



FROM SCRATCH

{life on the homestead}

February/March 2014

Spring Fever

6 Steps to
a Bountiful
Garden

Sawmill
on the
Homestead

The
Homestead
Orchard

The
Gardening
Issue



Letter from the Editor and Publisher

While we write this, there is still snow on the ground from the latest “polar vortex” to grip the country.

Everything is cloaked in white, and what isn't is a sticky, wet cold mess that no one wants to deal with.

Still, we get up every morning, feed the chickens goats and the rabbits. We pack their enclosures with straw and make sure to break the ice first thing in the morning.

All this is difficult to deal with, but it pales in comparison to the difficulty of struggling with our ever mounting excitement.

Spring is coming!

It may be our imagination, but we swear we can feel wisps of the season creeping around as we trudge through the winter muck – and it is driving us crazy.

Everywhere we look, we see – in our mind's eye – new places to put raised beds, unused corners of land for rows of crops and bits of space we can plant flowers and trees and fodder for the animals and – well, you get the idea.

Every chance we get, we gather around the farm table armed with notebooks and graph paper and pencils and almanacs and argue about what we're going to plant, when we're going to plant it and what we're going to do with it when we harvest it.

At From Scratch magazine, we've gathered together the best writers and gardeners for our annual Gardening issue.

We've gathered ideas and inspiration from all corners from the nifty mini greenhouses from Our Little Coop, the three-tiered planter project from Jenny Peterson and her design team and the ways to make sure this year's garden is more bountiful and beauti-

ful than ever with Melissa Willis.

Our award winning Home Agriculture Editor, Chris McLaughlin has put in countless hours to make sure this issue is one of our best ever, all so every one of our readers can enjoy the excitement that is a new Spring and a new season, which is just around the corner.

And, even bigger than Spring (maybe) is this: It is From Scratch magazine's one-year anniversary!

We've seen exponential growth in our first year and we can't thank every one enough. From our readers and subscribers, our advertisers and sponsors, all our contributors and even our Facebook fans and Pinterest followers have all helped make From Scratch magazine one of the

fastest growing publications online.

We never dreamed we'd grow this fast. For everyone who has helped us get here: Thank You.

In the coming months and years, we hope to offer more ways to read our magazine with new formats, more ways to read the great articles we've been privileged to publish and more ways to build a strong community devoted to sustainable living and farming.

Thank you,

Steven and Melissa



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Editor



Melissa Jones
Publisher



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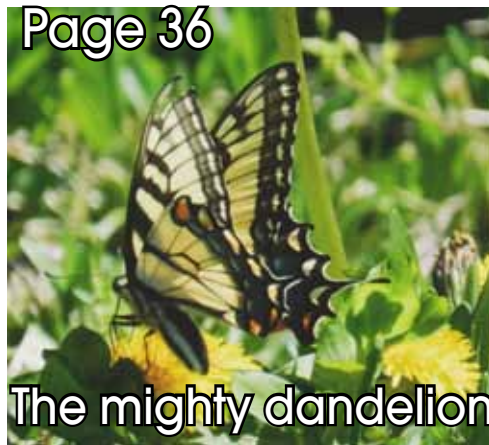


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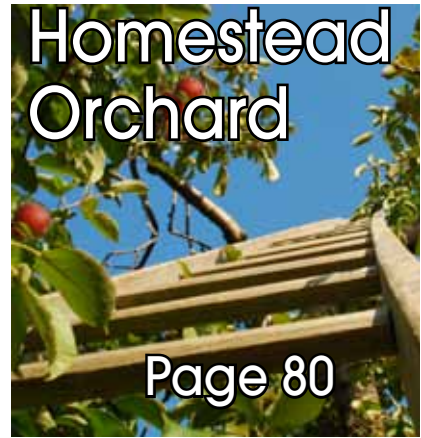


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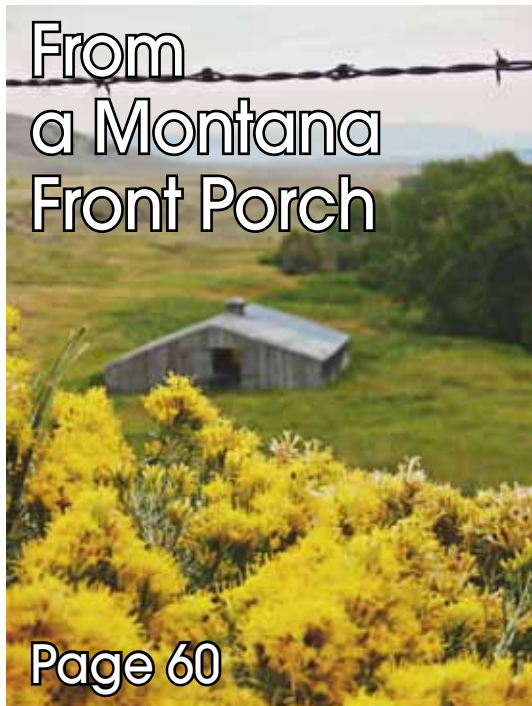
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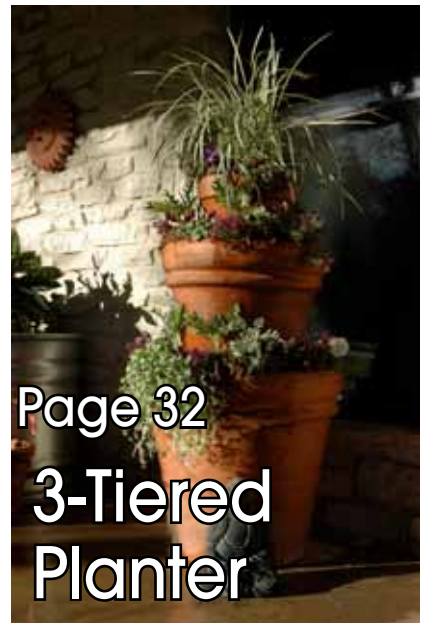
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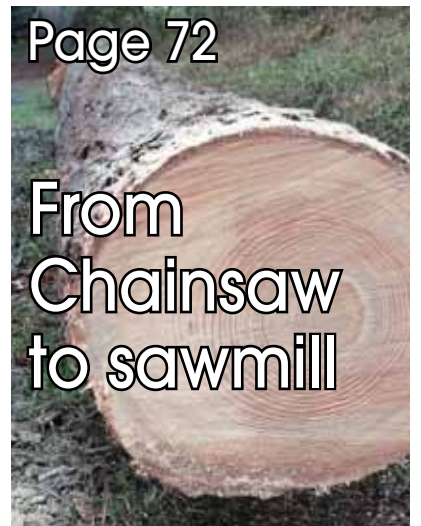


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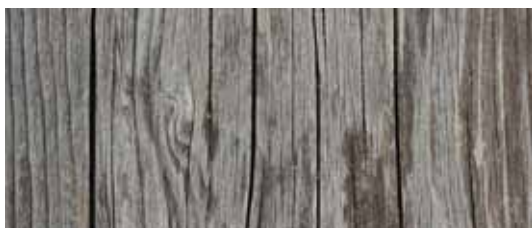


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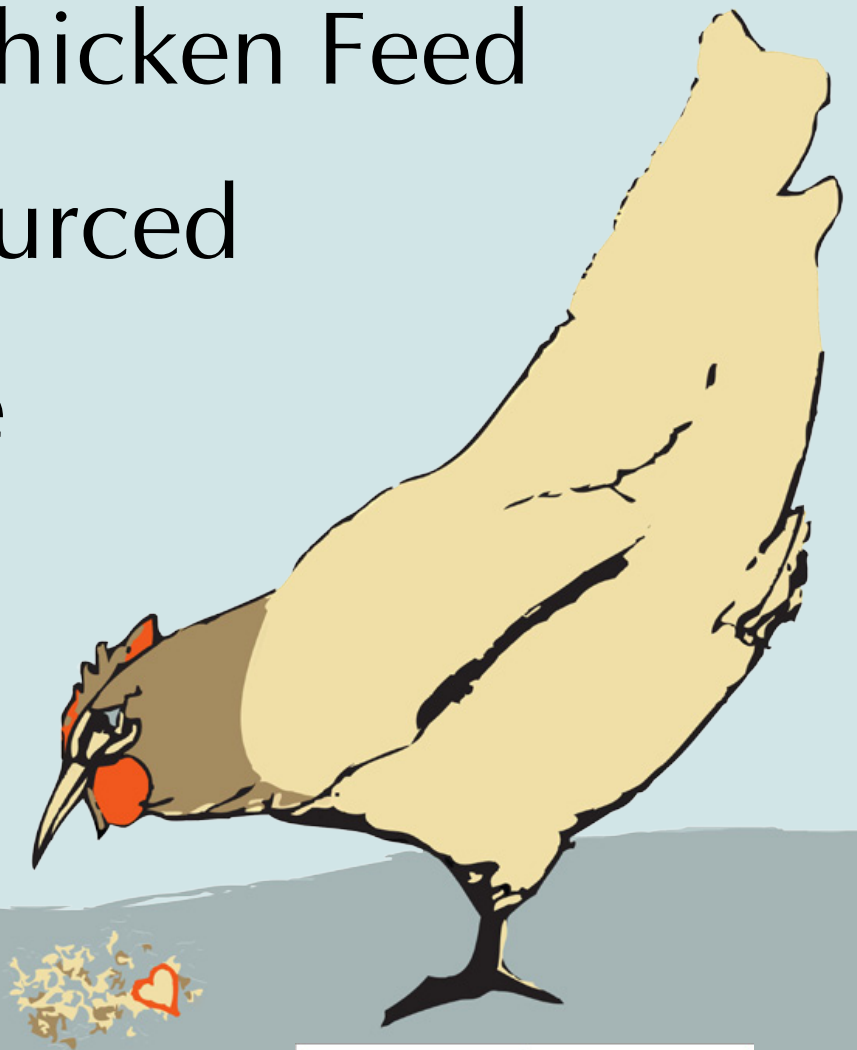
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Reader Photos



Donna Kyanan shared this photo of Liza Jane, who used to play with her granddaughter. When she went off to college (the granddaughter, not the chicken) Donna sent her this photo for her dorm room.



Jessica Long poses with her chicken, Lady Gaga.



Trudy Nodgaard sent us this photo of her granddaughters girls getting ready to go on a bug hunt late one Saturday.



Svea Miller's Rhode Island Reds (who are Vermonters at heart) drink from a stream during a wintry day.



Beans and herbs from Glori's garden are put up and ready to use.



Karen Lynn's dog enjoys the outdoors during a recent ice storm in Wilmington, NC.



Pete Curtis, the mini mule, enjoys a rare Alabama snow day in this photo submitted by Amanda Jones.



Riley, Terri Jorgensen's golden and her Orpington, Olive, when she was just a little one. "This is one of my favorite pictures," she said.



David Sperry sent us this photo of his Barred Rock pullet. "She is such a sweet heart and is very gentle and trusting," he said



Krista Kapp sent us this photo of her hen Midge meeting her pig Oinky.



**THE
BACKYARD
FARMING,
GET IT
IN THE
GROUND
GARDENING
ISSUE**

Letter from the Home Agriculture Editor

Try as I might to appreciate every season, this gardener's heart is always itching for spring. I have plans — big plans... new plans...more plans. I scratch them out on paper and walk our property looking for that perfect place. My appetite for new ideas is insatiable and I end up finding inspiration around every corner. Soon, I will have to make choices and start planting. As a Northern California resident, I'll be starting seeds indoors in the next two weeks — which will satisfy me for just about exactly that amount of time.



Chris McLaughlin
Home-Ag Editor

In this issue of From Scratch Magazine we have some excellent how-to articles and experiences written by garden-savvy homesteaders. I hope that you'll read every single one and let them inspire you in 2014 to:

1. Just plant something (for those new to gardening)
2. Try something new (for these that tend to play it safe)
3. Try doing something differently (for those if us seasoned gardeners that feel that our way is the only way).

As always, I wish you peas.

Chris







Delphinium

Flirting with Flowers

By: Julie Thompson-Adolf

Once upon a time, I fell in love.

With flowers.

Loose, wild collections full of fragrance. Elegantly bundled, monochromatic nose-gays. Crazy creations bursting with color and creativity. A single peach rose, perfect in its simplicity. Flowers spoke to me. They said, "Don't wait for an occasion. Treat yourself. Treat your friends." After all, who doesn't love the surprise of a beautiful bouquet, given for no reason other than to share happiness?

Too often, I'm consumed with practical, edible gardening: Plant the seeds for my heirloom kitchen garden, amend the soil in the raised beds, determine the best companion plants to ensure a

bountiful harvest, try, try desperately to grow something new that the kids will eat without complaint. And so often, I overlook what launched my love of gardening: Flowers.

My parents didn't grow vegetables in our family's suburban garden. Maybe because my dad grew up on a Depression-era farm where he didn't find glamour in manure-spreading. Or maybe because my mom embraced her ability to buy produce at the grocery store after a financially lean childhood ... whatever the reason, my love of gardening didn't originate with vegetables.

Instead, my mom loved flowers. Tulips and daffodils. Snapdragons and pansies. Tea roses and lilacs. My introduction to gardening began with beauty, not practicality. And I can assure you,

Poppy



with a chemist for a father, our garden was not organic. Still, the scent of lilacs on the kitchen table will forever trigger memories of spring in my childhood.

A few years ago, I became obsessed with flower farms. As a member and former grower for Slow Food USA's first Earth Market in Greenville, SC, I dreamed of owning a flower farm. Organic, local flowers — what an amazing career! Lacking land, though, I decided to downscale dramatically. Instead, I follow a brilliant flower farmer through her blog, Floret Flowers, and try to adapt her grand scale production and design techniques to our own cutting garden.

So, while a flower farm is not in my future, fresh bouquets are high on my gardening priority list. Plus, the beauty of growing flowers is this: Not only will you enjoy gorgeous arrangements throughout the year, you'll actually benefit the environment, too. Bees and butterflies will adore your blooms. Just remember: No poisons, please. Anything you spray to prevent "pests" will impact beneficial insects, too.

Because everyone deserves beautiful blooms in their lives — whether just for yourself or to sell at market — I'm sharing a few tips on starting your own cutting garden.

THE SITE

The majority of blooms will need full sun, so locate your cutting garden in the sunniest of sites. A few flowers (like my much adored hellebores) can tolerate shade, but your biggest bloomers will appreciate and

thrive in full sun. Along with sun, select your site with thoughts of wind. Some protection from fierce gales is appreciated, particularly by delicate blooms or those with tall, fragile stems.

Your site should also have easy water access. The best blooms receive consistent irrigation and you don't want to haul buckets of water from the house. Trust me.

Think also about the need to grow up.

Some gorgeous flowers, such as sweet peas, need the support of trellises. While these vining blooms grow vertically, they also allow you the benefit of planting other varieties at their base. More blooms per square foot is a good thing, in my opinion!

Additionally, a cutting garden located near or surrounding your kitchen garden is a win for your vegetables. You'll attract pollinators that will help ensure a bountiful harvest.

THE SOIL

Prepare your beds with rich, well-draining soil. Remember the rule: The more you put into your soil, the more you'll get out of it. Just like a vegetable garden, if you want a stellar harvest of blooms, you'll need nutrient-rich soil. Add compost, well-rotted manure, or a good organic fertilizer to your beds. Just remember — too much nitrogen can cause lots of green growth with minimal blooms. Test your soil (which can be done through University extension services for a nominal fee) to determine if any nutrients need to be added to your soil before adding organic fertilizers.



Foxglove



Sweet Pea

THE SEEDS

During these bleak winter months most of us find our mailboxes overflowing with the promise of spring: seed catalogues. Is there anything more lovely than sitting by the fire with a blanket, a highlighter, and a pile of seed catalogues? Still, with all of the hundreds of choices, it's easy to become overwhelmed. Honestly, who doesn't want to grow every variety of sunflower with adorable names like "Teddy Bear"?

As someone who continuously orders too many seeds, I've provided a list of the easiest flowers to grow from seeds — the ones that are well-suited for bouquets. The reality is that some gorgeous garden blooms don't fare well when brought inside, where they quickly shed pollen all

over the tablecloth or wither away quickly.

Of course, bulbs, flowering shrubs, perennial vines, and even plants such as hostas and ferns are fabulous additions to a cutting garden. Every fall, I wait until the major bulb companies deeply discount their inventory and order hundreds of tulip, Dutch iris, narcissus, lily, and other bulbs to plant in the garden, both for landscaping and for bouquets. I'm obsessed with bulbs, but since it's a bit late to plant bulbs for this year's cutting garden, it's best to focus on flowers that can easily be grown from seed. Besides, purchasing seeds is a relatively small expensive for a potentially large return of blooms.

To get you started on planning your cutting garden, I've include a list of



Cosmos

flowers that are easily grown from seed, along with hints to help ensure you'll have a houseful of beautiful blooms from the garden. After all, gorgeous bouquets can nourish your spirit, just like a delicious heirloom tomato can quench your hunger. There's a place for both in your garden.

BEAUTIFUL BLOOMS FOR THE CUTTING GARDEN

BELLS OF IRELAND

Annual. Sow 2 to 4 weeks before average last frost. Requires light to germinate. Press lightly into soil surface and keep moist. If sowing during warm weather, refrigerate seeds one week before sowing. Bloom time: Late summer. Use: Lovely green stalks with tiny white flowers are great accent stems or used as foliage. Vase life: 7 to 10 days. Dries well.

COSMOS

Annual. Sow 1-2 weeks after last frost. Full sun. Bloom time: Summer. Uses: Perfect for casual summer bouquets. Vase life can be up to 10 days when cut fresh from the garden.

DELPHINIUM

Perennial. Sow 1 to 2 weeks after average last frost. Requires darkness to germinate. Sow at depth of 1/4". Best germination at 70-80 degrees F. Blooms late spring/early summer. Full sun. Thrives in cool, moist climates. (Note: I've never had luck with delphinium — I think it's too

hot in SC. But I'm going to try one more time because it's so beautiful.) Uses: Harvest when 3/4 of blooms are open. Tall flowers add height to arrangements. Vase life: 5 to 7 days.

FORGET-ME-NOTS

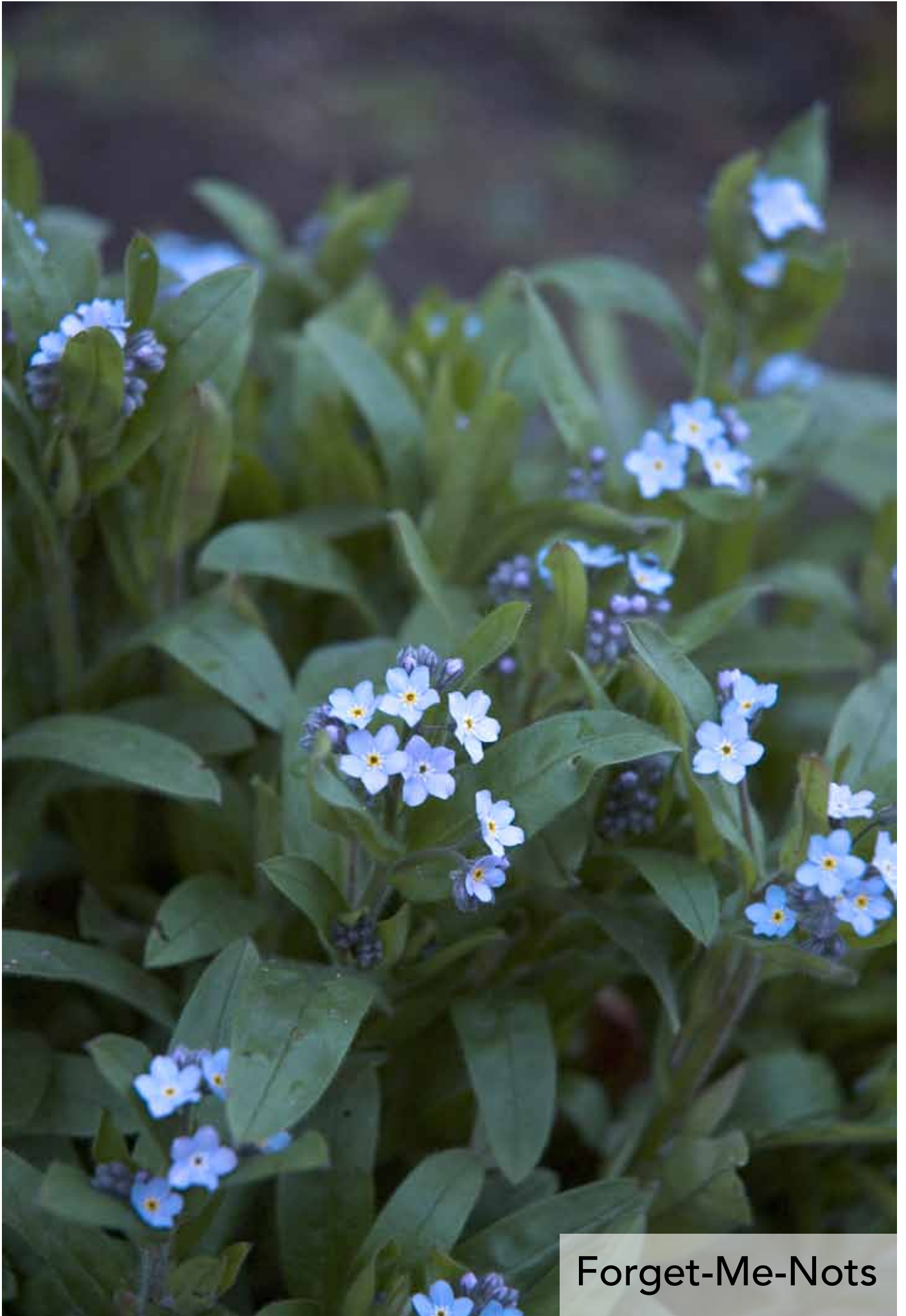
Perennial. (Also annual varieties.) Plant seeds 1 to 2 weeks before average last frost date or as soon as soil can be worked. Can sow in early fall for early spring blooms, which is helpful in warm climates. Grows best in partial shade with moist soil. Blooms spring and early summer. Use: Harvest when a few flowers are open. Flowers shouldn't shed when handled. Submerge cut flowers into deep, cool water to harden them prior to arranging. Vase life: 5 to 7 days.

FOXGLOVE

Biennial. (Foliage first year, blooms second year.) Sow seeds 1 to 2 weeks after average last frost up until two months before first fall frost. Requires light to germinate. Press seeds into moist soil, do not cover. Prefers shade/partial sun. Note: All parts of the plant are poisonous. Blooms late spring/early summer. Uses: Harvest when bottom third of bell shaped flowers open. Vase life: 10+ days. Recut the thick stem to avoid blockage and increase vase life.

POPPY

Hardy in zones 1-6, grown as an annual in zones 7+. Sow seeds 4 to 6 weeks before average last frost or as soon as soil can be worked. In mild climates, fall sowing is recom-



Forget-Me-Nots

mended. Seeds require light to germinate. Poppies like cooler weather. Foliage dies back in summer heat, reappearing in fall. Bloom time: late spring. Uses: Cut in bud stage when the bud shows some color of the blossom. Vase life: 3 to 5 days. Sear the end of the poppy and place in warm water. Can also use the seed pods to add texture and interest to arrangements.

SNAPDRAGONS

Annual. (Perennial usually grown as an annual. May overwinter in climates as cold as USDA zone 5.) In cold climates, sow seeds 4 to 6 weeks before average last frost or as soon as soil can be worked. Mild climates: Sow seeds in late summer to early fall for winter and spring blooms. Uses: Harvest when a few buds are open along the base and others show good signs of color. Vase life: 10 days to two weeks.

STOCK

Annual. Sow 2 to 4 weeks before average last frost. For blooms throughout the growing season, sow every 4 weeks. In mild winter climates, sow in fall for early spring blooms. Grow in full sun to light shade. Average bloom: early summer. Uses: Harvest when one-third to one-half of bottom blooms are open. Vase life: 3 to 5 days. Cut thick stems for better water penetration.

SUNFLOWERS

Annual. One of the easiest, most rewarding flowers to grow in a cutting garden. Sow seeds 1/2" deep, 1 to

2 weeks after average last frost. I typically sow seeds every few weeks throughout early summer for a long harvest. Full sun. Bloom time: summer through fall. Uses: Harvest when three-fourths to fully open, center free from signs of pollination. Vase life: 5 days. If large leaves wilt, strip them to prolong vase life. Watch the water level — sunflowers are thirsty!

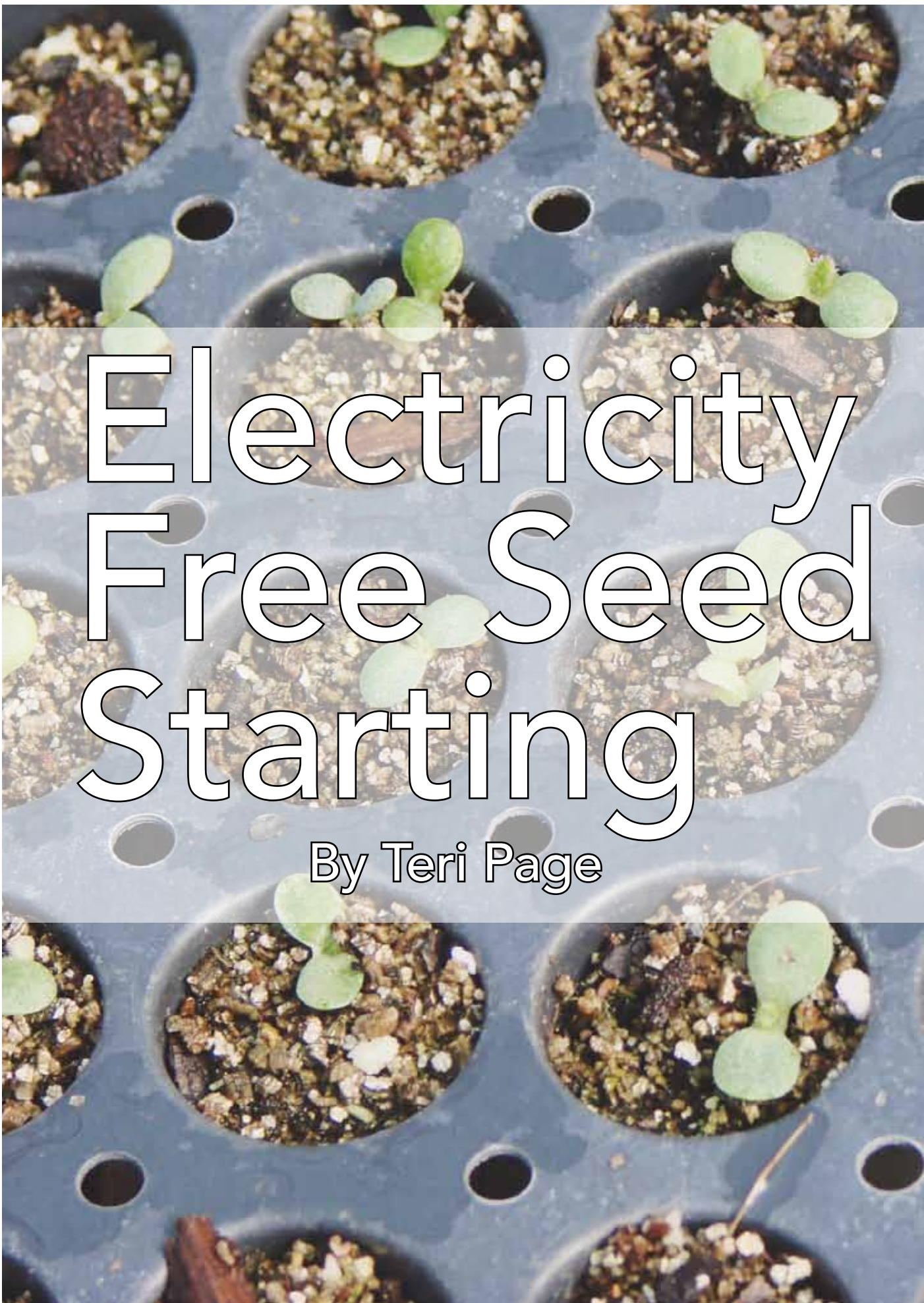
SWEET PEA

Annual. Delicate, fragrant beauties grow best when soaked in water for 24 hours or nicked with sandpaper prior to sowing. In mild climates, plant in late fall/early winter for spring blooms. In cold climate, sow seeds 4 to 6 weeks prior to last frost. Full sun. Vines need trellising. Note: Plant and seeds are poisonous. Uses: Harvest when a few flowers open at the base of stem. Vase life: 3 to 5 days.

ZINNIA

Annual. Sow seeds 1 to 2 weeks after average last frost. Full sun. Long lasting garden and cut flower. Thrives in hot weather. Uses: Harvest when flower is mostly open. Handle gently, as zinnias bruise easily. Vase life: 5 days.

Julie is a garden writer, owner of Garden Delights, and author of the blog, Growing Days. She lives in South Carolina with her animal-crazy family on their organic micro-farm with eight incredibly spoiled chickens and two greenhouses – in a subdivision – with a homeowners' association. She dreams of owning a flower farm ... some day.



Electricity Free Seed Starting

By Teri Page

After months of planning and dreaming about our gardens, and ordering seeds, the longer days of February are a great time to get an early start growing spring and summer vegetables, herbs, and flowers.

Often, advice on how to start seeds involves equipment such as heat mats and grow lights. While it's true that such equipment may lead to more reliable germination and sturdy growth, setting up lights and heat mats may not be feasible for every gardener. The cost of purchasing mats and lights, and running round-the-clock electricity to the equipment can be prohibitive. Furthermore, as many homesteaders live off-grid, using solar power for their electricity needs, they may not generate enough power in the winter months for such a seed-starting set-up.

My own family is building an off-grid homestead, and we are currently living electricity-free. Without the benefits of an electric heat mat or grow lights, I began to consider some alternative ways to start seeds — electricity-free — both indoors and outdoors.

STARTING SEEDS INDOORS

With a sunny south-facing window, and plenty of space, starting seeds indoors without the use of grow lights or heat mats is possible — it just requires a little more attention. Seeds will germinate in different areas of your home, depending on their specific temperature requirements.

Place cool season crops in flats in your basement or root cellar; for warmer season crops, germinate seeds near a wood stove or other heat source.

Some people like to use clear plastic domes or plastic wrap to retain moisture until seeds germinate. Remove this cover as soon as seeds germinate.

When seeds have sprouted, move flats to the sunniest location in your home, preferably a south facing window. I like to rotate my flats at least once a day to ensure that plants are getting even light on all sides.

When days have warmed up, consider moving seedlings to a cold frame outdoors to get more direct sun exposure and to begin the hardening off process.

STARTING SEEDS OUTDOORS/ WINTER SOW

Have you noticed how some hardy varieties reseed and germinate in the outdoors with no intervention? Often these plants lead to the first harvest. Such is the concept behind the winter sow method.

Using the winter sow method, seeds are sown outdoors in the dead of winter, in a simple, homemade micro-greenhouse — namely recycled plastic containers!

COLD FRAMES

Cold frames are another useful tool for those wishing to get a jump-start



on their spring or summer gardens. Cold frames, which are low boxes outfitted with a clear glass or plastic lid, are easy to make, can be constructed with reclaimed materials, and are a low-cost and small-scale substitute for a hoop house or greenhouse.

Cold frames protect small plants from the elements, and heat up the soil when the sun shines.

As such, cold frames can benefit seed-starting gardeners in two ways: as a place to direct sow seeds, or as a place to harden off seeds started indoors.

Consider direct sowing arugula, beets, spinach, lettuce, or radish directly into well-composted organic soil.

Or transfer your growing seedlings from the indoors into an outdoor cold frame when the days warm.

One note of caution: Since they are typically oriented to the sun, cold frames can heat up quickly.

On sunny days, be sure to ventilate your cold frame so your care-

fully sowed seedlings do not fry in the sun.

DIRECT SOW

If you are blessed with a climate that allows you to direct sow in the early spring, do so.

As soon as the ground is dry enough to work, and the soil is warm enough for the types of seeds you would like to plant, direct sow them right into the ground, following recommendations for that particular variety.

Whichever method you choose, getting a jump-start on your spring or summer garden does not have to be an expensive, equipment-intensive process.

Sow your seeds indoors or outdoors, and you're on your way to a successful harvest.

Teri Page lives in Northeast Missouri where she is building an off-grid homestead on 10 acres of raw land. She cultivates organic gardens, working on a food forest and building a 250 square foot home. Read more about her and her adventures [here](#).

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MINI GREENHOUSES

WINTER SOWING

BY: EMILY MCGRATH



It is at about this point every year when I am officially OVER winter. It's cold, it's dark and at times can really leave me feeling a bit lonely and isolated from the outside world.

While I do love the occasional snow, the excitement of the holidays and all of the fun that comes along with winter, I miss being outside, the sunshine on my face, the warm breeze of a summer night and most of all, working in my garden.

Every year I wait anxiously for the stores to put their seed packs on display and when they do, an instant wave of giddiness comes over me. Seeing the seed packs after a long winter brings me hope and a prom-

ise that there will be new life again. But what would you say if I told you that you didn't have to wait until that magical spring moment to start your seeds?

What if I told you that you can in fact begin sowing the seeds for your summer garden right now?

If you are familiar with the method called "Winter-Sowing," invented by the brilliant Trudi Davidoff than you aren't at all surprised by this news. But if you are anything like me having never heard of winter sowing up until this point, my guess is that you are feeling pretty excited aren't you? So here's the deal. You're going to need three things in order to complete this project.



- Empty gallon jugs
- Seeds
- Mother Nature

First you will need to make your mini greenhouses.

I am using empty gallon sized milk and water jugs for my mini greenhouses, but you can use any plastic containers as long as the sun can penetrate the walls. Start by punching drainage holes in the bottom of the jugs and a few at the top to help ventilation. The easiest way to do this is to heat up the tip of a screwdriver on your stove. After punching the vents, cut the jug from side to side just below the handle, leaving about two inches to act as a hinge.

Fill your greenhouses with soil.

Any type of soil will work just fine for this project! Add enough soil to the bottom of your greenhouse so that the soil is approximately two to three inches deep.

Wet your soil.

Water your soil and let drain.

Sow your seeds.

Trudi Davidoff advises that you should sow your seeds twice as deep as the seeds smallest dimension. Sow your seeds on the surface of the soil, covering the seeds with more soil in order to achieve the proper soil planting depth.

Wondering what seeds to sow? You can winter sow just about anything



but the best kinds of seeds sow in the winter are seeds that are cold hardy herbs and vegetables, and plants that are grown in your zone. Checking for keywords such as “direct sow in the fall” “direct sow in the spring” and “self sowing” are also great indicators that a seed will work well for winter sowing.

Label.

After you have finished sowing your seeds, slap a piece of duct tape across your container and with permanent marker write the date and seed of the variety sown.

Put Your Greenhouses Outside and Let Mother Nature Work Her Magic!

This is the part of the project that I find fascinating. While most of us are so accustomed to forcing our seeds into germination by using indoor lighting and heat, winter sowing allows Mother Nature to control the germination process resulting in hardier and healthier stock! After you put your greenhouses outside in a safe and secure spot where the wind won't blow them away, your work is done until spring!

Come Onnnnnn Spring!!

Small seedlings will begin to emerge as spring arrives and it will now be time to tend to your tiny plants. Be sure to check the soil daily and water your seedling as needed. Don't forget to close up the tops when you are finished!



3-TIERED PLANTER PROJECT

BY: JENNY PETERSON

Do you have a spot in your garden that could use a dramatic focal point, or does your entryway need a bit of a pick-me-up? Or perhaps you're short on space, and you need to plant "up" instead of "out." No worries – whatever your garden needs or challenges, this project is for you. I've been creating these triple-decker planters for both myself and my landscape clients for years now, and it never fails to pack a punch in a small footprint. And the best part? You're likely to have everything you need, aside from the plants, right at your fingertips.



MATERIALS

- 3 planters in graduated sizes (One should be able to fit into the next larger size. I've used 24", 16" and 8" terra cotta pots.)
- Sturdy, empty black nursery pots (bricks or cinderblocks can be substituted)
- Potting soil appropriate to the type of plants you are using
- A variety of 4" plants, with one larger plant (quart or gallon size) for the top planter
- A variety of topdressings appropriate for your plants (bagged decorative moss, pea gravel or smooth river rocks)

DIRECTIONS

1. Place the largest container in its permanent spot – when it's completed, this project can be a heavy one, so you won't want to move it.
2. Take your inverted black plastic nursery pot and place it inside the largest container, then place your medium-sized container upright on top of that. This not only raises the 2nd container to its

desired height and provides support, but takes up space so you are not forced to use expensive potting soil to fill up your largest container. Remember, you can also use stacked bricks or cinderblocks here.

3. Fill both the large and medium containers up with soil, stopping 4" below the rims.

4. Place the smallest container on the soil surface of the 2nd container, and halfway fill it with soil.

5. Now start planting in the rings that were created in the large and medium containers – 4" nursery sizes work well. Simply remove the plant from the nursery pot and pop it in to the rings, and fill with soil in between the root balls. I like to push each root ball up against the next one for a tight fit, and for an instantly full and lush look. For the top planter, plant one larger specimen plant, or use a decorative element like a gazing ball or a seasonal pumpkin.

6. Now finish up by tucking in small handfuls of decorative moss, gravel or river rock in between the plants, completely covering the soil surface. This conserves soil moisture and provides a professional finishing touch.



PLANT COMBOS

SUCCULENT COMBO:

4" Succulents with one larger specimen succulent in top container

FALL COMBO: fall annuals for your area, with a pumpkin resting on a bed of moss in top container

WINTER COMBO: cool season annuals with a rosemary cone topiary and tiny Christmas ornaments in top container

SPRING/SUMMER COMBO: warm season cascading annuals with a smaller ornamental grass in the top container

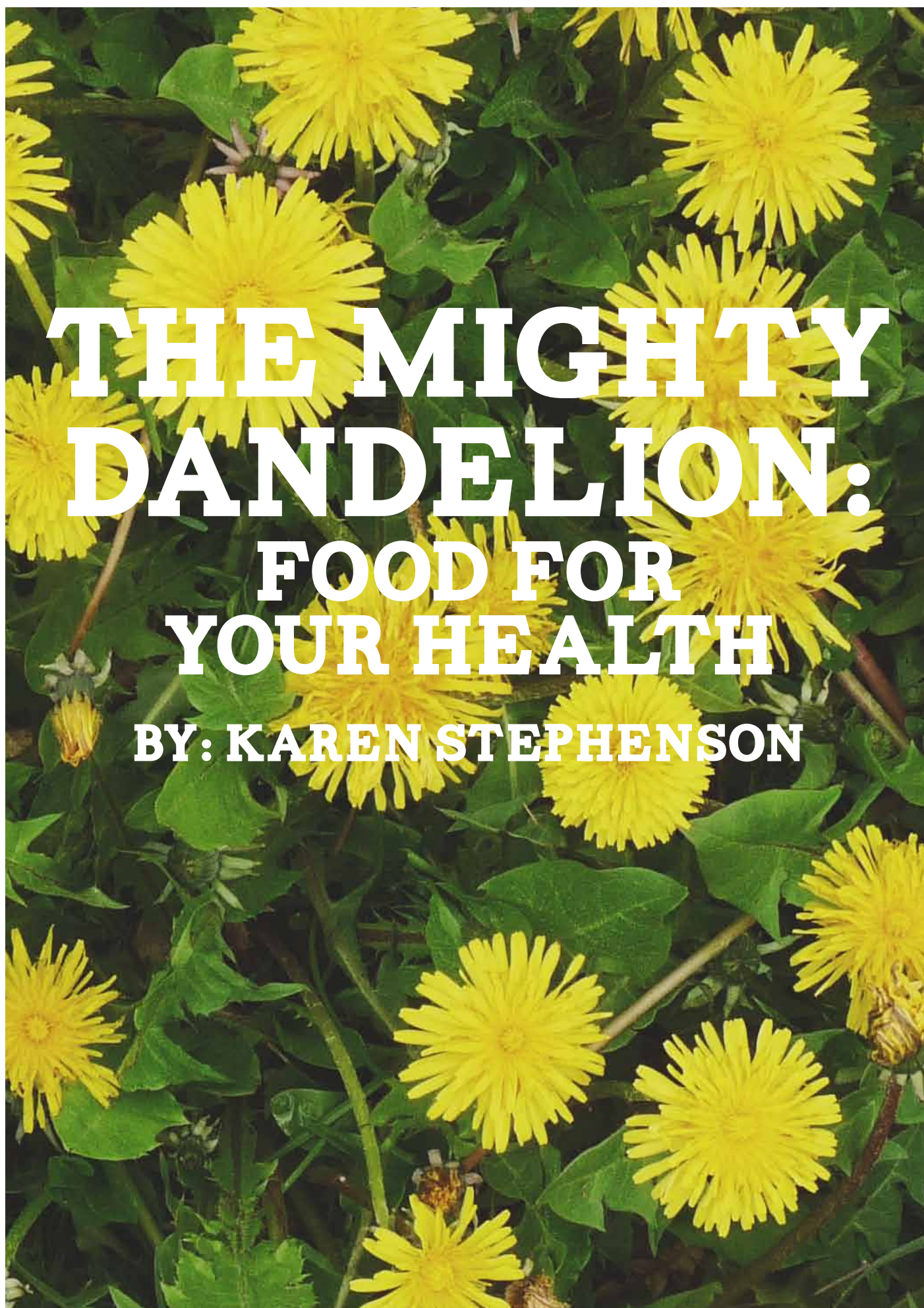


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**THE MIGHTY
DANDELION:
FOOD FOR
YOUR HEALTH**
BY: KAREN STEPHENSON



Dandelions can be categorized as one of the most readily available foods that are not only high in nutrition, they're free!

This amazing plant is also commonly used in herbal remedies making this one of the most versatile plants commonly known to us. Free food that's sustainable, it doesn't get any better than that.

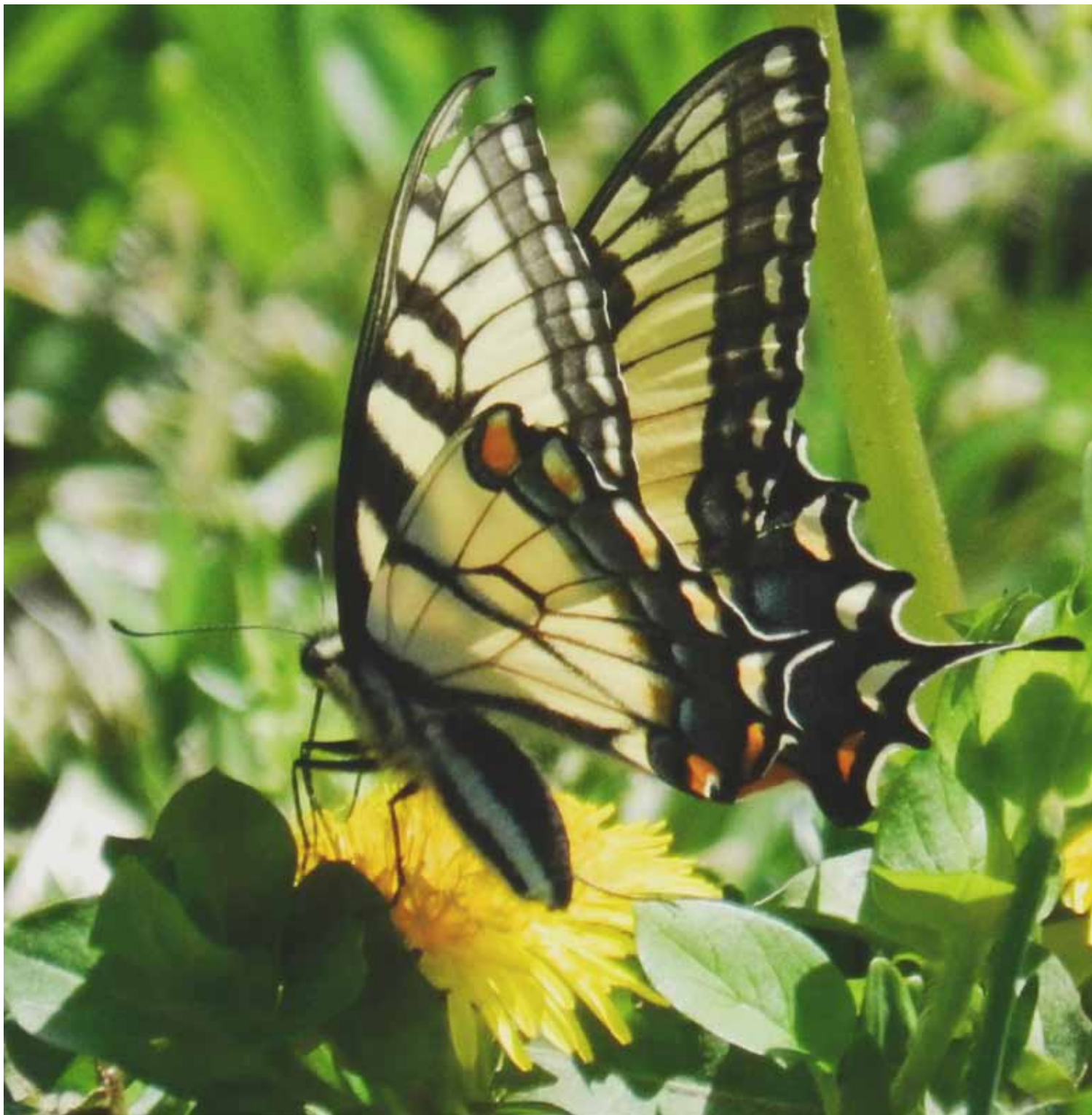
Yes, for those who enjoy a perfect lawn these plants can become a nuisance; but why take the time to remove and toss them away when you can toss them into the kitchen? There is no shortage of recipes out there that can help you integrate these into your meals and the best part of all is that dandelions can be categorized as a superfood.

DANDELION NUTRITION

All the information on nutrition that I'm sharing with you here is based on one cup of chopped dandelion leaves. Dandelion greens contain 3% of our daily requirement of protein. They also contain 8% of your daily requirement of dietary fibre and 2% of the carbohydrates your body needs as well as 1% of fat. Omega-3 (24.2 mg) and Omega-6 (144 mg) can also be found in this marvellous plant.

When you think of the dandelion from a nutritional aspect this is no weed; it is truly a superfood. Yes, to eat dandelion leaves raw takes courage because they are bitter.

Although there are ways to use dandelions so that it reduces or elimi-



nates the bitterness, the bitterness is food for thought.

The bitterness is most definitely better for our bodies and in particular our liver. Many of us have no idea how critical our liver is to our overall health. Without a healthy liver we can be hit with a plethora of health ailments. This is one of the reasons why we have become a nation of sick people; we have long abandoned the

food we need for the foods we want. We have become sweetened, salted and fattened and yet our body needs some bitters.

Our liver loves dandelions and the liver performs over 500 vital functions every day. Some of these functions include the regulation of blood levels of amino acids, cleansing the blood of drugs and other poisonous substances and it produces many



The Greek gave this plant its official name *Taraxacum officinale*. "Taraxacum" from the Greek "taraxos" (for disorder) and "akos" (for remedy). The adjective "officinale" is used in botanical Latin meaning "used as medicine."

Even though we see these plants everywhere in the spring there was once a time in which they did not exist here. Dandelions were brought to North America by the European settlers because it was virtually a maintenance-free, sustainable source of food. It didn't take long before the aboriginal people took advantage of this incredible plant.

GROWING DANDELIONS

There are some advantages to keeping some dandelions growing in your garden.

Believe it or not this is a great companion plant to have with your vegetables. The long dandelion taproot brings up nutrients (including trace minerals) to the shallow-rooting plants in your garden therefore adding minerals and nitrogen to the soil. Of course you want to keep them under control and removing the ones you want can be food for you and your family.

Dandelions grow in all types of soils but you will notice that the large healthier-looking plants grow in nutrient-rich soils. No worries though, this hardy plant will grow in very poor soil. They thrive in spring and tend to hibernate during the hot weeks of summer. They flower once again later in summer when the weather is cooler for them.

All parts of this plant are edible; the root, leaves, stems and flowers

enzymes we need. So integrating dandelions into our diet is a natural way to help keep our liver healthy and nourish our entire body.

Dandelions have been cultivated for food and for medicine since the Roman times. They were used as medicine long before the birth of Christ. Some of the first records of dandelions being used as medicine date back to ancient Egyptians.

COLLECTING AND USING DANDELIONS

If you collect dandelions you might as well take the root because it can be used in many ways.

Be sure to cut the root into smaller sections while it is still moist as it is much easier than once dried out.

After you collect your plants wash them thoroughly.

Separate the roots, leaves, stems and flowers.

If you want to freeze some dandelion leaves then blanch them before freezing.

If you want to dry leaves and roots for storage then you can make a wooden frame with window screening (not aluminium) to dry them on. In a dry location dandelion leaves will be dried in about a week, roots will be longer and times vary depending on their thickness.

Once the root and leaves are thoroughly dried then they can be stored in mason jars (in a cupboard) for up to two years.

OK, so what can you do with the roots?

The most common use would be to make a nourishing tea for your liver. If desired take some roots and put them in a food processor to turn them into powder. (You can do the same for dried leaves.)

When you make tea you can use just the root or powder form if you have a tea filter for your cup.

Take some of the powder root or leaves and add this into your favourite dishes as a spice and as a way to add nutrients to your meals.

If you want all the bitterness removed

(which means you'll lose some of the nutrients your liver loves) then you can boil the leaves first before using them in dishes such as lasagne, pizza, casseroles, pasta sauces, or even with your favorite pesto recipe. Some people double boil the leaves to remove all the bitterness.

The water is brought to a boil, strain the leaves, then add fresh water and bring back to a boil again.

If you want to benefit from the maximum nutrients then using them fresh is best.

Toss a few ripped up dandelion leaves in a salad, in your smoothies, and even when making dips if you have gotten used to the taste.

Make no mistake, the further away from the typical American diet you get the less bitter these leaves will taste.

It's all about readjusting the taste buds. Baking dandelion leaves like kale chips is another way to enjoy the goodness they hold.

Baked dandelions tend to lose their bitterness. The flowers can be frittered and baked or tossed in a skillet. They also make great tasting syrup in which you can add to smoothies or add water and drink as is.

The flower is what is used to make dandelion wine.

Last but not least the stems are also a food source.

There is only one way I have managed to use dandelion stems and enjoy them; steam them and use as a pasta alternative when making spaghetti.

Stems do not store well so the only time you can use these is when they are fresh.



MINERALS IN DANDELIONS INCLUDE:

CALCIUM

IRON

MAGNESIUM

MANGANESE

PHOSPHORUS

POTASSIUM

SELENIUM

ZINC

VITAMINS IN DANDELIONS INCLUDE:

A, B1, B2, B3, B6, B9, C, E AND K.

BAKED DANDELIONS

Fresh large dandelion leaves
(washed and dried)
1 cup whole wheat flour
1 1/2 cup water
1 egg
2 tbsp. wheat germ
3 tbsp. of spices of your choosing

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Combine the flour, water, egg, wheat germ and spices into a bowl and mix well.

Dip leaves into the batter and place

onto a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Be sure to not to overlap for best results.

Bake 5 -10 minutes if the leaves used are very large. If the dandelion leaves are smaller then start watching them at about the 3-4 minute mark to ensure they do not burn.

Serve warm or once cooled!

For more recipes check out EdibleWildFood.com



TALKING CHICKEN SCRATCH WITH LISA

FROM FRESH EGGS DAILY

BY: LISA STEELE

Q: I have ten hens and four nesting boxes. Why do they all lay their eggs in the same box, often at the same time, squawking and trying to shove each other out of the nest? There are enough boxes for all of them, according to the rule of thumb of 3-4 boxes per hen.

A: There are two schools of thought on why chickens all seem to want to use only one or two nesting boxes, no matter how many are made available to them. The first thought is that seeing an egg already laid in a certain box signals to the hen that is a safe place to lay her egg, after all she is looking for the safest place she can find to raise her fu-

ture chick. That leads to the second school of thought that the chickens are all contributing to a community 'clutch', or cluster of eggs, in order to collect enough for one hen to then sit on and hatch. Nesting box wars are just one of the many pitfalls of backyard chicken keeping sadly!


Q: Why do my hens emerge from the nesting box singing and carrying on? They are generally quiet, except for right after they lay an egg.

A: Again, there are two schools of thought about the 'egg song' as well. The first is that the chicken is just voicing her joy and pride at having laid her egg.

Imagine the feeling of relief you would feel to have laid your egg and relieve all the pressure and discomfort!

The second thought is that the hen is trying to distract any potential predators by calling attention to herself and drawing attention away from the nest and her vulnerable egg.

Remember, while we may look at eggs as primarily a food source for our family, to that hen, it's the next generation, which she will try to defend and keep safe at all costs.



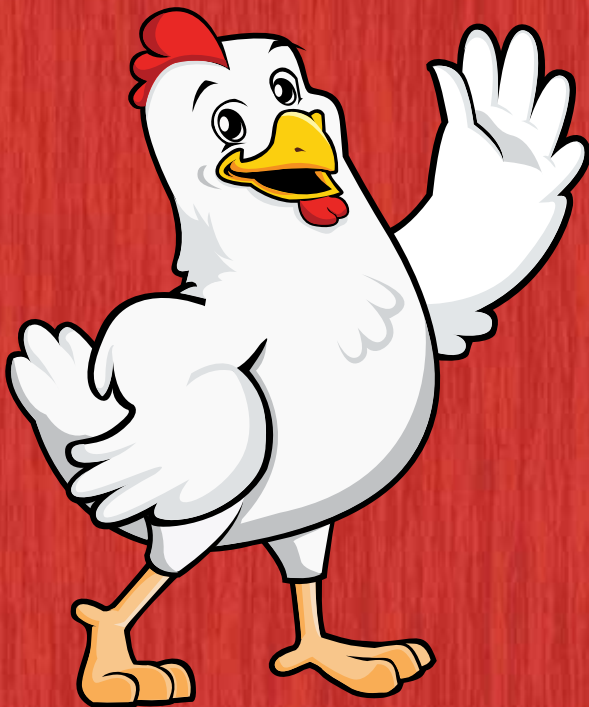

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HOW TO PLAN FOR THIS YEAR'S HERB GARDEN

BY: TESSA ZUNDEL



The first thing you should know about me is that I love peonies. No, this isn't an article about peonies, just roll with it a minute. I love peonies because they're classy, they're lovely and they look drop dead gorgeous in any garden.

Peonies only have one flaw; they're not an herb. They may be beautiful and they may grow well in my yard but they're not going to feed me or administer to my health like an herb. So, this year, when finances are tight and I'm spread thin over the homestead and home school, if I have to choose between more herbs and more peonies, you'll understand when I tell you, I'm going with the herbs.

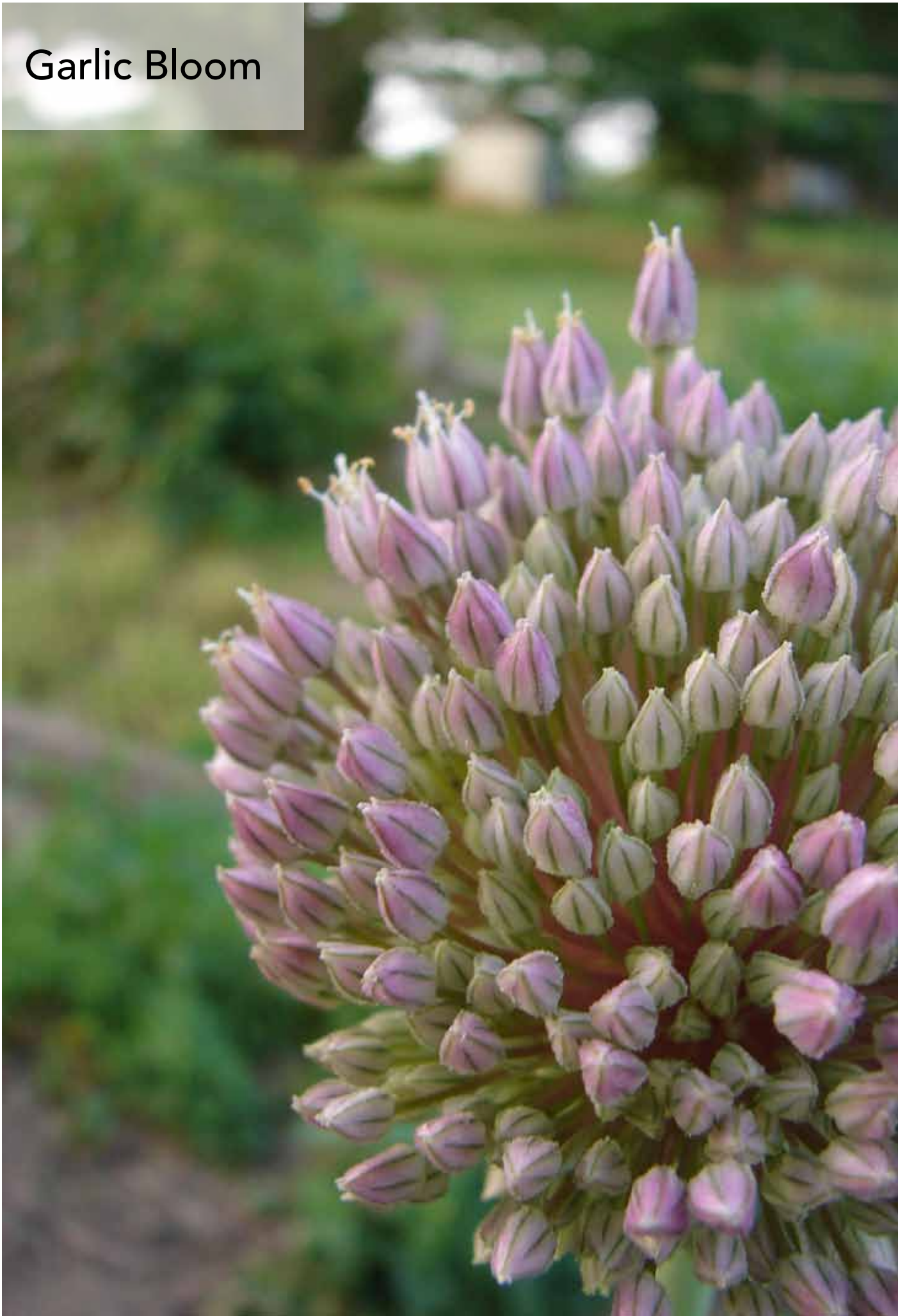
I don't have anything against showy perennials – in fact, I love their diva ways and I know you do, too. But I

also know that, like me, you have good sense and a strong desire to have more of what you use every day at your fingertips, instead of a shipping charge away. Some people stick with their cutting gardens and that's good for them, but not for you.

You're looking to deepen the connection between you and the plants that thrive just to sustain you. Herbs feed your body, attend you when you're ill, all the while managing to gladden your eye. That's why this year you've decided to either build from scratch or expand upon your herb garden. And, heck, just so they don't feel left out you can plant a few lavender bushes next to your peonies; many herbs perform as wonderfully well in your flower beds as they do in your herb garden.

The whole key to this herb garden

Garlic Bloom



venture is planning. My purpose in writing is not to convey the mechanics of planting your herb garden; there are fine resources for that at your local library, in that master gardener class you just signed up for and even online. Today is about kick-starting your passion for the idea of taking on, yes, one more garden project. I hope to show you why having a dedicated space for your herbs will end up being more convenient for you, for them, and perhaps not as overwhelming as you thought.

I realize that for some of us the idea of herbs in the garden is relatively new – we know what they are, of course, but actually working herbs into our gardens has been a hit and miss sort of affair. Some of us are up to our eyeballs in mint and fennel and are actually considering setting a torch to the whole yard just to get them under control. Wherever you find yourself on the herb garden spectrum, you're among friends here. So, let's chat.

The first order of business when planning an herb garden (oh, that's what you're doing, by the way, so go grab a pencil and some paper), is to wrap your brain around your motivation to have a dedicated space for your herbs. Like I said, most herbs are not terribly picky in the garden. They aren't generally too fussy about soils and even sunlight can be negotiable, depending on the herb. Many of them are highly adaptable and the polite ones can be tucked here and there in your flower beds with little trouble. So why bother?

May I suggest a few reasons for cre-

ating a special place just for your herbs? How about that you're tired of reaching over your fragile dahlias to harvest your basil leaves. Or your fennel keeps dropping seed amongst your stonecrop (how did they even end up together?!) and you just don't want to pick out the seedlings anymore. There's always my personal favorite, you've cut your elderberry back year after year and all it seems to do is get bigger in a leviathan-like manner and now it's drowning out your lilac. How about the fact that you just need more space because of the sheer volume of herbs that you require to cover the needs of your family's health? Or the fact that your culinary herbs are hidden in your square foot garden boxes at the back of your yard, way too far from the kitchen to be handy? How about because you're tired of searching all over the yard for the oregano as it hugs the ground like a long, lost brother? And last, but not least, how about because you're tired of paying someone else to grow, pack, and ship something that you could be cultivating yourself – no shipping required.

You want to plant an herb garden for your convenience as well as for that of your herbs. So let's consider how we create this dedicated garden area. If you're living in an apartment, then this project might amount to expanding the garden space in your windowsill to include all the windowsills on the south facing side of your building. If you're on an acre, it may mean clearing some virgin land and building the soil from scratch to accommodate your herbal designs. For those in urban settings,



it may mean stealing a bit more of your lawn (quick, while your significant other and your neighbors aren't looking).

However this plan shakes down for you, it will require some thought and planning. The first thing to write down is (here, grab that pencil and you can make a little title up at the top of your paper that looks like this):

"Herbs I use in my kitchen and my medicine cabinet"

You'll probably need to put down the computer while you go rummage through your cabinets. Go ahead, I'll wait for you to get back.

Alright, what did you come up with?

Here's what my short list might look like because these are some herbs I use all the time: peppermint, garlic, cayenne, wolf berry, echinacea, ginger, Oregon grape root, oregano, chaparral and chamomile. So, you've established what you use (usually by all the scattered, empty containers in your cabinet and by all the notes stashed around the house saying, "Buy more _____ herb today before we all die!"), now let's look at what we can feasibly grow.

I'm going to share the secret of successful gardening, are you ready? Ok, here goes: Grow what you'll use and grow what you'll grow. Holy oversimplification, Batman! It may sound like an oversimplification of what is, in fact, a collection of com-



plicated, integrated processes. But it all boils down to finding out what plants you actually bring into your house and then into your body, as well as those you will actually plant, tend and harvest in your garden.

Let's take my list of herbs from above – peppermint, garlic, cayenne, wolf berry, echinacea, ginger, Oregon grape root, oregano, chaparral, and chamomile.

I can tell you right now that I'm not going to grow ginger or chaparral. Why? Well, because, in my climate I would need a heated greenhouse to get ginger to survive – two words that translate into "lots of money."

If I were someone else, I could plant

ginger in pots and bring them in by winter to tend them indoors until spring warmed the earth. However, I'm me and for me, potted house plant equals dead house plant because I just lose track of taking care of them. Chaparral, though, I can wild craft responsibly where I live in adequate quantities so I have no need to plant it.

What about wolf, or Goji berry? Well, that is an interesting plant in the landscape; lovely in spring with sweet, lilac shaded flowers, gorgeous, persistent red berries through winter, and delicate, green leaves. However, the bush sends runners out all over the place and is a sprawling, low-ish lying bush that looks a lot like a bad hair day. I love Goji berries and use



them all the time, but I keep them in a separate bed so that I don't have to go digging them out of my peonies.

The garlic, you ask? Garlic is a bulb and, as such, needs to be planted in its own bed because one, you plant it in fall to harvest clear into the next fall so you'll need a space that doesn't see a lot of change throughout the year; and two, you're going to have to dig it out of the ground with a broadfork or spade and you don't want to have a tender plant nearby for fear of fallout from that digging process.

It's the same thing for echinacea and Oregon Grape Root, only it's really best to have two-year-old roots. With any of these crops, any time you have to dig up roots, you make a mess so it's wise to give these herbs

their own space. That's not to say that the space has to be utilitarian or unattractive! I simply group all the echinacea varieties together for clumps of shock-and-awe in my garden. The Oregon Grape Root is also lovely bunched together in fat quarters of purple, yellow and green.

Cayenne and oregano are perfect gentlemen in the garden and can be planted just about anywhere but you will need to harvest from both frequently. So make sure you plan to put them some place you can reach easily. Watch out for cayenne, though, and plant it somewhere it will be harvested without too much reaching because if you pull too hard or at the wrong angle on a pepper plant, you'll snap off whole limbs.

Chamomile is ladylike and won't

interfere with other plants and is, in fact, a beneficial companion for most. You will need to harvest flowers quite often from her, as well.

Ha, peppermint! If you're being bullied by an herb in your yard, this is probably the one. Amiright? Peppermint is so useful in both the kitchen and garden and it's probably the most widely recognized herb plant around, being featured in everything from gum to toothpaste to candy. It doesn't take up much vertical space but the horizontal grow space for this plant can go a little wonky. Peppermint roots are strong, vigorous, and wily – your wits are no match for them over time, trust me. I have a spearmint (very similar to peppermint) bed that is surrounded on all side by concrete sidewalk and it still finds its way into the rest of my gar-

den.

You can control mints with vigilance and ruthless pulling of all starts you find. If you should you happen to be on the dark side of the moon – don't leave it, it will grow there. This is one plant that you may want to consider as a lovely addition to your container garden (unless you're like me).

There's so much going on in the herb garden that in all fairness, your herbs really deserve their own space. The cool thing is that you really don't need to design a culinary herb garden AND medicinal herb gardens since most herbs serve double duty in the kitchen and the medicine cabinet. Looking at my list again you can see that peppermint, cayenne, garlic, oregano, chamomile and Goji

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berry all have an equal shot at landing in your smoothies and entrees as they do in your tinctures and capsules. Plus, they're all going to look really cool together, you'll see.

GET YOUR PLANS DOWN ON PAPER

Do you still have that pencil? Start making sketches of your herb garden – don't worry about soil requirements and water needs and all that today.

Just daydream and doodle. In the next week or so, go ahead and visit the library and start checking out books that have "herb" in the title. Look for key words in those books like "cultural requirement," "growing zone," and "bloom time," and you'll start to paint a picture of the technicalities of your new project. Read everything listed in the suggestions here and all other titles that speak to you.

Look up your local master gardener class and check out those online master herbalist courses you've been thinking of all winter.

Go to the internet but take what you learn with a grain of salt when you're on certain sites.

Especially watch out for shifty homesteaders writing articles for online magazines (Ha!).

While you read, make notes on your sketches about what you really want to plant this year and what you might save for later.

I do suggest that you stick to planting only five to 10 new herbs in your space as you build it up. Any more than that and you might get over-

whelmed, kill your stuff and figure you're just not cut out for herbs. Sketch little brick pathways and benches to keep the whimsy factor in play.

I have maintained many a garden project with a bit of whimsy, my friend.

It's all downhill from here, I'm afraid. You're committed now and your passion has convinced you that the herb garden will be you're new project for the year.

At least, I'm hopeful that it has! I love herbs and the richness they've brought to my garden and my family.

I'll start running on about them to complete strangers and my husband just stands by and waits patiently while I do my "herbal missionary work" as he calls it.

I just want you to know that I believe in you.

With a little forethought, a lot of research, and a huge kettle of elbow grease you'll be able to create your own herbal space, just outside your door.

Every time I look at mine I feel a little bit more secure in the crazy old world.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm off to go doodle a few new ideas for the herb garden ... and to recycle my Van Engelen catalog, as the peonies are calling my name.

Tessa Zundel runs the Homestead Lady blog. She lives on her Pocket Farm with her husband and children where they raise chickens, homeschool the children and grow all sorts of herbs. Find out more about her here.

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Garden Bed Composting

By Kristi Stone

Composting is an easy way to add nutrients to your soil and recycle waste.

“Buzz, buzz, buzz!”

My ears perk up at the annoying sound, and my eyes that would much prefer to stay shut, blink open knowing that soon, the chickens will be singing their egg song and waking up a small portion of suburbia. I immediately grab whatever mobile device is close at hand and check my email and Facebook – my brain’s daily breakfast. Once my brain has been fed and I’ve realized all that’s on my to-do list for the day, I drag myself out of bed, hoping that I can accomplish something — anything – from my to-do list.

I don’t know about you, but I’m a lazy homesteader. I’m also the one whose idea all of this was, so by virtue of being the “brain” of this 0.18 acre homestead, it is my job to make my body follow my brain right into my homesteading duties.

Every. Single. Day.





My husband works very hard each day as a carpenter at a nearby airport (and on weekends if I need him to build any chicken coops, rabbit hutches or animal runs); and the kids ... well, they are kids and could care less about homesteading at this point in their plugged-in lives. It's pretty much up to me to each day to keep things running smoothly, which for this lazy homesteader with so many other hobbies and interests, can be a difficult task.

This makes it necessary for me to find ways to cut corners without losing quality — and if I can increase the quality of what I'm doing in less time, I have found a new habit and a fabulous way to keep one part of

my postage-stamp-of-a-homestead running like a well-oiled machine. One of the ways I increase quality and decrease time spent is to compost directly into my garden. I learned to do this quite by accident, and let me tell you, "me + garden composting" is truly a match made in heaven.

This accidental habit happened because of my inability to handle our compost piles. You see, we have a couple of those compost bins that come as a really long rolled up rectangle that you screw together with plastic screws—sort of a "choose your size" type deal. Because it is my habit to think that bigger is better, we screwed them together on

the last holes, which made them about 3 feet in diameter—plenty of room to fit plenty of composting material! Great right? I thought so until I filled them both up completely and couldn't remove the screws! My poor compost is still trapped in those bins. On the bright side, I should have some lovely black gold once I wrestle it out of those rectangles.

I had to come up with a Plan B, and by golly, I like Plan B way better than Plan A because it is much easier and cuts out the middle steps from compost material collection to garden.

This method works best when there are multiple garden plots on your property. I have four — one for herbs and three for vegetables — so there is always an empty plot that has just been cleared out and is ready for its nutrients to be replenished. Be-

cause they are all raised beds, they often need their volume replenished as well, which is a fabulous use of all of the chicken and rabbit poop, shavings, hay, and leftover uneaten veggies that I collect from our rabbit hutch and chicken coop throughout the week.

Each day when I clean out the rabbit hutch tray and refresh the chicken coop, I scoop all the poop and soiled shavings with a dustpan into an 18 gallon plastic blue container.

Once it's full, I carry it over to the composting garden, each day moving from one dumping site in the garden to another, until the garden is evenly filled. I go ahead and add small kitchen scraps if I will be composting this garden for more than a couple of months. I keep adding material to it, for 2-4 months before I will be

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planting in it. The reason for this is because I want to give the chicken poop and any rabbit urine time to completely compost — otherwise it will burn the tender plant leaves — as well as any kitchen scraps that need time to break down. I don't get scientific about it at all — that's just not me — rather I just add what I need to and let it compost right in the raised bed.

As if this wasn't easy enough, I don't even turn my compost — my chickens do that for me! Lucy and Ethel not only make my composting job extremely simple and save me tons of time, but they save me money on feed. They remove unwanted grubs from my garden bed that would be harmful to my seedlings, as well as

unwanted seeds that might otherwise sprout in my garden, stealing all those lovely nutrients from my growing vegetables.

Grubs, worms, and leftover food items (saving those that are toxic to chickens—see list below) provide a great source of nutritional content, not to mention hours of pecking fun for our feathered friends.

Because I use my chickens as composting partners on a regular basis, I make sure that I avoid adding the following items to my compost bed:

- Chocolate
- Onions
- Avocado and pits
- Uncooked potato (especially green)



- Tomato plants
- Stone fruit pits
- Foods high in salt
- Apple seeds
- Alcohol (or foods that contain it)
- Dried beans (uncooked)
- Caffeinated drinks
- Food you wouldn't eat (moldy or rotten food, etc.)

Using compost in my garden has revolutionized the volume of produce I receive from my planting efforts, and composting directly into my garden has done the same for my gardening efforts. It has saved me so much work, time, money, and has given my chickens a place to forage for the nutrition they wouldn't otherwise receive from their daily laying mash. The nutrition they receive transfers to nutritious meals for our family, and with all of the other benefits of using this method, this method is a huge "win" in my gardening notebook!

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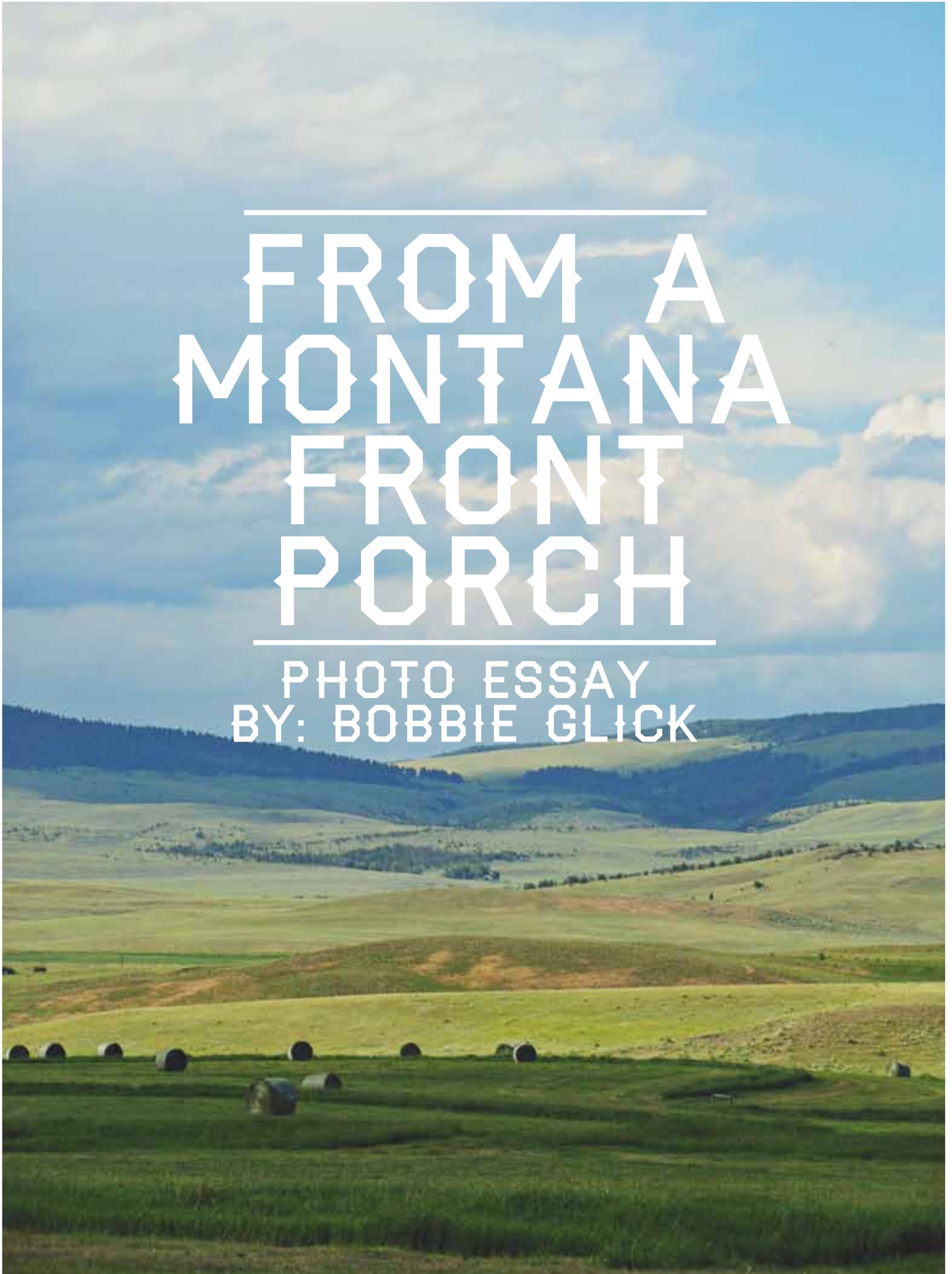
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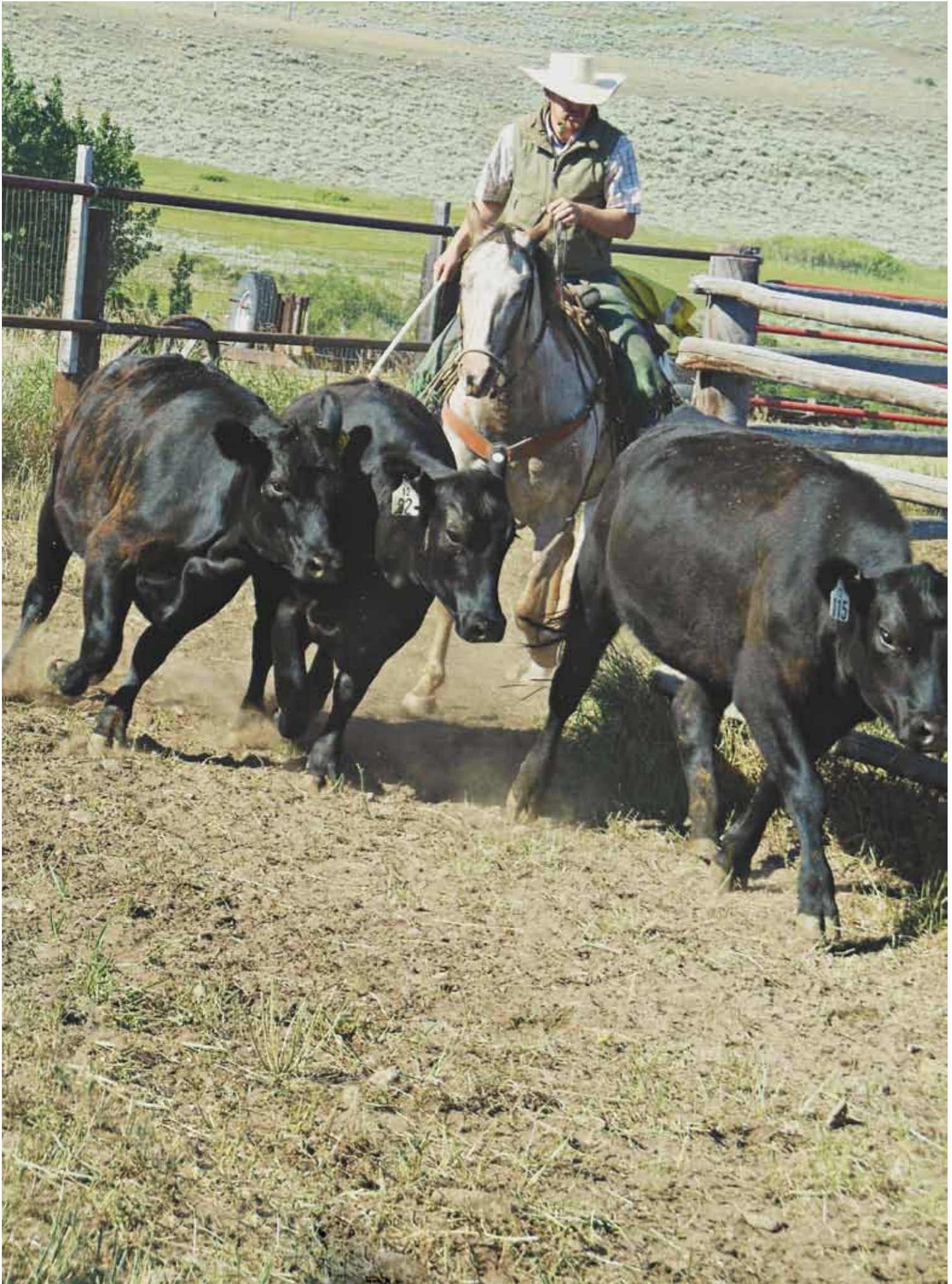
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FROM A MONTANA FRONT PORCH

PHOTO ESSAY
BY: BOBBIE GLICK







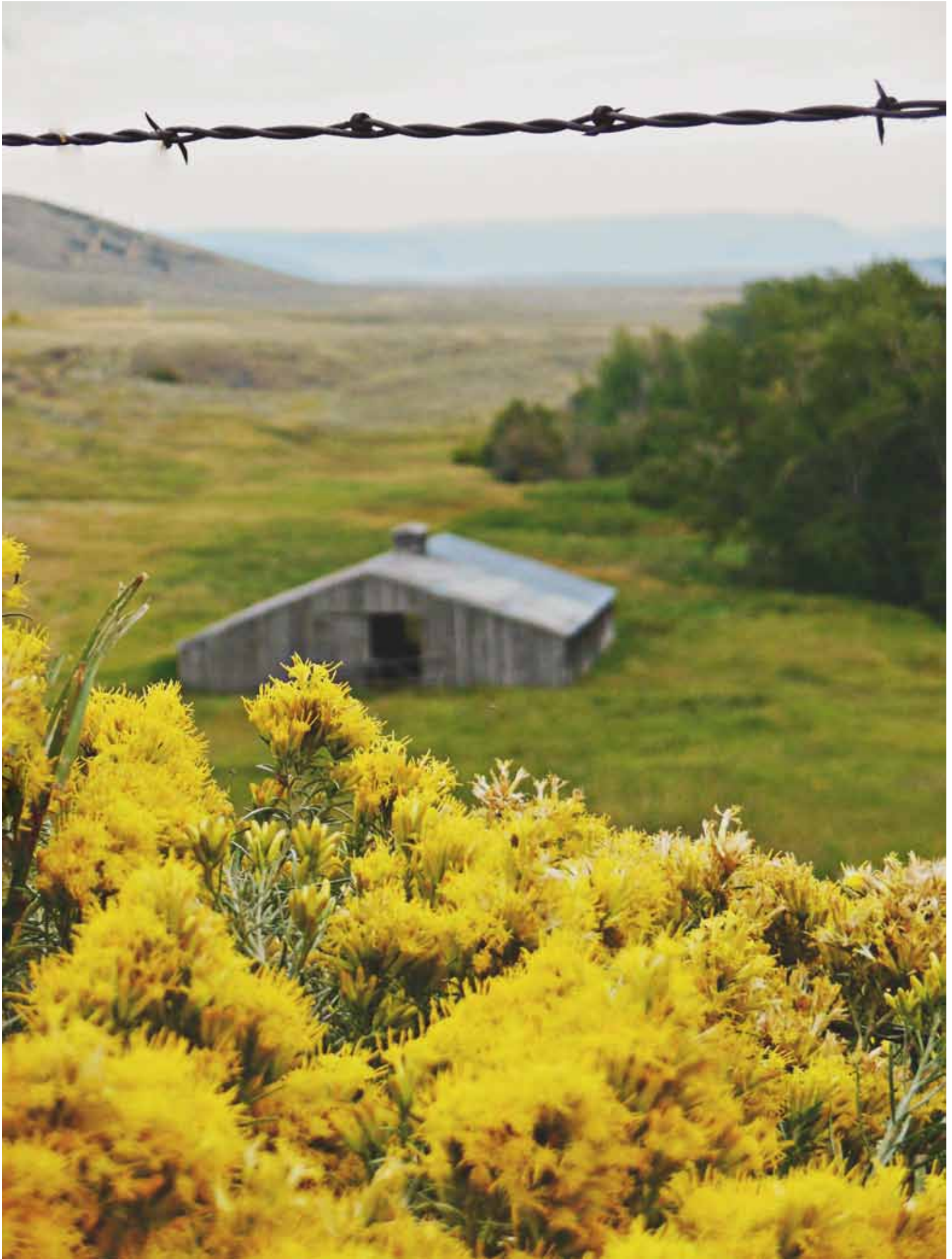






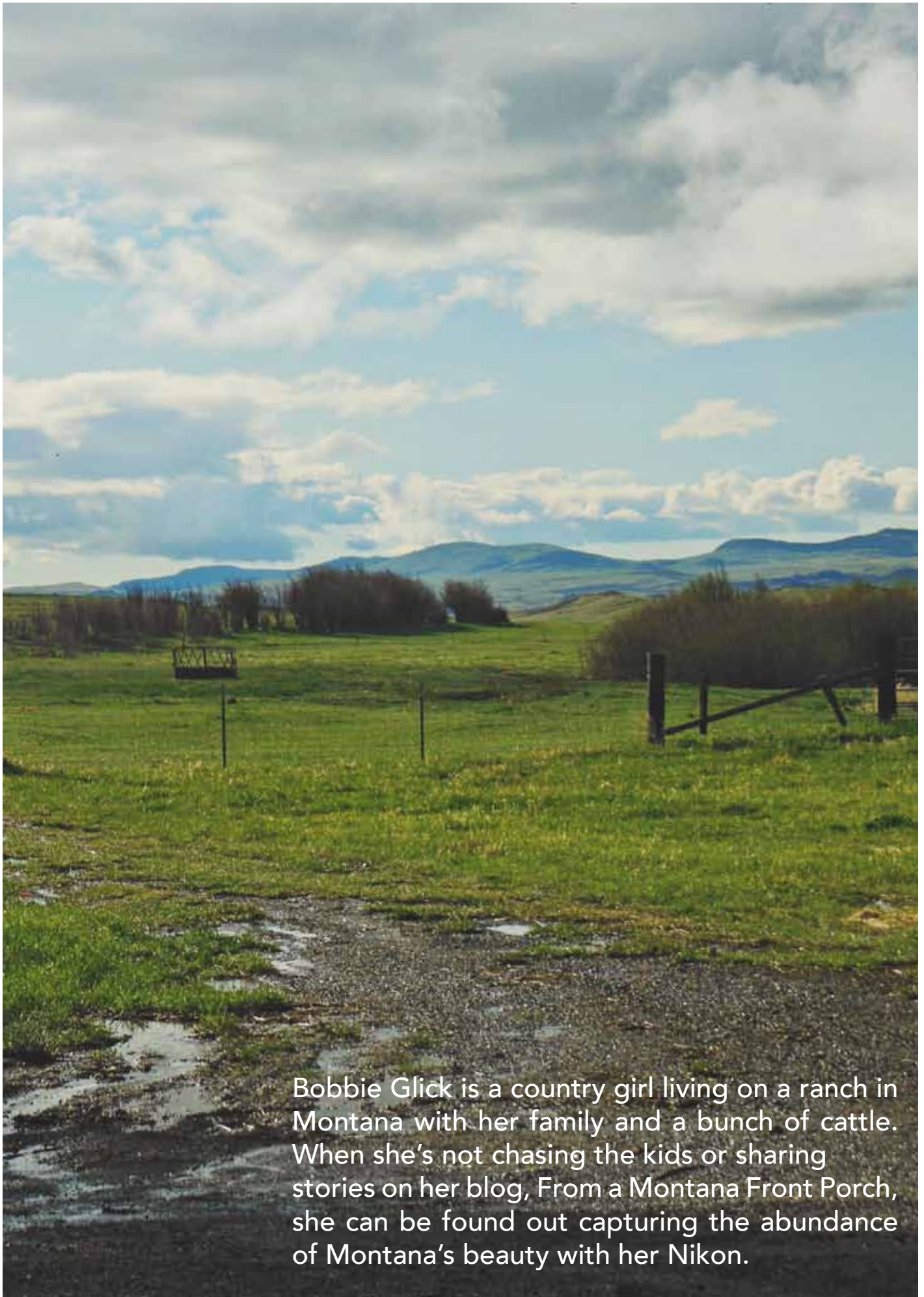








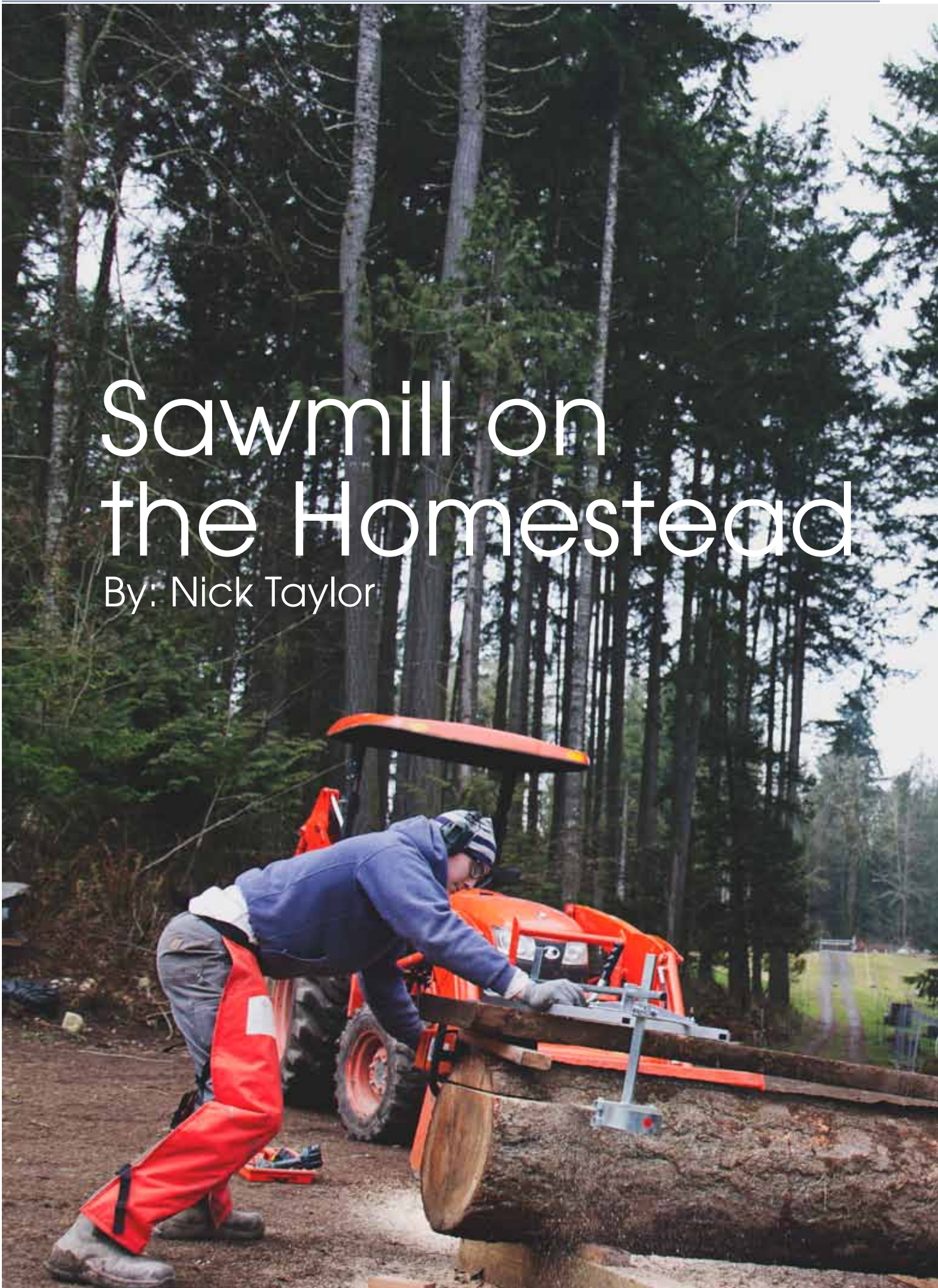





Bobbie Glick is a country girl living on a ranch in Montana with her family and a bunch of cattle. When she's not chasing the kids or sharing stories on her blog, *From a Montana Front Porch*, she can be found out capturing the abundance of Montana's beauty with her Nikon.

Sawmill on the Homestead

By: Nick Taylor





I imagine not having to pay for lumber or hunt down used materials to build the structures and facilities that are so critical for our homesteading lifestyles. At The Farmstead in Olympia, Washington, Rachael and I have come full circle from temporary pallet/T-post/tarp structures for our animals. We've also learned how to avoid buying expensive lumber to build the same simple structures that the Pioneers built for nothing but the price of their own labor. Two years ago we found the Small Log Milll (\$170) from Granberg International, and we've been turning logs from our property into 2x6's, 2x4's, 6x6's, 8x8's, 4x4's, you name it.

The mill is basically a well-engineered bracket that clamps to your chainsaw bar and guides your chainsaw cut parallel to the ground by following along the straight slabbing rails that are mounted on the log. The best part about this mill is that it's very mobile so you can mill where the tree falls. Being able to make manageably sized lumber on the spot keeps you from needing a big tractor or winch to drag timber out of the woods.

Getting Started

To get started milling your own logs, here's what you need:

- Granberg International Small Log Mill (or equivalent)
- Chainsaw
- Slabbing rails (two 2x4's mounted on aluminum brackets, also available from Granberg)
- Cordless drill
- Torpedo level
- Ear protection

How Long Does It Take?

Our Stihl MS290 Farm Boss with a 20" bar does a good job of ripping material up to about 30" wide since you can run the saw up both sides of the log if your bar is not as long as the tree is wide. At 56cc this saw is at the low end of what you want to use to rip with, and we fall back on an old 87cc Stihl 056 with a 36" bar when it's time to cut the big stuff. The MS290 will make a 20" deep rip cut at a rate between 40 and 60 sec-

onds per foot depending on factors like how sharp the chain is, what type of chain I'm using, and what type of wood I'm cutting through.

The majority of the wood we mill is soft Douglas Fir, but our property also provides us with harder woods like Red Alder and Maple. The first cut takes the longest on account of the initial setup of the slabbing rails. Once you've ripped the first flat and wide surface the remaining cuts are not as deep, and easily build on the initial flat surface you just created.

Like anything else on our homesteads, once you get the hang of the setup, it's just about the same every time. On average it takes me about an hour from tree selection to completion of the first cut on an 18"-20" log. Milling (2) 6x6's and (3) 4x6's at 12' long after that usually only takes me another hour. I'll fill the saw with fuel and oil 3-4 times to do all the milling for each 12' length of log.

Choosing the Right Chain

I like to use a standard full-skip chain for rougher cutting since I find that it cuts faster than rip chain; however, I run a special rip chain when doing smoother cuts for furniture-grade lumber. Both types of chain are available at your local saw shop, and you can get some of the best rip chain online from Granberg as well. Rip chain is cut at either a 0-degree or 10-degree angle, unlike your standard 30-35 degree chain, so make sure you sharpen it back to that angle.



Additional Accessories

I also use the Granberg Mini Mill II (\$126) in conjunction with the Small Log Mill. The Mini Mill also mounts to the chainsaw bar and it allows you to make easy plunge-cuts perpendicular to the original rip cut without having to roll the log 90 degrees to make a vertical cut. These two pieces of equipment combined allow you to make slabs and beams in almost any size.

There is nothing sweeter than looking down at the machine-like precision of the first cut you make with these tools. You're suddenly flooded with the possibilities that you have opened up for yourself both creatively and economically. In terms of self-sufficiency, there's no sweeter feeling.



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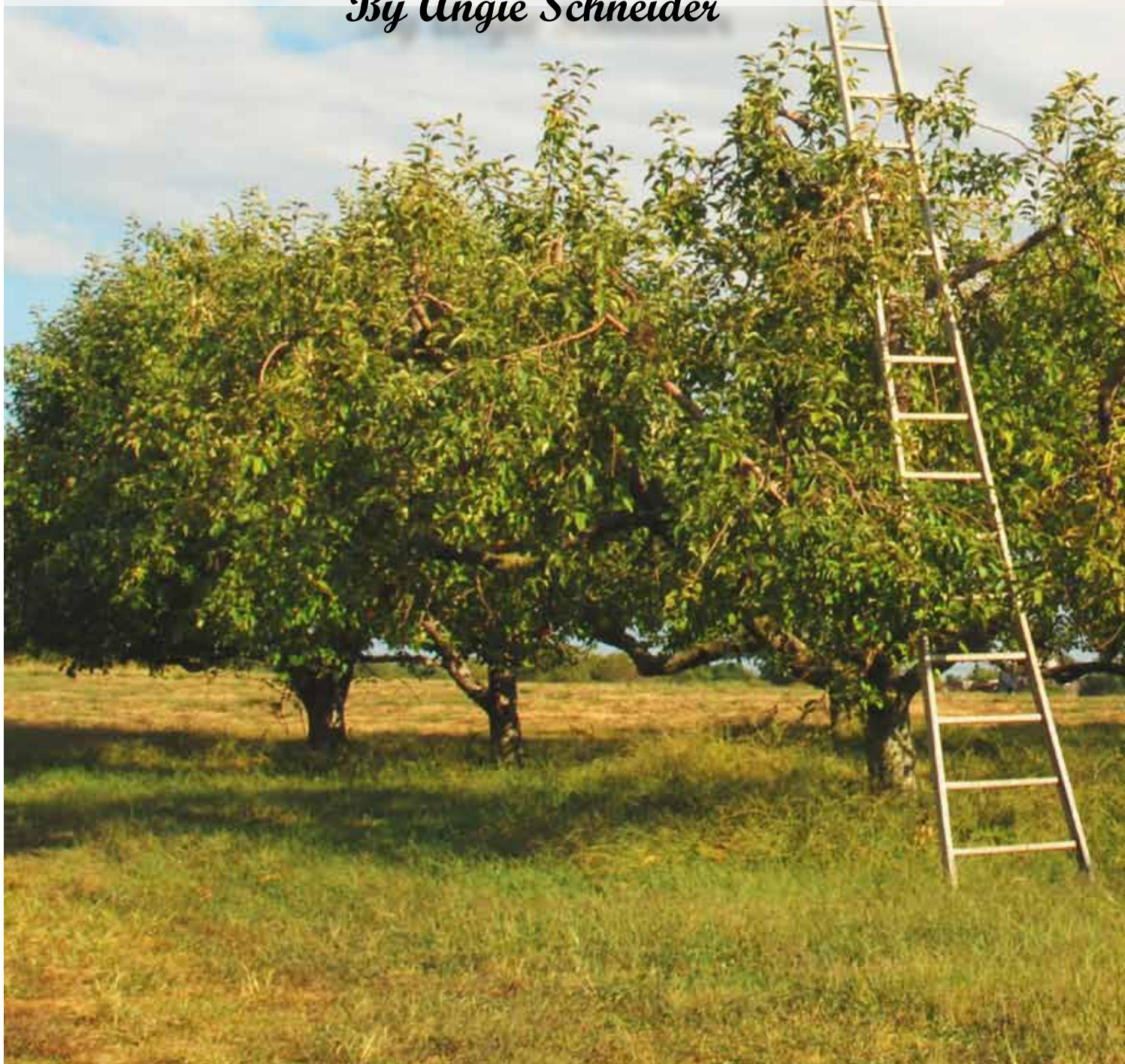
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Homestead Orchard

By Angie Schneider



A photograph of a young tree with a wooden support stake in a field under a blue sky with clouds. The tree is in the foreground, and the background shows a grassy field and a white building in the distance.

When we moved into our home a couple of years ago, one of the first things we did was plan out a small orchard. There was already a mature lemon tree and two mature pecan trees on the property but we had visions of providing all of our fruit for our family on our little homestead.

Having fruit trees and bushes is one of the most important things a homestead can have. Unfortunately, it's often one of the most neglected things on a homestead, especially a small homestead. Growing fruit takes time. Sometimes there will be years between planting and harvest. So, the sooner you get those fruit trees and bushes in the ground the sooner you'll have a fruit harvest.



1. Make a list of all the fruits your family likes. This is the time to dream. Even if you think something won't grow in your climate, but your family likes it, write it down.

.....

2. Now that you have your list, do a little research to find out what varieties will actually grow in your climate. You can search fruit trees for your gardening zone on the internet. Talk with local gardening friends to find out what varieties they grow. Also, don't overlook your local nurseries. They have a vested interest in you being successful, so they are usually super helpful. Master Gardeners clubs can also be a helpful resource.

If you live on an urban or small homestead you will want to consider planting dwarf trees. Dwarf trees are trees that are grafted onto a rootstock that will not allow the tree to grow large so you get the same great fruit in less space.

But don't cross a fruit off your list just because you're told it won't grow in your climate. Some fruit trees grow very well in pots. Meyer lemon and Satsuma oranges are two citrus trees that can be grown in colder climates inside in a pot.

.....

3. Learn what trees are self-fertilizing and which ones are not. Self-fertilizing trees are exactly what they sound like – the flowers from this kind of tree will pollinate themselves. Some trees are not self-fertilizing and need two trees to produce fruit. Make sure that the two trees are different varieties that bloom at the same time. That doesn't necessarily mean you have to have two trees. If your neighbor has fruit trees then find out what kind he has, get a different variety and they can cross pollinate. This is a great way to get fruit in an urban yard.

Here's a quick list of most self-fertilizing fruits: Figs, grapes, persimmons, most peaches, most berries, apricots, and European plums (although they do better with two varieties) apples, pears, Japanese plums, cherries and nuts require a pollinator.

.....

4. Determine how much space you have available to plant fruit trees and bushes. If you live on an acre or less, you can still have an amazing orchard but you might have it spread out in different areas of your property instead of one large orchard area.

Consider using any walls or fences and espaliering the tree. An espaliered tree is a tree that you will prune in such a way that it fans out over the wall or fence. This is



a great space saver and yet you'll still get a lot of fruit.

.....

5. Put your plans on paper. This is the fun part. Get out some paper and colored pencils and map out your yard or acreage. Take your list of varieties and start putting them on your map.

Go outside and walk the map and make sure your plans will work. Is there enough space for a full size tree of the variety you have list-

ed? Is there enough sun? Is there an adequate water source? When the tree is full size will it cast a shadow on an area that you don't want shaded, your vegetable garden for instance?

6. Don't think you have to plant the entire plan this season. An orchard is a long term relationship, so you have time. We try to add just a few new trees or bushes each year. We brought some fruit trees in pots with us when we

moved here, we had a lemon and orange tree, a pomegranate tree, three blueberry bushes and three pineapple plants.

The first year we put everything but the blueberry bushes in the ground and added a fig tree, a lime tree and a grapefruit tree.

The second year we put in four peach trees, two plum trees and two apple trees. This year our list includes two pear trees, four grape vines and two more blueberry bushes.

Just to give you an idea of just how much fruit these trees can add to your homestead, our mature lemon tree gave us over 200 pounds of lemons last season. A mature peach tree can give you well over 75 pounds, so can a mature plum tree.

Fruit trees are amazing. When they are properly cared for, they can supply your family with produce for many years.

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THINKING OUTSIDE THE TOMATO CAGE -
USING FOUND OBJECTS TO GIVE YOUR GARDEN A LIFT

Interesting Trellising Ideas

By: Heather Jackson

Do you ever get frustrated with the options available for trellising your vegetables? I tried year after year to find a tomato cage that didn't fall over at the first sign of wind and didn't cost a fortune. I came up short every time. I've also experienced the frustration of planting a beautiful garden only to have my bean trellis snap right at harvest time.

Don't despair! Take a look around you. You may have many things lying around your homestead that are just waiting to become garden conversation pieces.

This old clothes drying rack belonged to my husband's grandmother. It was no longer being used for laundry, but I hated to get rid of it, so I "planted" it right

in the center of my garden.

We simply drove a piece of PVC pipe into the ground and stuck the pole for the drying rack inside. I attached some wire to the corners and tacked them to the edge of the raised bed in the four corners to keep it from spinning. After that, we tied on bits of plastic cording and let them hang freely. The beans climbed right up and made picking easy. Everyone who visits the garden comments on how interesting it is.

For the cucumbers and tomatoes, I utilized some thin pallets that my husband brought home from work. I spray painted the pallets bright colors and tied them together at the top, creating an "A" frame. They weren't attached at the ground at all, but they







weighed enough that not a single frame blew down all year. The pop of color was especially cheerful and made me enjoy my gardening even more. I simply trained the cucumbers to climb the frame and tied the tomatoes to it as needed. For my loofahs and asparagus beans, all I did was use what was already there. I chose a fence line that the goats did not have access to and asked my husband to plow as close to it as he could. I planted my seeds and then just trained them over to the fence. Once there, they grew right up

and I could pick easily from both sides. This idea cost nothing but a wee bit of effort.

This year, I challenge you to look around your homestead and see if you can repurpose something into a trellis. Maybe you have an old antenna you took off the roof or a broken bicycle you could “plant” in the ground that would be simply beautiful covered in vines. The possibilities are endless. With a little creativity, your garden will flourish and your visitors will love to see what you come up with next.

6 STEPS TO A BOUNTIFUL HARVEST

BY MELISSA V. WILLIS

Despite the bone chilling temperatures outside, this is the perfect time of year to get your 2014 garden plans in order. Whether you're a seasoned vet or a newbie in the garden planning to plant in containers, raised beds or straight in the ground, these six steps will set your foundation for sowing, growing and harvesting in no time flat.

1 - SEASON

Have you learned about your Growing Zone and looked into how long your average growing season is?







These details are key to the success of your garden and will offer you some insight into whether or not you will need to use season extenders in order to allow your garden to make it to its full harvest potential.

2. - SUNLIGHT

Every plant requires its own amount of sunlight. Tomatoes need more sun than spinach, so make sure you know where the sun hits in your yard (and for how long each day) and plan accordingly.

3. - SOIL

The health of your plants depends heavily on the quality of your soil. Purchase quality soil, compost and fertilizer wisely. Better yet, make

your own.

4. - IRRIGATION

Depending on your climate, you will have to decide whether or not your garden will need supplemental water. If it does require watering, now is the time to think about how that will happen. Will you hand water with a hose or a watering can or will you install drip irrigation? It is important to think about how time intensive your garden will be and watering is a huge contributing factor here.

5. - SEEDS

Do you have a list of fruits and veggies you'd like to grow this year? Do you have a wealth of seeds already, or is it time to purchase some? Think



about if you will be making a local purchase or ordering online. Your decision will affect when you can actually start your seeds. If you have a stash of seeds, now is the time to assess their viability through germination tests.

6 - MAP

This is the perfect time to map out exactly where each of your seeds

and transplants will go in your containers or garden. Make a list or draw yourself a picture and do it in pencil ... I guarantee that, as you navigate your way through this planning stage, you will move things around a lot and a pencil will be your friend.

HAPPY PLANNING!

A photograph of a clothesline in a garden. The clothesline is a thin green line stretched across the frame, supported by a large tree trunk on the left and a wooden post in the center. Several items of clothing are hanging on the line, held by wooden clothespins. From left to right, there is a white garment, a bright red garment, a teal garment, a yellow-green garment, and a patterned garment. The background is a lush garden with green foliage and some orange flowers. The ground is covered with dry leaves and small plants.

EVERYONE NEEDS A CLOTHESLINE

HOW TO MAKE YOURS

BY: KAREN BEATY





Everyone needs a clothesline.

It's a bold statement but I think it's true. Consider the following: Compared to machine drying, using a clothesline saves energy, saves money, reduces wear and tear on clothes, and makes your clothes smell great. Plus, sunshine is a great stain remover. (It is the absolute best at removing stains from cloth baby diapers.)

If you have a clothesline you might not need a clothes dryer at all. Many folks, myself included, find hanging clothes on the clothesline to be a very pleasant chore. I've even heard some people describe it as "meditative". Even if hanging laundry on the line isn't a Zen experience for you, it still gives you a great excuse to go outside and have a few minutes to yourself. If you don't already have a

clothesline now is the time to hang one. (And if you have a lousy one now is the time to fix it.)

CHOOSING A LOCATION

Before you hang a clothesline you need choose a good location. There are three things to take into consideration: Available anchor points, your climate, and convenience.

A clothesline needs two sturdy anchor points that can support the tension of a full line of wet clothes. Our old house had a small backyard with no trees so we anchored one end of the clothesline to a wooden privacy fence and the other end to a shed. Our current house has plenty of trees so we strung up three different lines amongst the cedars. Just work with what you have. Almost every yard will have at least two sturdy anchor points to choose from.





You should also consider your climate when choosing the location of your clothesline. I live in Central Texas where the winters are mild and the summers are extremely hot and sunny. My clotheslines are located in shade and my laundry still dries in 60-90 minutes in the summertime. On the coldest winter days it can take several hours. If you live in a colder or damper climate I would recommend putting your clothesline where the laundry can get direct sun and a good breeze to speed drying time.

Another point to consider is how convenient your clothesline is to your house and, specifically, to your

washing machine. I set up my washing machine in a protected outdoor area so that I could easily divert the greywater outside for watering plants. My clothesline is located about 30 feet away, within eye-sight of the washing machine, which makes me more likely to hang a load of laundry on the line than to haul it inside to the dryer. If possible, locate your clothesline in a convenient area so that you are more likely to use it (if you still own a dryer) and less likely to curse it (if you don't).

All this said, if your yard is small or difficult and you really only have one possible place to put your clothesline, don't sweat it. Just hang it. Your clothes will dry.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Once you have decided where to put your clothesline you need four simple items that you can buy at the hardware store or scavenge from other uses. It's easy to set up an excellent clothesline with the following:

- Plastic-coated clothesline wire (enough to cover your span plus at least 8-12" extra)
- 1 screw eye
- 1 screw hook
- 1 turnbuckle

Don't know what a screw eye, a screw hook, or a turnbuckle are? No problem. You can find them at any hardware store and they look like this:



You can string a clothesline with virtually any cording or wire but you want to make sure your line won't rust or sag horribly.

Cotton cord sags horribly.

Metal wire can rust and then stain your clothes.

Galvanized wire won't rust and plastic cording won't sag like cotton but the absolute best line for a clothesline is plastic-coated clothesline wire (sometimes labeled as "multi-purpose wire"). It costs about \$10 for 100 feet of line, it doesn't rust or sag, it's easy to work with, and it

lasts for a long time.

HOW TO INSTALL

You need to attach your clothesline to the anchor points. My preferred method is to use a screw eye on the first end and a screw hook plus a turnbuckle on the other end. Using a turnbuckle allows you to adjust the tension on the line so that you can make your line nice and taut. To install your clothesline just follow these steps:

1. Install the screw eye into your first anchor point (this may require pre-drilling a small hole).
2. Loop one end of the clothesline wire through the screw eye and wrap about 4-6" of it around itself to secure it, like this:



3. Install the screw hook in the second anchor point (again, you may need to pre-drill a hole).
4. Open the turnbuckle about 2/3 of the way open and hook it to the screw hook.
5. Secure the clothesline wire to the turnbuckle, pulling it taut and wrapping about 4-6" of it around itself just as you did before. (You will need to trim your clothesline wire to the appropriate length for this part. Just remember to leave a few inches free for wrapping.)



It will look like this:



6. Tighten the turnbuckle to make the clothesline taut.

Don't tighten it so much that you create a weapon but get it nice and snug so that your line won't sag when it has wet clothes hanging on it.

Your clothesline may stretch a bit over time but you can tighten the turnbuckle some more later to pull the line taut again.

You're done.

You now have a sturdy, functional clothesline that will last for many

years. All you need now is some wet laundry and a bag of clothespins. Wooden clothespins last a lot longer than the plastic ones and are more pleasant to use since the plastic ones get brittle in the sun and eventually break.

You can buy or make a clothespin bag that hangs on the clothesline but I have found it easier to keep the pins in a cloth bag that I hang from my shoulder.

It's a more efficient movement for me to reach into a bag on my hip than to slide a special bag along the clothesline as I go.

If you have small children you might consider hanging a low clothesline for them to use.

Children as young as two enjoy hanging small items on a line.

My children love to hang napkins, underwear, and socks on their low line.

Just remember to hang low lines in a place where folks won't stumble into them on accident.

Most folks aren't expecting a clothesline three feet off the ground.

Alternatively, you could take the line down and roll it up after using it.

If your child has trouble pinching the clothespins properly just show him or her how the clothespin is a little alligator and you have to pinch his tail to make him open his mouth.



After you hang your new clothesline you can issue a challenge to your friends.

For one month everyone keeps track of how many total loads of laundry they washed and how many they dried on the clothesline.

The person with the highest percentage of loads dried on the line wins. Good luck and may your clothesline provide you many years of service and Zen moments while saving you money and electricity.

Karen Beaty has been making shift since 2003 when she scavenged my first item out of the trash. Years of mental shift preceded that moment. She now strives to obtain more of what her family needs through re-use, recycling, swapping, thrifting and self-production. She lives in Austin, Texas with her husband, three children, cats, goats, a flock of poultry and a wonderful community. Find out more here.



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The Old One

by: Bobbie Glick

There was a time when he had been shiny and new. Long before this dusty, forgotten corner became his home, he had been important and needed and had filled a vital role. His days had been long and hard, but full of adventure. Then age started to take its toll and the effects of working out in the elements caught up with him. Weathered, aged and bent, he soon found his job given to another and himself tossed here to be left with

only his memories and hidden wisdom for company.

He didn't harbor too many hard feelings, after all, he remembers clearly the day that it was he who was chosen to replace an old bent one. That feeling of pride and importance was too strong to be easily forgotten. Oh, how he had been full of his own importance! The old ones he was stepping in for had tried to offer their advice, claiming that they could help him if he would only take a moment

to listen. Taking one quick look at their weathered and bowed frames, he had decided that their advice would not be needed. I mean, if he had listened to them he would most likely end up looking like them, and he could definitely think of better ways to end up. No, better for him to use his young strength and knowledge to figure things out for himself.

It only took him a short while to realize that he probably didn't know as much as he thought or to figure out that this job was a lot harder than he had ever imagined. Yes, it was exciting and adventurous and he liked being needed, but it was also hard, gruelling work, full of dirt and pain. Lots of pain.

On his hard days he would often think of those old ones that had offered him advice and wonder just what they would have told him.

Would they have saved him some of the pain that came from not always paying attention to where you were going?

Would they have warned him about certain trails that looked good but led to nowhere?

Would he have lost so many nails along the way if he had only taken the time to listen to the words of those that had already travelled this way before him?

Would he have lasted longer if he had stopped to glean from their hard earned knowledge?

They probably shook their heads in frustrated sadness when he turned away from them in his youth, knowing of the hardships he was sure to face if he kept his current attitude. Watching in silence as he was nailed

into place and led out the door. Knowing long before he did what was in store they had probably wished that they could have prepared him. They most likely had done the same thing in their brash youthfulness and simply hoped to spare someone some of the mistakes that they had made. The day came when he was startled to realize that his own time was up. Someone else was there to take his place. Tossed into this lonely corner he found himself trying, like all the old ones before him, to pass on his knowledge to any who were willing to listen. Speaking in his quiet gravelly voice he knows that unfortunately, most won't listen to him. Knows that in their minds he is brushed off as a has-been who doesn't understand how things are done now. Doesn't understand that things change and knowledge from the past has no place in today. Most will think him senile, someone to smile weakly at as they pass by, but not someone that you actually listen to.

However, there will be a few that stop to listen and those few are the reason he keeps trying. They will be the ones that take a moment to stop and learn. And because of this, they will be the ones that get to travel the farthest and live life with the most adventures. They will save themselves some pain and wasted miles because they took a walk down memory lane with a bent and weathered one and learned from someone who has already been there. They are the few that he is waiting for, the reason he still cares and the reason he is still here.

Trogg's Hollow Farm

Growing A Sustainable Farm Outside the Windy City.

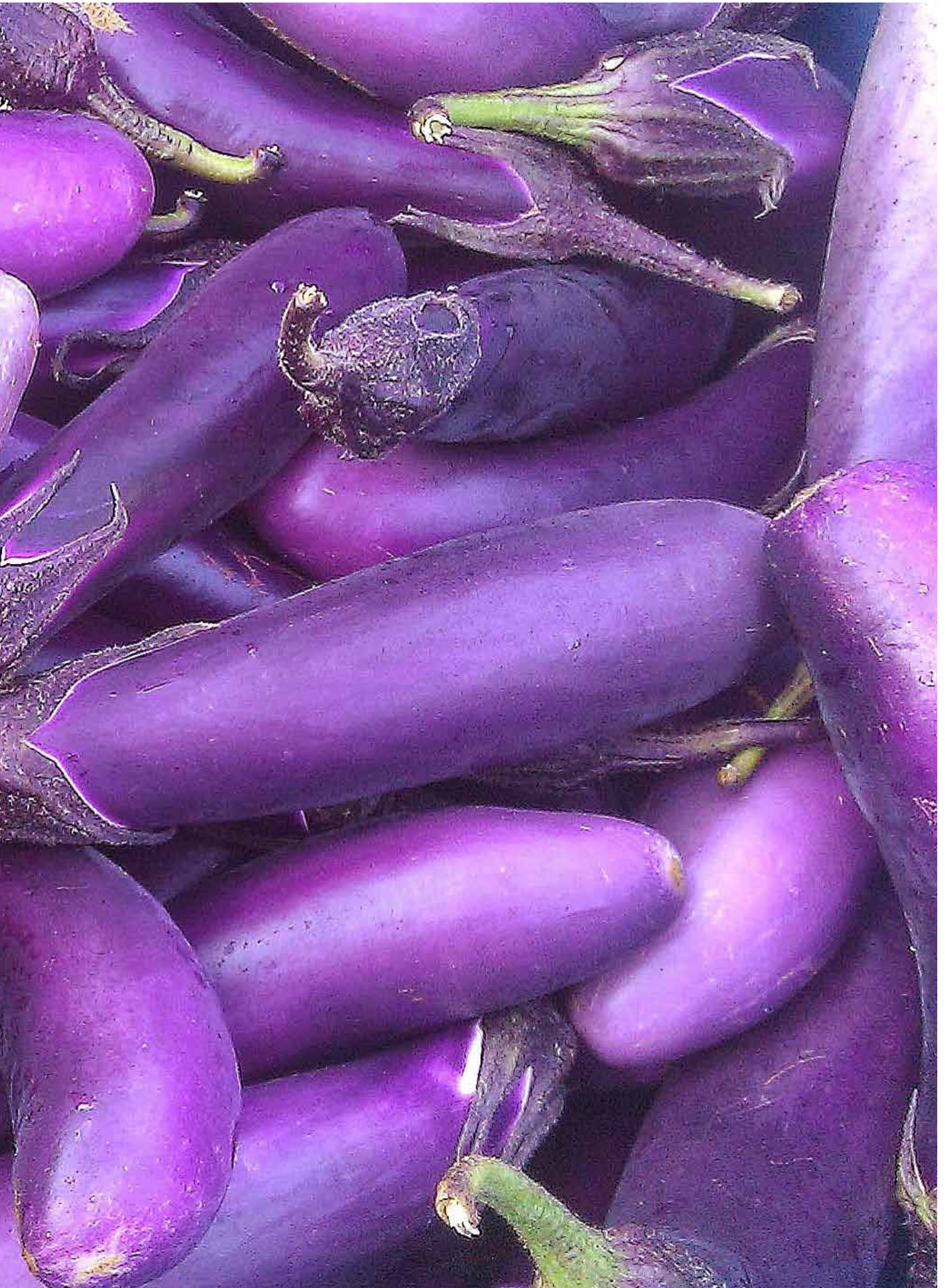
Article and Photos by Lisa Lombardo

A warm breeze whisked away the odor of chicken manure as I pattered around the chicken coop and pasture on a quiet morning in May. Bees buzzed around the clover and the hens scattered in front of my wheelbarrow. A minivan pulled into our driveway and out piled Trogg, Marcy, and their 4 cute kids. They were here to buy a few laying hens I advertised for sale on Craigslist. We chatted a bit about chicken breeds and care. The kids skipped over to the fence, excited about the colorful menagerie of chickens, while I learned a bit about my visitors.

Trogg and Marcy Prchal bought

an 11 acre farm down the road a bit from our little homestead and were starting their first growing season in their new digs. I listened with interest as they talked about their all natural CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) and farmers' market business.

Originally started on a 2 acre property in Elgin, Illinois, they were excited to expand their business on the farm in Poplar Grove. Ninety miles northwest of Chicago, we have the best of both worlds here ... proximity to the cultural center of a major metropolitan area but with the open skies, wildlife, fields and streams of an agricul-





tural community. Our conversation lasted longer than the patience of four children in the market for laying hens. They had their little flock picked out and helped load them into crates. I wished them luck with the new birds and waved goodbye. I made a mental note about their farm so I could stop in to see the market garden and check in on the chickens.

Since that spring day, I've had the pleasure of visiting their farm, complete with chickens, ducks, and guinea fowl, four farm kitties and

Peaches, the canine alarm system. I stopped by in early June to buy tomato starts after mine were destroyed by cutworms. I traded eggs for some of their turnips and greens around Thanksgiving time. Always interested in the local food movement and my neighboring farms, I signed up for their newsletter and started following their progress. I've gotten to know a great deal more about Trogg's family since then.

They didn't start out as farmers. Marcy works for the University of Illinois from home as an Architectural

Historian and Archaeologist. They home-school their 4 children, ages 2-10, and what a polite bunch they are! The family has always been passionate about growing their own chemical free vegetables using only compost and hard work and had given bushels of food away to friends and family for years. In 2009 Trogg and Marcy started researching CSA farms and became involved with Upper Midwest CRAFT. They started selling shares in 2010 to friends and family and then took the Stateline Farm Beginnings class to help them firm up a business plan. In fall of 2010, Trogg found out that he had six months left at his "real" job, so they made the plunge the following spring and he began work as a full time 'farmer dude.'

Trogg and Marcy operate a CSA, or a farm that sells seasonal shares of produce to members. This relationship benefits both the farmer and the consumer. The farmer receives much needed capital up front before the growing season, when the largest investment must be made for seeds, growing medium, farmers' market fees, etc. The shareholders' investment provides a safety net in case a crop fails or the growing season is disrupted by bad weather. They get to know their farmer and how

their produce is grown. Most CSAs produce their crops with natural or organic methods. Membership provides the opportunity to take part on work days, bring home weekly boxes of fresh, nutritious, locally grown produce for their family meals, and be part of their local food system.

Trogg's Hollow sells most of their produce through shares, and the extra goes to local farmers' markets as a way to promote their business, bring in new shareholders, and make extra cash from the surplus. They currently have around 70 shareholders, but would like to expand to 100-120 so the farm can support itself and pay the bills.

The growing conditions in Northern Illinois allow this local farm to grow a wide variety of green leafy vegetables, tomatoes, sweet and hot pep-

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pers, multi-colored snap beans, potatoes, sweet peas, beets, carrots, turnips, cucumbers and watermelons, plus colorful flower bouquets. Their tomato crops are quite impressive, with more than 10 varieties of heirloom tomatoes and one variety of super sweet hybrid tomato. Of course, their customers have their own favorites, with Red Russian Kale, colorful heirloom tomatoes, and mixed salad greens topping the list.

Besides this tasty list of produce from Trogg's Hollow, they offer other local goodies as add-ons to their shares. Their network of local farms provide honey, pasture raised chickens and turkeys, eggs, grass fed beef, Berkshire pork, organic grains, handmade soaps and deodorants, and

natural cleaning supplies. Customers have access to fresh local products and the farmers work together to promote each other's products.

I asked Trogg and Marcy what the future holds for their business and they shared their plans for a permanent greenhouse for season extension and seed starting. They also want to repair the barn to use as a community art and music space. And plans are underway to expand a program they started with the local YMCA called the 'Share Project,' where they donate a share to a local family in need for a season, plus they would like to expand this service to other communities. They also plan to open a farm stand at the home farm in Poplar Grove soon.



Trogg's Hollow sells in Rockford, Illinois and surrounding areas, in addition to the west and northwest suburbs of Chicago. They offer share pickup at their farm in Poplar Grove, Rockford City Market, Huntley Farmers Market, the Elgin Harvest Market, and at residences in Dekalb, Sycamore, Hampshire, Elgin, Roselle, Wheaton, Berwyn, La Grange, Forest Park, Arlington Heights/Palatine, and Crystal Lake.

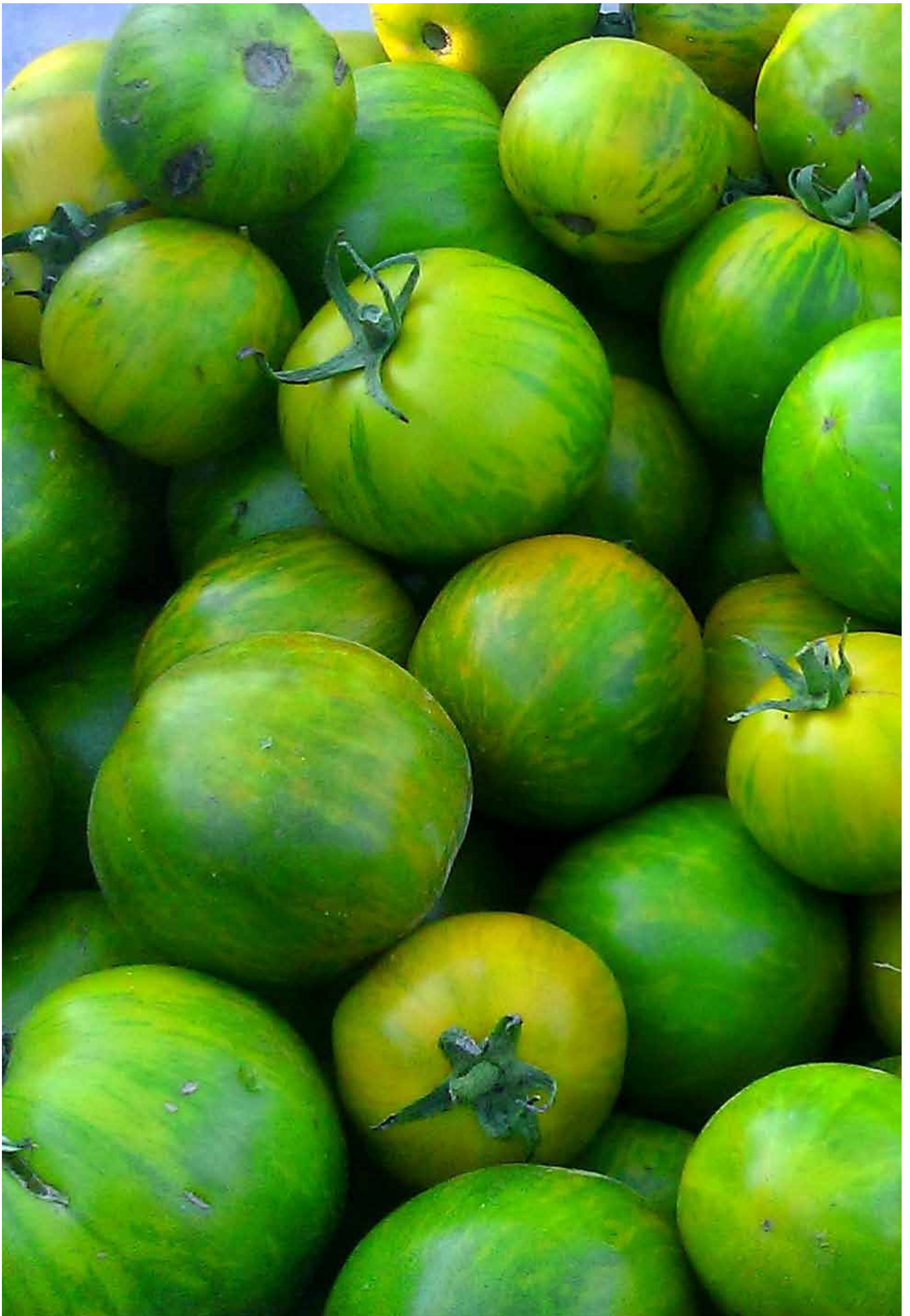
Because I grew up on a farm, I know that there can also be limitations that come along with this line of work. Their biggest concern is a lack of funds. People don't understand how much food actually costs to grow, harvest, pack, and deliver. Because taxpayers subsidize large farms and agricultural businesses, our grocery store prices remain low. Small producers like Trogg's Hollow don't receive these subsidies from the federal government and their prices barely cover the cost of production. They have yet to make a profit, and haven't collected pay checks. The second biggest challenge they have faced is access to land. Between the price of land, property taxes, and laws about subdividing acreage from large plots, owning land is out of reach for many would-be small

producers.

I asked Trogg and Marcy if they have any advice for people interested in starting a small farm business. Their answer: "You must have a plan, a business plan, and understand that this is a business like any other. Don't expect immediate profit and expect hard work. [Seek] out help from other local farmers. There are not enough of us and we should always be willing to help. Also, find and participate in your local (training) organization."

They also give some great advice for consumers interested in joining a CSA.

"The first thing we tell everyone is that you should know your farmer. This is the most important thing for





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Sign up for their newsletter through a tab on the website, get weekly farm updates, and find out their farmer's market schedule so you can stop by and say hi!

everyone, even if they are not interested in a CSA. Second is, look at all your options and pick the best fit for your family. Every farm and farmer has a different program and personality. These differences are not good or bad, just different and are for different folks. Third is to communicate with your farmer. If you have questions or concerns, then call them ... If a farmer isn't willing to be open and help, and explain why things are the way they are then maybe this isn't a good fit."

As a gardener and homesteader, I have a deep appreciation for the work and dedication Trogg and Marcy have invested in their CSA and

market garden operation. There is a commitment on a deeper level than is required from most small business owners. As farmers, their livelihood depends on weather, soil health, and growing conditions, as well as the willingness of consumers to invest in their own health, their local food system, and sustainable food production for the future.

Lisa Lombardo is a homesteader in northern Illinois. She has chickens, ducks, too many pets (according to her husband) and a large garden and fruit trees. She was raised on a farm in western New York. She writes at the Self Sufficient HomeAcre.

Curtains

in an

AFTERNOON

by: Jennifer Cazzola



This unlined cafe curtain with three tucks across the bottom will look darling fluttering in the breeze of your open windows this spring.

With the use of a single width of fabric, eliminating the need for side seams, this is an easy project that can be put together in a single afternoon.

You need not be an expert seamstress in order to pull this off either. The only skills required are some easy math for figuring the measurements and the ability to sew a straight seam on a sewing machine.

For this project you will need:

- A lightweight fabric such as linen or muslin
- Thread to match
- A sewing machine
- An iron and ironing board
- Scissors
- Pins
- Sewing gauge or ruler
- Steel tape measure
- Small Spring tension rod about 7/16"

The Steps:

1. Figure the amount of fabric needed.

For best results a smaller window is recommended.

Using a steel tape measure, measure the desired length of your curtain from the rod pocket to the hem. To this length add the following: 4" for the hem, 1 1/2" for the rod pocket, and 3" for the tucks: 1" for each tuck.

2. Press up the hem and the rod pocket.

To give your curtain a nice heavy weight, press up a two inch double hem across the bottom as shown and pin.

Across the top, press 1/2" and then 1" to form the rod pocket.

Stitch both the hem and the pocket with a straight stitch as close to the edge as possible.

Note: Performing all of the pressing, and all of the stitching at once will save time.

For this project I have eliminated the side hems using instead the selvedge edge of the fabric.

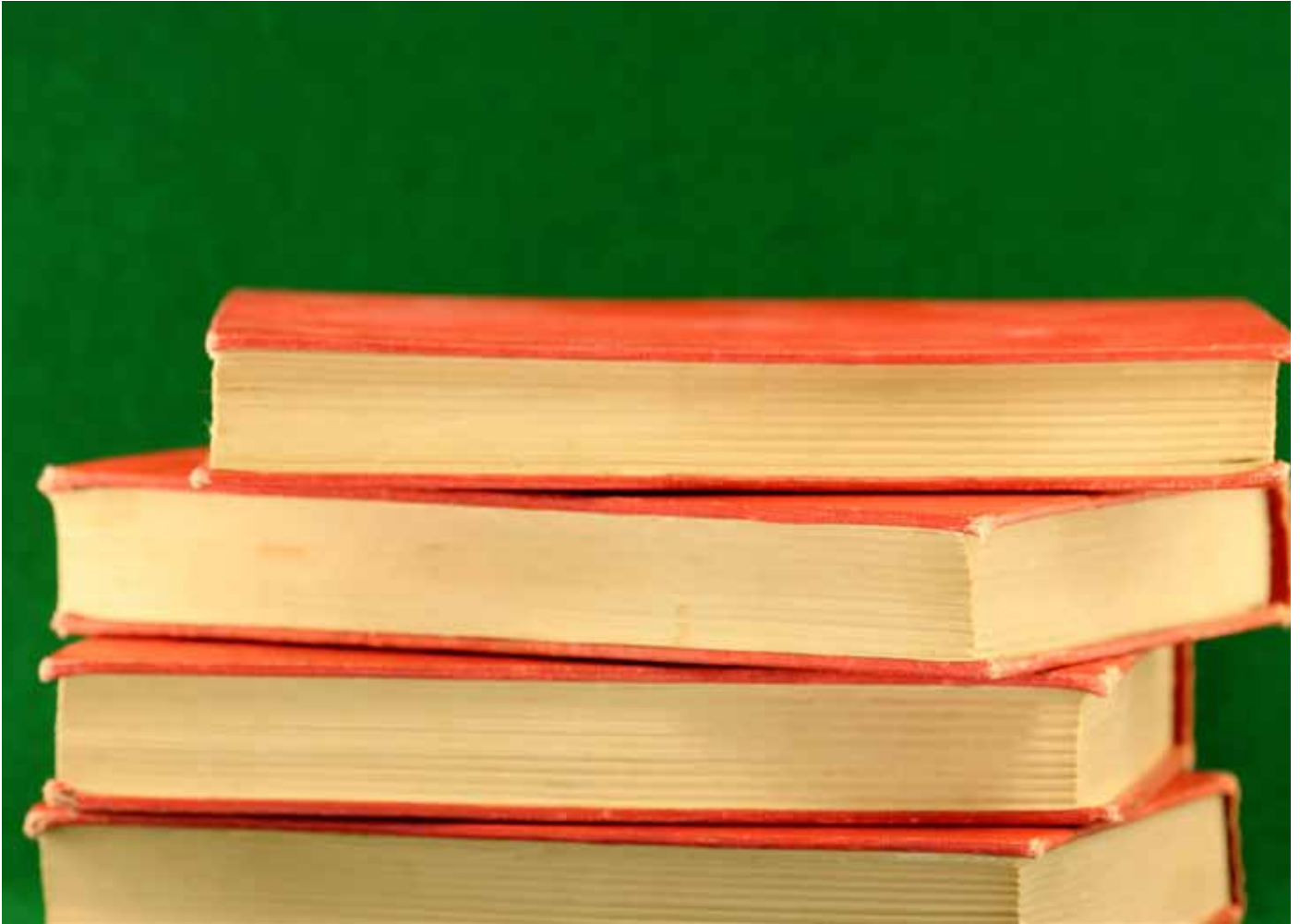
The edge is easily concealed within the window frame after hanging. If this is unacceptable, you can add a 2" double side hem before adding the rod pocket. Simply press and stitch in the same manner as the bottom hem.

3. Add the tucks. Using a sewing gauge or ruler, mark a line 3/4" above the hem stitching with pins, as shown. Crease. Stitch 1/2" from the crease. Press the tuck towards the hem. Repeat for the second and third tuck, making each crease 3/4" from the previous stitching.

4. Install your curtain! Insert the tension rod through the rod pocket and adjust to fit your window. Spread the gathers evenly across the rod. If the tucks make the hem too stiff, preventing it from gathering as desired, use clothespins to hold the folds in place. Remove after a few hours and enjoy your new look.

Learning with Style

By: Lawrence Williams



Each of us tends to prefer one way of learning more than another. Some of us learn best through reading. Others prefer to hear information spoken before they can make sense of it or remember it. Some need to see diagrams or demonstrations in order to develop understanding. Still others need to physically touch, manipulate, move, and experiment in order to relate to a given subject. In addition,

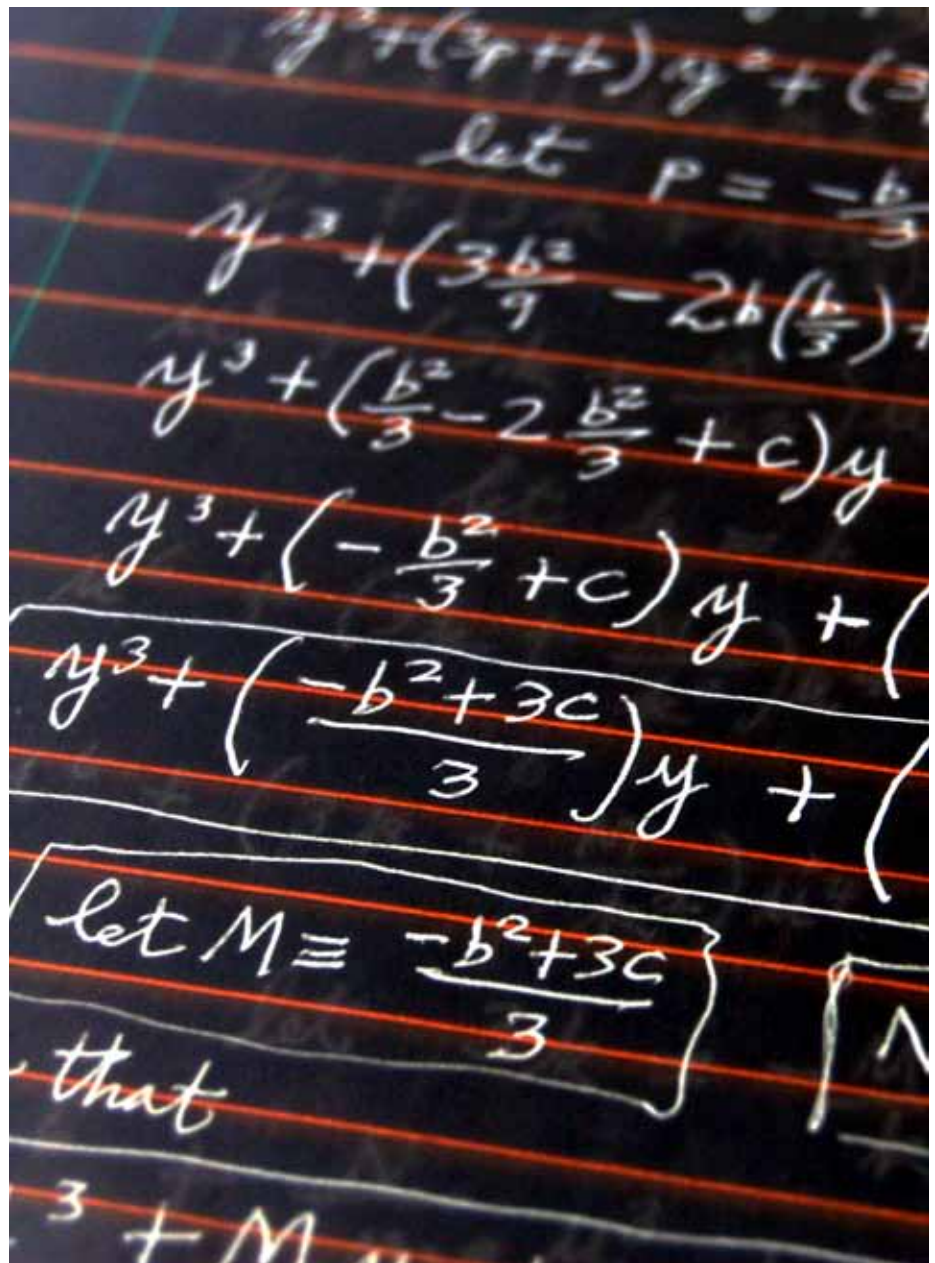
there are various other ways of learning beyond these. For example, some children might benefit from a social environment filled with group activities; others need ample time for reflection.

One Style Doesn't Fit All

In previous generations, learning styles were not even acknowledged, much less accommodated. From one perspective, one could even say that

the very concept of “learning disabilities” arose (and continues to arise) from an inability of some teachers and administrators to recognize and deal effectively with the different learning styles of children.

The concept that prompted much of the current debate over learning styles arose in the 1970s, with the left-brain/right-brain theory of neurological functioning. This prompted educators to view students as either left-brained learners (those that tend to approach things in a logical, linear or verbal manner) or right-brained learners (those that approached things in a more creative, spatial or holistic manner). Gradually, however, this view began to lose favor, as further research indicated that the learning process involves a very complex interaction of both hemispheres simultaneously. Nevertheless, educators recognized that the left-brain/right-brain concept, though incomplete, was true to a certain extent, that children do learn differently, and that teachers had to move beyond the purely logical-verbal approach traditionally used



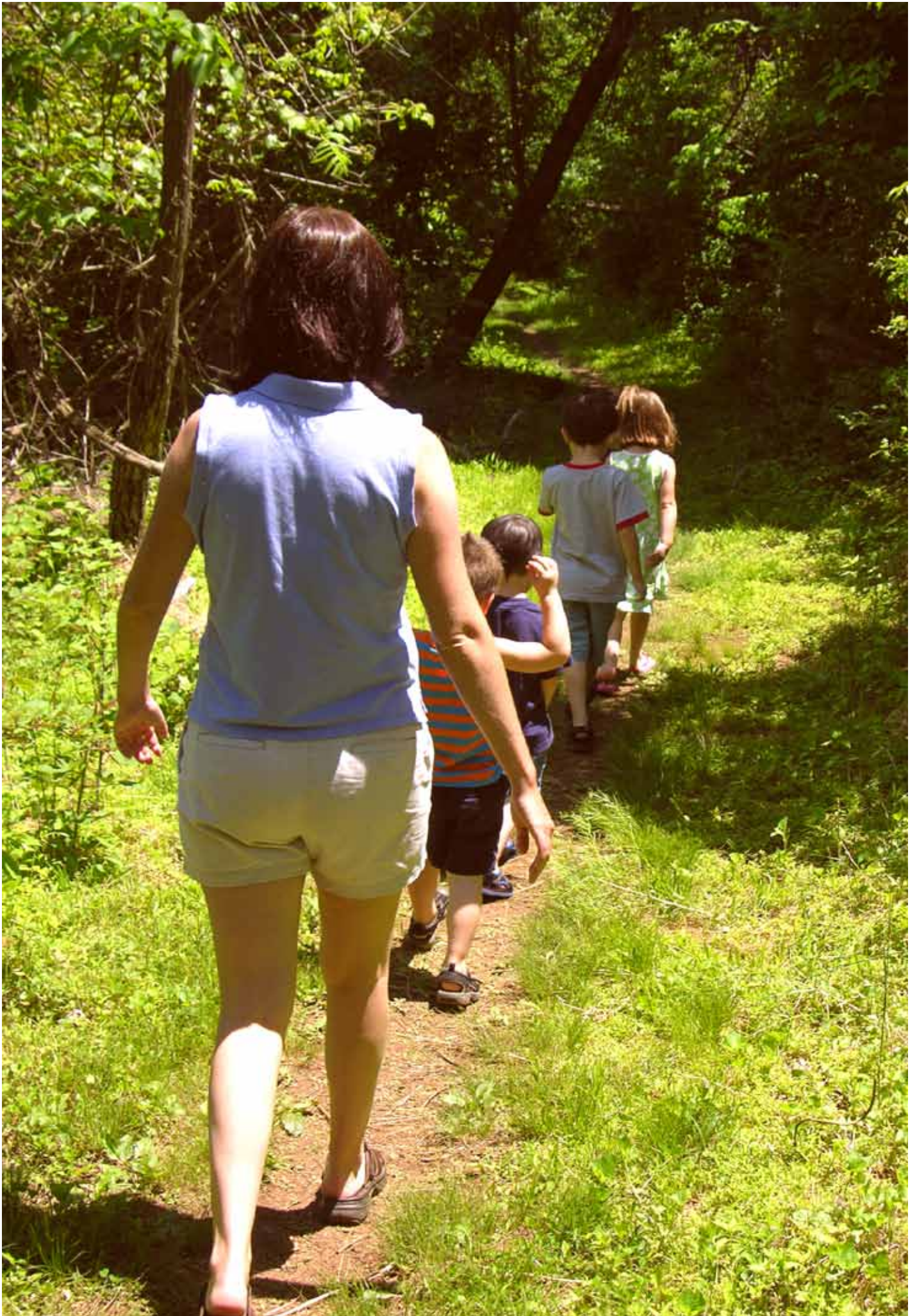
+ IN PREVIOUS GENERATIONS:

Learning styles were not acknowledged. From one perspective, one could say the very concept of “learning disabilities” arose and continues to arise from an inability of some teachers ... to recognize the different learning styles of children.

in schools and learn how to teach in ways that could appeal to a broader range of learning styles.

The Treasure Trove of Multifaceted Intelligence

Recently, research on learning styles



has increased considerably, and our understanding of these differences has grown. Two of the most prominent theories are those of Robert Sternberg of Yale and Howard Gardner of Harvard. In *The Triarchic Mind*, Sternberg proposed that there are three types of intelligence. He calls these componential (the mind that is tested by IQ tests), contextual (the kind you use in creating new environments), and experiential (a practical or “street-smarts” kind of intelligence). Conventional school activities tend to focus upon componential intelligence, while contextual and experiential intelligence is what we tend to use in the everyday world. Naturally, this causes a problem for many children.

The theory that has been most widely acclaimed is that proposed by Howard Gardner. In *Frames of*

Mind, Gardner synthesized evidence from brain research, psychological testing, experiments with animals, developmental work with young children, descriptive accounts of exceptional ability, and cross-cultural studies. This evidence supported the idea that there are seven different kinds of intelligence: linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal. He has since added an eighth type, naturalistic. These are not completely separate forms of intelligence, but rather aspects of the same intelligence that is within each of us. That is, we all have all eight types of intelligence in varying degrees, but generally one or more of these aspects tends to predominate, and this creates a particular style of learning for each individual.

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How can we make sense of these various approaches when we're homeschooling our children? How can we cooperate with individual learning styles to help our children learn more effectively?

There are so many creative options in working with a particular learning style.

Often parents find themselves coming up with really imaginative activities on the spur of the moment. Here are just a few suggestions to give you an idea of the range of possibilities:

Verbal-Linguistic learners like creative writing and word games; making up rhyming verse (perhaps in the form of rap music lyrics) about any subject can be very effective.

Logical-Mathematical learners like logic problems and mysteries; they enjoy creating timelines for history or graphs for science.

Visual-Spatial learners enjoy drawing pictures and maps, or creating puzzles and 3D models; they use imagery to understand so providing a visual aid is always helpful.

Bodily-Kinesthetic learners can benefit from chewing gum or sitting on a ball while solving math problems; they like role-playing historical and literary characters.

Musical learners benefit from translating facts into rhythmic forms (such as clapping while reciting multiplication tables); they may study best with music in the back-

ground.

Interpersonal learners enjoy a dramatic production or group discussion; they appreciate problem solving with others, and connecting their studies to real-life situations. Intrapersonal learners enjoy reading biographies and watching plays or historical reenactments; they appreciate time for reflection and journal writing.

Naturalistic learners benefit from observing the natural world, so field studies are especially important; literature and writing assignments can capitalize on this interest.

Thomas Armstrong explored Gardner's model and developed techniques for working with each of these types of intelligence in his book *In Their Own Way: Discovering and Encouraging Your Child's Personal Learning Style*.

This is an excellent source of information for anyone interested in understanding how to work with the different learning styles proposed by Gardner.

Knowing Style When You See It

Using Armstrong's criteria, Oak Meadow has developed a learning styles evaluation to use in determining the particular learning styles of your child in relationship to the seven types of intelligence.

You may also find it interesting to evaluate yourself to determine your own learning style and note how it compares with that of your child. It can be helpful to take into account our own innate tendencies when working with children to ensure we are not unintentionally steering them toward our own preferences. The purpose of identifying learning styles is to begin the process of identifying and appreciating our children's unique ways of learning and expressing, and then to encourage that uniqueness by structuring school (and life) activities accordingly.

As our children find joy in embracing the world through their unique learning styles, they gradually become able to explore other learning styles, other creative outlets, and other points of view.

By starting with their strengths, we help them develop the confidence they need to tackle the greater challenges that lie ahead.

As a homeschooling teacher, you have the opportunity to discover and cooperate with your children's preferred mode of learning, so they can learn more easily and enjoyably. Your choice of curriculum can help you in this process.

*This article was excerpted from *The Heart of Learning*, by Lawrence Williams (an Oak Meadow publication).*



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WINTER HOMESCHOOLING - HOMESTEAD STYLE

BY: CAROL J. ALEXANDER

Wintry weather may be inconvenient, but it offers homeschool educators a chance to impart lessons about science, math and more.

As you've probably figured out by now, our family enjoys incorporating our homestead chores into our academic lessons. Nothing brings joy to a parent more than watching a child have that "aha" moment while planting corn in the garden.

Problem is, in January we are not planting anything. In fact, except for tending animals, our farm chores pretty much come to a standstill in the winter. So what kinds of things are we studying?

SNOW

Wilson A. Bentley (1865-1931) devoted his life to studying and photographing snowflakes. You can read about his determination to capture a snowflake on film before it melted in the wonderful children's book *Snowflake Bentley* by Jacqueline Briggs Martin and Mary Azarian.

You can also see some of his amazing photographs in his book *Snowflakes in Photographs*. This 80-page Dover publication has over 850 illus-

trations.

For more information about Mr. Bentley, visit <http://snowflakebentley.com>.

BUT WHAT ELSE CAN A KID LEARN FROM SNOW?

Compare the weights and measurements of wet snow with dry snow. Discuss how much deeper the snow would be if it were drier. Figure out the weight of a 6-inch cube of dry snow and compare it with a 6-inch cube of wet snow.

Study physics lessons while building a snow fort. Igloos are dome-shaped. How do those blocks of ice stay up?

Calculate speed ratios while sledding. If you are going downhill at 45 miles per hour, and your sledding track is 250 feet long, how long will it take you to reach the bottom?

How about making snow ice cream?

ICE

On our homestead, frozen hoses mean more than, "now we have to



carry buckets of water to the goats." On our place frozen hoses are science. Winter with snow and ice presents the perfect opportunity to study the three forms of water: Solid, liquid, and gas.

You can demonstrate how water expands when it is frozen by filling a plastic container full and putting it in the freezer. Next day, it will be broken. We had the perfect opportunity to show the kids the detrimental effects of frozen water one winter when a pipe burst. That incident provided not only science lessons, but plumbing lessons.

Compare the amount of water your stock drinks in the winter with how much they drink in the summer. Weigh a five-gallon bucket of water. If you carry that bucket out to the stockyard five times, how many

pounds of water have you carried? Keep track of how long it takes for the water trough to freeze when it is 32 degrees, 30 degrees, 25 degrees, and so on.

BUT I DON'T LIVE WHERE IT'S COLD

Okay, so maybe you live in Florida or the Southwest US and are in the midst of your gardening season. What a child can learn from gardening!

To explain the sprouting process, you might like this experiment. Fill a quart canning jar with potting soil. Slide lima bean seeds down along the side of the jar into the soil. Moisten the soil and put a lid on the jar. Wrap black construction paper around the jar and secure with tape. After three days, slide the black paper off the jar and see what changes the seeds



have gone through. Replace the paper and wait a few more days.

Explain to your child that is what is happening in the garden under the earth where you can't see. Have your child sketch the different stages of development in his nature journal.

We all understand the purposes behind mulch in the garden.

While applying it, (and that is a great job for little guys) explain to your children that a good layer of straw, grass clippings, or compost around your plants will hold moisture in the soil and deter weeds.

Then have them try this experiment. Plant identical rows side by side. Mulch one row but allow the other to remain bare.

Keep a record of the two rows. Does the one require more water? Compare the weed growth between the two. Which plants appear to be healthier? This is a great assignment to record in a science lab notebook. Have the child take pictures to add

to the notes.

Some garden plants seem to take forever to grow, like tomatoes. But some appear to stretch up before your very eyes. Here is a great activity to do with corn or sunflowers. Using a carpenter's tape rule, measure the plant each morning and chart its progress.

You can make it a little more interesting by predicting when you plant it how tall it will get, and then see if you are right when it's done growing. For the younger child, you could study graphs by charting the height of various plants.

Just because the winter winds blow doesn't mean your homeschooling needs to be reduced to books and seatwork.

Try a few of these ideas and come up with more of your own. Your kids will love winter homeschooling—homestead style.



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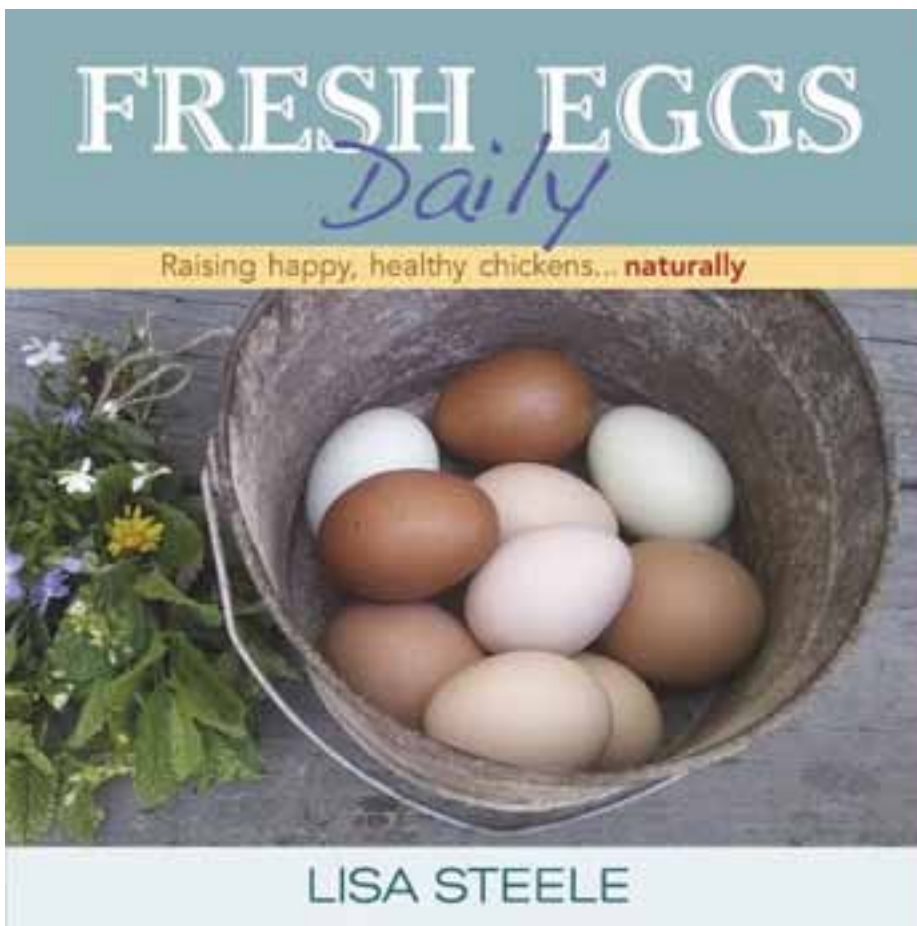
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How to Fail at Baking Bread

by: Meredith Skyer



You're about to read the heroic and embarrassing story of an almost failed baker.

Please raise your hand if you've ever attempted to bake bread and failed miserably. I'm right there with you. I spent two years failing at baking bread. For two entire years, this baker made every mistake in the book.

One day I was so determined to finally figure out this bread baking thing that I baked six loaves in one day. I made different mistakes with every loaf, and they all went to our chickens, they couldn't understand what they'd done to deserve such a

lumpy, over baked treat. But you know what? I kept trying. I took every one of those mistakes and learned from them until I finally got it. Now I'm here to share those failures with you.

So, here we go, please enjoy the top ten ways to fail at baking bread. Learn from my mistakes, avoid them, and go make your own mistakes.

Don't follow the recipe

Some of you would never dream of straying away from a recipe. You fine folks can move along to the next

tip. If you are more like me, you're an independent, stubborn soul.

For people like us, following directions is hard.

We want to do our own thing.

If you ever want to succeed at baking bread, you must change this fundamental aspect of yourself.

I know it's hard, but you can go right back to being hardheaded and rebellious when your bread comes out of the oven.

When it comes to baking bread, you must follow that recipe, no matter how ridiculous or redundant the steps might seem.

Just one mistake can be do or die.

If the person who designed the recipe took the time to write in a certain detail, then it's important.

Baking is a science, so every little measurement counts.

If the recipe says to sprinkle the yeast on top instead of mix it in, there's a reason for it.

Trust your recipe and your bread will thank you.

Be an Arrogant Fool

If you have ever looked at the intricate details of a bread recipe and thought: "pssshhh that can't be that important," this tip is for you.

Arrogance will break you in the bread baking game.

When I baked my first loaf I was already a master at baking sweets. Cookies, cakes, pastries, brownies, you name it, I had baked it — and had the arrogance to boot.

Come to find out, bread is not the same as brownies.

Brownies are chocolate and butter and sugar, it seems no matter what's done to those ingredients, they'll

still be delicious. This is not so with bread ingredients.

You must go into this venture with the eyes of a newborn babe.

Throw away everything that you think you know about baking.

Start fresh.

The regular rules of cooking and baking don't apply to bread.

Bread is a completely different beast, and it can be seriously ruined by arrogance.

Have a lackadaisical attitude about temperature

Temperature is extremely important in every aspect of baking bread.

It's most important when you're dealing with live yeast.

If your water is too hot, it will kill your yeast and your bread will never rise.

If it's too cold, it will take a whole day for the yeast to activate and you'll be sitting around twiddling your thumbs in anticipation.

Use a thermometer if you have to — this is crucial.

Every good recipe will give you a temperature range for activating your yeast, follow it and good things will come.

Lose track of time

Have you ever heard that timing is everything?

No doubt it's true.

If you're the type to, say, set your bread to rise then run out to the store for just one thing then return 3 hours later with an armful of groceries, then you need this tip.



You must pay attention to the time. When you set your bread to rise, set a timer to remind you to check on it, and check on it often.

The bread needs to rise just the perfect amount and timing has a lot to do with that.

This can be tricky but with practice you'll get it right.

On the first rise you usually need your dough to double in size.

If you let it triple in this first rise, the little yeasties will consume everything around them and die, leaving you with very few yeasties to get your dough to rise a second time.

If you let your dough rise for too long the second time it will look amaz-

ingly spectacularly perfect, until you get it in the oven.

Dough does a final rise in the oven. This is called oven spring, and if you let it rise for too long before it hits the oven it will collapse into a hard lump.

Our chickens have also been fed many hard lumps.

Try to speed up the process

Baking bread is something that you just can't rush.

I always decide to bake bread 2 hours before I have an important commit-



Don't knead your dough enough

You need to knead that dough! This is another instance where my stubborn nature came out in full swing. They would say, "knead for 10 minutes" and I would say, "pshaa, I'm a potter, I knead clay all the time. I'm an expert at this, so I can cut that time in half!"

As you can guess, stubbornness and arrogance do not mix well when baking bread.

Save your lofty ideas

about bread baking for the day when you're a master baker and you truly can do whatever you want.

For now, knead the bread for as long as they tell you to — longer even.

When in doubt, keep kneading. If you don't know if the dough is springy, elastic, or smooth yet, then it isn't. It's hard to over knead bread.

It's easy to under knead it.

Set a timer if you have to.

This is one of the most crucial steps so don't skimp.

Sure, your hands will hurt, and you'll get bored, and you'll look for distractions.

But buck up and deal with it! It's going to be worth it.

Besides you're getting a great arm work out and this is the perfect time to do some of that meditation you've been meaning to work into your busy life.

Or if you are the type to lean more towards the dark side, take this time to smush out your frustrations and stress on your lump of dough. Really abuse it; it will only make it better.

ment. To make up for my bad planning, I've tried to cut the rise time in half by making the environment hotter.

I used to turn the oven on to 400 then shut it off and put the dough inside. Guess what? It didn't rise. It just sat there like a pointless wet lump of soggy gluten because I killed the yeast making the environment too warm.

Take your time and let nature do its thing.

A friend of mine said it this way: you want your dough to rise in a place that feels like a warm summer's day. No hotter, no colder. It works.

Use the wrong ingredients

Baking is a science. It's more chemistry than it is art. If you don't know what you're doing and you start messing with ingredients, replacing here and there, your science experiment will end badly.

If you want the bread to turn out right, you must buy bread flour. Don't do what I did—trying over and over again to convince myself that there's no difference between bread flour and all-purpose flour.

This one simple change made a world of difference for my bread. Bread flour has more protein than all-purpose flour, which aids in gluten development. Without it your bread can't achieve the perfect consistency and it will have a hard time rising. You don't have to go to a fancy pants baking store to get decent flour, if your grocery store carries King Arthur flour, you're set. If you want to be a fancy pants and shop at the bakery supply—go for it! I won't judge you.

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