



FROM SCRATCH

{life on the homestead}

June/July 2014

**Sustainable
Living**

Independence
Day **Veteran
Farmers**

Edible
Flowers

**Good
Biosecurity
Practices**

Strawberries
with 1840 Farm

Letter from the Editor and Publisher



This may be the busiest time of the year for homesteaders, farmers and the like.

It's full on planting season and the days are long, which means plenty of daylight to get things done.

You are surely weeding, seeding, thinning, watering, repairing, feeding, caring, medicating, trimming and more.

It still seems, however, that there's never enough sunlight to finish everything.

The Summer Solstice is just around the corner and we know those days will start getting shorter very soon.

So it's rush, rush, rush.

Quite frankly, for us, it's kind of fun. We put seed in the ground, gather the eggs by the dozen and care for the animals every day. Sure, by the time August rolls around the heat will make us hate summer and we'll be begging for the sweet release of Autumn to finally break, but until that time comes, we're going to enjoy this incredibly productive time, and try to get as much done as we can.

It's no different here at From Scratch magazine. We've got our own fields to plant AND we're trying to grow and improve our publication every day.

This issue, we've expanded some of our regular features: We began a series on the

Agricultural Act of 2014 (The Farm Bill) and we're hoping to highlight some of the stories about agriculture from around the world and right around the corner with our Homestead Roundup.

We've still got all the great stuff you've come to know and love: Chris McLaughlin covers all types of ties, we've got a great story about Spruce Syrup (who knew!) and we find out about all the edible flowers you may have growing in your showy flower beds.

Now, while you may want to use this time of the year to get as much work done as possible, we recommend you take a little time to enjoy the balmy weather: Winter comes soon enough and you'll surely miss the summer breezes.

Take a hike in the woods, head to the beach for a day or just sit on the porch and enjoy some iced tea (or dandelion wine if you have it). And maybe read a little bit of From Scratch magazine and don't feel guilty for letting the summer be for just a day or so.

Steven and Melissa

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Using the
Entire Harvest

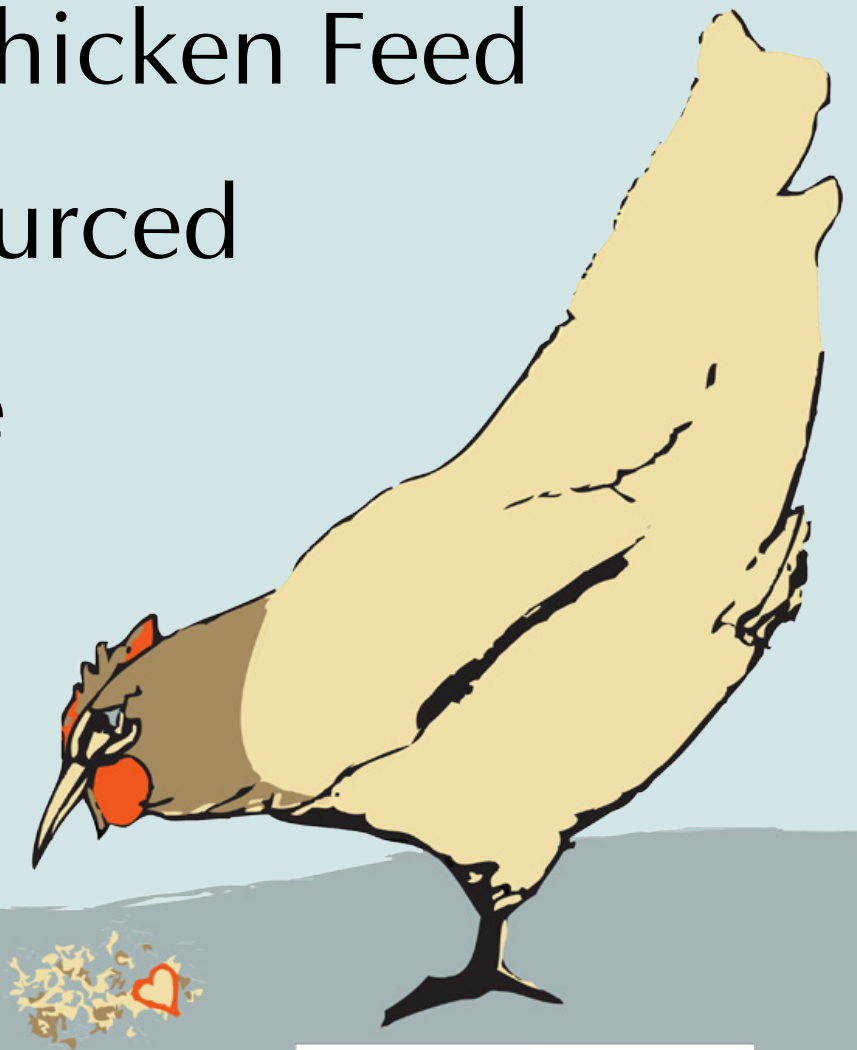
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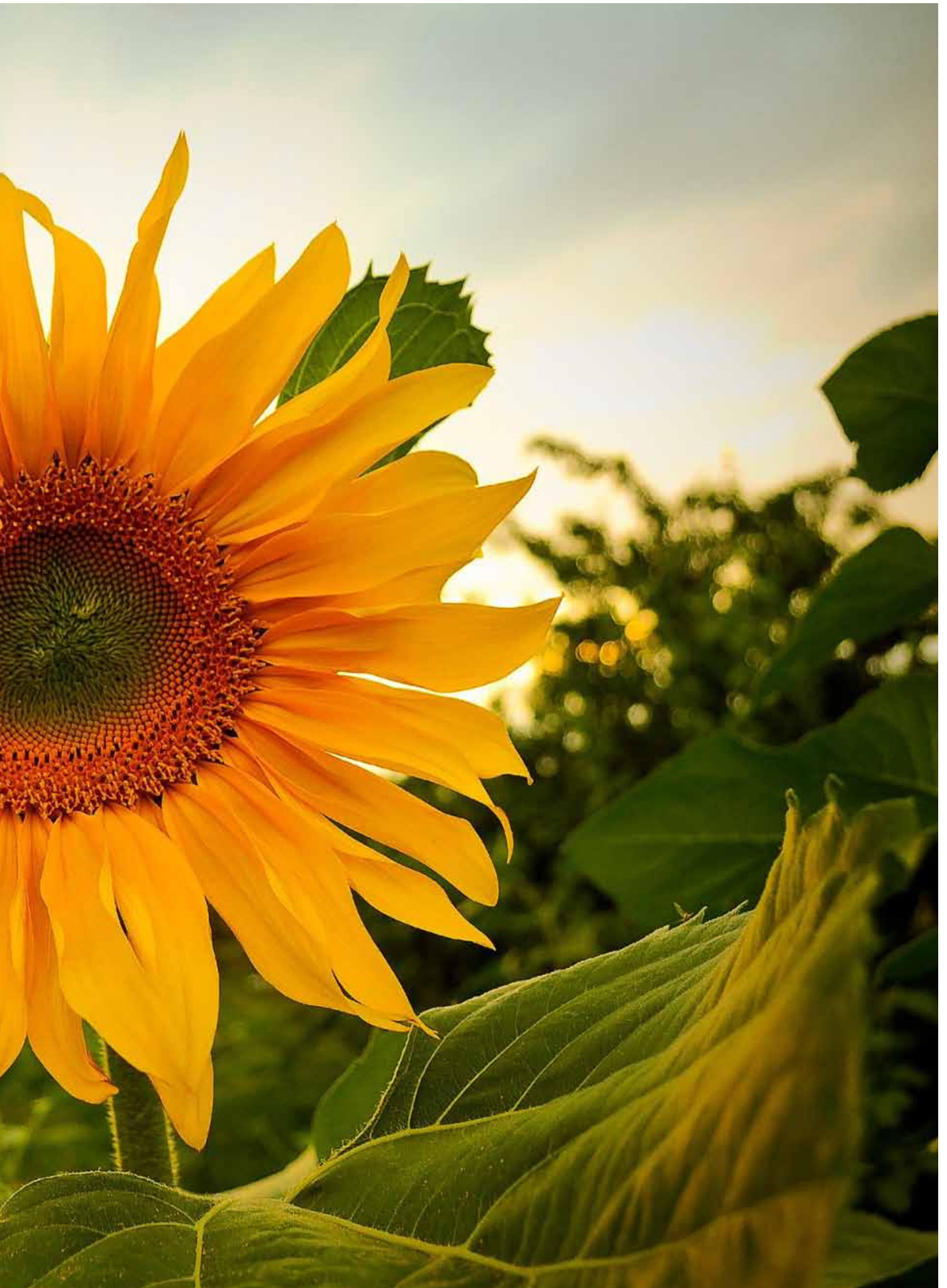


Melissa Jones
Publisher

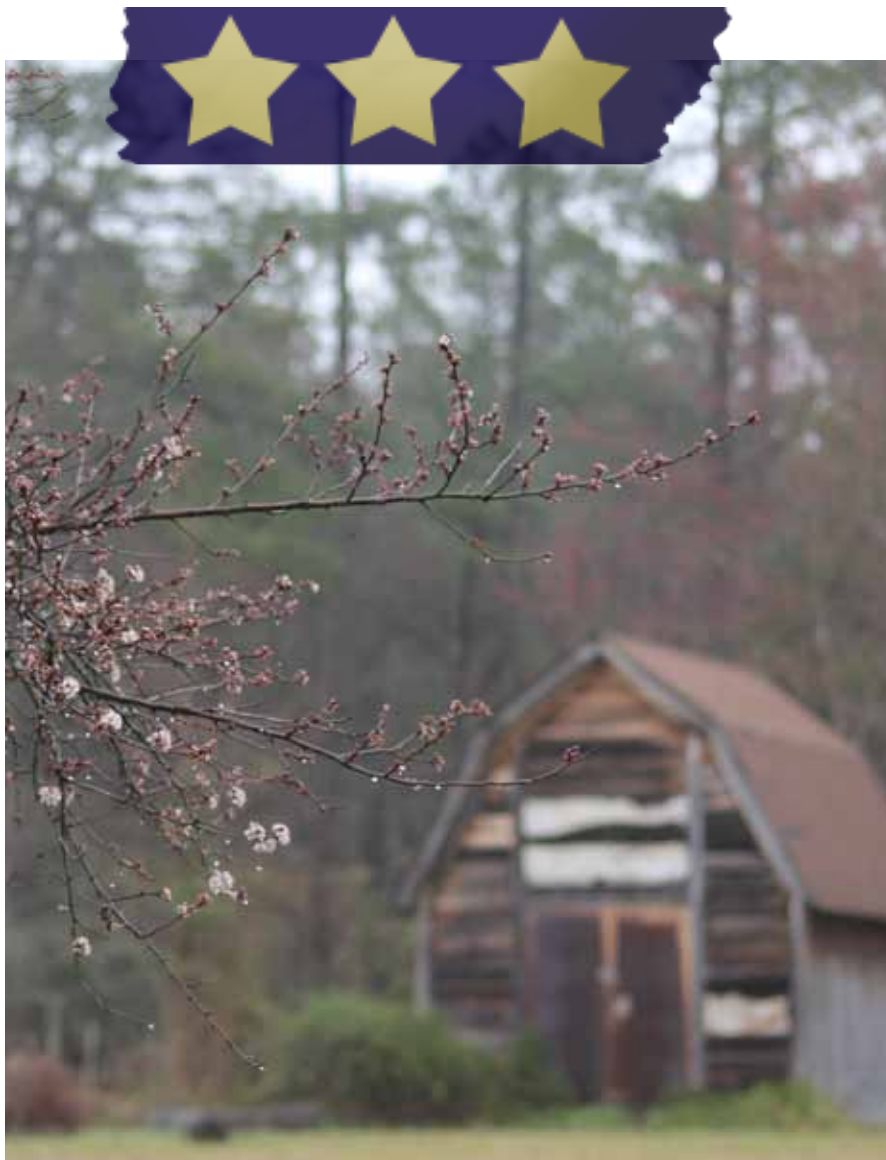
Summer afternoon; to me
those have always been the
two most beautiful words in
the English language.

~Henry James





Reader Photos



Ailee Farey sent us these Sp...
time photos taken around h...
in Virginia. (above and left)



Janya and her Berkshire gilt, Beulah,
out at her farm in Western Washington





Spring
er farm



Maggie Heilman sent us these photos of Raisin, Rowan and River, her one-week old mini-Nubians.

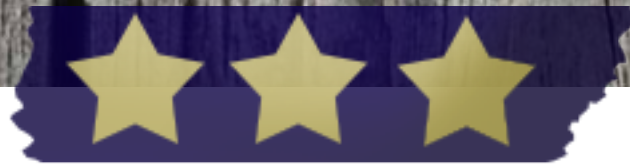


Stacey Westrick sent us photos of her children and silkies.

David sent us these photos of his homestead helpers (above and left)

Homestead Roundup

Relevant News Briefs from around the Globe



CENSUS LISTS MILLIONS OF FARMERS, NOT ALL MAKING MONEY

NPR published a story in May about the US Census's latest figures on farmers in the United States. According to the article, (Read it [here](#)) 2,109,303 farmers are working in America. Most of them, however, aren't making a living, according to the piece by Dan Charles. "Two-thirds of all farms sell less than \$25,000 worth of crops or livestock each year. That's not profit — that's total sales," the article states. That's not enough, points out Charles, to pay for benefits like health insurance and retirement.

ORGANIC CENTER RESPONDS TO WALL STREET JOURNAL ARTICLE

The Organic Center, a non-profit devoted to organic food and farming, responded to a mid May opinion piece in the Wall Street Journal that indicated organic farming is unsustainable. The piece, titled Organic

Farming Is Not Sustainable, pointed out studies showing nitrate leakage into groundwater from composted manure, indicated composting produces greenhouse gases and stated that conventional farming uses less land and water (Read the article [here](#)).

The Organic Center disputed the claims and pointed out that organic farming produces, overall, create fewer greenhouse gases and increases the general health of the soil. The Organic Center also points out flaws in the piece, including citation of certain pesticides by the writer and more. Read the response to the WSJ piece [here](#).

VERTICAL FARMING ADVOCATED IN SINGAPORE

An article on Today Online calls for more vertical farming in Singapore. The article by Dave Lim advocates a point by point plan for Singapore's government to implement vertical farms in Singapore. "Vertical farming can be the next big thing," Lim states in the piece. "This sector may not generate the same revenues as pharmaceuticals or aerospace, but it may have

stronger emotional appeal for Singaporeans.”

Large scale vertical farm calls for multi story farms in urban centers to mitigate the world’s growing demand for food. Find out more about it here. Read Lim’s full article here

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC LAUNCHES 8-MONTH SERIES ON FOOD CALLED “THE FUTURE OF FOOD”

The National Geographic Society recently launched a massive multimedia undertaking, examining world food policy and production.

“By 2050, Earth will likely be home to more than 9 billion people,” the society states on their website devoted to the series.

The series examines the ways using conventional, organic and new agricultural technology and new policies can feed the 2 billion people the world is expected to house in the coming years. Find out more about the fascinating series here.

FARMER VETERAN COALITION ANNOUNCES HOMEGROWN BY HEROES INITIATIVE

The Farmer Veteran Coalition announced the Homegrown by He-

roes initiative in mid-May. A product labeling program, the initiative will allow famers, ranchers and other food producers who have served in the military to identify their products for consumers.

The iniative will allow consumers to select products to support the country’s farmer veterans. Find out more about the coalition and the initiative here.

FARM TOURS:

Find out where to tour your local farms!

June 7-8:

Carolina Farm Stewardship Association is hosting a farm tour in Upstate South Carolina. Click here to find out more. (<http://www.carolinafarmstewards.org/uft/>)

The CFSA is also hosting a Triad Farm tour in North Carolina on the same day.

Both tours feature area farms devoted to providing local food. Find out more about the Triad tour here.

Send us information about your farm tours and news briefs to info@fromscratchmag.com.

FOR DAD



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TheHivernant \$130



Olive Wood Rustic Chess Set -
TunisiaHandMade, \$59



Wooden laser Cut Dad Keychain -
NinaRaizel, \$21



Hero Dad Pillow -
CariJoyDesigns, \$35



Brave Heart Mug -
Farizula, \$19



Weber Stainless Steel Tool Set -
Amazon, \$23.99



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White Porcelain Berry Basket, HeirloomHomeStudio, \$19



Kitchen Tea Towel, Ruffhouse Art, \$14

MARKET



Bolga Market Tote/Storage Basket
(Fair Trade Ghana), Amazon.com,
\$46.97



Porcelain Peach Basket, HeirloomHomeStudio, \$34



Strap Red Leather Sandals, Crupon Sandals, \$84

FARM BILL

BY STEVEN JONES

357 PAGES; NEARLY A TRILLION DOLLARS IN FEDERAL SPENDING; AND THE LIVES OF TENS OF MILLIONS OF AMERICANS IMPACTED DIRECTLY AND AN UNTOLD AMOUNT INDIRECTLY. THE AGRICULTURAL ACT OF 2014, KNOWN AS “THE FARM BILL”, IS THE LATEST OMNIBUS BILL PRODUCED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO DETERMINE FOOD AND FARM POLICY IN AMERICA.





The passage of the bill impacts everything from SNAP benefits (a.k.a. Food Stamps) to international trade. It is one of the most important pieces of legislation passing into law this year, and arguable THE most important.

So, what exactly does the Farm Bill say?

Quite frankly, we at From Scratch magazine don't know.

So, we're determined to find out. In the coming months, From Scratch magazine will dive headfirst into the 357 pages of legislation and into the pages of title code that the new legislation changed. We'll interview policy makers, farmers, lobbyist, SNAP recipients, interest groups and more. All in an ongoing effort to thoroughly examine this bill and find out what it means to small, medium and large farmers -- organic, conventional or otherwise.

We'll find out how much it costs taxpayers, how much money it saves -- if any -- and determine what is good or otherwise about it. We'll publish the stories here in our magazine and we'll create a special section on our website where you can read all our coverage, the full text of the bill, and follow the appropriation hearings and more.

When the bill passed into law in February, we contacted Roland McReynolds, Executive Director of the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association and discussed the bill: "The new Farm Bill includes many

small, but important programs that promote local food systems, organic production, and beginning farmers. But it also reduces conservation program funding; is biased in favor of capital-intensive, GMO-dependent and environmentally destructive farm monocultures; and distorts agricultural markets to the detriment of healthy food and beginning farmers. The giant ag chemical and equipment manufacturers and industrial food conglomerates are happy, but it is a far cry from the dramatic reforms that are needed to create a level playing field for American family farmers."

The Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (CFSA) is a farmer-driven, non-profit organization that helps people in the Carolinas grow and eat local, organic foods by advocating for fair farm and food policies, building the systems family farms need to thrive, and educating communities about local, organic agriculture, according to their website.

Chairman of the House Committee, Rep. Frank Lucas (R-OK), praised the bill's passage in a press release from the Committee released in February.

"I am pleased a majority of my House colleagues joined me in supporting a comprehensive farm bill," he said. "The Agricultural Act contributes major savings to deficit reduction, significant reforms to policy and yet still provides a safety net."

Since the bill's passage, we fol-

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lowed up with the CFSA to ask them about what happens with the bill now. We spoke with **Rochelle Sparko**, Policy Director of the CFSA earlier in May. Here is the interview:

FS: What is the worst thing about this Farm Bill?

RS: There are a few bad things about the bill; the worst for our members is that Congress didn't cap or cut subsidies for crop insurance or commodities. This means that large, wealthy farms will continue to disproportionately benefit at the expense of small and beginning farms.

FS: What is the best thing about this Farm Bill?

RS: The best thing about the bill is its support for beginning farms and rural economic development. There are funds available to help beginning farmers get started by aiding them in accessing credit and training, funds to help fund value-added businesses (like jams and pickles) and funds to start or strengthen local and regional food systems.

FS: How will the Farm Bill be implemented?

RS: Implementation of the Farm Bill takes some time. The bill authorized funds, but next the funds for each of the programs need to be appropriated by Congress. In

addition, for the newer programs authorized by the Farm Bill, USDA needs to publish rules for their implementation and obtain comments from the public. Some NOFAs (notices of funds available) have already issued for programs authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill. If you're interested in getting information about the appropriations process, and about the funding opportunities available, people should check out the website of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition.

FS: Is it possible to change parts of the farm bill, or how it is implemented, now that the bill has passed?

RS: It is not possible to change parts of the Farm Bill now that it has passed, absent some action by a federal court. However, the implementation is dependent on the funding appropriated by Congress, so it is possible that some programs authorized by the bill will be implemented at a lower funding level than is permitted by the bill.

Read more about the bill, including a summary and complete text, [here](#). Watch for updates on the Farm Bill on our Facebook wall, Twitter feed, blog and of course, in the pages of From Scratch magazine. Let us know what you think about the Farm Bill: Email your letters to the editor to info@fromscratchmag.com.



CHICKEN BIOSECURITY

PROTECT YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR FLOCK

In the last couple of months, chicken keepers may have been frightened by reports of a salmonella outbreak among hatcheries in America.

While the CDC, hatchery officials, the USDA and others work to determine the extent of the outbreak and how to address it, a lot of people were suddenly concerned with biosecurity among their flocks, especially among backyard chicken keepers.

A lot of people (us included) consider chickens to be an integral part of homesteading. We tend to idolize the animals, treating them as productive family members.

And while some commentators point out that chickens are farm animals and not pets, we feel implementing proper biosecurity measures does not mean loving

or enjoying your birds any less. Biosecurity, according to Margaret Ross, the Extension Livestock Agent, North Carolina State University, Craven/Jones Counties, means taking preventative measures to keep your poultry (and all livestock) safe and disease free.

"We want you to keep your flock happy and healthy," she said.

Biosecurity, Ross said, is important to all operations, small or large. Preventative measures are the best way to keep your flock healthy and productive.

"Just because a backyard poultry farmer may have a small flock, biosecurity is no less important to them than it is to large poultry operations," Ross said.

The steps to maintain proper biosecurity are simple: Wash your hands after contacting your birds, wear only one pair of boots to

THE USDA RECOMMENDS THESE STEPS TO PRACTICE PROPER BIOSECURITY:



- KEEP YOUR DISTANCE**
- KEEP IT CLEAN**
- KEEP IT AWAY**
- DON'T BORROW DISEASE FROM YOUR NEIGHBOR**
- LOOK FOR SIGNS OF DISEASE**
- REPORT SICK BIRDS**

work with your chickens, don't wear the same pair of boots off your property, restrict access to your animals to a small number of people, keep wildlife away from your animals, keep all enclosures and equipment clean and disinfected, separate new birds from your flock for at least three weeks and don't share equipment with others. If you find signs of disease among your flock, report them. (Click here to find out where to report sick birds http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/birdbiosecurity/biosecurity/links/step6.pdf)

The list may seem long, but the principles can be boiled down to a couple of basic concepts: Keep it clean and separate.

These steps will help prevent disease from spreading among your birds, but what about spreading salmonella and other diseases to humans?

Turns out, according to the CDC, the same practices also prevent disease from spreading to humans as well.

Salmonella, particularly, spreads to humans from the feces of infected birds, usually when the material gets on people's hands. People then touch their mouths, or near their mouths, infecting them with the disease. Avoid touching your face when dealing with your birds.



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Salmonella impacts older adults, young children and those with weak immune systems worse than healthy adults, so make sure people in those categories avoid handling or touching live poultry.

THE CDC ALSO RECOMMENDS POULTRY OWNERS AND OTHERS:

- Don't snuggle or kiss baby birds, touch your mouth, eat or drink around live baby poultry.
- Don't let live baby poultry inside your house
- Don't eat, drink or prepare food in

areas where the birds live or roam.

- Don't give baby birds as gifts to children

If you have any questions, contact your local extension agent, Ross said.

You can also contact the USDA and find out more about biosecurity here (<http://healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov>

Find out more about Ross here: <http://cravenjoneslivestock.blogspot.com/> Find out more about the CDC's recommendations here: <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/SalmonellaBaby-Birds/>



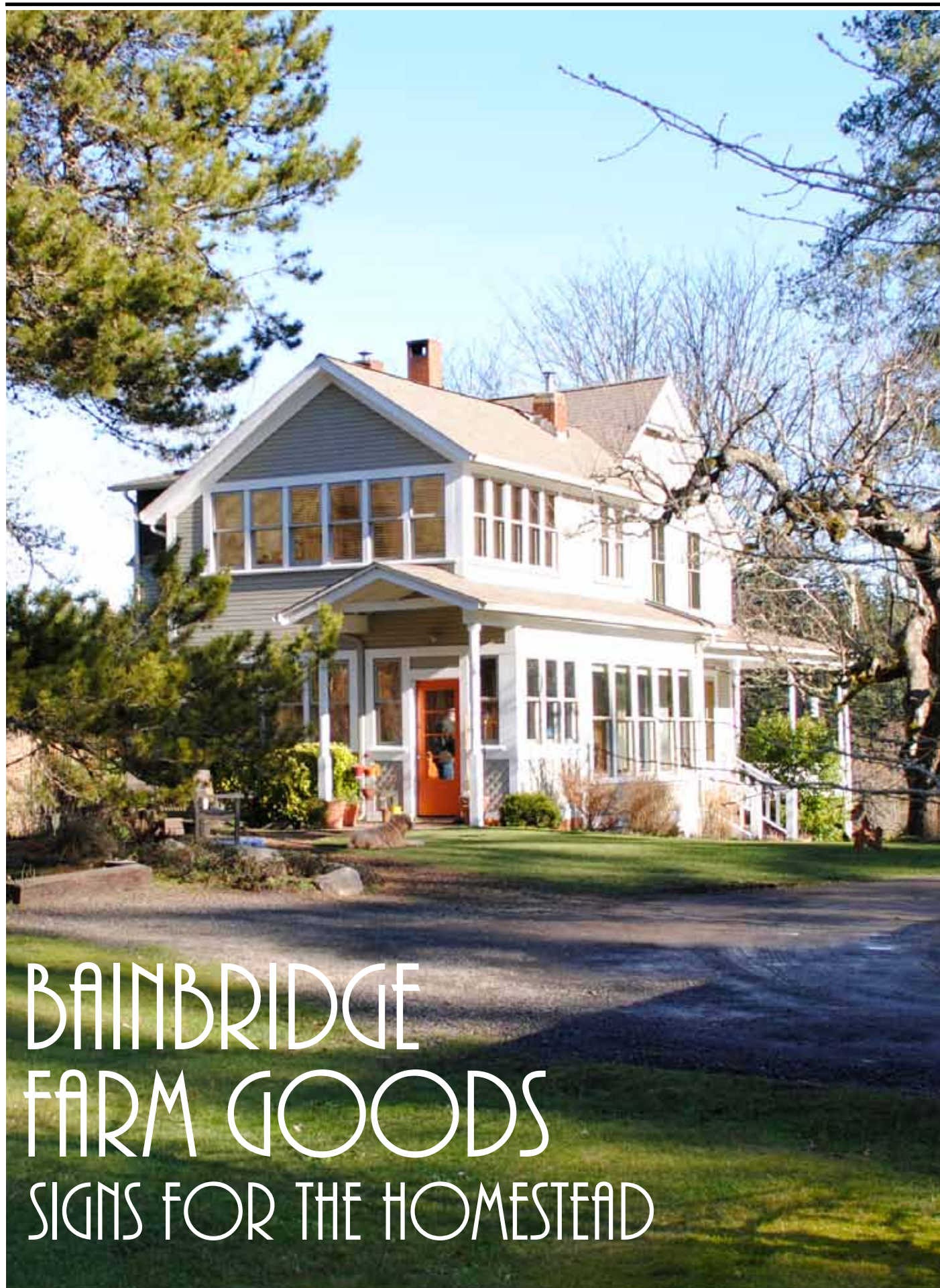
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BAINBRIDGE FARM GOODS SIGNS FOR THE HOMESTEAD

Story by Melissa Jones



HOW DID YOU GET STARTED. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN BUSINESS?

We have been in business about 3 1/2 years. We moved to a historic farmhouse on 2 1/2 acres on rural Bainbridge Island, a short ferry ride from Seattle. On our small farm we have a pond, vegetable garden, several 100 year old apple trees, plum trees and grapes. We decided to build a chicken coop because we wanted to have fresh organic eggs. After Scott built the coop, I was looking for a cool sign to put on it and couldn't find anything I liked so I decided to design my own. I made about 20 signs thinking I could sell them to friends and other islanders. I sold over one hundred and it blossomed from there. Now we sell signs to people all around the world and have retailers sprinkled across the



US and Canada and even in Finland, England and Australia.

WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO START YOUR OWN BUSINESS?

I have a degree in Fine Art and have done graphic design for a living for years. I wanted to have a business where I could work from home and still have time to be a Mom and enjoy a healthy lifestyle. With Bainbridge Farm Goods, I start working after the kids go to school and when they come home I'm able to have time to spend with them, work in the vegetable garden or go to the barn and ride horses with our daughter.







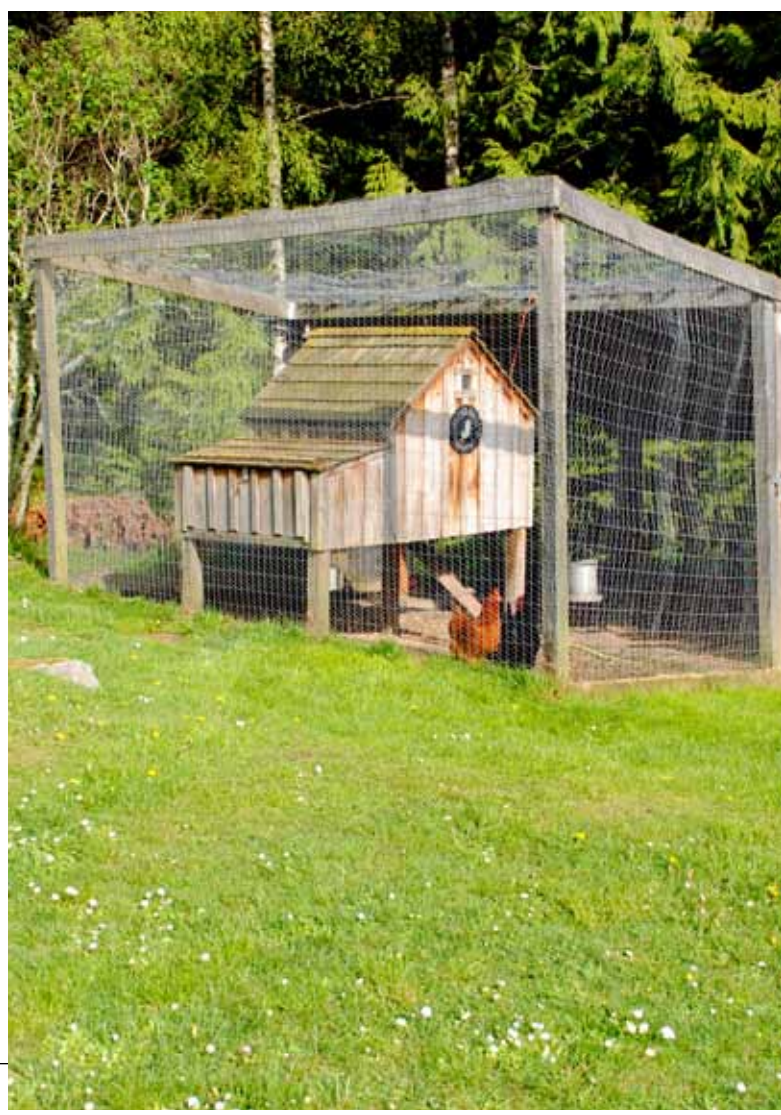


WHAT IS A TYPICAL DAY LIKE ON YOUR FARM?

Well it depends on the weather! Some days it's pouring rain so there isn't a lot of outside activities taking place! On the beautiful, sunny days here on Bainbridge Island it's pretty idyllic. In the summer the vegetable garden is in full bloom and we have a bounty of flowers, tomatoes, squash, peas, corn, potatoes, beans, etc. In the fall we have apples and

plumbs. The kids like to just hang out, play in the pond and yard.

The chickens roam free as long as we can keep an eye on them -- we need to watch out for coyotes. There are usually wild ducks in the pond depending on the season -- but there is a pair of mallards that seem to stick around and have babies here year after year. There are always lots of work to do on Bainbridge Farm Goods and orders to prepare and ship too.



SHARE ONE THING THAT YOU WOULD LIKE THE PUBLIC TO KNOW ABOUT YOU AND YOUR JOURNEY.

This business is so much fun! The best thing about it has been the customers and the feedback we get from them. Its fun to make products that brings so much joy to peoples daily lives. I think it has a lot to do with the kind of lives our customers lead and the things that they're passionate about like gardening or having goats, chickens, horses or dogs. They are all just so kind and supportive and appreciative of the products we make.

WHAT ARE THREE THINGS THAT YOU WISH SOMEONE WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU ABOUT STARTING YOUR OWN BUSINESS BEFORE YOU STARTED.

Don't expect anything to happen quickly!

Be prepared to work hard.

Be willing to adapt and change.



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BUILD A TREEHOUSE, MAKE A MEMORY, LEARN IN THE PROCESS

BY CAROL J. ALEXANDER

I think that a child should have a treehouse so he can stretch his imagination," said 14-year-old Donovan.

Stacallen, age 6, "would put toys in there and have tea."

"A kid needs a place to get away from everyone else," thinks 14-year-old Miles. "Being up in the air gives you the feeling you are in a different realm."

Six-year-old Maddox said, "Kids need treehouses so they can climb ladders and go out on the balcony to look at the trees."

"If I had a treehouse, I'd make it a gamer club," said Colin, age seven. "Like, I'd buy a TV and Xbox; and of course there would be a bed, or how else would I sleep up there?" \

I didn't have a treehouse as a child, but I do remember going to an old, hollowed out tree in the woods behind our place with my book and my lunch almost every single summer day. But my boys? They built their own tree fort and they practically live in it. If they aren't swinging from the rope, they are sword fighting with homemade swords, or planning their next canoe trip with dad.

According to licensed professional family counselor Harvey Yoder of Harrisonburg, Virginia, "Most children in the US spend only 30 minutes of time a week in unstructured time in the out-of-doors, whereas the average 10-16-year-old spends over 30 hours a week in front of some kind of electronic screen." After hearing that sobering statistic, I felt compelled to tell others about the benefits of treehouses, encourage them to build one for their own

kids, and of course, find the academic lessons in the process.

Building a treehouse does not need to be a monumental (or expensive) building project. A treehouse can be as simple as a platform raised off the ground under a tree, to something as elaborate as what Pete Nelson of the popular TV show *Treehouse Masters* builds. Think of this project as a time to make memories with your kids.

The Design Phase

There are three phases to building a treehouse. Before cutting into a pile of lumber, your kids need to design what they want their treehouse to look like. I call this the design phase. Some kids will try to convince you that they have it all in their heads and can build as they go. Do not listen to that. As a parent, convince them to dialogue what they are thinking and get it down. During the dialogue, offer constructive suggestions and advice. This process develops thinking, listening, conversation, and speaking skills in your children.

Once your think tank session is over, have them draw up their plans. Older kids can use a computer-aided drafting program. This will provide another set of learning opportunities in art, drafting, geometry, and computer skills. A few more learning activity ideas to include are:

Begin with a science unit on trees — particularly how they are nourished and how they grow. This will give you a better understanding of some of the logistics of construction.

Create a list of needed materials. If you have scrap lumber that you want to use, measure it and determine if that is feasible.

Research the toxicity of different types of wood -- pressure treated, oak, etc. -- and the relative precautions for each.

Plan a field trip to a tree nursery and learn everything you can about trees from the arborist there.

The Building Phase

The next phase of your project is the building phase. Some of the best memories are made while working together. The interaction between parents and children, siblings, and even friends can build bonds that last a lifetime.

"If I were building a treehouse with a child," shared Pete Nelson in an interview, "I would want him to learn that the experience of working with one's hands, with friends or family, is a joyful time -- not like writing a term paper is a painful thing. Building a treehouse is never a painful thing."

If you are working with different ages of children, keep the little guys busy counting nails, making piles of five and multiplying them, or comparing the lengths of different boards. (Are you seeing the math lessons here?) They can also act as errand runners or drink fetchers. However, don't miss the opportunity to train them in some basic carpentry skills like swinging a hammer. For your school-aged children:

If you choose to use a design from

a book, your older child can learn to read and interpret the plans.

A research project might be to discover the appropriate time to use nails and the time to use screws or bolts.

Have the child interview a carpenter and write a paper about what he learned.

The Enjoyment Phase

The moment you have been waiting for -- the enjoyment phase. Here is where your children will meet with friends, read books, or have sleepovers with cousins.

Before getting started, they may want to decorate. If you do not already have a barn full, get some discounted paint from your local hardware store and let them go. Bean bag chairs, thrift store finds, or cast-offs from Mom can act as furnishings. An old fruit box with a piece of plywood makes a fine table and benches can be made of scrap lumber.

Before hoisting items up the ladder, have your kids draw a floor plan to scale. Measure a few pieces of furniture and determine what will fit.

Hook up a pulley system to make the hoisting easier. Turn this into a lesson on simple machines.

Practice art and sewing skills with making signs or creating a flag.

Pete Nelson said, "A treehouse is a place where you can discover who you might become." How about taking the time this summer to provide that place for your children? Who knows, they just might learn something in the process.

Resources

Whether building a treehouse intimidates you or not, here are a few resources to give you ideas and help you with the technical aspects of building.

Treehouses You Can Actually Build by David and Jeanie Stiles outlines five basic treehouse designs that can be adapted for different situations. Even the most inexperienced builders can follow the simple line drawings and instructions in this book.

Home Tree Home: Principles of Treehouse Construction and Other Tall Tales by Peter Nelson and Gerry Hadden is the most comprehensive guide in building treehouses from the simplest design to an adult retreat with modern conveniences. This book covers site selection, safety issues, tree care, and more.

Black & Decker's The Complete Guide to Treehouses by Philip Schmidt features step-by-step details to building three different treehouses, complete with plans.

Sections on zoning laws, platform basics, and installing windows are included.

Treehouse Workshops by Pete Nelson. These five-day workshops walk you through all phases of constructing a treehouse no matter what your skill level is. Offered in various locations around the US, the workshops include tree selection, climbing how-to, tool safety, and specialty hardware. For more information, visit their website at www.treehouseworkshops.com.



Charles Reid

VETERAN FARMERS

By Steven Jones

*They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks
— Isaiah 2:4*

18 years ago, Charles Linwood Reid finished up a 30 year career in the United States Marines. He served during the Vietnam War and then up through the first Gulf War. He served as a logistics specialist.

"I had PTSD, and part of the way I dealt with that was through living a regimented life," he said, so he stayed in the Marines as long as he could.

He retired in 1996.
"Your body just gets worn out," he said.

A North Carolina native, Charles returned to his home state and went to church at First Baptist in Jacksonville, North Carolina.

His church had about 11 acres. They kept a garden on the property, for church members and area food banks.

Seeing a chance to step up and help his community, Charles started working with Rev. William McCoy, also a retired Marine, on the property as a volunteer in 1997.
"It's called agri-therapy," Charles

said. Since then, he's spent the last 17 years working on the farm and with his church as a volunteer with the Step Ministry and the Second Chance Mission.

Last year, Charles joined the North Carolina Extension Office Farm Incubator Program in Onslow County. As part of the program, the retired Marine is working a quarter acre. He's growing one-crop -- Cabbage Collards -- and donating all of it to the Second Chance Mission and area charities.

"Anybody that needs it," he said. Charles is one of several members of the class who served in the military.

Robert Roberts Jr. left the Marines in 2012. He's been working a piece of property in the county.

He also joined the program in 2013.

"I enjoy growing things," he said.

"It's fulfilling and challenging."

Both Charles and Roberts are part of a growing community of farmers in the United States who left the military and went right to the fields.

THE FARMER VETERAN COALITION

The Farmer Veteran Coalition started in 2008.

Michael O'Gorman, the executive director, started the group with a specific mission in mind.

"I started the Farmer Veteran Coalition thinking I could help a small number of veterans start their farming careers," he said. It turned out to be a much bigger program.

"What we tapped into was a gold-

mine -- a generation of men and women in search of the same sort of higher calling that led them into military service."

People like Charles, who views the opportunity to farm for his community as a continuation of his personal tradition of service.

"I don't know what's wrong with me," he said, laughing. "I can't stop."

Organizations like the Farmer Veteran Coalition work with farmer veterans to help continue that mission.

"We need to strike fast to make this wonderful dream a reality," he said.

The Farmer Veteran Coalition works with veterans by providing micro-loans to farmer veterans, career counseling, mentorship programs, fellowships, educational opportunities and more.

The organization also works to promote the work of Farmer Veterans, specifically by their Homegrown by Heroes labeling program.

"Consumers and businesses purchasing agricultural products will begin to see this logo at the point-of-purchase and on business signage, enabling them to select products that support our country's farmer veterans," the group states.

"We believe that veterans possess the unique skills and character needed to strengthen rural communities and create sustainable food systems for all," the group states on their website.

If you think about it, it makes sense. Agriculture businesses and

farms -- especially sustainable businesses and farms -- are multidisciplinary organizations requiring knowledge of entomology, cellular biology, ecology, machinery, mechanics, engineering, plumbing, mathematics and ... well, a whole lot of different things.

Military personnel, trained to deal with constantly changing environments, would seem to be uniquely situated to make a solid go of farming.

"They understand the commitment to achieving organizational goals and objectives and have demonstrated the ability

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to work efficiently and effectively within multi-cultural environments," states the government-run veterans employment site Feds Hire Vets. And a sense of self-discipline is a huge boon to farmers, beginning farmers or otherwise, a trait veterans are known for. In fact, for veterans like Charles, the environment found in farming -- outdoors, labor intensive, multi-tiered, complex -- are the exact environments they

thrive in. "They're both consistent," Charles said, of the commonalities between military service and farming. While on the face of it, that statement seems strange (farms and military environs are from the outside, decidedly inconsistent), it does make sense. Farming and military service require constant work and organization. Without which, as the old saying goes, you're just growing weeds.

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1840 Farm is proud to introduce our new Americana Collection. Each handmade basket in this collection will feature fabrics in a blend of patriotic colors and display a five pointed star stitched on its base. A donation will be made to The Farmer Veteran Coalition for every basket sold from this special collection.



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ABOUT THE FARMER VETERAN COALITION

The Farmer Veteran Coalition is devoted to creating a new generation of farmers and leaders, while developing viable employment in the communities they serve.

The group offers a variety of programs devoted to helping farmers financially and otherwise. To find out more about the Farmer Veterans Coalition, check out their website here. You can also register for their

program, Homegrown by Heroes here.

The program is open for any veteran or active duty member of the United States Military, regardless of when they served.





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Dandelion Wine

By Alexandra Michaels

You may have a yard full of dandelions this time of year, and if you do, we suggest you pull them, but only so you can make this delightful libation. Dandelion wine is a wonderful tradition and if you can get some put up this summer, you'll thank yourself by Fall and Winter when you have this to serve to holiday guests. Enjoy!

DANDELION WINE RECIPE

- 10 to 12 Cups Dandelions (Flowers only)
- 1 C Honey
- 2 ½ Pounds Sugar
- 1 Orange rind, chopped
- 1 Lemon rind, chopped
- 1 Gallon Water
- 2 Tbsp. fresh, chopped ginger
- 5 Cloves
- 1 Package yeast
- 1 Cup Orange juice
- 1/2 Cup Lemon juice

Combine dandelion flowers, honey, sugar, orange rind, and lemon rind in a large pot.

Boil water in a separate container and pour over flower mixture. Bring mixture back to a simmer for 30 minutes. Allow to cool to room temperature.

Add prepared yeast. Read and follow manufacturer's directions for hydrating yeast before adding it.

Add orange juice, lemon juice, and spices.

Cover in a non-reactive container; ceramic, glass, or enamel and set aside for a least a month in a dark place to ferment. Strain and decant into sterilized jars. Seal. Let wine season for three months in a cool, dark place before serving.





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TALKING CHICKEN SCRATCH WITH LISA

FROM FRESH EGGS DAILY
BY: LISA STEELE

Q: I keep hearing about 'heat-tolerant' breeds of chickens but what does that really mean?

A: Chickens can handle cold far better than heat. Overheating in hens which can lead to heat exhaustion or even death in extreme cases in the summer is a very real concern for chicken keepers. Some breeds fare bet-

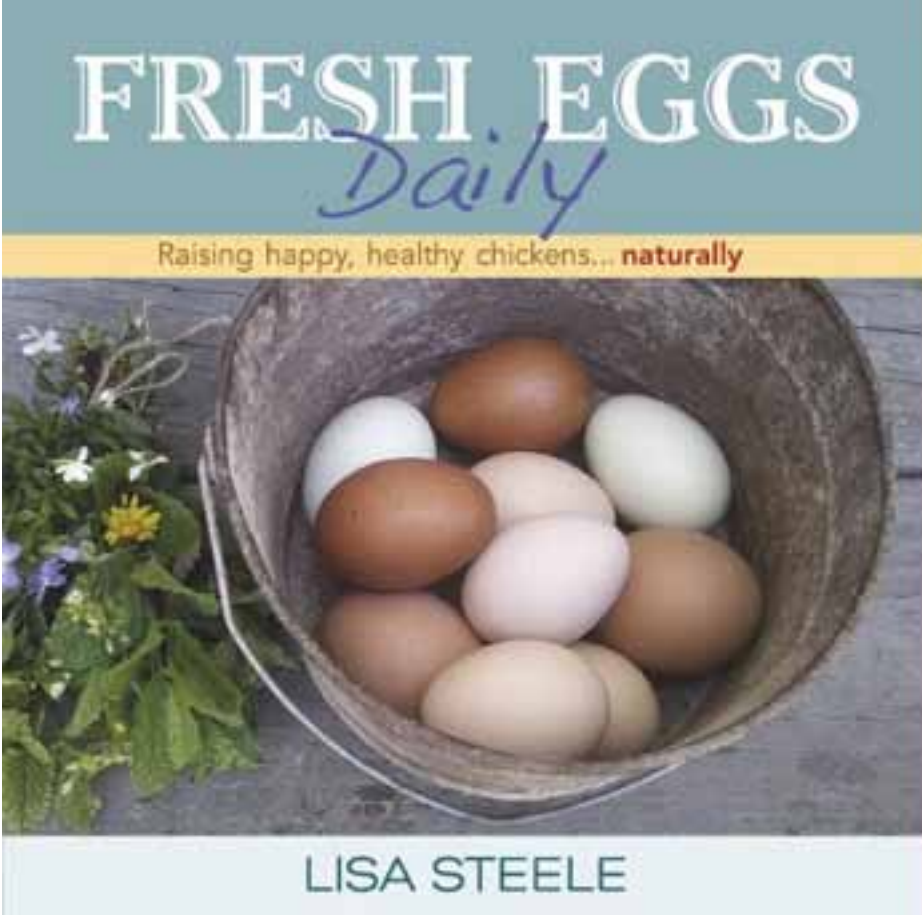
ter in the heat than others. For example, the Mediterranean breeds such as Penedesencas, Andalusians, Anconas and Leghorns which are smallish breeds, usually light-colored with large combs can handle the heat better than a breed that has a larger frame, and is darker in color with a small comb. A chicken's comb acts as a radiator for the

hen, helping to draw heat out of the body. Chickens will also hold their wings away from their bodies and pant to stay cool. Generally, younger chickens do better in the heat than older hens.

Q: I know that chickens need plenty of shade and cool water in the summer to stay cool, but what else can I do to help them when the temperatures rise?

A: My chickens love a treat of frozen watermelon or cantaloupe halves. That helps cool them down and also keeps them

hydrated. Providing tubs of water for your chickens to stand in is also appreciated and you can add a block of ice to keep the water cold longer. Skip the cracked corn or scratch in the summer, since digesting the grains can raise chickens' body temperature. To help them stay cool at night you can freeze water in milk jugs or water bottles and put them in the coop for your hens to perch on to sleep at night. Blowing a fan across the jugs helps circulate cool air. I like to call that 'redneck air conditioning' for them!



FRESH EGGS DAILY
Raising happy, healthy
chickens...naturally
by: Lisa Steele

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Spruce Syrup

Photos and stories by Jeff DeBels

Every year, spring slips into summer so quickly that I barely notice. Last night I was shaking off a cold rain. This morning I broke a sweat walking to my car. Somewhere in the time between, buds began to appear on the red spruce trees.

In addition to marking the transition between seasons, spruce buds can be harvested and used to make spruce syrup and spruce beer. The

buds are ready to pick when they are bright green and still covered with a thin woody sheath.

Grab a bucket, remove the sheaths, and you're ready to cook. Spruce syrup is a tangy alternative to maple syrup.

When brewing beer, you can use spruce buds in place of hops. These buds have loads of Vitamin C to go along with their fresh, earthy taste.



MAKING SPRUCE SYRUP

I learned to make spruce syrup from a friend who grew up among the European spruce of the French Alps. Start with about a gallon of red spruce buds.

Remove the woody sheaths and put them into a five gallon pot. Fill the pot with enough water to cover them generously. Bring the water to a boil, cover, and let it simmer for about two hours. The longer you decoct the buds, the stronger the flavor will be. Strain out the buds and return the water to the pot. Spruce buds don't contain as much sugar as ma-

ple sap, so you'll want to add your own. How much and what kind is a matter of taste. Start by stirring in a cup of sugar as you bring the syrup back to a boil.

As with making maple syrup, there is the long, slow process of boiling it down. This will take many hours and you may add more sugar as you continue. Once you hit the right consistency and sweetness, turn it off and let it cool. Spruce syrup can be stored in a mason jar in the refrigerator, where it will last for a year or more.

Spruce Pale Ale



Photos and Stories
by Jeff DeBellis



Red spruce buds have been used to make beer at least since the days of Colonial America when the British Royal Navy used it to treat scurvy.

A recipe from 1760 reads:

*Take seven Pounds of good spruce & boil it well till the bark peels off, then take the spruce out and put three gallons of molasses to the liquor & and boil it again, scum it well as it boils, then take it out the kettle & put it into a cooler, boil the remainder of the water sufficient for a barrel of thirty gallons, if the kettle is not large enough to boil it together, when milkwarm in the cooler put a pint of yeast into it and mix well. Then put it into a barrel and let it work for two or three days, keep filling it up as it works out. When done working, bung it up with a tent peg in the barrel to give it vent every now and then. It may be used in up to two or three days after. If wanted to be bottled it should stand a fortnight in the cask. It will keep a great while.**

Unless you have a barrel and a tent peg in your kitchen that you've been itching to use, I would recommend a more contemporary method. Spruce buds' have a fresh, citrusy taste lends itself perfectly to a pale ale.

Start with a pale ale brewing kit or recipe. It will usually have three kinds of hops that it asks you to add to the boil – bittering, flavor, and aroma. The difference in these has less to do with the type of hop itself and more to do with how long you boil each one. The longer you boil the hops, the less flavor and aroma they will impart to the brew. I like using spruce buds to replace the aroma hops, adding them for the last five minutes of the boil. If the recipe calls for one ounce of hops, use four ounces of spruce buds.

A few weeks later you'll have a batch of delicious home-made spruce pale ale. There's no better way to welcome the summer.

*Recipe from the journal of General Jeffrey Amherst, Governor-General of British North America, 1960





Sitting down to a salad is one of spring's greatest joys. After a long winter of heavy root vegetables a fresh, cool salad is a welcome treat. Salads have for years followed the same recipe; lettuce or spinach, tomatoes, carrots, onions and croutons. Salads in many restaurants lack even some of those basic ingredients. Have you ever sat down to eat and thought, isn't there a more vibrant option?

Have you even considered flower petals? Your flower garden may be just the ticket to livening up your salads, ice cream, teas and cooking. When it comes to harvesting flowers for consumption some caution is in order. Flowers and formal flower gardens are one of the most heavily treated garden types. As a precaution do not harvest petals from public gardens, along roads or from an-

ewhere soil quality is questionable. The safest way is to find a trusted gardener or friend, or to start your own flower garden with some of the varieties. When harvesting only collect the petals and discard the pistils and stamens. Be careful consuming flowers if you have severe pollen allergies. While some varieties are safe in small amounts others may cause severe reactions. If you have allergies start with small amounts spaced a few days apart and monitor for any reactions.

Keeping petals fresh is easy, simply wrap in a moist paper towel, place in an airtight container and refrigerate for up to ten days. You can also dry most varieties to be added to teas or cooking as a spice.

There are hundreds of edible flowers, many exotic and not well known. Here are ten that are common:



Allium:

The name may not sound familiar but this family of flowers include leeks, chives and garlic. All of the blossoms from this family are edible and have similar flavors to the more commonly used parts.



Chicory:

These beautiful blue flowers have graced our roadways for years but they also make a wonderfully colorful addition to our flower gardens and plates. The petals and buds are both edible and have a mildly bitter flavor that complements overly sweet dressings. Dried chicory roots has also been ground and used as a coffee substitute for centuries.

Carnations:

Carnations are for more than just prom gowns. The petals are sweet and make a good addition to sherberts and ice creams.



Clover: All of the clover plant is edible including the leaves, but the flowers are particularly sweet with a slight taste of licorice. They can be dried and ground to add flavor to homemade ice creams or wilted into salads along with the leaves.



Lavender:

Lavender is used for more than just a potpourri. Its flowers are sweet and perfumed but many people find them a bit spicy.

Lilac:

Lilacs are very aromatic and their petals have a pungent citrus flavor. They compliment sea food dishes well and add a note of spring to salads.



➤ EDIBLE FLOWERS
ADD AMAZING TASTE,
AROMA, AND COLOR
TO FOODS. ➤



Rose: All varieties of rose are edible with more pronounced flavors in the darker colored varieties. Be sure to remove the bitter white base of the petal before using. They are excellent in desserts like ice creams and pies.



Marigolds: It has been well known for years in the agricultural community that marigolds are good for feathered livestock like chickens, guineas and ducks. The flowers are peppery, tangy and mildly spicy in flavor and are a great addition to many Mexican dishes. Mexican cooks have been using marigolds for decades.

Squash and

Pumpkin: These huge blossoms are excellent for stuffing, just be sure to remove the stamens and pistils before eating. They are often served in high end restaurants. They have a similar, but milder, flavor to the variety of squash that they will go on to produce.



Sunflowers: We all love roasted sunflower seeds but the petals of this wonderful plant are also edible. The bud can also be harvested and steamed like an artichoke to add dimension to a meal.

Read more from Carolyn [here](#).

➤ THE NEXT TIME YOU WALK THROUGH YOUR FLOWER GARDEN BE SURE TO STOP AND EAT THE ROSES. ➤

Magnolia Flower Vinegar

Ingredients:

- 1 Jam jar with a tight fitting, rust proof lid
- 1 Bottle of white rice wine vinegar
- Plenty of fresh magnolia flowers. (Nibble on a few petals to find the sweetest varieties)

Stuff as many magnolia flowers and buds as possible into the jar, pushing down with a spoon to remove as much air space as possible.

Pour the vinegar over the flowers to the top of the jar.

Close the lid tight and shake lightly. Place the jar in a cool dark cupboard for minimum a week before use. The longer the steeping time the stronger the flavor. The vinegar will turn a pretty pink color.

Use as a salad dressing or a dressing over fish or vegetables.



MATH AND SCIENCE ALL AROUND US: EVERYDAY INQUIRY FOR BRAINS OF ALL AGES

BY: DEEDEE HUGHES

At Oak Meadow, we love to encourage students in active, experiential learning. Here are just a few ideas of how math and science skills can be explored and expanded in the natural course of daily experiences.

Math and Science in the Garden

Preschoolers: count and sort seeds; loosen soil to prepare the seed bed and observe the insects living in the soil.

K-2nd grade: measure the seed bed and how far apart seeds should be planted; keep a watering chart; observe soil erosion from watering and adjust the soil to prevent water

run-off.

3rd-5th grade: draw each phase from seed to harvest; collect and dry seeds for next year; record the number of seeds produced per individual fruit/vegetable.

6th-8th grade: calculate the ratio of seed planting depth to plant spacing (or seed size to how long it takes to sprout) and look for patterns; measure and chart seed growth.

High School: study soil composition and determine soil amendments; chart sun/shade ratio in each part of the garden; design a planting chart based on soil and sun/shade needs; calculate yield per plant type and plant yield per square foot.

Math and Science in the House

Preschoolers: count and sort while table setting and doing laundry; divide indoor pot-bound plants or take cuttings to root new plants.

K-2nd grade: measure ingredients in a recipe; compare baking yeast bread vs. quick bread.

3rd-5th grade: read and follow a recipe; find out how many walnuts need to be cracked to get $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of nuts or how many lemons to juice for a gallon of lemonade.

6th-8th grade: double and half recipes; experiment with how batter consistency affects pancakes; compare unit pricing when grocery shopping; calculate price of store-bought vs. homegrown veggies.

High School: create a household budget based on household spending in the prior three months; experiment with recipe substitutions; calculate cost savings of line drying clothes vs. using a dryer.

Math and Science Out and About

Preschoolers: build a sandcastle and then pour water on it; dam up a stream; count the number of steps it takes to walk across the yard, and then the number of steps it takes to run across; make rock

towers.

K-2nd grade: make and fly a kite; make the longest tunnel possible in the sand or dirt; build a three-sided structure, a four-sided structure, a five-sided structure and keep adding sides (you can use sticks, scrap lumber, dirt and bark, etc.); make a dog agility course (this can be used for kids, too!).

3rd-5th grade: count the number of shells, rocks, insects, etc. found in a three foot square section of beach, forest, or meadow and compare to another three foot section somewhere else; find out how long you have to stand under a sprinkler or in the rain before your hair or clothes start dripping.

6th-8th grade: design and build a tree house; figure out how far your bike travels in each gear with ten pedal rotations; build a campfire (if you don't have a fire pit, make one or use your sandbox).

High School: make a business plan for earning money doing something you enjoy; train a dog or horse; make a solar oven and dry fruit in it; volunteer for beach or river cleanup, trail maintenance, or at an animal shelter.

Math and Science at Night

Preschoolers: take a walk with a flashlight (and a friend); count

lightning bugs or bats; listen to the night sounds.

K-2nd grade: make animal shadows on the wall with a flashlight; watch the stars come out; turn on an outside light and see what kinds of moths it attracts.

3rd-5th grade: take a walk in the moonlight; look for nocturnal animals in your yard (or signs of them the next day); map nighttime sounds (which direction are they coming from) and try to figure out the source.

6th-8th grade: keep track of

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sunrise, sunset, moon rise and moon phase; look at the night sky through a telescope; find the dew point.

High School: map a meteor shower (how many sightings and in which quadrants of the sky); measure and chart the movement of the stars; observe animals coming to a water source at dusk or on a moonlit night.

DeeDee Hughes finds math to be eminently satisfying and science to be endlessly fascination. She loves to find fun ways to explore both, for work and for pleasure.



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Homeschool Convention



COLUMBIA, SC
July 24th - July 26th

The Midlands Homeschool Convention is scheduled to begin July 24th. The brainchild of homeschool advocates in South Carolina, the convention is designed to help parents and educators create the best homeschooling experience for their children and students.

The convention features speakers like Andrew Pudewa, Dr. Mick Zais and Zan Tyler. We spoke with organizers about the event in May. Here is the interview:

WHY A HOMESCHOOLING CONVENTION?

When we contacted Andrew Pudewa about coming to the Midlands Homeschool Convention, his response was by far the most polite rendering of what many others seem to be thinking, "South Carolina is the hoppin' state for homeschool conventions these days!"

We are thrilled that he understood MHC as the positive addition it is and was happy to come and even

bring his High School Essay Writing Intensive for the morning of Thursday the 24th.

Others have simply asked, "Why host another homeschool convention in SC?"

We have several reasons, but we'll begin with the most pragmatic. As they say in real estate, "location, location, location."

Many of you, like most of us on the planning team, make a financial sacrifice to homeschool your children. There are literally thousands of us in the Midlands region for whom a three day trip to the up-state or out of state is a financial impossibility — or at least a strain. Furthermore, with the common core and other problems in public schools, there are thousands more people in the region who are considering homeschooling. Most of them will never take the leap into home education if they perceive their nearest option to find help is two hours away.

Finally, being centrally located in Columbia makes a much more convenient travel option for those from places like Florence, Myrtle Beach, Aiken, Orangeburg, and Charleston. It is arguably a much more interesting destination as well, boasting sites such as the Riverbanks Zoo, the State House, the State Museum, The Children's Museum, and the Columbia Metropolitan Museum of Art; all offering great options for pre convention field trips. So, while we cannot save everyone the hotel costs, we are working with the Columbia Convention center to find affordable accommodations for out

of town guests for whom Columbia will prove the better option.

Location aside, we have seen a certain cultural shift in the larger homeschool community. In the past, the large majority of homeschoolers were religiously motivated, and all the conventions were so focused. However, that reality has started to change. Many homeschoolers now are not religiously motivated and are not interested in a religiously centered convention. While some members of our organizational team would list religious reasons as central to their motives for homeschooling, we also have a large representation of those who homeschool for purely educational or practical reasons. So, we have worked to create a convention that will appeal more broadly to homeschoolers of all personal backgrounds and educational approaches.

Our hope to build MHC as a centrally located, inclusive convention that will help bridge the divisions in the growing homeschool community. By keeping an education focus we hope that we can learn to learn from each other and become a homeschool family.

Consider, Tuesday, February 5, 2013 I was still settling into my position as president at SCAIHS. By amazing coincidence I was having coffee with Dave Graham from SCHEA when I first heard about House Bill 3478. Yes, that House Bill. The one that threatened to shut down all third option home schools.

That was the start of a long day of

releasing statements against the bill and trying to personally call every third option leader. I was hoarse from talking (mostly to answering machines) by the end of the day. I also got an education in just how much distrust existed between the different homeschool groups. I spent half my day answering angry emails accusing me of all sorts of evil designs and explaining that I and SCAIHS actually had nothing to do with the bill.

I had a baptism by fire into the realities of divisions within the homeschool community. So, from that point I made it my mission to encourage greater unity within the home school community. Now that I am a leader in the third option Alliance Homeschool Accountability Association and director at the Midlands Homeschool Convention, I find I am in an even better place for promoting cooperation.

HB 3478 is long dead, but the House members who proposed it are still in office. Furthermore the groups behind it, those who pushed it and funded the fight for it still don't like us. I know because I've met them and spoken with them. What has this to do with a convention? Simply, political rallies don't unite a community; there were people arguing with each other at the political rally to fight against HB 3478.

No, the best institution to resist over reaching government is not a political institution. It is a family. If we come together on matters that we all care about: if we work together in learning how to teach

our kids more effectively and if we build friendships across those all too many potential dividing lines around tools to be better teachers, then we can build the community—a family—that can effectively resist any attempts to destroy our educational liberties.

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS WITH THIS CONVENTION?

Aside from those above, we want to genuinely help answer educational questions and provide interactive learning experiences for as many homeschool families as possible. Moreover, we have tried to create a convention that someone who has never homeschooled could attend and leave with everything they need to get started including their accountability membership and connections to support groups.

WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE CHANGED IN HOMESCHOOLING THAT THIS CONVENTION COULD HELP FACILITATE?

Again, we hope it will remove some of the divisions in the homeschool community. Also, we'd love to destroy the stereotypes about homeschooling. In a world where every business, every industry -- everything -- is literally built around individualization, options, and choice, why should homeschooling be seen as one size fits all?

DO YOU EXPECT TO DO THE CONVENTION EVERY YEAR?

We are already planning 2015, and some vendors and speaker who couldn't make it this year are so interested in what we are doing that they are asking to be put on the schedule for 2015. Our goal is to become the annual SC convention that everyone looks forward to.

ARE YOU STILL TAKING VOLUNTEERS? WHO CAN PEOPLE CONTACT ABOUT

VOLUNTEERING?

Yes. just go to the Volunteer registration under the guest info section of midlandshomeschoolconvention.com.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'D LIKE TO ADD?

We are committed to serving SC homeschoolers. Check us out. See what we have to offer. Give us feedback. This year will be great, and we'd love to have your help in making future years even better.



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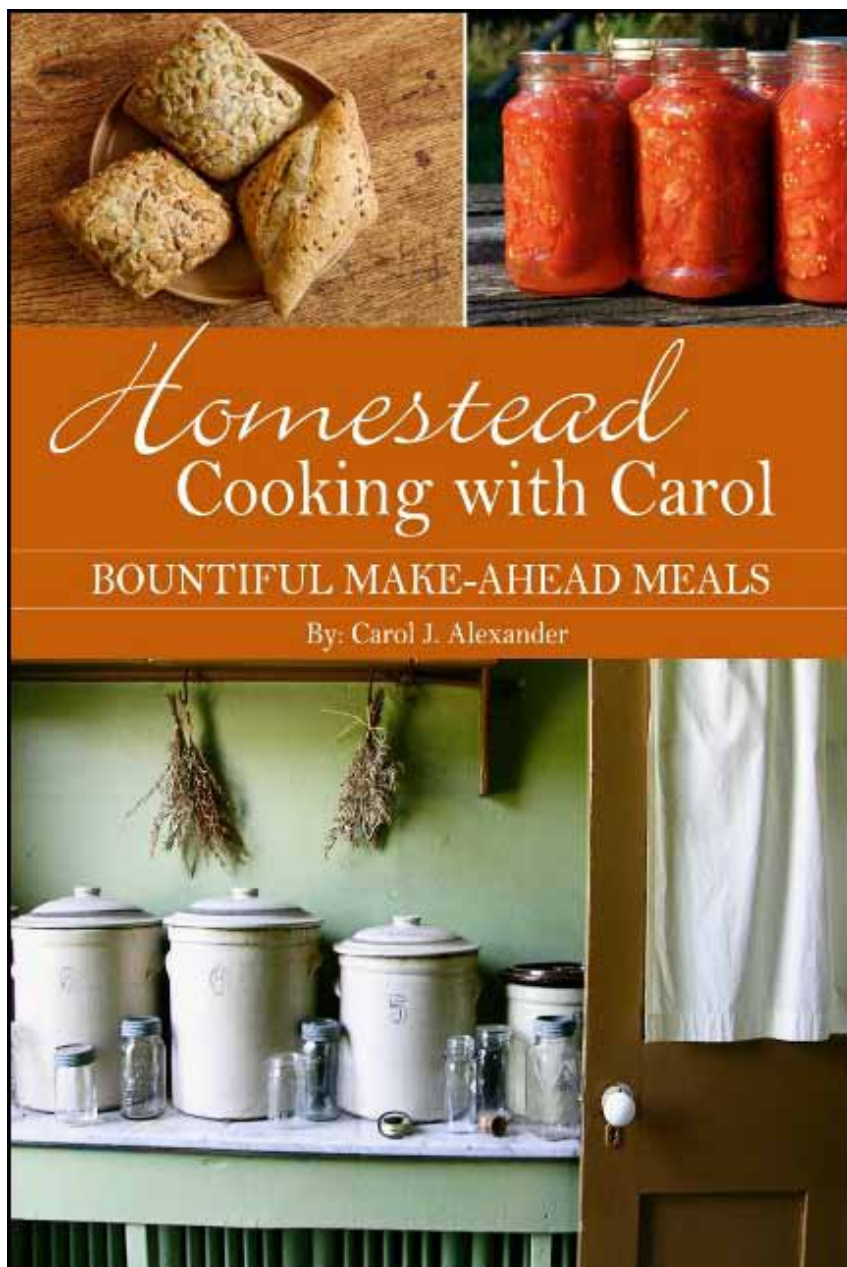
Carol J. Alexander, our homeschooling columnist and the author of a half-dozen self-published books, recently published her latest book: *Homestead Cooking with Carol: Bountiful Make-Ahead Meals*.

In today's quick fix, always running culture, cooks get used to producing meals in shorter and shorter time frames: 30 minutes is a maximum.

However, homesteading families

often make meals from scratch, which means sometimes a single meal can take hours to produce. While that is exactly why many families go into homesteading or adopt homesteading methods, sometimes, it is still helpful to be able to produce a meal in minutes. And that's where Carol's latest book comes in. It may seem like a cookbook, but *Homestead Cooking with Carol* is more a book about methodology.

She explains the philosophy behind



creating meals, still from scratch, but using pre-planning and other methods to make meals easier and quicker to produce, while still sticking with the slow food ideas many of us have about cooking. The book is short, but its skeletal structure is a bonus: It encourages readers to be creative and use the ideas presented to their own advantage. The book isn't a cookbook, but Carol provides concrete ideas to get her readers started.

Here's an interview with Carol, about the book and about why she wrote the book:

FS: Why did you write this book?

CA: In the movie *Miss Potter*, Beatrix Potter says, "There's something delicious about writing those first few words of a story. You can never quite tell where they will take you." That is how I feel about *Homestead Cooking with Carol: Bountiful Make-ahead Meals*. I didn't intend to write this book as it turned out. Actually, I cannot for the life of me remember where I thought I was going in the first place. But I am so glad with where it took me because I think that the end product is a great reference for all home-makers, whether they

grow their own food or not.

FS: THE FUN THING ABOUT THIS BOOK IS IT ISN'T A COOKBOOK, BUT MORE A COOKING STYLE BOOK. CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCE?

CA: When I want a cookbook, I expect to purchase a book of recipes. Maybe it will include a few tips like how to knead bread or how long to bake a turkey. But basically, in my

opinion, a cookbook is a collection of recipes with a certain theme. Homestead Cooking with Carol is a method. It takes the cook from harvest to table.

It teaches the reader how to prepare her food while she's dealing with bushels so that when the harvest is over she doesn't face a lot of preparatory steps every evening.

FS: WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO WRITE THIS BOOK INSTEAD OF A TRADITIONAL COOKBOOK?

CA: I am not a foodie. I do not have a repertoire of fascinating or scintillating recipes.

I just know how to get hungry bellies filled with nutritious food.

This book discusses more of the how's than the what's. And to me, the how is more important.

FS: CAN YOU SUM UP YOUR COOKING STYLE, AS EXPRESSED IN THIS BOOK?

CA: I have two cooking mottoes. The first is eat your food as close to the way God made it as possible. My kids will tell you I sang them to sleep at night by that motto; but I will tell you they are exaggerating. To me that motto means that if you have a choice between fried apple pie and applesauce, choose the applesauce.

If you have a choice between applesauce and an apple, eat the apple.

I am not a purist.

You will find a few boxes in my

trash. But "as close as possible" is what I strive for. My second motto is that it's okay to eat plain. I'm a busy lady.

I try to grow as much food as possible on our modest acreage. I homeschool the last two of our six kids and I've been in this homeschooling business for 19 years. I work part-time as a freelance writer.

There are not enough hours in my day for chopping, dicing, braising, marinating, etc. I'm doing good if I can dump and stir and that spells plain cooking.

FS: HOW DID YOU DEVELOP THIS APPROACH TO COOKING?

CA: I'm rarely on the ball. Many days it's four o'clock and I have no clue what is for supper. If everything is frozen, I'm up the creek. So I learned early on that I preferred canning as much of my food as possible.

Canned meat and potatoes do not have to be thought out the day before. Remember, I'm the dump and stir kind of gal.

Once someone gave us a deer already cut into quarters. I didn't want to deal with it that day so I just wrapped it up and stuck it in the freezer.

Big mistake. Not only is a quarter of a deer too much for a meal, it doesn't fit in the pan.

I spent more time messing with that deer after the fact than if I had just dealt with it when it came in the door. Lesson learned.

Another time my tomatoes came

on full force while I was busy traveling with my husband. It couldn't be helped. My daughter just popped all my tomatoes in zip-shut bags and put them into the freezer.

She saved the tomatoes, but I did not get pints of diced tomatoes out of the deal. Once frozen, they turned to mush. So all my tomatoes went into salsa. Experiences like these taught me that if I want meatballs, it's easier to make them when I'm butchering and grinding the meat than months later when the meat is frozen solid. The same holds true with most other things. So, the approach is to know how you want to eat your food come supper time when you are actually harvesting it. That's where the planning comes in.

FS: WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR READERS TO TAKE AWAY FROM THIS BOOK?

CA: That they do not have to succumb to take out or the drive through after a long day of homesteading chores. With a little planning (and I have worksheets that accompany the book) they can prepare their food in advance to make the day to day meal prep work much easier.

I want them to take away a renewed outlook when it comes to cooking. I want them to feel a burden lifted from their shoulders with a feeling of freedom and energy replacing it.

FS: HOW MANY BOOKS HAVE YOU WRITTEN?

CA: I have a series of e-booklets

written for homeschooling homesteaders. *Lessons from the Homestead* are short unit-studies centered around different areas of homestead living.

So far there are five in the series. Other than this series, *Homestead Cooking with Carol: Bountiful Make-ahead Meals* is my first book.

FS: WHERE CAN PEOPLE PURCHASE THE BOOK?

CA: It is available on my blog Everything Home with Carol or on Amazon.

When not in her garden or homestead kitchen, Carol J. Alexander works as a freelance journalist specializing in all things home. Since 2007, her writing has motivated and inspired both new homesteaders and homesteading wannabes in their journeys to living a sustainable lifestyle.

Homeschooling, parenting, natural living, herbal medicine, and frugal living are topics that round out her portfolio.

In addition to her column in From Scratch, Carol's work has appeared in BackHome Magazine, Grit, Hobby Farms, Urban Farm, Capper's Farmer, Home Education Magazine, The Old Schoolhouse, and in regional parenting magazines all over North America.

She lives in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia with her husband, children, and critters of various kinds.

A Children's Garden

By Tessa Zundel

Photo (above and right only)
by O'Boy Organics



Every gardener has a friend in the closest child. Children are drawn to gardens like the tide is drawn to the shore -- its almost as if they can't help themselves. I think even Mr. McGregor had, along his lane, a child who must have loved his garden. Ms. Potter never wrote of any child but Peter Rabbit and Mr. McGregor probably would have shooed her away if he'd seen her, but I bet Peter Rabbit wasn't the only one nicking nasturtiums and pea pods. Wasn't it The Secret Garden's little Mary in that Francis Hodgson Burnett classic who taught us the truth that, "If you look the right way, you can see that the whole world is a garden"? It seems only natural that children should have a space to call their own in the gardens of

their homes but feeling motivated and knowing how to create a children's garden can be a challenge, especially if space or a lack of experience with gardening is hindering you from creating one. Here are a few things to ponder as you consider your children's garden plans. The first requirement is to make sure you have some children on hand. Don't try to do this without their input and please don't take over the project so that everything turns out "just so." The primary purpose of a garden designed for children is to allow the children to garden. Kiddos will surprise you with the things they think of to add to the garden and how hard they're willing to work to make their ideas come to life. You won't be able to make all their dreams come true in

the garden (my son's first request was a live dragon) but you can listen to them and let them know their ideas are inspiring and you're here to help the children take ownership of their garden space.

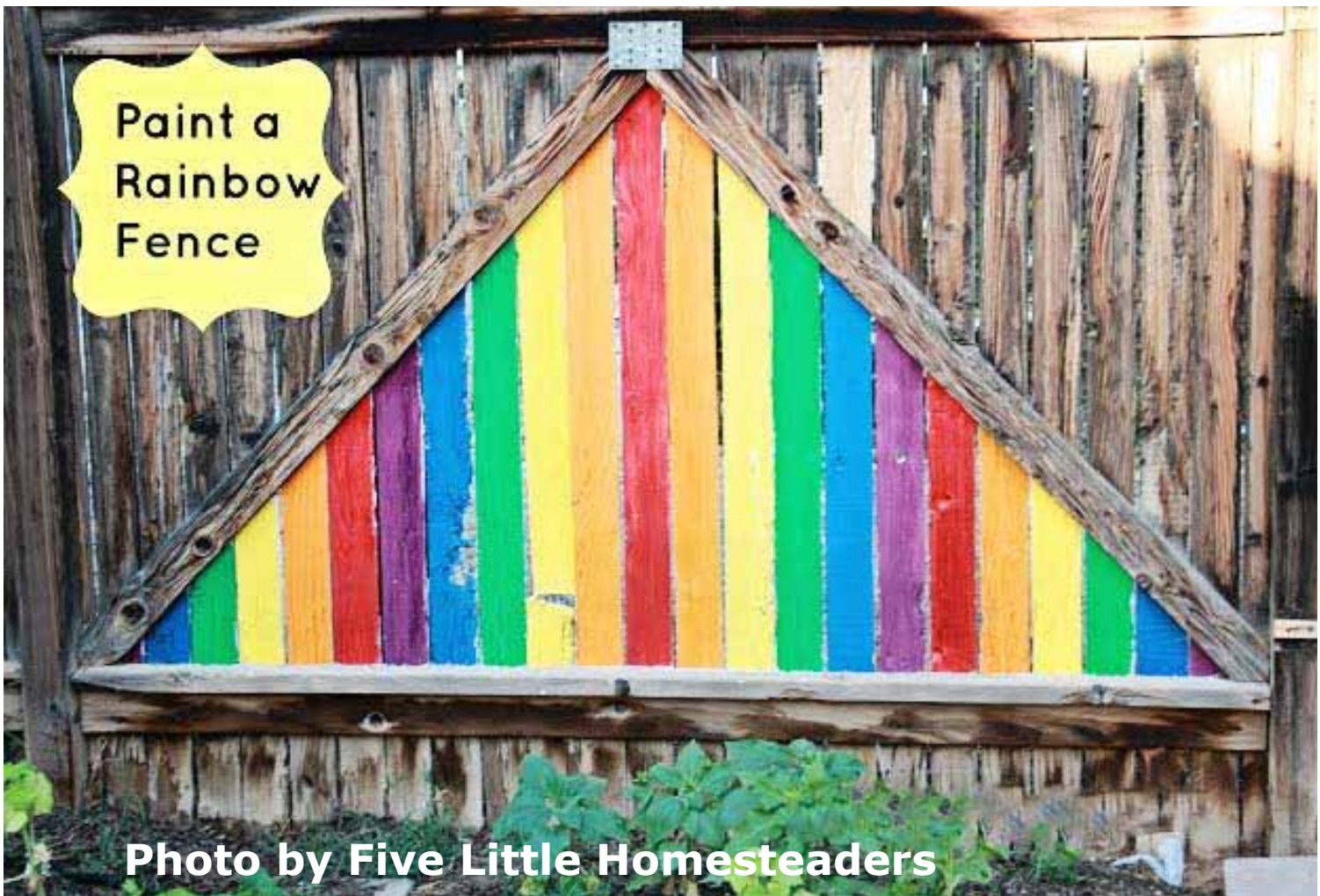
I would also suggest that you make sure, if possible, that the children have access to quality garden tools. The brightly colored garden tool kits you see sold for children are nice for sandboxes but they are of very little use in an actual garden. In my experience, what a young gardener really needs is a good fitting pair of gloves and a spade in a size that they can manage. A sturdy garden fork can be useful, too, especially for weeding. The larger the child, the larger and more useful the tool and the greater their individual responsibility to actively participate in the establishment of the children's garden.

Regardless of ages, I like to live by Ruth Krauss's adage that "A hole is to dig".

The first big decision you need to make is whether or not you and the children want a perennial children's garden or an annual one. A perennial garden will be one that you plant, for the most part, only once with selections that will produce again and again: Flowering shrubs, fruit trees, asparagus, bulbs and anything else that lives longer than one year. This garden, while it doesn't have to remain static, will not move around your property. An annual garden design is meant to last through only one growing cycle and can, therefore, be unique every year. Good examples of simple an-

nual Children's gardens are a child size teepee covered in runner beans or a forest planted in sunflowers. Even if some of the plants reseed themselves, the basic plan is to replace the old annual design for a new one each year.

In her fantastic book on children's gardens *Roots, Shoots, Buckets and Boots*, Sharon Lovejoy shares some great ideas on children's garden designs that are both practical and whimsical. Some design ideas are more about high producing plants like vegetables and others focus on the delight of planting a flower simply because its beautiful. The first year we had her book, we used Lovejoy's design for a Giant's Garden. Ever heard of Walking Stick Kale or Dill's Atlantic Giant Pumpkins? That was an awesome garden year for the children. If following a design or being inspired by an outline of an idea is helpful to you, I highly recommend this great book. We take it out nearly every year. Regardless of how the space ends up looking, its helpful to remember some of the reasons why a family can benefit from giving the children a garden of their own. In our yard we have two main areas that the children use for gardening. There is an established children's garden that we're still filling in with fun ideas as we find them and then there's the family's vegetable garden. In the veggie garden, the kids each have their own 4'x4' raised bed to plant, tend and harvest from; if they don't do it, it doesn't get done. Without calling home-school to order, I've just allowed



my children to learn one of THE most important things they could ever learn -- you reap only what you sow, you do battle with what you leave untended. Some years that means that what a child's garden box produces is a healthy selection of weeds which they must harvest for the goats before the weeds go to seed. When that happens, there is a very real sense of loss. As much as I am here to help with planting seeds and identifying weeds, it is not my job to take away accountability or take over the tasks myself. My daughter was so sad when her heirloom peach tomato refused to produce on the limited amount of water she gave it while she was distracted playing in the swimming pool all growing

season. I didn't need to remind or lecture because the garden did the teaching. My daughter learned that being focused produces far greater rewards than allowing yourself to get distracted and that meaningful work is the thing all other activities should fit themselves around -- not the other way around. When the children are on their gardening game, though, happy lessons are reinforced. Suddenly, a vegetable that was bland in a supper recipe only a month ago tastes so wonderful simply because it was harvested from their garden. There are so many sick neighbors and lonely grandmas to surprise with flowers because the children just can't wait to doorbell ditch their specially grown treas-



ures. Mama, did you know that carrots come in purple?! Did you know there are sunflowers that produce over a thousand seeds per head?! Hey, Pops, did you see this cave of vines we made all by ourselves? Look, they even make these gourds that we'll turn into birdhouses! Apart from life lessons to be gleaned from a children's garden, there are tangible harvests as well. I'm a very utilitarian gardener and I have a tendency to focus on food producing plants. Nothing wrong with that -- ya gotta eat, right? The fact is, food is pleasing and having your children start their gardening ventures with something simple like a tomato or pea vine is a savvy move on your part. Typically, veggie plants like tomatoes, any bean or pea, carrots

and even potatoes are all pretty simple to grow, even in containers if you have limited garden space. Potatoes can be grown in a garbage can!

Herbs, too, are rewarding for the potted children's garden -- pick a scented one like basil or chamomile for your little one to grow and you may just create a love that will last a lifetime.

No garden is complete without flowers and I suggest you pile them on! Flowers are no respecters of age, gender or Lego persuasion - they simply appeal to everyone. Start with great producers like sunflowers, sweet peas and calendula. Buy seed mixes that encourage pollinators to visit your yard. If you're feeling rich, plant a rose -- make it a climbing St. Swithin that will



fill the summer air with Neverland. Learning to be patient is a huge part of learning to be a successful gardener. And a successful person, too, I suppose.

Organics aren't the only things to be found in a well rounded children's garden.

To make sure the fun factor is always in play, ponder some non organic features to include like a winding brick path -- call it The Crooked Mile or paint it yellow to garden in Oz.

Try taking apart some wind chimes and hanging them individually along a fence post and invite the children to coax music out of them with a stick. What about a sandbox hidden under a weeping mulberry tree cave; yes, it will take a few years to train the mulberry but what's your

hurry?

Children do nothing but grow older whether we take the time to observe it or not. Let's show them we have the time to plant a tree together. Speaking of planting, one of the neatest things we've done so far in our children's garden is to build a willow house out of willow cuttings from our tree. We did get a few branches to sprout, remarkably, and if the grapevines and the lace vine don't take it over, one day we'll have a living fairy house. I was informed the other day that there are spiders inside and that one must use a sturdy stick in advance of entering the fairy house. Duly noted. Life is give and take.

Other ideas like chalkboard paint on a garden shed wall or a simple colorful mural will inspire the chil-



dren that their garden, no matter the size, is the perfect place for creation. Outdoor games like Tic-Tac-Toe and Hopscotch are the engaging additions to a children's garden space. Don't think I haven't caught my preteen still playing Hopscotch with my five year old. No one is too cool for the children's garden. Need more?

Create corners with a theme -- the sandbox is the Pirate's Cove where every now and then Dad buries a few pieces of fools gold or other booty. What about a mailbox where family members and friends can leave messages at any time of year? If you've carefully instructed the children on bee safety, have a protective fence and you can afford the indulgence, an observation beehive is one of THE coolest things I've ever seen in a children's gar-

den. My kids are beekeepers themselves and they can sit for long stretches of time doing nothing but watching the bees collecting dew and nectar.

Don't let these ideas inhibit your own creativity -- if you can imagine it, chances are you'll be able to translate it into the children's garden somehow. Ask the kids how it's to be done. You won't be disappointed in the results of any effort it might take to create a simple (or elaborate) garden space for the children in your life. Believe me, it will all be worth it when they can echo our good garden friend Ms. Francis Hodgson Burnett: "The Secret Garden bloomed and bloomed and every morning revealed new miracles".

Read more from Tessa Zundel here.



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Strawberries on 1840 Farm

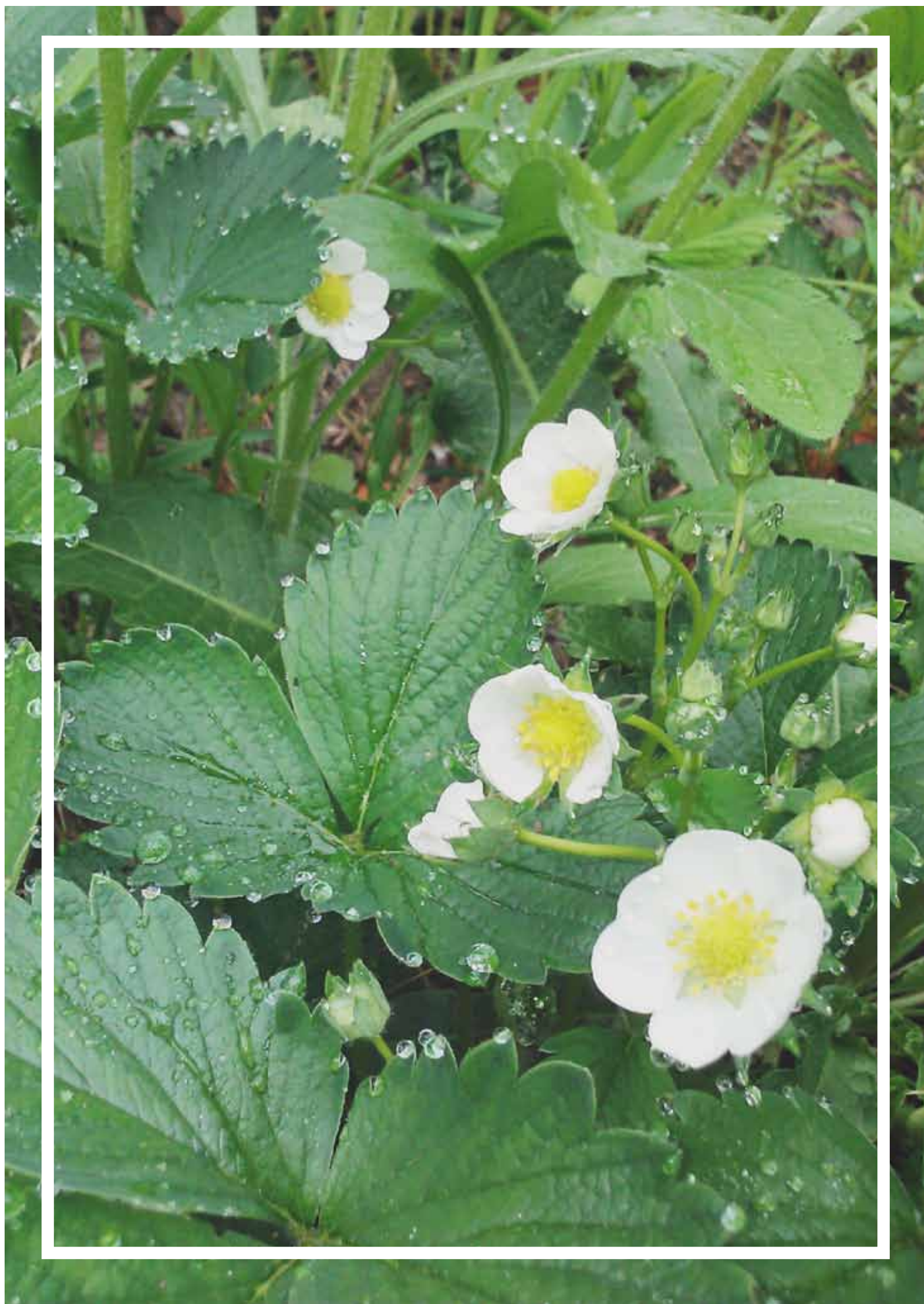
By: Jennifer Burcke

I approach strawberry season with marked anticipation each year. I can't help it, there's just something romantic about a strawberry.

Everything about them is rich and luscious from their shiny red exterior to their earthy, sweet flavor. One look at those plump ripe berries flecked with tiny seeds makes my mouth water and my mind start dreaming of delicious ways to prepare our berry harvest.







Our strawberries are the first flowering fruits to ripen in our garden. Long before the heirloom tomato, pepper, squash, or cucumber plants are showing promise, the strawberries are dotting the landscape with delicate flowers. Those tiny white flowers are a sign of delicious things to come straight from our family garden. As the bees flit from flower to flower, I become increasingly excited about the growing season ahead.

During strawberry season, I find myself making fresh strawberry pie and shortcakes to highlight their fresh flavor. I also love to ensure that we will be able to enjoy the comforting flavor of fresh strawberries throughout our long New England winter. To accomplish that goal, we stock the pantry with rows and rows of glass canning jars filled with homemade strawberry jam. I first made homemade strawberry jam almost a decade ago. We had a bounty of strawberries that year and I have a husband who adores strawberry jam. Finding a use for pounds of fresh berries resting on our farmhouse kitchen counter can become a race against the clock. Bravely attempting to make homemade strawberry jam seemed like the perfect way to transform our abundance of fresh berries into a treat for my husband and the whole family.

At the time, I had never made jam of any kind and my only foray into canning had been a disaster. I

don't use the word disaster lightly here. I had spent a very hot summer's day during our first summer of here at 1840 Farm watching that epic canning disaster unfold. For hours, I toiled over a pile of heirloom tomatoes. I peeled them. I seeded them. I lowered each beautiful glass canning jar into the boiling water canner full of pride. Moments later, I watched as shards of broken glass and bits of diced tomato began to swirl around like a cyclone of despair in the pot of boiling water.

So, when I attempted to make strawberry jam the following spring, I wasn't sure that I was ready to tackle the task of canning the jam. Instead, I hoped to make a fresh batch of jam that we could enjoy straight from the refrigerator. Making the jam was simple and the results were absolutely stunning.

This jam was so delicious that it inspired me to get out the canning pot. I was determined to successfully can this beautiful ruby red jam and line the pantry shelves with it. I'm happy to report that my foray into canning strawberry jam was much more successful than my first attempt at canning tomatoes. Not a single glass jar broke during its time in the boiling water canner. Each jar of jam sealed, emitting that trademark sound that is pure music to a canner's ears.

I did indeed line the pantry shelves with beautiful ruby jars filled to the brim with the trademark flavor of



strawberry season. Each jar did its part to allow my family to enjoy a taste of summer on the darkest winter days, reminding us that each passing day was one day closer to the next strawberry season.

Nearly a decade has passed and we're still making that same strawberry jam recipe. In fact, our sessions making strawberry jam have become a family affair. My husband and children join me in the kitchen. With a record spinning on the turntable, we happily work together to make enough homemade strawberry jam to last all year long.

We love spooning warm spoonfuls of strawberry jam over scoops of fresh homemade ice cream and vanilla bean custard. We drizzle a little over thick slices of my Great Grandmother's daffodil cake. No matter the time of year that we

serve it, that beautiful homemade jam is sure to bring a taste of summer to our family table. Our homemade jam can also be used as a baking ingredient. A bit of our strawberry jam from the pantry can elevate the flavor of any recipe to extraordinary.

Using every last bit of jam ensures that I can look forward to spending a few glorious summer afternoons gathered in our farmhouse kitchen with my family. We'll make next year's stash of strawberry jam and warm memories to last a lifetime. It's no wonder that I look forward to strawberry season each year. I hope that a few of my family's favorite strawberry recipes will inspire you to spend time in your kitchen celebrating and preserving strawberry season.



Jennifer Burcke • 1840 Farm • Food Editor

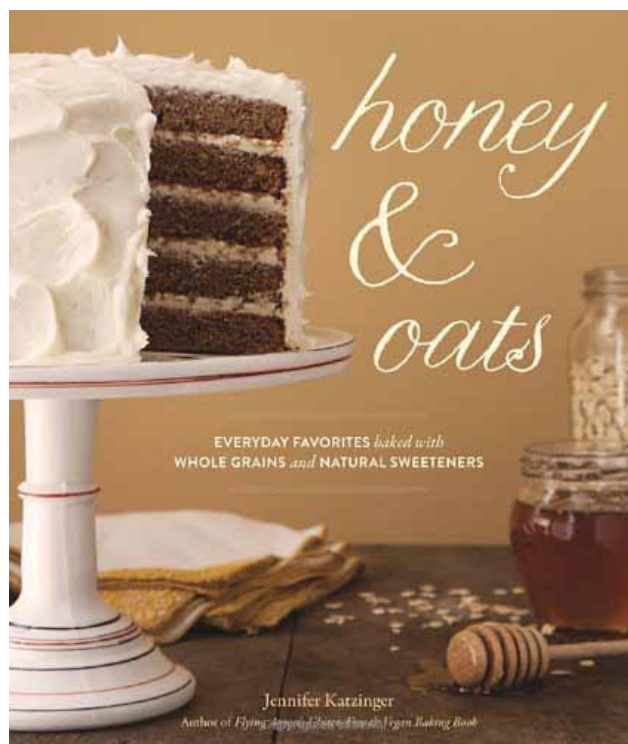
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Most strawberry jam recipes call for adding pectin in order to properly gel the jam.

Strawberries have very little pectin, so a source of pectin must be added. I prefer to use the natural pectin in an apple rather than add commercially produced powdered pectin. I find that an apple adds plenty of pectin along with a touch of tangy flavor that offers a nice counterpoint to the sweet earthiness of the fresh strawberries.

The grated apple softens as the jam cooks, releasing its pectin and becoming nearly unrecognizable in the finished jam. The apple peel should be removed before canning the finished jam. At our house, the apple peel coated in rich strawberry jam is a delicacy. It's like the best fruit leather on earth and is happily devoured by the whole family!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ pounds strawberries, washed, stemmed, and cut into small pieces
- 2 cups (384 grams) granulated sugar
- 1 medium apple, prepared as directed below
- Juice of ½ lemon (approximately 2 Tablespoons)
- 1 Tablespoon vanilla extract

INSTRUCTIONS

Place several plates or large spoons in the freezer for use in gel test. If you are planning to can the jam, ready your canning pot, jars, lids, rings, and canning equipment. I like to use 4 or 8 ounce canning jars when processing this jam. Using a sharp paring knife or vegetable peeler, remove the peel from

the apple in long strips. Core and quarter the apple. Use a grater to grate the apple quarters. Add the grated apple and apple peel to a large non-reactive pot with the strawberries and sugar. Stir gently to combine and place the pot on a burner over medium heat. Bring the mixture to a gentle boil, stirring occasionally. Reduce the heat slightly and continue to boil for 15 minutes, stirring as needed to prevent the sugars from burning. Using a slotted spoon, remove the strawberry pieces from the pot and transfer to a medium bowl. Removing the strawberries will help them to maintain a firmer texture in the final jam.

Continue to boil the liquid in the pot for another 15 minutes. Return the reserved berries to the pot and add the lemon juice. Stir to combine and continue to boil gently for another 15 minutes or until the mixture passes the gel test when allowed to cool on the chilled plates or spoons set aside in the freezer.

While the gel test may sound like a daunting scientific experiment, it is actually a simple, visual method for determining if your jam has reached the ideal consistency. This test will allow you to measure the finished consistency of your jam. If the mixture is too loose, it can be boiled further to allow a bit more of the liquid to evaporate. If the mixture has boiled too long and is slightly too thick, a small bit of liquid can be added to loosen the mixture before canning.

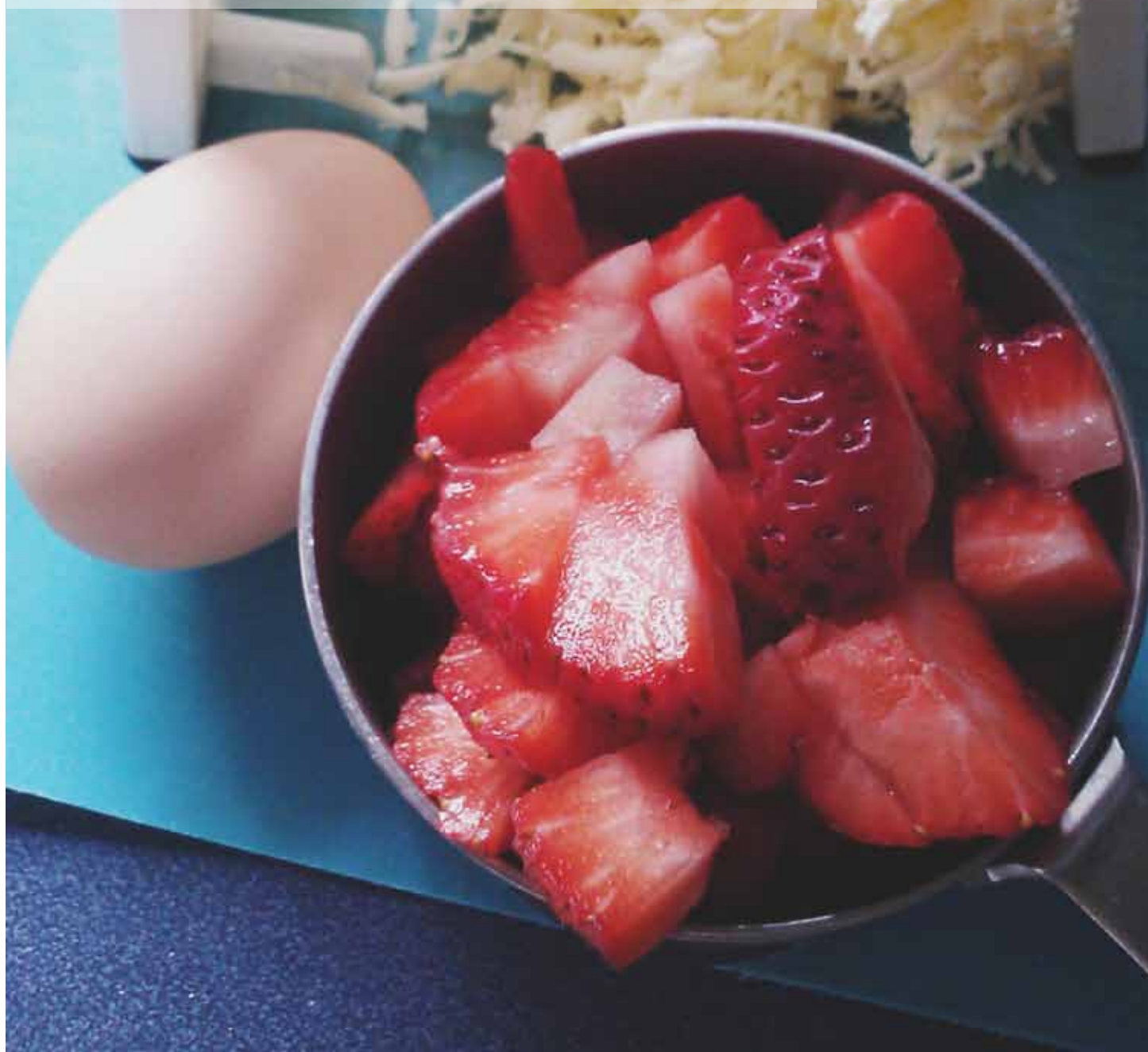
Performing the gel test involves placing a bit of the hot jam on a plate or large spoon that has been chilled in the freezer. When the mixture has been allowed to cool, the consistency can be accurately gauged. When cool, the jam should form a cohesive mixture, forming a wrinkle as it moves when pressed with your finger. If you run a finger through the small puddle of jam, it should split apart and then return to a cohesive puddle moments later.

Once the mixture has passed the gel test, remove the pot from the heat. Remove the apple peel and stir in the vanilla. Ladle hot jam into sterilized 4 or 8 ounce jars leaving $\frac{1}{4}$ inch headspace. Remove air bubbles from the side of the jar. Using a clean cloth, remove any residue from the rim of the jar. Place a lid on the jar and tighten with band. Gently lower the filled jar into the boiling water canner. Repeat until all jars have been added to the pot. Place lid on canning pot. Return water to a boil. Once the water has returned to a boil, process half-pint jars of jam for 15 minutes. Turn off the heat and remove the lid from pot. Allow the jars to rest in the water for at least five minutes. Carefully remove jars to a towel lined baking sheet. Allow jars to cool up to 24 hours before checking the seals and labeling the jars for storage. A properly sealed jar of strawberry jam can be stored and used for up to one year.



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Use in recipes that require butter to be cut into the flour. Using tiny grated bits of butter makes mixing the dough a breeze.





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Oat Scones

with Fresh Strawberries

I like to grate the butter for recipes that require butter to be cut into the flour. Using tiny grated bits of butter makes mixing the dough a breeze. It also yields an incredibly tender scone as much less mixing is needed.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups (160 grams) old fashioned oats
- 1 cup (80 grams) oat flour
- ½ cup (60 grams) whole wheat flour
- ¼ cup (30 grams) All-purpose flour
- ¼ cup (48 grams) brown sugar
- 4 teaspoons baking powder

- ½ teaspoon salt
- 8 Tablespoons (4 ounces) butter, grated
- ¼ cup (2 ounces) heavy cream
- 1 large egg
- 1 cup chopped strawberries
- 1 Tablespoon granulated sugar

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a Silpat liner.

Combine the dry ingredients in a large bowl. Add the grated butter and gently toss with your hands



Scones are most delicious served the day they are made, so serve them immediately and enjoy every last bite!

to fully coat the butter and evenly distribute it throughout the dry ingredients.

In a small bowl, combine the cream and egg and whisk to combine. Add the cream and egg to the bowl with the flour and stir gently to moisten the dry ingredients. Reserve the small bowl as the remnants from the cream and egg mixture can be used to brush the scones before they are transferred to the oven. Add the chopped strawberries to the batter and fold gently to combine.

Transfer the dough to a lightly floured surface. Gently pat the

dough into a circle approximately 8 inches in diameter. Cut the dough into eight wedges. Transfer each wedge to the prepared baking sheet. Using a pastry brush, gently brush each scone with the remaining cream and egg mixture. Sprinkle a bit of the granulated sugar on top of each scone.

Transfer the baking sheet to the preheated oven. Bake the scones 18 to 20 minutes, rotating the baking sheet halfway through the baking time. When fully baked, the scones will be lightly browned and firm to the touch.

Remove the baking sheet from the oven to a wire rack to cool.



Rhubarb and Strawberry Brown Butter Crumble Cake

This cake is the perfect way to enjoy the amazing flavor of fresh rhubarb and strawberries all year long. Long after the season has ended, I can prepare delicious recipes that highlight the delicious flavor of rhubarb and strawberries. Rhubarb freezes incredibly well, so I stock the freezer with plenty of rhubarb to last all winter long in our favorite baking recipes. Each year, I harvest ripe stalks of rhubarb before washing and slicing into ½ inch pieces. I place them in a single layer on a small sheet pan in the freezer and leave them to freeze overnight. Once they are frozen solid, I transfer them to a freezer bag for long term storage.

While rhubarb freezes well, I prefer to utilize our homemade strawberry jam rather than freeze the strawberries. By using jam, I can control the amount of liquid in the recipe and create a fruit filling that has a beautiful appearance and consistency. When combined with the rhubarb, brown butter, and oats, the results are delicious.

INGREDIENTS

1 ½ cups (6 ounces) rhubarb, cut into ½ inch slices
1 Tablespoon cornstarch
2 Tablespoons (1 ounce) butter
¼ cup (48 grams) granulated sugar
¼ cup (48 grams) brown sugar

1 Tablespoon vanilla extract
 ¼ cup (2 ounces) strawberry jam
 1 ½ cups (180 grams) All-purpose flour
 1 cup (80 grams) old-fashioned oats
 2/3 cup (120 grams) brown sugar
 1 ½ teaspoons Ceylon cinnamon
 ½ teaspoon baking soda
 ½ teaspoon salt
 12 Tablespoons (6 ounces) butter, cut into small pieces
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Lightly butter an 8 inch springform pan. Set aside. Wash and trim the rhubarb stalks. Slice each stalk into ½ inch pieces and place them in a medium bowl. Add the cornstarch and toss gently to coat the rhubarb.

Make the brown butter. In a small skillet, melt the 2 Tablespoons of butter over medium heat. After the butter melts, you will notice that the milk solids will begin to separate. Continue to cook, stirring occasionally to allow those solids to brown slightly. You will notice a slight change in color and aroma. Brown butter has a slightly nutty aroma which will signal that the solids have caramelized and that the brown butter has finished cooking. Remove the skillet from the heat. Add the granulated sugar, brown sugar, vanilla, and strawberry jam to the warm skillet. Stir gently to fully combine the ingredients before adding them to the bowl with the rhubarb. Stir to coat the rhubarb



with the brown butter mixture. Set aside.

In the bowl of a food processor, combine the flour, oats, brown sugar, cinnamon, baking soda, and salt. Pulse to combine. With the machine running, add the butter gradually. Add the vanilla extract and process until the mixture comes together and forms large clumps.

Transfer two thirds of the crumble mixture into the bottom of the prepared pan. Press the mixture lightly to form a crust that completely covers the bottom the pan. Stir the rhubarb strawberry mixture and pour over the crust, spreading to cover evenly. Sprinkle the remaining crumble mixture evenly on top of the fruit filling.

Transfer the pan to the oven and bake the crumble in the preheated oven for 30 – 35 minutes until the topping has browned lightly and the fruit filling has thickened. Remove from the oven to cool. Serve warm with a scoop of vanilla ice cream or fresh whipped cream.



OLD FASHIONED BROWNE BURNT BUTTER RICE

BY CHRIS MCLAUGHLIN

Speaking of butter, have I ever shared with you my very favorite quick side rice recipes? I have been making it for 25 years and have no idea where I got it.

Let me be very clear about this recipe. It's not for people on a diet. It's not

for people that only eat low calorie/low fat dishes. No, ma'am, we're talking about a Paula Deen-worthy recipe here, folks. This side dish is about satisfying flavor without being overwhelming ... and it's mostly about butter. And some lemon.



INGREDIENTS:

- 2-3 cups of cooked rice (depending on how many people you're serving).
- 1 - 1 1/2 cups of salted butter
- 2-3 lemons

DIRECTIONS:

Before you put this simple dish together, cook your rice according to package directions and place it all in a large bowl. I'll be honest here, I do use white rice for this dish most of the time. But you can use brown rice or whatever your little heart desires -- even Minute rice. No judgment here.

Heat 1/2 cup of butter per cup of rice in a pan (don't look at me like that, I warned you).

Turn the heat up a bit to about medium and let that butter get brown...nearly black is even better. Once all of the butter is brownish-black.

Pour the hot butter over the cooked rice in the bowl & using two folks, toss it all up so that all of the rice is coated with burnt, buttery goodness.

Take the lemons and roll them around on the counter, pressing the fruit all over. This releases the juices even before you slice the lemon.

Slice one lemon in half and squeeze it all over the rice.

Toss it up with the forks once again. Add as much lemon as you desire. Your Old Fashioned Browned Butter Rice is ready for the table!



*Blogger
Profile
City Girl Chickens*

When did you start blogging? Why?

I started my blog about 4 years ago. Before that, I'd built a City Girl Farming website (and later City Girl Chickens), but I really wanted more of a format to interact with others a bit more informally. I like telling stories and showing off my hens or my kitchen experiments. A blog format fits much better than just a website for things like that.

How long have you been involved in the homesteading movement?

I grew up in Montana where we had chickens, turkeys, an occasional pig or sheep, horses and always massive gardens. I can't remember a time when I didn't help my mom in the kitchen with canning projects. We NEVER went out to eat, but always had home cooked meals every night. This was the norm to me.

I moved to the 'big city' for college and couldn't believe how terrible city food tasted. (My mom would send me college care packages filled with veggies from the garden.) I started small trying to re-create my own homegrown food in containers, graduating to raised beds and canning some of my food (before this latest wave of popularity). I didn't

dive back into chickens, however, until about five years ago. I wasn't sure I wanted to commit that deeply. As it turns out, though, the chickens really threw me headlong into an awareness of our consumer issues (as a nation) and a desire to become more and more self-sustaining in what I do. They've changed my perspective more than anything else.

Why did you get started in homesteading?

Originally, I wanted to have good, nutritious food in my own yard like I grew up with. The chickens helped broaden my reasons why as they motivated me to look deeper into the farming practices, etc. in our nation (for example, since I have a small city flock, I know each of my hens individually and all their quirky personalities. This makes things like factory farmed eggs even more deplorable because I can't imagine treating my hens like that.) As I became more and more educated, it became apparent that our system is broken and the best way I can help is to grow and raise it myself. I know for sure what's going into my body because I know exactly what went into the vegetables, fruit and eggs.

What are your plans for the future?

I really want bees—maybe about







three hives. I'm also looking at a place (still in the city) where I can expand my gardens, maybe even running a very tiny scale CSA type of thing for a few of my friends and family from my backyard.

Tell us about yourself?

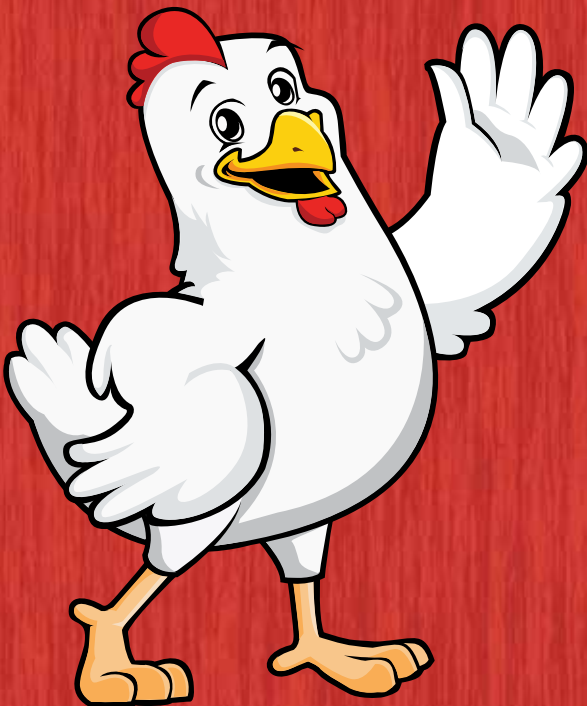
I grew up in rural Montana where we grew, raised and canned a huge portion of our own food. My dad also hunted, so we ate a lot of wild game. When I moved to the city my first thought was how easy it was to just go to the grocery store, but I realized quickly the food in those stores couldn't compare to the food I was raised on.

I was very involved in the preser-

vation process as a kid, which, like most kids, I didn't appreciate at the time. However, it's given me confidence and skills in the kitchen that most of my peers don't have.

Although I've been in the city now for a bit more than half my life, my roots still go back to the country, where I'd someday like to live again. But until then, I look for ways to bring the country into the city. And thankfully, it's getting easier to do as more and more people are seeing the necessity of doing the same thing.

Aside from my chickens and gardening, I'm also an artist and designer by day. Often my hens make their way into my work, which is always fun for me.



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Why urban homesteading?

Well, honestly, I'd rather have a real farm. But, I since live in the city, I'm determined to bring as much of the rural live into my suburban home as possible. It's also small enough I can do it myself without a lot of extra help or equipment, which feels much more sustainable in the long run. (And besides, I can supplement what I'm doing with the abundant farmer's markets all over town.) Urban homesteading becomes the best

of both worlds in that way. A bit of the country on a scale that's easily manageable.

What difficulties (outside of space issues) do you feel are unique to urban homesteading?

Sunlight is sometimes a challenge (and not just because I live in the Pacific NW). Living around big hous-



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es that surrounded by solid wood fences causes a lot of sunlight blocking. It can be frustrating to have a perfect patch of ground for a garden and realize you mostly only get overhead sunlight because of all the built structures around it.

I also think the limits on city flocks are way too small. Most cities, if they allow chickens at all, limit them to 3-5. Even just a few more hens would sustain a family with eggs in a more sufficient way. Fortunately I live in a city that allows us to have as many as we want. I've had as many as 12 at a time in my backyard and it's been wonderful.

What is your favorite thing to grow and why?

Probably tomatoes since nothing can compete with the homegrown taste. I also really like growing herbs since they don't take up very much space and when they're blooming they attract tons of bees.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

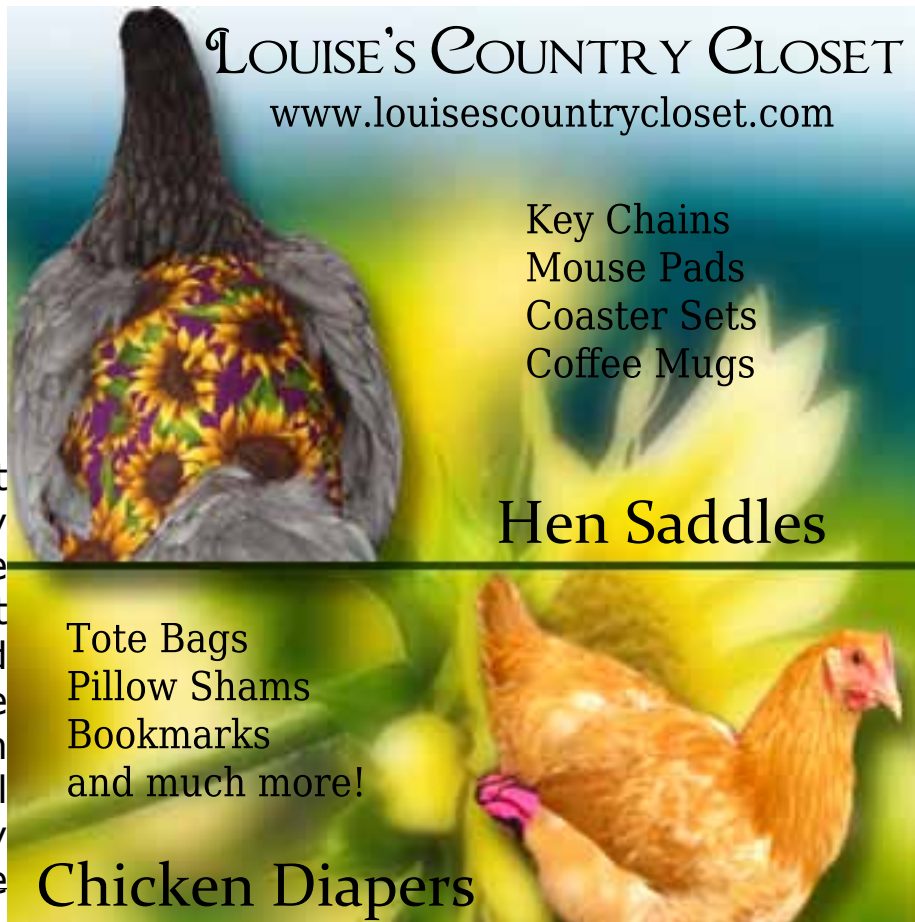
Sometimes people tell me it feels too overwhelming to try to grow their own food or raise chickens. I always say, start small. Maybe one raised bed this year will lead to 3 more next year. And then when you've got four beds, you'll wonder how you will get by without 6 more. But those

four will feel like less work than that first one did. It's not a race. You can grow into it.

I also always tell people on the fence about chickens: JUST DO IT! My chickens have literally changed my life. They're funny, personable, and a great stress relief. I thought I was getting chickens for eggs, but I found out that the eggs are just a fringe benefit. They are a good investment. And you'll never have to buy fertilizer again!

What is your favorite space saving trick?

One backyard space saving trick is to build your coop on stilts so you can put the run (or at least part of the run) underneath the coop. It's a good way to get double the space when you live in cramped city conditions.



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THE TIES THAT BIND

BY CHRIS MCLAUGHLIN



It doesn't take much more than a season to realize the handiness of keeping ties around the homestead. How I end up using ties the most is as plant supports for vertical gardening or to attach a support system (such as netting or fencing) to posts or a frame. Below is an excerpt from my book *Vertical Vegetable Gardening* (Alpha Books, 2012) on the pros and cons of common ties you may have around your place.

There's no question that ties come in handy on a regular basis on the homestead. The question is, "Which ties work should I use?" Often, it's just a matter of preference on the gardener's part. Still, there's some logic behind the right ties for the job, so let's take a look at your choices.

Twine, thick string, and jute

The uses for this type of tie are just as numerous as the varieties and styles, so be creative.

- The good news: If you have it already, it's free; if not, it's cheap. And did I mention versatile? It can be used for guiding vines or securing a climbing structure to posts, etc. By the way, jute, twine, and cotton string are all organic fibers and therefore are fit for the compost pile once they show too much wear and tear after a couple of seasons.

- The bad news: If it's thin twine, you'll have to be careful not to tighten it too much when you're securing a plant.

Wire

There are lots of variables when it comes to wire. Some is flexible and bends easily using only your hands. You'll need pliers in order to twist others. Don't overlook wire for securing nonliving materials (not plants). Wire is inflexible and will end up cutting into (and eventually killing) plant stems.

- The good news: It's strong, durable, and inexpensive. It's potentially easy to use, plus if you choose a galvanized wire it won't rust, either.

- The bad news: If you need pliers to twist the wire, then it'll be harder to use (therefore, more physical effort). If it isn't galvanized, it'll rust and become unsightly.

Fabric strips

I'm talking about the fabric strips that you can rip up yourself from old sheets and the like. Fabric can be strong, so I would (and do) use them for tying anything.

- The good news: If you're repurposing old sheets or other fabrics then these ties are 100 percent free.

And as long as you don't pull too hard and crush the vine, they're gentle on plant tissue so they are great for tying plants. Fabric ties are pretty easy to reuse later.

- The bad news: Depending on the fabric, they may stand out in the garden (unless you're using a camo print).

Plastic plant ties (commercial)

There are a few types of commercial plant ties that are staples in the nurseries and garden centers. The first is the thin, green plastic type that comes on rolls. You'll find them hanging on an end cap by the tomato plants because they're handy for securing tomato vines as they grow. They're also the least expensive of the commercial ties.

Another variation of green ties is the Velcro ties, which don't actually "tie" at all.

They wrap around the plant and the structure and wrap back around to cling onto themselves.

You may find other ties that work much in the same way with only a slightly different approach.

You may have already figured out that these products are for guiding plants to their climbing structures. It's possible to use them for other things, but they're not necessarily strong enough for a tight hold.

- The good news: Obviously, purchasing commercial products is convenient, considering you don't have to scour the garage for something that resembles a tie when you need it. They're also created to be visually appealing. In other words, you don't see them; they basically blend in with the garden. They're durable products, especially the self-clingers.

- The bad news: In my opinion, when you cut the stretchable tape to size (because you're trying not to waste any), it's difficult to reuse that piece on another project.

I'm not saying that it can't be done, just that you probably won't. For this reason I don't consider the stretchable green tape to be reusable. (Your mileage may vary.)

The clinging type has much more reusable potential in my opinion.

The stretchable green ties are cheaper than the Velcro-types, but compared to some of the other ties, they're still the priciest way to go.

Metal fence clips

If you're working with T-posts, metal fence clips are worth their weight in gold. You'll need pliers to bend the ends back, but they're fast and secure.

- The good news: I love to use them for taking the place of wire as far as securing climbing supports to posts.

- The bad news: They have limited use.

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Zip ties

We've all used zip ties at one point or another; they're considered the poster child for securing in a hurry. You wrap them around whatever you'd like and slide the narrower tail end into the hole at the other end and pull it through. Rigid plastic teeth have an unrelenting grip. Some police officers now carry handcuffs that work just like zip ties.

Zip ties should be strictly used for securing a climbing material to a post, or a post to a post, etc. I never use them to secure plants to anything. They'll end up damaging the plant in one way or another. If they don't scrape the tender vines, they bend and break them.

- The good news: I adore zip ties. I tie things with zip ties just because I can. They're fast, easy, strong, durable, and relatively inexpensive. You'll find them in various lengths and many colors. (I like green or clear in the garden).

- The bad news: They're not reusable (clearly). It's not always simple to remove them from a structure if you need to. On the other hand, they're not always hard to remove either.

Twist ties

Twist ties are for securing plants to their trellis or netting, etc. You'll find them packed up at the garden center or you can get them off of a loaf

of bread.

- The good news: Well, the best news is that if they're coming from bread bags and such then you're repurposing; we like that. Repurposed, they don't cost you a dime and they're easy to use.

- The bad news: I usually have to tie a few bread bag ones together to make them long enough to wrap around anything. The plant twisties sold new are made longer.

Plastic clips (commercial)

Special, hard plastic plant clips are used to guide plants along their supports. If I had only one or two tomato plants, I could possibly see investing in these clips. The truth is that they feel like overkill to me. But it's great to have so many choices.

- The good news: Plastic clips work best with heavy-branched crops such as tomatoes. They're durable and certainly reusable.

- The bad news: They can be expensive (comparatively speaking).

Incidentally, if you're growing small melons vertically, you're going to need to fashion a sling of some type to support the maturing fruit as well as ties.

There are slings available on the market, however, you can probably find something around your house that will serve this purpose. Netting of any kind will work -- bird netting, too. Also pantyhose, T-shirts, and any cotton fabric will do the trick.

How to Use Plants from the Garden to Create Natural Colors for Fabrics and Fibers

A Garden to Dye For

Chris McLaughlin

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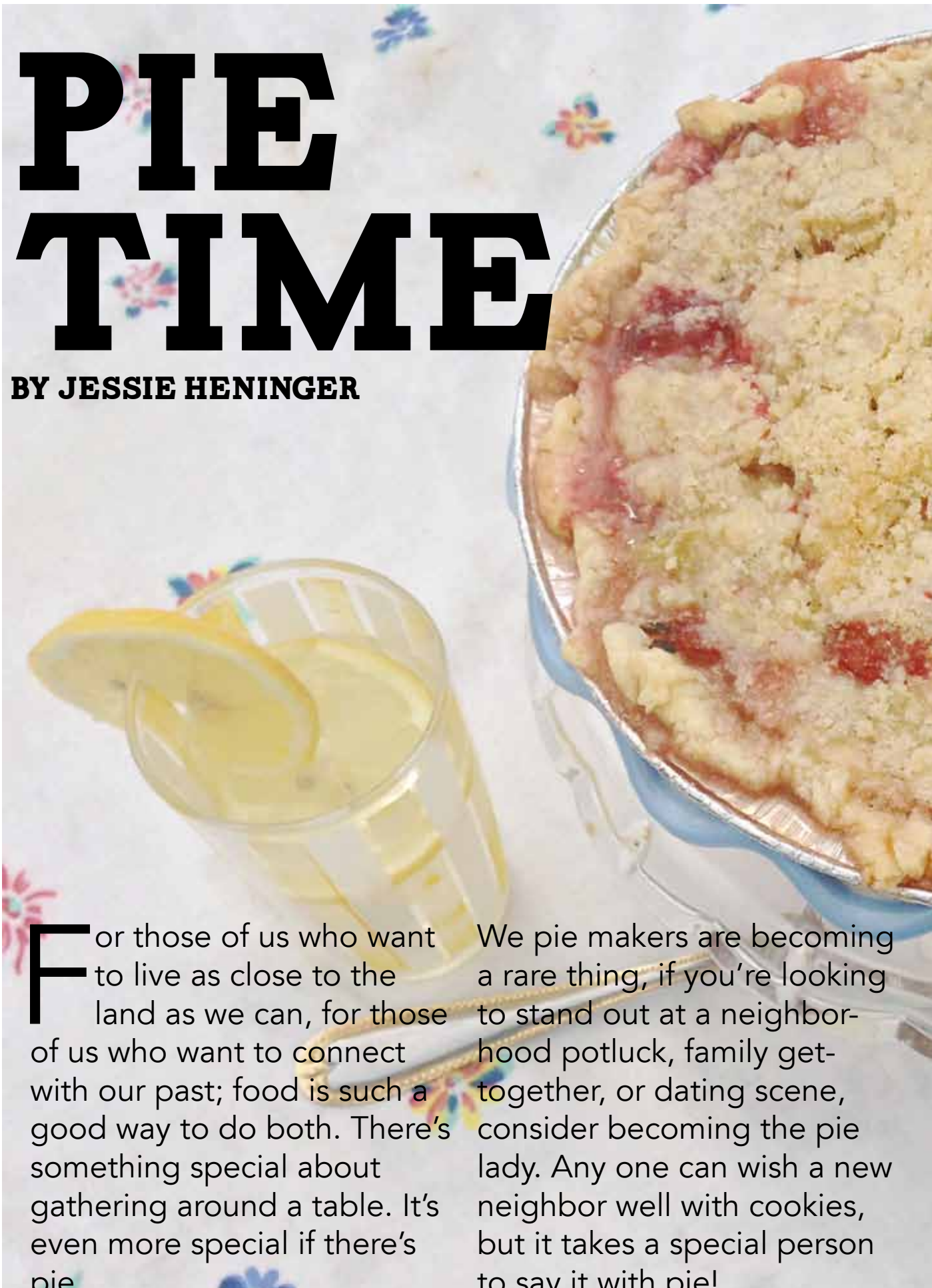
A Garden to Dye For shows how super-simple it is to plant and grow a dyer's garden and create beautiful dyes.

Many of these plants may already be in our cutting, cottage or food gardens, ready for double duty.

This is the book that bridges the topic of plant dyes to mainstream gardeners, the folks who enjoy growing the plants as much as using them in craft projects.

PIE TIME

BY JESSIE HENINGER



For those of us who want to live as close to the land as we can, for those of us who want to connect with our past; food is such a good way to do both. There's something special about gathering around a table. It's even more special if there's pie.

We pie makers are becoming a rare thing, if you're looking to stand out at a neighborhood potluck, family get-together, or dating scene, consider becoming the pie lady. Any one can wish a new neighbor well with cookies, but it takes a special person to say it with pie!





Summer is finally here and while we dreamed of fresh fruit and berries all winter, now that the harvest is upon us it's possible to be overrun with bushels and pints of sweet goodness. How many ways are there to eat a raspberry? How many jars of strawberry jam can the freezer handle? Is it possible to eat too many peaches?

The answer to all these questions is simple. Pie. While the word might be easy to say actually making one is another story. Baking a pie is

a dying skill; one that our grandmother's might have been proficient at but our mother's probably didn't bother with. It seems so old-fashioned, and yet there's nothing more American than pie. In fact, my favorite summer thing is a warm piece of tart raspberry pie alongside cool vanilla ice-cream.

Many years ago I embarked on a pie making adventure to tame and conquer the elusive pie crust, and the results have been well worth my time. Full disclosure, there is no fail-proof crust, or sure-fire way



to make a pie. She is a finicky mistress but with practice you, too, can bake up delicious (if not always beautiful) flaky crusted pies. Here are a few things I've learned along the way:

Having the correct tools is going to make your job easier, a pastry blender and wide shallow bowl are a must. You're going to have to get comfortable using shortening and butter, a pie crust is not meant to be healthy it's meant to be deli-

cious. If your crust falls apart, just piece it together in the pie plate, it will still taste amazing. What you're aiming for is a certain kind of "feel" and "look" with the dough, I promise this will get easier with practice. There are hundreds of pie crust recipes out there, find one you're comfortable with but remember: The butter shortening combination is the key to a flaky crust. Butter for flavor, shortening for texture and splash of vinegar to help the crust roll out easier.



Makes one 9 inch double crust pie

- 2 1/2 cups of flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 stick of butter, chilled
- 1/2 cup vegetable shortening
- 1 egg
- 1 Tbs vinegar

With a pastry blender or your fingers combine the flour, salt, butter and shortening until you get crumbs that are about the size of peas (don't over think it).

Break the egg into a measuring cup and beat in the vinegar, add enough cold water to equal 1/2 cup. Cut into flour mixture until a soft dough

forms. You're going for something like slightly dried play dough.

Divide dough in half and roll out on a flour dusted surface. Put the crusts in the freezer. The vinegar and freezing time will make it extra flaky. If you only use one crust you can store the other in the fridge for a couple days or in a plastic bag in the freezer for three months.

This pie crust recipe will work for everything from berry pies, to cream pies to turkey potpies! Fruit pies are my favorite. You just mix the berries, sugar and a bit of tapioca to your desired taste.



A FEW OF JESSIE'S FAVORITE PIE THINGS



CUISINART CTG-00-DB DOUGH BLENDER -

A sharp pastry blender is a must, it cuts the work load in half.



SWEETIE-LICIOUS PIES: EAT PIE, LOVE LIFE - For it's great tasting recipes and beautiful pictures this is not only my favorite dessert cookbook, it's one of my favorite cookbooks period.



LE CREUSET STONEWARE PIE BIRD FUNNEL -

While not necessary, I find these old fashioned gadgets to be delightfully fun sticking out of a double crusted pie.



WOODEN ROLLING PIN - You can find rolling pins for sale in antiques shops and thrift stores for a song.



VINTAGE WIDE MOUTHED SHALLOW BLUE PYREX BOWL - Using pretty things in the kitchen reminds me what a blessing it is to have all this wonderful food to work with.



BRADSHAW INTERNATIONAL 9-INCH RED CERAMIC PIE DISH- I like a heavier duty pie plate, and the pretty colors look good on my buffet.



CAST IRON CARE

WITH L

BY KAREN LYNN

At our Lil' Suburban Homestead we love our Cast Iron Cookware and we have slowly been adding to our collection for years. We also love raising our bees so we decided to start seasoning our cookware with Beeswax and this was a win win because we certainly had plenty of Beeswax lying around. So our process to season your cast iron cookware is very simple and anyone can do it in their own home.

WHERE DOES BEESWAX COME FROM?

A lot of folks hear the term "Beeswax" but don't always really know where it comes from but generally folks know it comes from the lovely "honeybee". More specifically Beeswax is made by the bees in their process of converting the sugar from the honey. This is secreted by the bees into the hive and

COOKWARE

BEESWAX

IN



its primary purpose is to keep contaminants from being in the hive. The honeybee is doing a lot of other work in addition to making that lovely golden potion we call honey. Beeswax Is Loaded With "Good Stuff"

In the past in the 1980's my husband and I would have used hydrogenated fake fats but those days are in the past and we know that there are healthier oils and natural alternatives that actually provide

nutrients for our bodies. Now we know lard, butter, ghee and many animal fats including chicken and duck fat are better for us. We would typically use lard to season our pans but then an idea struck my husband "Why not try out our Beeswax?" We actually have a large chunk of Beeswax so it's also really easy to store in your pantry or your beekeeping closet such as we have. So we tried seasoning our own pans with beeswax and we



were impressed with the results. Beeswax is a natural lubricating compound and I have to say there are benefits of seasoning your cast iron skillets with Beeswax is that you are for one you are using a natural product made by the bees and it seems to last longer than other methods of seasoning at least from what I have experienced so far.

Beeswax is also a natural protectant, it is a natural source of Vitamin A, and it has anti-bacterial properties as well.

Cooking with cast iron cookware is better for your health as it fortifies your food that you cook in it with

iron and you don't have to worry about chemicals that you don't want leaching into your food either.

SEASON YOUR CAST IRON PANS WITH BEESWAX

Scrub your cast iron cookware with hot water if needed and sometimes we use a metal spatula if we have to scrape off any stuck on food although this is rare.

We do not use dish soap and do not recommend it.

Place a tablespoon of beeswax directly into a cast iron pan or skillet. Next you will want to warm

up a cast iron pan to melt your wax slowly until it becomes a liquid consistency, then spread evenly with a clean cloth or paper towel (better yet brown thin paper towels work nicely) and evenly coat the wax all over your cast iron cookware.

Lastly you place your pans in the oven at 450 degrees until it stops smoking and it will smoke quite a bit so you may want to ventilate your kitchen prior to doing this.

This may also be done on an outdoor grill but you have to monitor very closely as the temperature can get too hot very quickly.

Place pans out to cool on pot holders and then they will be ready for cooking.

To ensure that your pans are properly seasoned you may want to sea-

son them twice. You will find that you will enjoy using an all natural product that is healthier for you and or your family and for us this is a "Free" resource that we possess but many beekeepers also sell their Beeswax to their customers and they are usually more than happy to do so.

If you don't have a local beekeeper inquire at your local farmers market or agricultural department they will be sure to point you in the right direction.

We have so enjoyed working with the bees on our homestead and speaking of bees there is much to do in the bee yard and garden today!

Read more from Karen Lynn here.



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USING ALL THE HARVEST

BY KRISTI STONE

As a homesteader, I am always trying to figure out ways to use things before they go to the landfill or compost pile. While I love that all of the nutrients from my home grown produce can go to nourishing the compost that

eventually nourishes my family, I have always loved just the simple idea of throwing less away. I'm not nearly as good about it as I'd like to be (especially in light of this year's spring cleaning), but my thinking is slowly moving in that direction. Over the past few years I've gath-



ered a few tried and true ideas that I like to use regularly with the carrots and mint that grow every year, and the strawberries that our family purchases every summer. It has always seemed like such a waste to throw up to half of a harvested plant away, but I never knew why or what to do about it. When I be-

gan composting, I thought I had found my answer to less waste — and I did. Learning that there were things I could do with fruit, vegetable and herb scraps before they go into the compost absolutely revolutionized my thinking. I've mastered this with a few of the vegetables and herbs that I grow, but I can even use these methods with store-bought vegetables. Organic produce is always best and can be used to its fullest, but non-organic gives the same results. Remember that your end product will have the pesticides and/or GMO qualities in it.

CARROTS

Your carrot harvest is one of the most versatile harvests that you will ever have. Carrots can be eaten fresh with dips, sautéed into stir fry, steamed or boiled as a side dish, canned or dehydrated for soups or sides, frozen in shreds for future carrot cakes, fed whole or in slices to our livestock, and used in so many other ways. When harvesting your carrots, make sure to save the greens to feed to your livestock, or in your family's salad. High in calcium, carrot greens should be fed sparingly to livestock that are suffering urinary issues. It is said that carrot greens have antiseptic and diuretic properties, which opens up a whole new way of thinking about this root vegetable. Carrot greens can be dehydrated and used in place of parsley in your recipes. Used as an herb, it adds a slightly carrot-y flavor to your dishes without being overpowering.



DEHYDRATING CARROT GREENS

After removing greens from your carrots, sift through and remove all dead leaves from the bunch. Submerge your carrot greens in a sink full of water and swish around. Allow to sit in water for a few min-

utes to allow any dirt to sink to the bottom. Remove your greens, gently squeezing excess water out. Place them on a clean kitchen towel and pat as much water out of the greens as you can. Separate small sprigs and leaves from larger stems and layer as



KALE, SWISS CHARD, FENNEL AND STRAWBERRY SALAD FOR YOUR RABBITS

NOTES: Kale, chard and fennel are vegetables that should make up 75% of your rabbit's fresh portion of food each day. It is recommended to feed 1 packed cup for every 2 pounds of your rabbit's body weight per day. This recipe will make just over 1.25 cup of vegetables, so you could adjust the amounts of kale, chard, and fennel up if you have a heavier rabbit, however, do not adjust the amount of strawberries up as strawberries are a high sugar fruit and should only be eaten in small quantities as an occasional treat.

- ½ cup kale (any variety)
- ½ cup swiss chard (high in oxalic acid)
- ¼ cup diced fennel (tops or base are fine)
- 2 tbsp strawberry tops

Chop all leaves and fennel into bite size pieces, toss together, and feed to your rabbits immediately, or refrigerate and feed within a few hours (do not allow salad to wilt or your rabbits may not eat it).

flat as you can on your dehydrator trays. Dry at 95 degrees until dry and crumbly.

STRAWBERRIES

Strawberries are fantastic, as we all know, and flavorful, summer strawberries are one fruit we can't get

enough of. A bounty of strawberries can be eaten fresh, added to salads, preserved in jams, dehydrated in slices or made into lovely fruit leather.

There really are endless choices as to all the ways that we can enjoy summer strawberries!

In addition to the abovementioned



ways that we can enjoy this fantastic fruit, did you know that there are a few uses for the tops as well? Before we send our strawberry scraps off to our compost piles, there are a couple of stops that they can make along the way. According to April Lewis Patel in her eBook *Don't Compost It, Cook It*, they can be macerated with sugar

and lemon and made into a fantastic strawberry syrup. I do this often during the summer and use the syrup to flavor my kombucha or my kids' lemonade.

Another way I use strawberry tops is to feed them as a treat to my most grateful chickens, or in this nutritious herb salad for my rabbits.



MINT

Prolific mint doesn't take too many seasons to find its home anywhere in your garden that it wants to, so naturally, if allowed to grow, we will have a lot of it.

Thankfully, mint is a fantastic herb with both culinary uses and medicinal qualities, which makes it

quite a versatile plant to have an abundance of on hand. Mint can be made into hot or iced tea using dried or fresh leaves, syrups to flavor your drinks, jellies to assist your lamb dishes, as a fly, mite, and vermin deterrent, and the raw leaves can be chewed on to freshen your breath.

After you strip your stems from all of the 'perfect' leaves, you can use the remaining leaves and stems to line your hutch tray to keep flies away from your rabbit's hindquarters, aiding in preventing flystrike. Line your chickens' nesting boxes to keep mites out of the area where they lay their eggs, and on the floor of the coop to deter other pests. Strip all of the leaves of the stems to make these natural and healthy toys for your non-lactating rabbits.

Mint Sprig Chewable Rabbit Toys

Put all of your stems into the water to wash them off.

Let them dry in your dehydrator or air dry.

Bundle dried stems with short pieces of cotton yarn (make sure to trim off any long ends before you give them to bunny).

I do hope that my ideas have helped jog your thinking in the area of using kitchen scraps creatively. I know I'll never look at kitchen scraps again without wondering about the stops they can make before they make their final home in the compost bin!

Read more of Kristi's work [here](#).

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