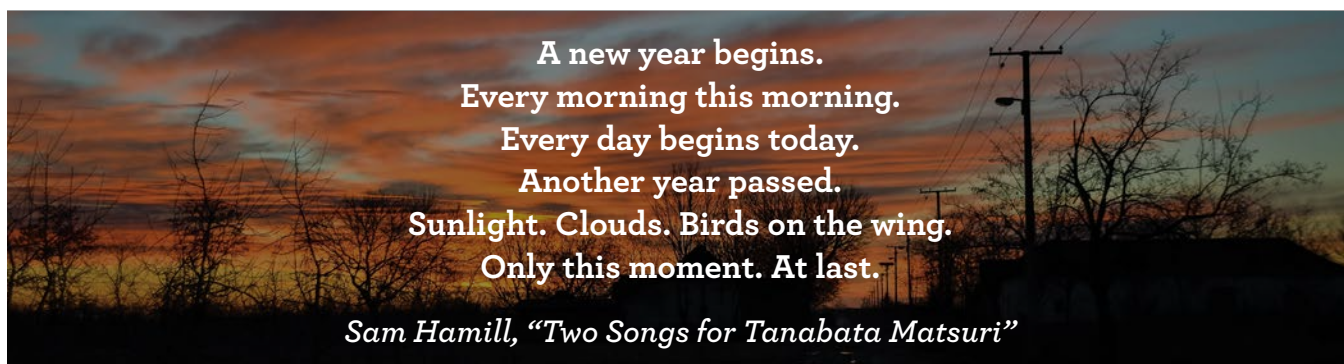
## WINTER AND EARLIEST SPRING OF 2023

BY W. L. FELKER

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Consider "farmstead" cheese, which means you make it from your own animals. <b>1</b>	Check your hives: ensure you have enough ventilation to prevent condensation within the hive. Be sure they have enough honey for winter. <b>2</b>	Winter barn basics: proper ventilation, but no drafts, plenty of unfrozen water, exercise the animals, check weight status regularly. <b>3</b>	Watch for late abortions in weak animals after tomorrow's full moon. And that moon is likely to bring in the first major storm of 2023. <b>4</b>	One market for January lambs and kids is the "club market" for 4-H clubs. Also explore the "Hothouse Market" for new lambs. <b>5</b>	Epiphany (Three-Kings Day) is usually celebrated on or near January 6. Milk-fed lambs and kids are often in demand for this market. <b>6</b>	Plan ahead for April's big celebrations: Graduations, Passover, Roman Easter, Orthodox Easter, and Id al Fitr (the breaking of the Ramadan fast). <b>7</b>
Lent begins on February 22, and pre-Lenten parties often create demand for lambs and kids for cookouts throughout the month ahead. <b>8</b>	Be prepared for possible drought; make sure your soil has sufficient potassium and phosphorus. Also, install cross fences to facilitate crop rotation. <b>9</b>	Increase energy feeds to animals in unusually severe weather. Many people believe that feeding energy foods in the evening produces the best results. <b>10</b>	The major lambing and kidding season now starts throughout the nation: more lambs and kids are born in the next eight weeks than in any other months. <b>11</b>	Depending on where you live, this may be the time to lime your soil. Since lime reacts slowly with the ground, it should be worked in a few months before planting. <b>12</b>	Experiment with heated water to encourage hydration for your horses as well as other livestock. <b>13</b>	Take inventory and order lambing and kidding supplies. Have iodine onhand to treat the navels of newborns. <b>14</b>
Provide fresh, warm water for your chickens daily, especially during the coldest weather. <b>15</b>	Prune in January before the sap begins to run. If you live in the southern states, do it right now. On milder days, spray trees for scales and mites. <b>16</b>	Prepare to start new seeds under lights as the moon turns new. Most flowers and early vegetables will be ready by April or May if you seed them now. <b>17</b>	Tomorrow is Meatfare Sunday, a feast celebrated by Orthodox Christians. Explore this market for the sale of lambs and kids. <b>18</b>	Today's lunar perigee and new moon together will disrupt the arrival of the January thaw, but its aftermath should bring the maple sap running. <b>19</b>	The dark moon is right for vaccinating the animals due to give birth in February. Trim their feet and clip udders and hind quarters before birthing. <b>20</b>	This is the month for pruning throughout most of the country. Take out suckers, dead and crossing branches, but don't prune what will bloom before June. <b>21</b>
Today is Tet (Vietnamese New Year) and Chinese New Year — the Year of the Rabbit. Promote your bunny sales to celebrate. <b>22</b>	Expect sap to run in the maples throughout the South as the traditional January thaw moves across the nation and the moon waxes. <b>23</b>	Watch for foot rot in high-density housing and pens this winter. Proper hygiene and exercise can help with rot-related lameness. <b>24</b>	Opossums and raccoons are more active as Deep Winter wanes into Late Winter. If you use heat lamps, fasten them well so raiders don't knock them into the hay. <b>25</b>	Today is the first day of Late Winter. Its thaws accelerate the swelling of buds, the running of sap, and increased activity of rodents. <b>26</b>	Check your chickens for red mites and lice at the base of the neck, under the wings, and the vent. Spray vinegar around coops to help prevent mites. <b>27</b>	Average temperatures in all areas of the U.S. climb one degree, a major statistical move toward spring today. <b>28</b>
If hay supplies are getting low or quality is poor, consider using a "lick tank" to provide supplemental feeding. <b>29</b>	Keep bird feeders away from coops and runs — wild birds can carry red mites that love your flock. Treat for parasites with diatomaceous powder. Deworm, too. <b>30</b>	At the end of the month, pick your pussy willows, forsythia, pear, and crab apple branches and bring them indoors for forcing. Cut back old raspberry canes, too. <b>31</b>	<h1>January</h1>			



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<h1>February</h1>			Test farm and garden soil as soon as possible. Spread manure as conditions permit. The use of composted manure cuts down on the spread of parasites. <b>1</b>	Plan to prune vines, shade, and fruit trees before February 15th, a pivot day for milder weather throughout the nation. <b>2</b>	Plant oats and barley as conditions permit in the South. Spread lime, phosphate and potash as needed. In the Border States, tap trees for sap as full moon approaches. <b>3</b>	As the cold grows deeper, provide a little extra hay and root crops for your rabbits, extra grain for your livestock. <b>4</b>
The moon is full today, intensifying the cold spell that typically follows Groundhog Day, February 2. <b>5</b>	After full moon, trim hooves, worm, and treat for external parasites. Do your slaughtering when temperatures are cold, but not below zero. <b>6</b>	Frost seeding of dormant pastures and lawns may be started this month. Just spread the seeds and let the freezing and thawing of the ground plant them. <b>7</b>	Consider the use of artificial insemination to enhance certain characteristics of your flock or herd to introduce new traits or to preserve traits. <b>8</b>	Don't let the new kids and lambs jump all over you or butt you. When they get bigger, that kind of behavior quickly becomes less than cute. <b>9</b>	Be ready for lambing and kidding at least a week before the lambs are "supposed" to be born. <b>10</b>	Prepare landscaping, garden, and field maps, including plans for double cropping, intercropping, and companion planting. <b>11</b>
In California, plant your oats and spring barley. In Texas, plant corn. Sow alfalfa and then cut hay in Arizona. <b>12</b>	Basic birthing; Clip, Dip, Strip, and Sip: Clip the navel to an inch, dip it in iodine, strip the teat so the animal gets a sip of colostrum. <b>13</b>	Be ready for broody chickens that don't want you to take their eggs. Be sure to pick up eggs regularly. <b>14</b>	If your hay is stored outdoors in the cold and wet winter weather, its nutritive value will be far below that of hay stored indoors under cover. <b>15</b>	The period between full moon and the moon's fourth quarter can encourage birthing, so be ready for your animals to birth up to a week early near then. <b>16</b>	Prepare your coops and runs for spring predator time. Identify local predators and consider traps to discourage them. <b>17</b>	If queen bees stop laying eggs after a cold spell, feed your bees pollen substitute until flowers start blooming again. <b>18</b>
If you market spinning fleece, it can be an advantage to have your sheep named. That way, you can give your customers some of "Jennifer's fleece." <b>19</b>	The moon turns new today. Since it was closest to Earth (perigee) yesterday, expect a chilly end to the mid-month thaw. <b>20</b>	Today is Mardi Gras! Sell your beads and hot-cross buns. Christian Lent begins tomorrow. Count the days to Easter and the Easter Market for kids and lambs. <b>21</b>	Raccoons, opossums, and skunks are on the move. Don't leave eggs in the coop; they encourage broodiness and may attract predators. <b>22</b>	Mares could show signs of estrus (a three-week cycle) as the days grow longer. You may wish to use ultrasonography to detect estrus. <b>23</b>	Order garden supplements now: roses, hawthorn, raspberry, tansy, hollyhock, peppermint, thyme, and chamomile; all herbs that fight abortion. <b>24</b>	Prepare your container garden for early vegetables and flowers and check the pH in your lawn. <b>25</b>
One trick to help a lamb to nurse: tickle the base of its tail. <b>26</b>	Today is Dominican Republic Independence Day. Explore the Hispanic market in urban centers near your location. <b>27</b>	Count the days before Thanksgiving (November 23). Broad breasted turkeys could be ready to market at about 125 days, wild turkeys in about 200 days. <b>28</b>				



**THE SUN** Perihelion, the point at which the Earth and the Sun are closest to one another, occurs on January 4 at 11:17 a.m. At that time the Earth which will be 91,403,034 miles from the Sun.

From January 3rd to January 27th, night contracts by approximately one minute every 24 hours.

The Sun enters the Late Winter constellation of Aquarius on January 20. The sun's declination passes 17 degrees 31 minutes on January 31, one quarter of the way to spring equinox, just as the final weather system of January arrives.

Between the middle of January through the middle of May, spring moves from New Orleans at a rate of six miles per day or one degree every four days.

Beginning on January 27, the day starts to grow at the rate of two minutes per 24 hours, and average temperatures, which have remained stable from the middle of January, climb one degree almost everywhere in the United States. Averages continue to climb at the

rate of about one degree every two weeks.

On February 18, the Sun reaches halfway to equinox. This landmark in the solar year is called Cross-Quarter Day. The Sun enters the Early Spring constellation of Pisces on that day.

**THE PLANETS** Throughout the winter, Venus and Saturn are in Capricorn and then in Aquarius, low on the western horizon just after sundown. Jupiter is in Pisces and Cetus, following Venus into the west at dark. Mars is in Taurus, preceding winter's Orion across the night sky.

**THE STARS** On winter nights in January, the sky offers the brightest stars of the year: Orion high in the south, the Milky Way streaming from the southeast to the northwest, the Great Square setting due west, Leo rising due east.

In the last week of February, the early night sky tells of Spring. Looking east, you can almost forget that cold Orion fills the west. Just a little to the right and

down from the Big Dipper, May's Regulus is shining in the constellation Leo. The faint stars of lanky Hydra spread along the horizon. Due east, the brightest star is Arcturus, which will be overhead this time of night when the first fireflies appear.

**THE SHOOTING STARS** January's shooting stars are the Quadrantids; they appear early in the first week of the month, most heavily on January 3rd and 4th, at the rate of about 35 per hour. Look for them after midnight in the eastern sky near Arcturus.

**METEOROLOGY** The season of Deep Winter begins on January 1st. This season has 6 to 7 significant cold waves, and it lasts from the 1st through the 25th of January. Average temperatures in this season are the lowest of the year everywhere in North America.

High-pressure systems are due to cross the country on or around the following dates: January 1, 5, 10, 15, 19, 25, 31. If strong storms occur this month, weather patterns suggest that they will happen during the following periods: January 1-2, 6-12, and 19-24 (the transition time to Late Winter).

Full moon on January 6th is expected to chill the first week of the month, and new moon, combined with perigee on January 21st will almost certainly bring a bitter edge to the January thaw period. On the other hand, the weaker lunar phase at the end of the month will favor a strong Groundhog Day thaw before February 3.

In February, significant cold waves are due to cross the United States around the following dates: February 3, 6, 11, 15, 20, 24, and 27. If strong storms occur this month, they will be most likely to strike on or around February 3-9, 14-18, and 24-27.

Full moon on February 5 and new moon on February 20 and lunar perigee on February 19 are likely to increase the intensity of the weather systems that typically arrive near those dates.

## PEAK ACTIVITY TIME FOR CREATURES

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. Activity is likely to increase at new moon and full moon and at perigee (when the Moon is closest to Earth), especially as the barometer falls in advance of cold fronts near those dates.

DATE	ABOVE	BELOW
January 1-6	Midnight to Dawn	Afternoons
January 7 - 14	Mornings	Evenings
January 15 - 20	Afternoons	Midnight to Dawn
January 21 - 28	Evenings	Mornings
January 29 - 31	Midnight to Dawn	Afternoons
February 1 - 4	Midnight to Dawn	Afternoons
February 5 - 13	Mornings	Evenings
February 14 - 20	Afternoons	Middle of the Night
February 21 - 28	Evenings	Mornings

## THE SCKRAMBLER

### THINGS TO SELL

If you and your family can sell all of these things all year, you will be very busy. And maybe rich?

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SCCHK	IIAPLT
KTSECRIC	RBBTSAI
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LOWO	RIERSB
NEAUIG SPIG	SAOP
FTSCRA	EEESHCH
UEYTRKS	KILM

The 3rd, 7th, 24th and 40th correct answers will win five dollars for their authors! 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.

## WINNERS & ANSWERS

### OF THE SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER SCKRAMBLER

Poor Will promised five dollars to 2nd, 8th, 23rd and 54th, persons to mail their correct answers to Poor Will, before the answers appeared in Countryside. The second correct answer came from Amelia Mishler, Dalton, WI. The eighth was from Ann Frawley of Sweetwater, TX. The 23rd came Arlene Straub of Emporium, PA, and the 54th came from Heidi King of Mesa, AZ. Thanks to all who played!

ENSKCICH/CHICKENS	AIGNYL/LAYING
OLFKC/FLOCK	IUAORTBCN/INCUBATOR
GESG/EGGS	TOML/MOLT
SAHM/MASH	KSCICH/CHICKS
OORRDEB/BROODER	TAHYREHC/HATCHERY
LERROIB/BROILER	LOWF/FOWL
OROETSSR/ROOSTERS	EREF NAREG/FREE RANGE
SENH/HENS	LPCKUGIN/PLUCKING
ARAPSETIS/PARASITES	LUPLEST/PULLETS
OUPLTRY/POULTRY	SETIM/MITES

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## PHASES OF THE CROW MOON AND CARDINAL MATING CALL MOON THE SNOWDROP AND ACONITE MOON OR BIRTHING MOON

The migration of crows north usually occurs in late December through January. By the time the overwintering crows get used to the return of the migrants, cardinals have begun their spring mating songs before dawn, a prelude to the blooming of the first bulbs of the spring, the snowdrops and aconites.

**December 23:** The Crow Moon is new at 5:17 a.m.

**December 24:** Lunar Perigee (when the Moon is closest to Earth)

**December 29:** Second quarter: 8:21 p.m.

**January 6:** Full moon: 6:09 p.m.

**January 8:** Lunar apogee (the Moon's position farthest from Earth)

**January 14:** Last quarter: 9:13 p.m.

**January 21:** The Cardinal Mating Moon is new: 3:55 p.m.

**January 21:** Lunar Perigee (when the Moon is closest to Earth)

**January 28:** Second quarter: 10:20 a.m.

**February 4:** Lunar apogee (the Moon's position farthest from Earth)

**February 5:** Full moon: 1:30 p.m.

**February 13:** Last quarter: 11:03 a.m.

**February 19:** Lunar Perigee (when the Moon is closest to Earth)

**February 20:** The Snowdrop and Aconite Moon is new: 2:09 a.m.

**February 27:** Second quarter: 3:06 a.m.



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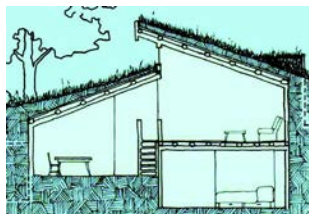
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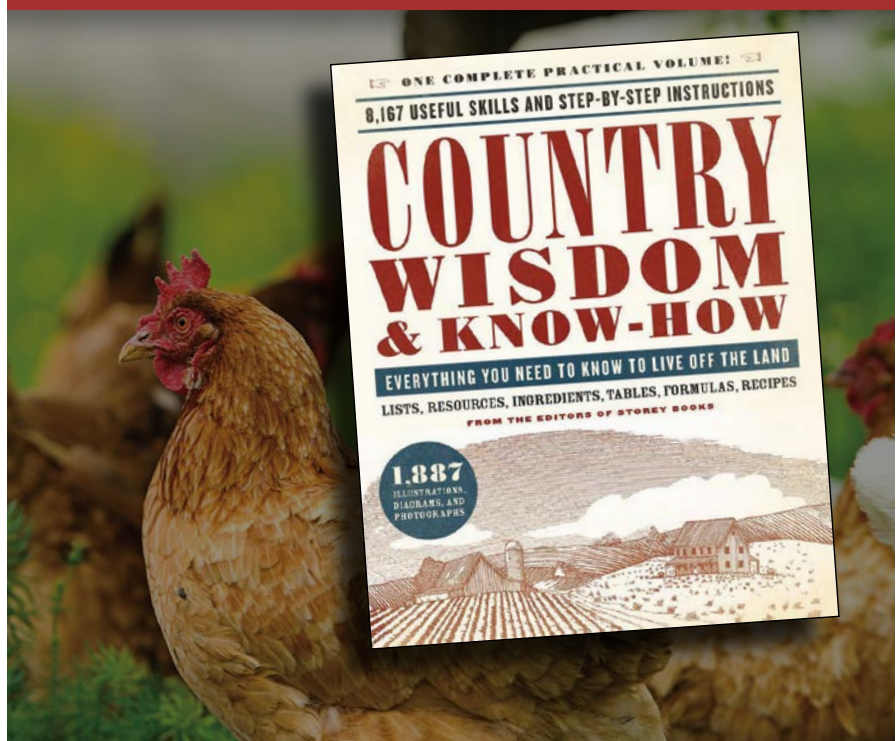
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