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Farming

MAGAZINE

Volume 17 Issue 1 No. 65

The Idaho Pasture Pig
Fruit Tree Pruning Basics
Passing the Hive Tool
A Pale Palette

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Volume 17 Issue 1 No. 65 Spring 2017

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Contentment
is the philos-
opher's stone
that turns
all it touches
into gold.

~Benjamin
Franklin
[1706-1790]

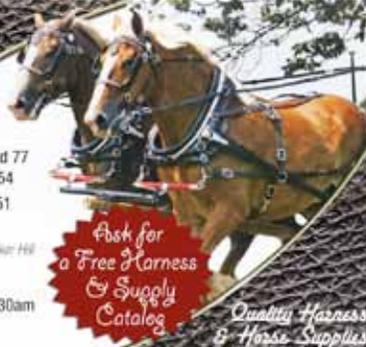
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Cover: Cows grazing on spring pasture near Mt. Hope, Ohio.

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Farming Magazine celebrates the joys of farming well and living well on a small and ecologically conscious scale. It explores the intricate bonds connecting people, land, and community and offers a hopeful vision for the future of farming in America. The magazine is created in the spirit of stewardship for the earth and regard for its inhabitants.

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PO Box 85

Hello,

With maple syrup season in the near future I came to some notes I had jotted down:

Using maple syrup has its health benefits but cooking also has its fringe benefits that make it all worthwhile. Our sap shack is in the woods adjoining our backyard, so one exceptionally warm night in 2016 my wife brought the evening meal to the shack. We sat outside to eat while listening to a screech owl.

The not-so-desirable job of washing the equipment can also be a pleasant job if done by two or more of the family members.

With a natural sweetener like maple syrup, the buckets are easier to wash than if they would have been used for corn syrup. Just imagine our bodies trying to digest that glue.

Gideon Raber
Baltic, OH

Hello David,

Your last issue had two things in it that touched me especially. The first was the news of Gene Logsdon's passing. Like so many others, I admired him and his writing for decades. His relentless and unique combination of insight, humor, and practical advice was priceless. After reading his last column I said to myself, "Look at him! He must be nearing the end of his life and his writing is just as good as it ever was." Of course, I had no idea how close he was.

The second was seeing *The Farming Ladder* pop up on your radar screen (or should I say chalkboard). (*This book was mentioned in a letter to the editor in PO Box 85 in the Fall '16 issue.*) This is probably my favorite of all books about farming and its possibilities. Some of the story seems dated now, but I still find an incredibly illuminating, inside view of a critical juncture in British agriculture. I suspect many of your readers would agree that the wrong road was taken at this juncture—in England and here

in N. America. But your magazine is a testament that the principles outlined in *The Farming Ladder* are still the basis for a happy and secure life devoted to full-time farming on a small place. The most important and underlying theme of the book is showing how the ancient methods, proven through the experience of countless generations of ancestors, can be made into a forward-looking program suitable for whatever age we live in, and to whatever tools we have access to. The Hendersons were early and enthusiastic adopters of tractor technology; in George Henderson's second book, *Farmer's Progress*, there is a photo of two horses grazing and the caption: "The day of the horse has gone by." But if they were alive today, I suspect the brothers would be leading the way in finding efficient and profitable uses for the horse—and all biological energy—as power mechanics becomes more expensive and fuel prices more unstable. The later editors of *Farming Ladder* have a very interesting foreword and afterword, which add a few important things to the story. I especially like his list of mechanics' tools necessary for the "modern tractor farmer"—all of which could rest flat on top of one of my beehives with plenty of room to spare; not quite what we would consider necessary today.

Wishing you and your family all the best of health and happiness in the New Year.

Sincerely,
Kirk Webster
Middlebury, VT

Dear David and *Farming Magazine*,

We just received some encouraging news the other day about possible work in the Democratic Republic of Congo. If the project goes through, it will be the fifth country in which we are currently working. We would be working with farmers who have never used draft animals before.

We appreciate your support of our work in Uganda with Boniface and crew.

Peace to you,
Ryan DeRamus
Tillers International
Scotts, MI

(*Boniface, a native of Uganda, was in our area for Horse Progress Days several years ago and had such interesting things to tell us about the work Tillers International is doing in Uganda.* Ed.)

Farming Magazine,

Thank you so very much for this wonderful magazine. We are grateful for it!!

Merry Christmas,
Louis and Elizabeth Koella
Sevanee, TN

Dear David and Elsie,

My administration is a little bit behind because we have recently moved and I don't have everything in order yet. But finally I got around to it and here is my contribution for a renewal for two years, including the money for shipping. Thanks very much for paying my shipping the first year; from now on I'd like to pay them myself. That just feels better :-)

I enjoyed the Fall issue very much! In my blog on the internet, I try to give the readers information about living and eating healthy, and your article about high fructose corn syrup gives a lot of good information to share. How too much of anything can be bad for you. Here in our country a lot of people who want to lose weight and want to get an "instant" health shot, eat and drink lots and lots of green smoothies. Kilos of spinach and brassicas go in there... just to swallow it up. Which is not so healthy, of course. "It's the dose that makes the poison"—great expression!

Jim Van Der Pol's article about the heavy rainfall was interesting! On our small farm we've had ditches built all around our pasture and between ours and the neighbor farmers. The Netherlands are below sea level, and our

countryside is almost more ditches than land! Rainfall gets heavier here too.

Also, I loved Becky's story, "Going Home." What an inspiring person she is! Especially in our first few weeks here on the farm, when I get a bit nervous about running the place with not so much experience, and an "office" husband who is away a lot...Becky's story lifts me up! Thanks for sharing that.

Thanks, friends, for the magazine and many, many farmers' greetings from Punthorst, The Netherlands.

Clarion Cornelisse
Punthorst, The Netherlands

Dear Sirs:

I so enjoyed your publication that I shared my Spring '16 issue with a friend for his enjoyment and did not get it back. I so want the article, "Making the Most of Your Garden," Part I, that I am requesting a reprint of that article or a copy of the entire Spring 2016 issue.

Hoping this is possible I am enclosing an additional amount with my renewal subscription.

Thank you,
Alice Singletary
Jefferson, NY

Dear Friends,

Snow is deep here in Idaho, the first really fine deep snow for many years. As I was reviewing our farm's precipitation history I realized we have had a 4- to 6-month summer drought every year we have been farming. Last summer and fall was the first time we had some summer and fall rains. I pray God will send us a wet cycle, but despite drought He has always met our needs; we are very thankful. Now we are awaiting the snowdrops and crocuses and the first barefoot days of spring. At 61 I still enjoy a cool mud puddle; I likely always will.

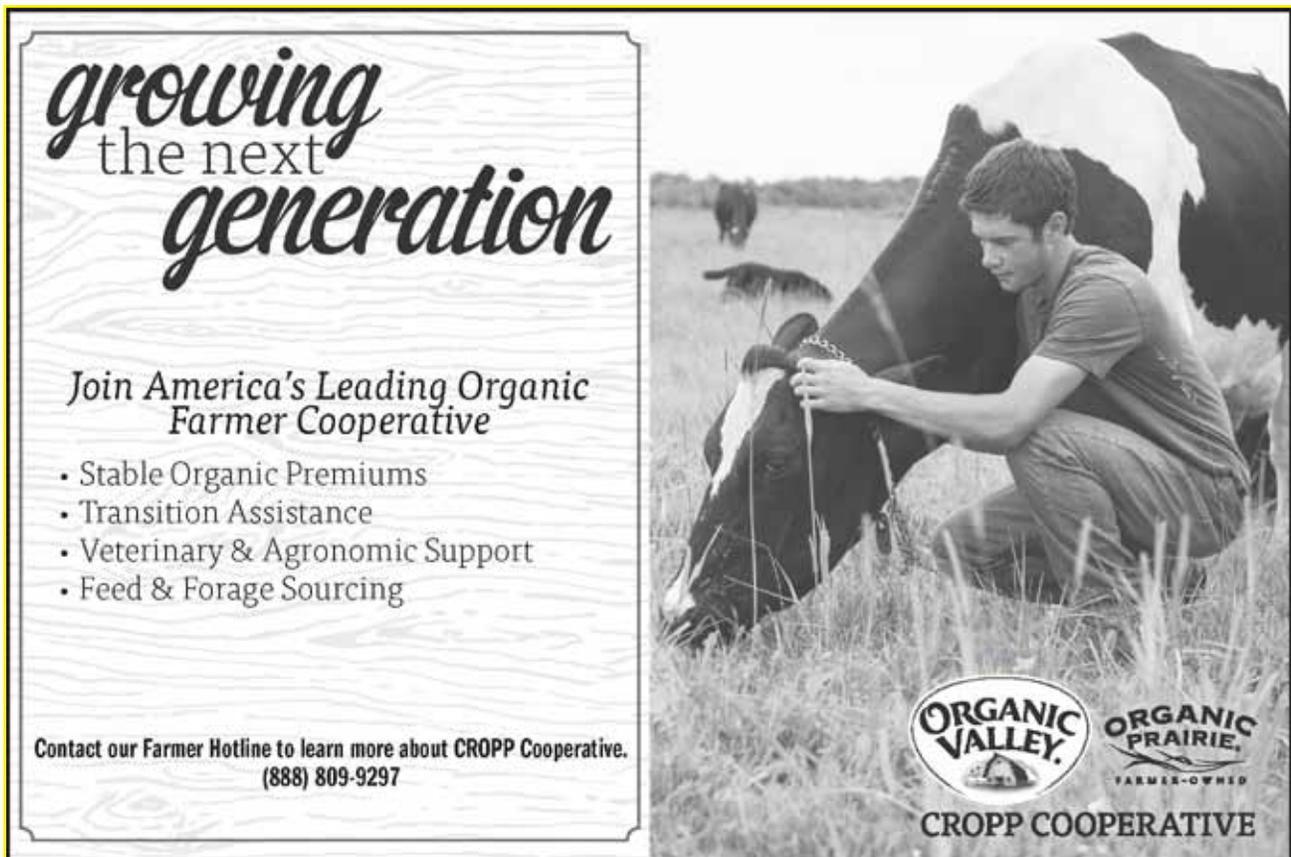
Please renew our friend and neighbor's gift subscription. We are off

grid so I liked Phil Thompson's battery article. ("Batteries Not Included," *Winter '16*) "Mandatory Winter Maintenance" hit my humorous bone! Does Bobby Bostic need a gift subscription?

Sincerely,
J.M. Roy
Princeton, ID

(Bobby has already received one. But thank you for offering. Ed.)

NOTE: We received inquiries about where the book *Why Cows Need Names* by Randy James (reviewed in the Winter '16 issue of *Farming Magazine*) is available. The Kent State University Press is the publisher and can be contacted at 800-247-6553 to place orders for individuals or booksellers. Write to The Kent State University Press, 1118 University Library Building, Kent OH 44242, or at www.KentStateUniversityPress.com.



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This winter has been different in that every spare minute we have we sort through things in preparation of moving to the “grandparents” house (remember, we aren’t retiring to a seaside cottage on some tropical island but continue to help on the farm wherever we’re needed, the best of two worlds) here on the farm. In other words, we need to downsize. In 50 years a lot of “stuff” was accumulated. I tended to be sort of a pack rat—I saved things but wasn’t too organized in doing so. We are finding many treasures and also quite a bit of junk.

Our three daughters were schoolteachers at one time, and a friend of theirs, who was a high school teacher and lover of books, would bring them books discarded by the local public libraries. Many of the books were old classics such as *Old Yeller* and many more. Gradually one of our upstairs spare bedrooms became a book depository.

Although many of the books were free-to-good-home books, I have to confess I contributed to the stash. My interests were anything related to farming, but also the natural world and church history. Say you add five books a year over fifty years and soon you’re talking about a real pileup. That’s where we are now. But we’re making progress.

Looking through the books and old farming publications I have considered the changes in agriculture in the half century of our marriage. And also the changes my father and my grandfather saw in their lifetimes. When my grandfather was born in 1860 (he was 85 when I was born), the Civil War hadn’t started, canals were fading away, and rail travel was coming on full steam. In his time the steam engine for power on the farm became common. Abraham Lincoln, when visiting a farming exposition in Milwaukee in 1858 where a steam-powered tractor was demonstrated pulling a plow, said, “What will happen to our rural communities?” My grandfather lived to see agriculture move from the cradle/scythe to the grain binder with its self-tying knotter, and from steam power to the internal combustion engine.

Ten years after my dad’s birth in 1905, rail freight tonnage peaked and began to lose out to truck transport. Dad saw the industrial revolution in agriculture come into full power as farmers switched from horses used for field traction to tractors, from small horse-replacing tractors to behemoths. Dad would wonder why you would hitch a \$30,000 tractor to a hundred-dollar plow? Probably the biggest change in Dad’s farming life was the coming of pesticides, especially herbicides. The first one was 2,4-D, right after the Second World War. I asked him why our people, as cautious as we are in adopting new technology, so readily accepted weed killers? His answer was, “Common ragweed. It was such a problem and 2,4-D fixed it, and we were told it is completely safe.” Of course, many other herbicides followed.

All through Mom and Dad’s farming career (1929 to 1968) the diversified farm—dairy (12 to 15 milk cows), six brood sows and fattening their pigs on home-grown grains, and a laying flock of 300 to 500 hens supplied the farm family with a good living and a good life.

It was in my and Elsie’s farming years from 1968 to around 2000 that things really changed. First to go was the small-scale laying flock (1960s), lost to the large cage layer houses and the supermarkets. Broilers and turkeys were next, and then hogs.

Among the biggest changes the last 20 years has been the shift to more intensive grazing and organic farming. Organic has changed from a very small part of American agriculture to 50 billion dollars a year in sales. It is providing a *gemütlich* and sustainable life for many small-scale farmers. Why is organic more successful today than it was when we started farming? I speak as a dairy farmer growing corn for silage and grain, oats, and hay and pasture. It is soil fertility.

I started unloading manure with our No. 8 New Idea spreader when I was perhaps eight years old. The manure spreader was ground or wheel-driven and it had two levers, one on each side of the operator’s seat. One put the beater and widespread in gear and the other the unloading web. The web lever had five notches, from slow to fast unloading. Dad told me to put the web lever in the third notch and drive the spreader three feet away from its previous track.

Soon after we started dairy farming and added more cows, we unloaded with the web lever all the way back and track on track. We put on many more tons per acre than Dad did and our son-in-law puts on even more. This morning in the stable he told me the field he is plowing was covered twice with manure last year and the soil looks like a garden. That is why we can grow 200 bushels of organic corn without any inputs except manure and periodical (two tons per acre every four years) lime.

As I write this we’re in the last third of February and the temperature is in the 70s. The silver maple is in full bloom and the honeybees are gathering pollen and some nectar. Daffodils and tulips are six inches high, and the lilacs are budding. This is the first time in my lifetime that I heard spring peepers, saw blooming crocuses, barefooted grandchildren, and cows grazing new growth in February. I still can’t comprehend that this is all a Chinese hoax. But there are many things I don’t understand.

DK



Forecasting is particularly difficult, especially concerning the future.

—Niels Bohr



—Doug Hoort D.V.M.

So often we don't set goals for our farm, or we let someone else do it for us. First, I let the Extension Service set my goals; I had to get four cuttings of high protein hay a summer. Then the graziers set my goals; I was a failure every time I made a bale of hay. In order to set my own goals, I had to decide what I actually do and what I want to do. I have a cow/calf operation on ground that tends to be on the hilly side; the soil ranges from muck to clay hills. My income comes from selling beef in multiple forms: cull cows, feeders, stockers, and the occasional grass-fed freezer beef. So, one of my goals is to raise as good a crop of beef as I can. My other goal is to leave the farm God loaned me in better shape than when I got it. Setting goals that fit my farm and me finally gave me good direction in how I cropped my farm and how I took care of my cows. What I didn't expect was that when I started following these two goals, I realized for all intents and purposes they were the same goal. Now, I am a slow thinker, and it takes me a while to figure things out. Once my thought process on setting goals slowly ground to a conclusion I realized I had to express it another way. The process would be better described as, I got in touch with God and He helped me follow His plan for me.

I am feeding beef cows, a fairly simple statement. But it reminds me that is the goal and anything I do should be influenced by that statement. How I provide hay and pasture for them are key management decisions I need to make. There are studies out there that show I can limit the feed for my beef cows. If their access to hay is limited to four hours a day, they will get all the nutrition they need. One winter when I was short on hay, I did limit feed them. I gave them two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening. To accomplish

this I cut up hog panels to hang on the feeders when I did not want them to have access to hay. One key element of limit feeding is you must have enough feeder space for everyone to eat at once, from the top of the pecking order to the bottom in your herd. The winter I limit fed the cows hay, it worked. The cows did fine. I had a good calf crop. I did not run out of hay. The cows were happy but I wasn't. If I wanted to be tied down for two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening I might just as well go back to milking cows. Adding to my unhappiness is that as I have gotten older some of my ambition has evaporated. That ambition level is also why I no longer put up square bales and limit feed them that way. I also found that as my ambition atrophied as part of the aging process, that I can't cow rodeo like I used to. My cows are quite docile. Their flight zone is about zero. So when I pulled the hog panels off the feeders they had no problem running over the top of me to get the first bite of hay. I am just getting too slow and old to dodge hungry cows.

Based on my ambition and the lack of desire to play rodeo, I prefer to feed my beef cows free choice hay. It is not totally free choice. I do insist they clean the feeders out before I give them more hay. They don't just get to eat the best; they have to eat it all; clean their plates, so to speak. I also may wait 12 hours after they clean their plates before I give them more hay.

Allow me to wander for a moment. The reason I love farming is I love how it all works. How a cow functions, how a hayfield grows, what an amazing Creation it is. I love how the more I know, the more I can improve what I am doing to care for my farm. It is also humbling; that the more I know, the more I realize what I don't know.

Now, back to our regularly scheduled article. Knowing how a cow works, cow language, and cow behavior allows me to monitor how much hay they need. When I leave a feeder empty for 12 hours I pay attention to what the cows are telling me. Dr. Ellis was one of the best professors I had in vet school. A statement of his that has stuck with me is, "Hoort, you got to listen to the cows; the cows are talking to you." I "listen" to the cows by observing their body language. When I come out the back door of the house, do they become alert, watching my movements, seeing if I am going to feed them? I look for cud chewing; if 70-80% of the cows are chewing their cud I know they still have food in their rumens. I particularly look for cud chewing in the cows that are at the bottom of the pecking order; they are the ones that will get hungry the quickest. The timid ones are most likely to be shoved out of the way while the top of

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the social order eats. I also look at cow butts, especially around the tail head. If I see roly-poly gobs of skin and fat around the tail head I know my cows are getting adequate nutrition, maybe even too much. Now, scoring cows on body condition is more complicated than that. I should be looking at the entire body before I make that decision. But butts are what I see when they are all up to the feeders eating; it works for me.

The rumen is the cow's first stomach; it functions as a storage facility and a pre-digester. If they are chewing their cud, the rumen still has forage in it. I then know the hay feeder doesn't need to be filled right away. Knowing the fact that the cow's rumen mechanically and biologically can digest fiber allows me to figure out a way to give my cows free choice hay and still keep them from getting too fat. When I milked cows, I wanted to cut my alfalfa hay as soon as I was seeing buds. I wanted a high protein, high-energy forage. Now I wait until I see about a 50% bloom. The extra fiber I get as the alfalfa matures fills my cows up before they consume too many calories. Feeding high fiber forage is actually a form of limit feeding. Before I move on to my second, but most important goal, I want to get the point across that how I feed hay is just part of the story. Managing my pastures and my hay fields is another 2000-word essay that, if I don't totally have my ambition retire, I would like to share with you later.

My second goal is to leave my farm in better condition than it was when I got it. I am a Christian. I believe that God appointed me as master over my farm, the steward of the farm, if you prefer. I am to use my land and my cattle to feed my family and my neighbors. God also requires of me that I do that with a balanced approach. That requires me to take care of the land, the crops, the trees, the water that flows in my creek, and finally the wildlife that shares my farm with me. Those responsibilities influence every decision I make. My farm is very prone to erosion, so it is in either permanent pasture or hay fields. The crick, or county drain, on my farm I protect by keeping my cattle out of it. I need to keep my soil on my farm and part of that is preventing the cows from eroding the steep ditch banks.

I am not so naive that I don't understand the need for making money on my farm, but at the same time to me farming is a way of life, not a business. *Farming Magazine* is the only farming magazine I pay money to get. Everything else I used to subscribe to has a "FARMING IS A BUSINESS" philosophy. "Farming is a way of life" is obsolete and is never mentioned.

David wrote a piece on an effort on his farm to help out his bobolink population. That article gave me the inspiration to leave a piece of my pasture alone until after the nesting season was over. My bobolinks would like to thank David for that article. My wife and I also offer our thanks. Whatever pasture inefficiency that comes as a result of that article is paid back multiple times. The enjoyment we have on a summer evening pasture walk watching the bobolinks is a great payback. Interesting, after following David's plan for a couple of years, I found it is a financial plus for my farm. When my cows get

access to that set aside piece of pasture it is very mature and the cows harvest, at best, 50-75% of the forage. But it isn't wasted; they stomp it into the ground and it becomes a thin layer of compost over the land. That composted plant fiber increases the water retention on my clay hills and improves the soil by increasing the organic matter. I have decided I am going to take advantage of that and improve my pastures by rotating my bobolink habitat to a different area of pasture from year to year. I am going to combine my responsibility to be a good steward of God's creation with my responsibility to be a good caretaker for my cows. The fields on my farm that have been in hay or pasture since I bought it in 1981 are my most valuable fields. I put the most value on them because of the sod base that makes up those fields. I love sod; it gives rain or melting snow a chance to soak in on my hills instead of rushing off the farm in the form of surface water. I think it even helps keep the moisture in the soil on my land that is tiled. The farm ground in my area is mainly farmed by ethanol millionaires. It amuses me to see them tile and re-tile their fields to the point I don't think they even have any empty spots to put in more tile. When it rains the water all immediately zips down into the tiles and dumps into the county drains. Very little of it has a chance to be stored in the soil or replenish the water table. Well, if the land is so well tiled that it dries out immediately after a rain, it can't store up much reserve moisture in the soil. To solve that problem, they drill a well and run energy-intensive pumps to irrigate. I prefer to skip all that expense and establish a good sod base. But it takes years to establish a good sod base. In my newest hay fields, one seeding is eight years old and another is two. I have very little sod. Well, I am going to take David's bobolink farm management philosophy and pick an area on those fields as my 2017 bobolink set-aside. That unutilized forage I have after the cows are turned into it in July will become my mulch crop. I am hoping I can increase my water retention on those newer stands and that will increase my sod development. Even if that doesn't work, that mulch layer will mimic sod and give me some of the benefits of sod. I am going to start managing my pastures more intensively by doing less to them.

When I earned my living as a bovine pediatrician or a "calf specialist," I would start off a training session by saying there is no big black book on farming. There is no set of rules that works for everyone. If there were, there would be no need for tech people like me; you would just buy the Book on Farming. Instead, your job is to listen, read, learn as much as you can, from as many sources as you can. Then you decide what works for you; you pick your goals. Setting my goals helped me in my decision-making process, in my advice selection process. It focuses me on what is important on my farm, but most important what is important in my life. 🐄

Doug Hoort was a veterinarian who did not know what he wanted to be when he grew up. During his veterinarian career he worked as a veterinarian in private practice, for the Michigan Department of Agriculture, USDA, Milk Products Inc., and Hamilton Feed. He currently has a beef cow/calf operation along with raising dairy bull calves to sell as feeders.

Conversations with the Land

I left the house this 13th day of February and angled down across the livestock yard and barns in a southwesterly direction. I was debating with myself as to whether this warm spell was a late January thaw or an early spring. I finally decided on the late January thaw because the geese had yet to show up in the south pasture. The sow feeding chores had been finished up by early afternoon though, and the ice was melting, the mud soft down to the frost a few inches deep and the breeze warm and inviting. I needed to go for a ramble.

Something there is about spring, or even the promise of it, that pulls me out and away. Fall features similar temperatures often and surely has its own charms, but it is often burdened with the sense of duty, hurry, and shortening days. Spring is all possibility again. Work planning feels good and natural, and does not interfere with being alive and joyful in Creation. Even a fellow approaching elderly comes alive with possibility and renewed promise. Walking easily but carefully now on the scraps of ice and dead pasture grass, I passed the young stock gathered around their sorghum sudan silage bale chewing peacefully and only mildly interested in my passage. Off to the west here and there lay others, wherever a hummock offered relief from the wet. The going was a bit more treacherous now as the ice was covered with melt water. Neither these young feeders nor the cows and calves in the other pasture had been up to drink for several days, living instead on the melt water.

I got to the corner of the pasture and paused, looking north along the fence and field windbreak we had planted twenty years earlier at the start of farming together with our son and his family. It had grown well and, as a matter of fact, the red osier dogwood we had used as a kind of snow fence in the westernmost row had gone wild, spreading like a weed, mostly due to the birds eating the berries in late summer and then defecating the seeds to the ground under the fence as they sat on the wire on the east, or pasture side, of the break. We now needed to grub the young bushes out every year to keep current in the wire. We should move the fence now, put it on the west side and string the paddock division wires through the tree line to it, enabling the cattle to come in and control the bush undergrowth whenever we wanted them in there. A little shade on very hot days is a good thing. I mused

—Jim Van Der Pol

about the wire. Move it or take up and discard and string new? It is already twenty years old.

The little cattail slough was at my back just across the line fence on our neighbor's. It was quiet now as the red-winged blackbirds had not yet come to start their territorial squabbles. When they do, they can easily be heard as I work in the barns in the mornings, about a quarter mile distant. I climbed over the pasture fence and headed straight west along the perimeter fence and across the triticale beginning to green up, then across the headlands of the corn stalks and finally the soybean stubble. I was checking fence. It amuses me to remember that I used to hate fencing work, back when it was all barbed wire and clouds of mosquitoes around my head as we worked soon after a summer thunderstorm. This newer system lasts much longer and is easier to patch and fix and now I like the work. I feel close to my father doing it because long before I started with the grazing he was moving in that direction with Hereford beef cattle. Bloat turned him around and headed him toward tractors. It nearly did me too, until I learned a little about managing it.

I notice that the bottom wire is down in the dead grass and pretty slack. Late last year I had patched it on the other side of the corner where someone's pickup or tractor had hooked it on the dead road that forms our western boundary, and when I retightened it, I didn't think of it that there are two winches in this full mile stretch. This run, on my side of the corner post assembly, didn't pull up as it should. I tugged on the wire, finding it was frozen in and made a mental note about this being the place to start when the frost comes out. Soon I was to the south west corner of the farm, and took the time to turn and look back at the standing water and ice scattered across the entire farm, making a mental note to get out here and pick the rocks off the hill if we had a week without rain. Wondering if the standing water was draining so early, I climbed the fence and crossed the cartway to gain access to the bank of the ditch where our tile outlets. I didn't need to climb down to the water to see that the tile was running full speed ahead.

Now there was a mission. Having discovered that one of our main systems was draining, I resolved to check the other two, plus any intake I could get to. I headed back walking now northeasterly toward the big expanse of water feeding the tile I had just seen running and confirmed the first intake

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working. I couldn't see the other under the ice. The cattle must have taken the marker down, but it wasn't taking water either, or I would see that. I made another mental note to get back later this week and check again. Due east about a quarter mile, I reached the end of the system, confirmed that the intake was running and started into the big middle drainage system. I could see the water was less than I would expect for the system even before I got to the first intake and saw flowing water. From there, over the pasture fence once again and back to the barns. Not willing to leave the job two-thirds done, I struck out once more in a southeasterly direction to confirm that the front system was flowing as well. Once there, I was able to spend a few minutes with the cows and calves and started thinking about the need to wean the yearlings now before calving starts in early April. The cows have mostly done the job but the young need to go to better feed and the two young bulls need to be separated and sent

to the bull group at the river before they start any unplanned calves.

The farm is pretty quiet. Perhaps next time, the bald eagles will be back, squabbling over a carcass as they prepare to head for the river where they summer. The redwings will fight and fuss in their little water hole and the robins will come back. I noticed for the first time an oriole nest on the way to the meat building this morning and I heard hunting owls in the evening earlier. I look forward to the sound of mourning doves in the morning and meadowlarks in the pastures. The dog smells of skunk! So yes, the world is alive. Some of it is still sleeping. All in good time! 🐾

Jim Van Der Pol grazes and direct-markets pork, chickens, and beef from his farm near Kerkhoven, Minnesota. He is a regular contributor to Farming Magazine.

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The Fence

“Good fences make good neighbors”

—*proverb*

—Ulf Kintzel

Photos by Author

Are you expecting a Robert-Frost-like poem? Then I will disappoint you. I am not mending a wall with the neighbor. He and I get along so well anyway, so there is nothing to mend. I am sure Peter agrees with me. I am writing about my woven wire fence that has now for two seasons enclosed the perimeters of our farm. Why did I pick this topic? During a visit to our farm, the editor asked me to write about it. My first thought was that this will only amount to a reader's letter. However, the more I thought about it, the more came to mind what this fence means to me.

Let's go back a little...well, let's go back quite a bit and explore what I used to do in 30 some years of shepherding and sheep farming. In my early days as a shepherd, back in the 1980s in East Germany, the sheep were herded during the day and put in the barn or solid night pen made from wooden panels. While the barn was usually safe, the night pen wasn't safe when it came to stray dogs. When I moved to West Germany in 1990, I mainly herded sheep under the transhumance system. That meant that the sheep were outside most of the year, in pastures in the summer in the hills and mountains, and in the fall in the valleys with dozens and dozens of miles to walk in between. The night pen was made from electric netting. While the sheep were herded during the day, on occasion a pasture was also fenced using electric netting. While this electric netting does quite a terrific job keeping the sheep in, it doesn't do the same job keeping dogs out. I remember herding sheep near the city of Freiburg, where as a rule the sheep farmer put an additional pen around the night pen just for the purpose of deterring dogs. Mind you, these weren't stray or wild dogs, but simply pet dogs of owners who didn't obey the leash law and had no real control over their dogs.

When I came to the U.S. in the mid-1990s, I used the same electric netting. In addition to dogs, I also had to worry about coyotes and, since I was in northern New Jersey, increasingly about black bears. The purchase of a guard dog eased some of these problems but didn't eliminate them. In addition, these were now my sheep and entirely my responsibility. That creates a whole new mindset!

When we moved here to the Fingerlakes area in western New York, we had land to purchase and a house and a barn to build. There wasn't enough money to fence in the entire farm and my willingness to borrow more was limited. It wouldn't have been wise either since the property line in the back of our farm was an uneven one and more land was to be had in the future. So, we had a permanent fence along the road and our straight southern border: high tensile woven wire with southern yellow pine posts and a high tensile strand on top that could be electrified. That fence was 5,005 feet in total length. The western and eastern borders we left open for another day. Here I continued with electric netting as the perimeter fence.

In 2015, after the additional twenty-five acres of land had been purchased a few years earlier and had been paid off, I was finally in the position, financially speaking, to have the perimeter fence completed. Not being 20 years old anymore and going for 50 instead, I have started to appreciate some conveniences over the years where I used to just plow through to

The woven wire fence shortly after it was built. The spaced-out longer posts are used to mount a birdhouse.



Playing it safe to avoid trouble (and lawsuits).

save the money, without worrying about the recovery of my body. I hired the same company that had built my woven wire fence nine years prior. The outfit is called BASH Contracting and they are worth mentioning. BASH Contracting is a small business in Clearfield near State College in Pennsylvania. Fence builders for agricultural fence are in short supply and good and competitive ones in even shorter supply. I dealt with Pat, one of the owners, who sadly died just recently at an age way too young. Pat and his crew of Angelo, Boomer, and Garrett built me a woven wire fence second to none. This time around, in 2015, we incorporated improvements in design compared to the fence built in 2006, i.e. putting the high tensile fence as close to the ground as possible instead of putting one strand of barbed wire at the bottom to deter coyotes. Gates were placed at strategic places where I knew after ten years at this farm that I would need them. Every fourth or fifth post was a longer one so I could mount a birdhouse on it. The grand total for the 12,408 feet of fence built in 2006 and 2015, including gates, end braces, corners, longer posts for birdhouses, and repair of the fence built in 2006 amounted to just a little over \$46,000. You say that's a lot of money? It sure is. However, it is worth every penny to me. Here are eight reasons why:

Before erecting the fence, I used my electric netting as a perimeter and interior fence. While electric netting is much safer than multi-strand fences with twine or similar, which I never considered for their lack of safety, they also take more time to erect. I absolutely don't mind taking down and erecting electric fencing, but the fact that I spend a good part of my day with it remained a fact. It is impossible to leave the electric netting up all year around the farm. It would take more netting than I could spare and the grass would grow into the netting and drain it of all electricity. If you add up the grazing cycles, I had to put up miles and miles of electric

netting as perimeter fence before I could even get to the grazing cells. In addition, the fence needed to be powered. Energizer units of at least two joules were needed. Also, the necessary deep-cycle marine batteries are heavy, need to be recharged every so often, and don't last all that long.

Now I have not only the woven wire fence as a perimeter fence. It gets even better. I mention the hot strand of wire on top or above the woven wire fence. This wire is powered by a plug-in unit in the barn. I start my electric netting at any given point of the farm at the woven wire fence. When done putting up fencing, I connect the electric netting with a power link to the hot wire strand. Wait, that's not all there is! I also have a remote control, which allows me to turn the energizer on and off wherever I am at the farm. In addition, this remote-control acts as a fault finder. If you touch the fence with it and there is a problem, an arrow points you in the direction of the source of the problem. I didn't appreciate it at first until the first time a staple came off the upper strand and it touched the woven wire, draining the fence of almost all the electricity. I assure you, it can take you a long time to find that spot on a fence more than two miles long without such a remote. The fault finder makes it easy.

While I still use my battery-powered energizers and marine batteries during the fall when I leave the farm for several weeks and pasture my sheep at the neighbor's farm, I no longer need to carry around any battery all spring, summer, and winter.

I used to make grazing cells that lasted me anywhere between one and three days of grazing before I rotated. Without deliberate planning I noticed that I started making the grazing cells smaller, simply because I now had the time to do it. Having grazing cells for two or three days are now a thing of the past. During the growing season, I now rotate daily with almost no exception. This helps to graze the farm



The BASH crew from left to right: Boomer, foreman Angelo, and Garrett.

more evenly and increases the use I get out of our farm.

All in all, let's put the first big check mark on the fence as a time and labor saver.

Dogs continued to be a problem here at our new location in the Finger Lakes. On several occasions a stray dog, or dogs of irresponsible dog owners who just let their dog out of the front door and don't care what happens next, came into the pasture or even into the flock. No damage was done since either my interior electric fence or my guard dog stopped the problems in their tracks, but it led to some intense situations with some neighbors. It is hard or impossible to explain that it is their job and not mine to keep their dogs off my farm and out of my flock. It is also an impossible undertaking to assure them that my guard dog is not vicious and that she simply views a pet dog the same way she views a coyote. Or that sheep don't play with a dog and are highly distressed instead and may abort when pregnant when the dog comes into the flock and chases them, even if the dog's intention was to just play as most owners claim (which the dog most often isn't because there is a predator in dogs of any size). Even if my guard dog takes care of any intruding dog, I would hate the idea of my dog killing the neighbor's little pet dog, dear to their children.

Recently, I saw two dogs of yet another neighbor roaming the street, moving right alongside my woven wire fence. I was driving down the road at the time, acknowledging these dogs. Yet I never missed a beat, never took my foot off the gas. Here was an argument with a neighbor I didn't have to have. My sheep were safe. Large dogs can no longer come into my pasture. Let's put a check mark on that one also.

Before I moved up here, a livestock dealer who had business in this area was forewarning me how many more coyotes there were up here than there were in New Jersey. She told me of a sheep farmer who had quite a few guard dogs to fend them off. Great. However, when I moved up here, I saw and heard little evidence of coyotes. That surely has changed. The last few years I have seen coyotes right in my back yard. You hear them quite regularly and more and more often from every which direction. In fact, their howling can

wake me up at times in the middle of the night. I remember jumping into the car in the darkness of the night because of their noise and the continuous barking of my guard dog responding to the coyotes. I don't need to do this anymore. I just roll over and go back to sleep when I hear them at night. Check mark for that one too.

There was one source of trouble that I had in New Jersey which I did not have to face here: black bears. I was told the area is perhaps a bit too open for them. That was until a few months ago, when my neighbor to the north told me about the black bear with cubs she saw behind her house in the woods. While black bears

like lamb as much as I do, I know for sure that black bears are very sensitive to electricity. My upper strand of hot wire has anywhere between 6,000 and 8,000 volts at 6 Joule. If you get zapped by it, you will feel a lot of pain. Sure, the bear can figure out to climb over one of the three gates in the back of our farm. However, I like my chances. Check mark.

"The greatest thing about my job is that I love my job." That is what Chris Matthews, a news pundit on TV, said once about his job. I remembered that sentence since it fits me so well. However, even though I seem to have the greatest job in the world, I need a break from it once in a while. So do my wife and the kids. While we stay mostly at home and rarely go out, once a year we have a vacation for a week. It is a must. I am fortunate to have a reliable farm sitter, but whenever I left on vacation, the worry that the sheep might get out and I will be needed back home was with me. So we never went farther than a day's drive. When I had the perimeter fence built, I also had an interior section of about 15 acres fenced. While that sounds like a lot of additional fencing, it only added a little over 1,000 feet to the total fencing since it was a corner piece already fenced on three sides by a perimeter fence. I call it the "vacation pasture." I can now put up my interior fencing in advance of our annual vacation and my farmer sitter just needs to take a few electric nettings down each day. If the sheep get out, they will still be in that pasture. No harm can be done. That enables us to venture a little farther. In 2016 we were able to say: "Hello, Newfoundland, here we come." What a wonderful vacation it was with lots of nature, history, hiking, and seafood every day. Another check mark, just for being able to go worry-free on vacation.

My area is known for a fair amount of snow. Ever heard of lake effect snow? While there are worse places when it comes to that kind of snow, we do get our share. In addition to the snow, we get a good amount of wind. That leads to a lot of drifting snow. In some years, it buried my electric netting that I left up as a perimeter fence. My flock, or at least a part of it, stays out all winter with access to shelter but still not housed. That makes a perimeter fence necessary. The

drifting snow on my eastern side buried the electric netting at times. While the flock still couldn't get out, it made the sheep vulnerable to predators, which can walk right on top of those snow drifts. Also, it did at times do some damage to the fencing. Fence posts broke, netting snapped. High tensile woven wire takes a lot of snow weight without any damage. It will sag a little under a heavy snow load, but will snap right back up when the snow melts. Problem solved, check mark.

Here is a question to any reader who has sheep: Did your rams ever get out prior to breeding season and breed some sheep that were not supposed to be bred at the time? Yes? Same here. They are hard to keep in when the ewes are cycling. Goat bucks are worse. They are quite good fence jumpers.

I solved that problem and had another interior woven wire fence built to fence in a few acres as ram pasture behind the house. It added less than 500 feet, again because I was able to use existing perimeter fence, two sides this time. I have not had any ram or buck jump out, even when I had the sheep in season grazing right next to it. It isn't just the solid fence with four feet of height. The hot wire on top of it zapped each ram at least once when they tried to climb up with their front feet and put the head across. I heard the goat buck voicing his displeasure when it happened to him. So, no more untimely and unwanted breeding. Check mark.

Deer hunting season is still big around here. Not every hunter in the neighborhood is respectful of other people's property, though. Those pesky hunters who trespassed from time to time onto our farm and whose slugs ricocheted off the trees at times, threatening the well-being of the hunters I did allow to hunt on my property, were hard to keep off



This power link connected to the hot strand above the woven wire allows me to electrify my temporary fencing wherever I am at the farm.

the farm despite "No trespassing" signs. The fence is now a physical barrier which leaves no dispute about where the property line is and is decorated with permanently made "No trespassing" as well as "Sheep dog on duty – Do not disturb" signs. Hunters no longer have an excuse or easy possibility to trespass. Here is the nice part: Deer are still jumping the fence with absolute ease. That means I still get to hunt on my own property, sitting in my tree stand, knowing I will not have to deal with disrespectful hunters. Check mark number eight.

If you are young, you may have no appreciation whatsoever for the money I spent for this fence, despite of my reasoning. Instead, you may think of the many things that you could have purchased instead. You are right. I used to think that way as well. However, if you are my age or a little older and you have

started looking for ways to make your farming life a little easier because you have a body that refuses to recover as easily as it used to after a day of hard work, you may have an open ear to what I said. So, in the same spirit as the VISA commercial, which tells you what things cost in real dollars and what priceless return you gain, I can say: 12,408 feet of woven wire fence: \$46,000. Having the ability to make all the check marks above and sleep soundly at night: priceless. 🐑

Ulf owns and operates White Clover Sheep Farm and breeds and raises grass-fed White Dorper sheep and Kiko goats without any grain feeding and offers breeding stock suitable for grazing. He is a native of Germany and lives in the U.S. since 1995. He farms in the Finger Lakes area in upstate New York. His website address is www.whitecloversheepfarm.com. He can be reached by e-mail at ulf@whitecloversheepfarm.com or by phone at 585-554-3313.

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BATHED IN LOVE AT BUTTERWORKS

Organic Yogurt the Offspring



Photo: Shann C. Henry

—Rachel Zegerius

He notes that she's the one with common sense who interjects reality into any situation, while she ascertains that he's the dreamer and the charm behind the legend that is Butterworks Farm. You might not meet a more dynamic dairy duo than Jack and Anne Lazor. "I'm Mr. Giddyup and she's Madam Whoa," says Jack.

The Lazors have been farming in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont since the late 1970s, when they processed milk from their two family cows on the stovetop in their farmhouse kitchen. Early on, their local delivery route consisted of 35 families receiving eggs, raw milk, butter, farmer's cheese, and—their ambrosial, signature product—yogurt.

Today, Butterworks Farm yogurt is one of the most widely recognized organic brands on shelves across the Northeast. Cornucopia has given the product its highest and most reputable, 5-spoon rating on its yogurt scorecard, designed to educate consumers about the best and worst organic brands available. (Visit: cornucopia.org/yogurt-scorecard/) Captivating more dedicated customers each year, it's hard to pinpoint just which of Butterworks Farm's unique characteristics makes their yogurt stand out.

It could be the heritage strains of cultures, grown weekly

and used in the fermentation process. Or, maybe it's the high content of fat and solids found in their grass-fed cows' milk that give it the rich flavor for which it's known. Alternatively, could it be yogurt-maker Theresa's special skills that bring the magic?

While all of these factors are sure to deliver, one thing is for certain. Umbilical to Butterworks' success is a commitment to the land itself: soil vitality.

Over the years, despite changes in their farming approach, dairy production, and business practices, the one thing that has endured is a perennial commitment to balancing nutrients, trace minerals, organic matter, and soil life.

"Developing the whole farm organism is the most important thing here," says Jack. The Lazors recognized the symbiosis early on.

In the mid-1980s, with their Vermont milk handlers' license approved and their yogurt on shelves across the state, the Lazors invested heavily in minerals for their land.

"The payback was almost immediate," says Jack. Diversity and yield of browse increased in the hayfields. The health and general well-being of the cows improved, and milk production increased.

"Thus began my love affair with soil," he explains. "All

I needed to do was to take care of it, and it took care of us. This was such a revelation to me. I very quickly realized that balanced mineral inputs do not cost—they actually pay.”

Voilà, the *terroir* of Butterworks Farm, a by-product of this deep reverence and responsibility to care for the earth. And, in turn, the earth is taking care of them.

Butterworks Farm has sustained itself for four decades and now grosses nearly \$1.2 million each year. They currently have a total of 85 dairy cows, including 43 milkers, and this year they transitioned from a system of feeding the cows both grain and hay to one of 100% grass-fed diets for all of their adult cows.

The high levels of forage quality in their fields—diversity, high energy, and high protein—have enabled the Lazors to stop feeding grain to their cows altogether. Such grass-based systems build soil carbon and, in the case of Butterworks, may lead to no-till grain systems in the future.

Implementing innovations like these, Jack and Anne Lazor are true organic pioneers. And, as mentors in the movement, they have encouraged years of development in local production, local food, and...local competition.

Not only do giant organic counterfeit corporations pose unfair competition, but increasing numbers of small New England dairies also make it harder to succeed in today's market. “We can't complain about that though, because it's really the best thing for communities to each have their local food supply,” says Anne.

But, distribution and profitability have declined over recent years. And, having been removed from the shelves of Whole Foods in the greater D.C. and New York regions as of late, Butterworks is reimagining a successful vision moving forward.

“We rode the wave and now the wave has crested,” says Jack. So, the Lazors have spent the last several months doing

a lot of soul-searching, digging deep to unfold the riddle of their future path—both personally and for the fate of the business.

“We grew and grew for a while, but maybe now we're thinking one of our options is to shrink,” says Anne. Strategies moving forward may include developing even more

relationships and markets throughout Vermont and New Hampshire, a focus on being THE local brand.

If there is any one thing that Butterworks aims to be, it's an alternative to corporate organics. What will become of the Lazors' legacy plan? Only time will tell.

“We are

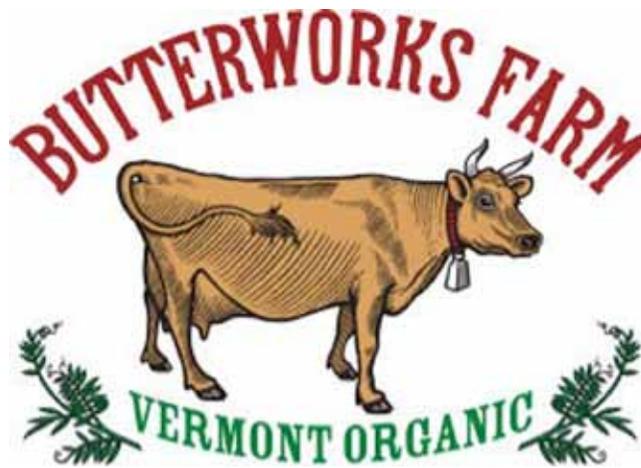
definitely marching to the beat of a different drummer,” says Jack. And, in a profit-driven economy that often de-emphasizes and externalizes the value of diverse ecology and sustainable natural systems, the Lazors see themselves as part of an “ascending spiral.”

The unifying force that connects every living and non-living organism in their farm ecosystem takes root in love of the Earth. “It's pretty idyllic,” observes Jack.

His definition of farming? Producing food for people out of love. Jack chuckles, “The entire farm is bathed in love.”

Remember that when you take your next spoonful of Butterworks Farm maple yogurt. 🍷

[This article was previously published in *The Cultivator*, Cornucopia's quarterly newsletter. Their webpage is: www.cornucopia.org]



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Who Ran off with My...

—Gene Logsdon

Once kept track of the time my father, brother, and I spent hunting grease guns, drawbar pins, jacks, and wrenches. The total: I won't tell you because you'd never believe it. And I'm not even counting seven woman-hours of help by Mother and various sisters; three hours by the gas man and two salesmen who helped hunt a funnel, a checkbook, and a fan belt; the vet, another half hour hunting a rope.

Dad generally starts the hunt.

"Who ran off with my.....?"

"It didn't walk off, you know."

"I'm going to buy a lock and....."

There you have the symptoms of "who-took-itis" or "pliers-dropsy" or "wrench-amnesia," an inherited disease of males passed on from father to son with no symptoms on the female side.

No man ever believes he has it. My father will come striding across the barnyard, his face drawn. "Someone," he says solemnly, "stole the hitch off the mounted mower." We search. Dad says he left it along the road where many people must have seen it. The Stolen Theory begins to sound plausible. We assemble for a council of war.

Shall we or shall we not call the sheriff? My brother remembers the dogs barking through the night. One of the girls thinks she saw a car parked down there, or at least going "awful slow." The breadman says there have been robberies on the other side of the county. We wonder how a thief could get the blasted thing unbolted, especially at night, but we say nothing. We've found the villain. So we buy a new attachment. Weeks later when the "stolen" one is found, we agree it's good to have a spare.

Over the years we've tried cures. Dad once came home from town with half a dozen hammers. We stumbled over them in the barnyard, kicked them out of the way to get doors closed. No tractor seat or shop chair was safe to sit down on. It was a gloriously secure feeling. But by the end of the month,

we were down to two. For a while Mom had a tack hammer in her sewing box that went by the name of "Momshammer" and was used in emergency hammer shortages. Until, in one such emergency, Dad tried driving spikes with it.

During the boom days of the 40s, we expanded to five farms several miles apart, with several tractor outfits and sundry part-time hired help.

We lost wrenches, sure. We lost needle valves, spark plug wrenches, and V-belts. We even lost track of a four-row cultivator and two 16-foot harrows!

We couldn't fritter away time on tools and equipment. There was always another 50 acres to plant or harvest, lurking somewhere over the next hill. Harrows dragged hastily into a woods at the end of spring planting, passed out of memory by wheat sowing time in the fall.

Once I tried to put 20 feet of electric fence—that I'd left strung along the edge of the wheat—through the combine. I shifted the fence over into the adjoining cornfield, and sure enough, Dad tried to run it through the corn picker in the fall.

There came a day when we all resolved to do better. No more tool dropping. No more litter. We even tackled the spot back of the barn where junk multiplies like bacteria. We tore down all old buildings so that we could mow the farmstead clean.

It was beautiful.

But for only a week. Then someone dropped a stone about six inches high in the center of that spotless sweep of ground. It seemed an innocent little rock.

Three hours later there were two wrenches lying on it and an oilcan beside it. Shortly after, a 5-gallon gas can. By chore time next day, a grease gun and an ax. By Sunday morning, a two-by-four, a half sack of fertilizer, a canvas, a calf bucket, a broken sickle, a battery, and four cats. The pile was now big enough to put things behind it. After that there was no getting rid of it. In the fall we removed the pile completely, but by then it was too late. The habit of dropping things there was firmly entrenched in us, even though the rock was gone. 

This essay was published in 1977 in a collection of essays entitled Listen to the Land, a Farm Journal Treasury.



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The Idaho Pasture Pig

—John Gladden

In a perfect world, being called a “pig” would be a compliment. And being called an Idaho Pasture Pig would be the highest compliment of all.

Developed in 2007 by Gary and Shelly Farris, Idaho Pasture Pigs combine the meat quality of Duroc, the maternal instincts of Old Berkshire, and the gentle grazing habits of Kunekune to produce a pig that is easy to handle, thrives on forage, and is an efficient meat producer—making it a good choice for those new to raising pigs or for anyone who wants to add high quality pork to their larder.

Pigs by nature are among the most intelligent animals and quite clean. A muddy pig is a happy, healthy pig, not a dirty one. Pigs don’t have sweat glands, so in warm weather they push sod off to the side to create a wallow to coat themselves with mud and stay cool. The mud also protects their skin from biting insects. Idaho Pasture Pigs will not soil their food or bedding—preferring to keep their manure off in a corner of the pen.

It’s one thing to say Idaho Pasture Pigs are uncommonly gentle, but to see Carrie Beegle’s 3-year-old granddaughter Savannah playing in a pen with a sow and her litter of piglets illustrates the point.

“The first thing Savannah does in the morning is run

outside and give them a snack,” Beegle said, adding that for safety, children are not allowed to enter the pens alone. As with all farm animals, respect is key. The pigs are gentle by nature, but also because of how they are treated. Beegle and her family interact with them every day, which leads to a relationship of trust, she said.

Beegle and her husband Greg have long raised honeybees, chickens, turkeys, and goats, in addition to vegetables and herbs. Greg is an executive chef and Carrie is a public school food service director and consultant. Beegle’s school menus are filled with made-from-scratch dishes like stuffed green peppers and stir-fries that use fresh, local, in-season ingredients. In 2015, her success in placing salad bars in schools earned her an invitation to address a Congressional hearing on a bill aimed at increasing the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables for children.

Raising Idaho Pasture Pigs at their Savannah Acres Farm in northeast Ohio seemed a natural next step in their personal farm-to-table journey, seeking to produce their own naturally raised meats free of the antibiotics and other feed additives used in many commercial operations today. Beegle got hooked on the breed at the 2014 Mother Earth News Fair in Pennsylvania and purchased two 3-month-old breeding pairs.

Short in stature with small, upturned snouts, full-grown female Idaho Pasture Pigs reach 250-300 pounds, while males



tip the scales at 350-400 pounds. Their coloring ranges from red, to black and white, to ginger.

To set up pigkeeping, Beegle built simple A-frame shelters out of plywood and four-by-fours to give the animals protection from the sun and wind. Filled with straw, they offer plenty of warmth during northern Ohio winters. Beegle also has converted a former hoop house into a pen, enclosing it with galvanized fence. Plastic 55-gallon barrels outfitted with pig nipples supply their drinking water.

There are four, one-acre fenced pastures seeded with timothy and alfalfa. One acre can support up to six fully grown pigs, so there is ample space for pasture rotation and for separating males and females. Grazing areas and temporary holding areas are easy to set up with portable electric fences. Pigs, however, are ingenious escape artists, Beegle said, and will quickly figure out when an electric fence is not working. Sometimes she'll bunk one of the males in a pen that houses her Nigerian pygmy goats and chickens. Everyone gets along fine, she said—though the pigs will happily eat any chicken eggs they find.

Ninety percent of the pigs' diet comes from pasture in summer and high-protein hay in winter. It's supplemented by milled grains to balance out their nutritional needs. They also dine on as many fruits and vegetables Beegle can throw their way. A local produce grower gives her surplus sweet corn, cucumbers, watermelon, and zucchini that is otherwise headed to a compost pile. A nearby food pantry saves leftover bread for her. The pigs are never fed meat products.

The animals can be bred as early as 6 months of age, but Beegle prefers to wait at least until 8 months for full maturity. The average gestation period is 114 days—or three months, three weeks, and three days. Sows can safely give birth to two litters per year. It's best to time farrowing so pigs are born during temperate weather. Extreme heat or cold can add unnecessary stress to the mother and baby pigs. A sow usually produces six to eight piglets in a first litter. Subsequent litters can produce up to 13.

"They're just fabulous mothers," Beegle said. "Very gentle." One of their habits is sitting down before lying down, Beegle added, making them less likely to injure baby pigs.

Part of the reason the animals are so good-natured is the fact that Beegle and family members who care for the pigs are in the pens with them constantly, building familiarity. When a sow is farrowing, Beegle is alongside the animal in the pen, handling the piglets seconds after they are born and helping the mother clean them.

"You have to go into the pens if you want them as gentle as this," said Beegle.

The piglets are playful and curious, nosing around the shoes of visitors and chasing each other around the pens. In as little as a week, they begin to try solid food. After three weeks with their mothers, they're moved to a juvenile pen. At three months, they are ready to sell.

Meat pigs are ready for butchering in as little as eight months and will have a typical hanging weight of about 175



pounds. The meat is highly flavored and nicely marbled, like beef, Beegle said. The grass-fed pork is higher in beneficial Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty acids, as well as high in Vitamin E. Whole or half pigs sell for \$6.50 per pound hanging weight.

Beegle markets individual pigs as well as mating pairs—but deals only with small-scale producers like herself who will care for the animals and who value all they have to offer. "These pigs will become a part of their family," Beegle said.

For more, visit www.savanaacres.com or call 330-703-7534. 🐷

John Gladden writes, gardens, makes maple syrup, and looks after the roadside ditch at his home near Seville, Ohio. His book, "How to Elevate a Cow," is available at: www.WoosterBook.com.

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Photos: Barbara Brady Conn

View of the front of our 100-year-old barn.

Once-A-Day Milking in Central Maine

—Sonja Heyck-Merlin

August 22, 2016: The transition begins

We rode our bikes down the lane to the gate holding the herd in their PM grazing paddock. It's about 7 PM, 2 hours past their normal milking time. On a typical evening, we would have just finished PM milking and be sending our 90-head herd of organic Jerseys back out to pasture.

It is our first night of once-a-day (OAD) milking, a date that has been circled on our calendar for two months. The cows are contentedly grazing the new paddock, seemingly oblivious to the massive change in our farming program. Not even one cow is hovering near the gate. Our worries about the cows charging back toward the barn are unfounded.

We decided to transition our farm to OAD milking to reduce labor. We lack the family labor force that many farms count on, therefore we rely on hired help in order to maintain the balance between the needs of our two young children and the needs of the farm.

We also deliberated continuing with twice-a-day (TAD) and downsizing our herd. This approach didn't mesh with our other goal of decreasing our dependence on purchased concentrates. Our herd has grown in size as the grain ration has been reduced to make up for the decrease in production. Downsizing the herd would push us to feed more grain.

After a large amount of research (mostly coming from low-grain, grazing herds milking seasonally in New Zealand), we decided our farm was as well poised as any to manage the

transition to OAD.

Research shows that we should expect a 25% drop in milk production in year one, with milk yields climbing upwards over subsequent years. Research also shows that farms can recoup 90% of their TAD yields within one to three years. Components should increase slightly, and somatic cell counts tend to increase. Although we expect to see labor, electricity, and milking supply costs to decrease, we do not expect those savings to equal the loss of revenue. Cash flowing in the second half of 2016 and 2017 will be difficult.

August 25, 2016: Adjusting to the new routine

During our first few mornings some bags are tight; there are a few cows leaking milk but the cows don't seem uncomfortable. Although we feed some grain (it varies between 3-5 pounds per cow a day), we are a pasture and forage-based dairy. On our low grain ration the herd can average up to 30 pounds per cow on twice-a-day.

One current concern is that the one-on-one time we spend with each cow has been reduced. I have attempted to prep our milking crew (which includes myself and two others) to move slowly and deliberately.

Milking is taking a little longer. Two people milk together in our barn; we milk into a pipeline with six units. The timing of milking seems off right now. One of my machines may be on a tail-ending first-calf heifer and another machine is on a

fresh cow.

Milk production has dropped about 22% in four days.

September 15, 2016: Transitioning from pasture to stored feeds

Production has dropped to about 20# per cow a day. We can accept this number in the short-term, but improving it is our number one goal as we move forward. Compounding our challenges is the weather. We are coming off an extremely dry summer and our pasture program has suffered. Since mid-August we have been supplementing the pasture program with baleage.

We're still getting paid for August milk, so the financial realities of this transition year are not yet apparent. Evenings on our farm have become more peaceful. In traditional New England fashion, our tie-stall is connected to our house and we are enjoying the privacy and the opportunity for more evening outings. Our workforce has stabilized and we are thankful to be spending less time training new workers.

October 30, 2016: You have to go down before you can go up

One unanticipated effect of this transition is the number of cows that are drying themselves off early. About 10% of the herd is involuntarily drying off at around 180 days of their lactation. Mostly, these are cows that were transitioned to OAD at early to mid-lactation. We expected fewer early dry-offs. Top producers that were switched mid-lactation seem more apt to dry off early than the cows with a more steady production curve.

The conundrum is whether we should cull these cows or accept a long dry period. We decide to cull the extreme outliers and retain most of the early dry-off cows. Hopefully they will produce better on OAD when they begin their next lactation.

December 13, 2016: Financial realities

As predicted, the decrease in expenses has not made up for our smaller milk checks. Improvements and investments are on hold. Our family budget has tightened as well.

Milk production per cow has risen slightly to 22.6 pounds per day. We're having our last charge of calving until March though, and I am concerned about more early dry-offs and unanticipated culling that tends to happen in the winter months.

On a more positive note, I am pleased with the improved body condition of our cows. In the past few years we have reduced our purchased grain consumption and with that has come some loss of condition. Some cows thrive on low-grain and others struggle. It's similar to the transition of a herd from conventional to organic. With OAD I expect to cull fewer



Sonja Heyck-Merlin and Steve Morrison and their two children, Terra (5) and Gale (3).

cows because of low body condition.

January 3, 2017: Milk quality

Historically, it has been our goal to keep our somatic cell count (SCC) below 150,000. Since our transition to OAD, our SCC is running from 200,000-250,000. There is less dilution of high count cows due to the decreased volume of milk. An unidentified problem cow in the bulk tank can now spike our counts to over 200,000.

Our farm has always co-existed with *Staph Aureus* but we are finding that the milk quality of our Staph cows has grown worse. From our experience, you must be prepared to identify and cull high count cows from

your herd. If you have a high SCC, I would recommend getting it under control prior to embarking on a OAD program. When it's time to dry off high count cows, resist the urge to keep them in the herd. Expect high count cows to get worse. Despite the elevated counts, we have not seen an increase in environmental mastitis.

Between the early dry-offs and culling, we are only milking 80 cows. Nine March heifers are much anticipated. Production per cow continues to slightly rise to 23.3 pounds per cow.

February 12, 2017: Looking towards spring

It is still far too early to draw any conclusions about the success (or lack thereof) of OAD milking on our Maine farm. We are only six months into our transition. The intent of this story is to describe our first-hand experience with the challenges and rewards of the transition year.

There is certainly a psychological hurdle associated with OAD which is hard to overcome. As dairy producers, we are accustomed to discussing our success in terms of rolling herd averages and pounds of milk produced. I remind myself that there are other metrics of success, one of which, quality of life, is difficult to measure.

Although we agreed to try this experiment for only one year, it's difficult to imagine a scenario in which we return to TAD. Year one should be the most difficult and we don't want to deny ourselves the future rewards of OAD. Our experiences during these first five months are in line with the research on OAD milking. We are optimistic that as we freshen more heifers on OAD and continue to cull those cows who aren't adjusting well to the new program, our production per cow will continue to rise. 🐮

Sonja Heyck-Merlin and Steve Morrison raise cows, grass, gardens, and children on Clovercrest Farm in central Maine. The farm has been certified organic since 1995, and the milk from their 90 Jerseys is shipped to Organic Valley.



Drawing by: Christy Otto

Runaway!

—Perry A. Yoder

I had Doc, a black horse, and Bob, a gray, hitched to the mower; my favorite team for this job. I had the cutter bar down and was ready to enter the pasture close to the barn when I thought of something I wanted to check on a few hundred feet out the lane. I drove up against the fence headed away from the front entrance of the lower barn, dropped the lines, and walked away. About 100 feet out I heard something and looked back to see my team do a turnaround and start for the barn. WHOA! From past experience I knew Doc was going to panic the second he felt nobody had the lines and this was no exception.

As I mentioned, the cutter bar was down and the team was fine entering the barn, but as you all know, no lower barn drive will accommodate a McCormick Deering mower with a six-foot bar down. I watched and listened with dismay as they went for the daylight at the back end of the barn. The noise was deafening, with the added terrified shrieks of the other horses in their stalls. At the back end they hit a nine-foot pipe gate with such force that it jumped right out of the hinges, allowing them to go outside and turn right and out the back lane toward the horse pasture. I dashed through the barn amidst choking concrete dust and came upon the team at the far end of the short lane. There they stopped but were panting and trying to calm down. I took one look at the mower, which had been totally overhauled and reconditioned one year earlier. To say it was totaled was an understatement. Both wheels were broken, as well as the frame. Mower guards were scattered throughout the barn. I towed the pitiful wreck behind the machine shed. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

This wasn't Doc's first runaway voyage. He was soft-mouthed and fine if you had the lines, but as mentioned before, if no one was at the controls *he* took control. He was one of my original horses purchased when we started farming in 1995 and oddly he was the last one of those six to go. He started his running career that first spring in the walking plow. Previous to our farming, my co-workers at the wood shop had taken up kite flying as a hobby. We were serious enough about it that we built some kites ourselves. I had built a nine-foot Delta. On this March day while resting the horses in the plow, I decided to loft this thing. I thought I was a good distance away from the horses, but Doc obviously got a backward glance at the big kite and decided to not take any chances. They went plowing on their own, not leaving the straightest furrow.

His best marathon run came one fall in the sulky plow. I

stepped aside a little to talk with a friend standing beside his pickup at the edge of the field. Apparently one of those mean, big flies of late summer was considering Doc's rump as a landing strip. Over the years many of these big flies had tried to draw Doc's blood, but none probably got more than a slight taste. He would not tolerate them. In this day's case, I quickly yelled and dashed for the plow, but I was too late. A quick "U" turn and they were flat out in seconds. Leaving my field they entered another partially plowed plot. By now soil clods were flying as high as the horses as the plow dug in, jumped out airborne, then dug in again. They eventually came to the barn, but the speed was too great to turn in, so they went out our lane and then lengthwise through another field. When I got to them they were at the edge of the neighbor's woods, exhausted. A total run of a half-mile. My friend had tears in his eyes from laughing by the time the show was over.

Most horse farmers probably have a dramatic story or two about runaways. We have been very fortunate to never have been seriously hurt during one of these episodes. A few of ours could have had serious results. My heart goes out to all of you families who have encountered serious injuries or even fatalities from runaways.

The point I'd like to address now is some safety features that might lessen some injuries or risks for us horse operators. New equipment manufacturers are certainly doing their part in this. Probably the number one feature they address is the double post guard. As I remember it, they were first added on forecarts, but now this is standard on almost all new horse-drawn equipment. Manure spreaders, gangplows, sprayers, cone spreaders, cultimulchers, power carts, and more. While this will not keep horses from spooking or even running away, it will give the operator a better chance of staying on until things are under control. I had a good example of this one June morning a few years ago.

I was heading out the lane with my cone spreader mounted on a mower running gear (no guard) to spread a plot of produce ground. I had Dock (not the original Doc) and Dick, a team kid-broke and as safe as they come. For some reason, the cone kicked in gear and the horses made a slight jump at the unexpected jolt and noise. With me standing free on this small platform, it was just enough to throw me off balance. I landed arms outstretched smack on Dock's rump. Dock, who had been thinking about calming down, immediately forgot about that. A sharp smack on the rump is a signal to any horse to get going.

I landed on the gravel, hung on to the lines, barely got out of the wheel's path, and after 75 feet I got them stopped. A torn shirt and a bloody shoulder and arm were part of the results. Neighbor ladies and my wife were picking strawberries and had a ringside seat to the show. A post guard in front of me would have avoided all this. We purchased a new, better version of spreader, complete with guard.

When purchasing new horses at sales most buyers focus on consigners' recommendations. Are they safe, kid broke, or whatever? Several years ago we bought a well broke, safe team at Mt. Hope. The day after the sale we husked corn and in the forenoon we were cautious and kept one of the boys at the lines. Everything went fine and in the afternoon I trusted them on their own. Well, halfway back the row the stress of horse sale week and this strange new home climaxed and they went for the back end of the field, far faster than we could husk. The panic part was, one of the little boys was riding on the back of the wagon. Fortunately, they stopped on their own at the back end of the field. The lesson here—give new horses a few weeks to get accustomed to your surroundings before you trust them.

Some other points that might avoid spills include: when using more than two horses in equipment with a tongue, be sure the neck yoke is fastened to the tongue somehow. Pioneer Equipment makes tongue caps. What happens is, if the side horses don't step up with the team in the tongue the neck yoke can slide right out.

Sometimes we need to make a minor repair on equipment while horses are hitched. Before we crawl underneath the spreader to do whatever, unhitch the horses, or at least pull the evener pin.

Routine inspections of harnesses such as hame straps, bits, and line snaps will also help avoid accidents. In this, harness makers are now helping out by making stainless steel hardware, especially bits, standard. Tandem hitches are fairly popular in our area. A runaway with a hitch like this would be no farmer's desire. Gangplows are where tandem hitches are most common and the turning at the end of a field is where you don't want to daydream. Doing a cautious, controlled arched turn with the lead team could quickly make a tangled mess with the rear horses. We use two different colored lines to the lead team, so I know which line to pull in case of split-second trouble. Pulling the correct line is crucial. We do brown for right line, 2nd letter r =right, and black for left. A local farmer invented and makes

line holders for tandem hitches. I'm not familiar with these but assume they are safety-oriented.

Above all, a good horseman will have fewer and maybe hardly any runaways. They know and think like horses and thus avoid many mistakes. Some even like the challenge of working with outlaw horses. Unfortunately, I don't belong to this group. It is simple knowledge that if you are scared, a horse can sense it, and then acts as it pleases. In contrast, if you act as if you were in control with a firm hand in the right way, horses respect and respond to that. The harmony between humans and horses can be a wonderful thing. 🐾

Perry Yoder and his family grow produce and have sheep on their farm near Fredericksburg, Ohio.

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Newsworthy

The **River Hills Poultry Alliance** would like to announce two upcoming events for 2017.

The **2017 Spring Poultry Expo** will be held on **Saturday, April 8th** in the **Silex City Park in Silex, Missouri**. The day will have as its theme “Building the Modern Laying Flock” and activities will include an egg show, workshops, displays of rare and heirloom poultry breeds, and the opportunity to meet one-to-one with numerous poultry breeders and writers.

The **Fall Poultry Fest** will be held at the same **Silex Park** site on **Saturday, September 9th, 2017**. There will be workshops, demonstrations, and an offering of some of the birds of the year. Starting time for both events is 7:30 A.M. DST.

The group holds a monthly farmers' market with poultry sale on the second Saturday morning of each month from February through November. The starting time is 8:00 A.M. in Silex, Missouri. Contact numbers are 660-998-0445 or 636-697-3447.



The Future of the Cleveland Bay

...in America it takes more calories to grow, harvest, and transport a crop than the crop is worth... (Per caloric accounting) ...it takes 6.5 calories of fossil fuel energy to produce a single calorie of food energy.

—Charles Walters & Gearld Fry in
Reproduction and Animal Health

—David Bontrager

Aldo Leopold once made the rather sarcastic remark that education is learning to see one thing by going blind to another.

He also stated that animal populations have behavior patterns of which the individual animal is unaware, but which it nevertheless helps execute. That thus the rabbit, in its ten-year population boom cycles, while unaware of cycles, is itself a vehicle for cycles.

He said that we cannot discern these behavior patterns in the individual, or in short periods of time. The most intense scrutiny of an individual rabbit tells us nothing of cycles. Neither of the rabbit population nor of the populations of those animals that prey on the rabbit. The cycle concept springs from a scrutiny of the mass through decades. Then he raises this rather disquieting question. Do human populations have behavior patterns of which we are unaware, but which we help to execute?

I never paid much attention to his statements on this subject even though I knew he had written them. That is until this winter when Raymond Troyer from Millersburg, Ohio, told me about a book called *Cleveland Bay Horses* by Anthony Dent.

J.A. Allan & Co. Ltd. published the book in Great Britain in 1978 and it is the most exhaustive source of information on Cleveland Bays I have found.

The author was born and raised in the Cleveland District of the North Riding of Yorkshire, where he was living in 1978 when the book was published. Thus Mr. Dent was able to

add his lifetime observations to his talents as a historian. This combination produced what may be the best bird's-eye view of the Cleveland Bay ever to appear in print.

While this essay is not meant to be a book review necessarily, I would like to discuss a few of the many points that are made in the book. The cycles of the Cleveland mostly.

But first, I'll touch briefly on the subject of temperament, which is one of the causes of what I am seeing as the next major cycle in the population of Cleveland Bays.

Dent, along with almost everyone else who ever had anything to do with Cleveland Bays, agrees that the breed is of most stable temperament. In his droll Yorkshire manner, Dent does point to one case that was an exception to this generality. And this is how he wrote it:

A Cleveland sire, or a half-Cleveland dam tends to ensure progeny that uses its head and takes its time in confronting obstacles in the hunting field or on the event course or in the show jumping ring.

He tells this little story about a horse with the most fitting name of Peter Simple. I found the subtle humor in it to be the most delightful thing in the entire book. Calm and straight-faced humor doesn't get much better than this.

Of course, occasional instances of impetuosity have been known: for instance, Peter Simple, who was out of a part-Cleveland mare, ran in the Grand National starting at 6 to 1 and carrying 12

stone. His jockey could not hold him and was discarded (thrown off) only to catch Peter Simple and mount again. But they still finished third, within six lengths of the winner, Gaylad.

Dent makes no mention of it, but I'm assuming the stewards of the meet were not too overwhelmed with paroxysms of laughter to accurately assess the conclusion of the race. They were Englishmen after all. And Yorkshire men as well. They were all made of the same stern stuff the jockey was made of. Not excluding Dent himself. He goes straight to the moral of the story in true Dalesman fashion:

The moral of the story is that not only the second cross, but even the first cross Cleveland, is good enough to run in the world's most famous steeplechase, and probably good enough to win it too, because surely it takes longer for a man to catch a horse and get up than for a horse to run six times its own length.

One could argue, I suppose, that some men are better than others at catching horses, but this would probably be beside the point. Even the most adroit of English jockeys could not have moved that fast. Fact is, Peter Simple was a horse endowed with great powers of acceleration and gifted with tremendous speed. He also, apparently, was capable of changing his mind, occasional fits of temper notwithstanding.

But even in Cleveland Bay crossbreds, unruly outbursts of such a nature are the rare exception rather than the rule. Dent stated that the full-blooded Cleveland is strongly prepotent and genetically stable. Which means that its offspring, even if crossed with a more temperamental breed, will likely inherit the Cleveland's sound mind. Or to put it more succinctly in traditional language—they breed true. He says it this way, "The Cleveland Bay is not only genetically stable but emotionally stable as well. Its temperament is calm and equable, unflappable."

If Dent made a statement in the book, I believe it was true. Most breed histories are written by people heavily committed to the breed in question. Usually as breeders, owners, or officers of the breed society. Because of this commitment they are apt to lack the detachment and perspective of the historian. Anthony Dent wrote under no such handicap. And

he was one of the world's leading hippologists (which is a person who studies horses) and the author or co-author of quite a number of books about horses, including *The Fools of Epona* (1962) and *Animals That Changed the World* (1966). If he said the Cleveland Bay is unflappable, it is probably true.

Such a horse will become more and more a necessity as motor vehicle traffic increases throughout the Amish communities. As the demand for level-headed horses increases, more Clevelands will be bred. Which brings us to the subject of population cycles.

In December Raymond Troyer told me of a prophecy he had read about the Cleveland Bay breed. He said he read it in Anthony Dent's book. The prophecy was that there would be a major change occurring to the breed in 2020. Then he made a rather startling comment, "Perhaps you are an instrument in making this prophecy come true."

I didn't say much at the time, but I did think of Aldo Leopold and his disquieting question: Do human populations have behavior patterns of which we are unaware, but which we help to execute?

For more than 18 years I had been mulling over the Cleveland Bay question. For more than 30 years I had been fascinated with the breed. And yet, it was not until a little over a year ago that I saw enough good results in our own horse breeding plans to see that they were actually going to work. This finally gave me enough confidence to publish those plans. This then took place in 2016.

As a result, a number of people bred mares to Cleveland Bays in the spring of 2016. And at this point it looks like quite a significant number of mares will be bred in 2017. This means that a smallish first crop of colts and fillies will become two-year-olds in 2019. It also means that the first crop of any considerable size to become two-year-olds will happen in 2020. And this will be a very major change for the breed.

Now get this. In 1976 Anthony Dent wrote these words:

Tomorrow

To prophesy is to invite the derision of the next Generation in due course, but let me attempt some forecast of the future of the Cleveland Bay nevertheless. It may best be done by trying to observe some pattern in the past history of the breed and, if it is a recurring one, to estimate when it is likely to repeat itself...

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Looking back, it seems to me that major new departures (changes) in the Cleveland Bay's progress only occur about once in a hundred years, and in the first quarter of the century. If you reckon 1620 for the introduction of the first Duke of Buckingham's Spanish stallions; 1720 for the consolidation of the Thoroughbred as a breed and the parting of the ways between it and the Cleveland Bay, each taking away, in different directions, that part of their ancestry which they had in common; 1820, or somewhat later, for the advent of the railway and the decline of long-distance coach traffic; 1920 for the irreversible triumph of the motor-car; then the next major change is indicated at around the year 2020. My 105th birthday would fall in that year...

I don't know about you, but I am not inclined to derision, even though I am "of the next generation." Don't get me wrong. I am not a fan of fatalism. I do believe we are given the choices to choose; we are allowed to walk the way we wish to go, however mistaken that way may be. Yet I know also that somewhere it stands written thusly, "All things work together for good ..."

Perhaps Aldo Leopold was onto something when he wrote his disquieting question. Perhaps some things are simply meant to be. What if we are meant to be a small part of the instruments being played upon as a part of a vast voiceless choir? And what if this choir is part of an even greater symphony?

Which brings us to an even more disquieting question: What if most of the company is out of step?

Anthony Dent concludes the book with a chapter called "...Ask the Old Men." This title is followed by a quote from an old farmer and breeder named Lumley Hodgson. Mr. Hodgson was from Easingwold in North Yorkshire. He was 76 years old in 1883, the year he was interviewed. Here's the quote:

"Young men scarcely recollect nice mouldy (shapely) sorts before railways knocked packing off the roads."
—Lumley Hodgson



What the old man was saying in his Yorkshire Dales jargon is that the Cleveland Bay breed was losing out to railways. Even though he never met the man, Dent seems to have greatly respected the opinions of the old farmer. He accepted everything Mr. Hodgson said, with only one reservation:

His (Hodgson's) trenchant remarks should be taken with only one reservation, which will be more obvious to those of my readers who like myself can say...As one walks down the far slope of the hill of summers, nothing is ever quite as good as "when I were a lad." The beer does not taste so good, the horses don't go so well...

Hodgson lamented "the great injury foreigners have done to the breed of horses in taking away the old breed of Chapman, or as they have latterly been called, Cleveland Bays." He recalled great feats of time past such as "old Mr. Maynard riding his horse Black Tommy from Highborne to Newcastle, forty miles without a bait, swimming the Tees at night..." or "Old Tommy Miles of Harlsey, riding the same mare from Harlsey to have his name called every morning in the Court at York, and home to sleep in his own bed every night for a week, rested on Sunday, did the same thing on Monday." And "when I was young you used to meet hundreds of nice mouldy mares in strings of 8 or 10 tied together all the way up the road from Northallerton to London, such as you don't see ten of in a year, now."

Dent then elaborates a bit more on that ageless factor which has always had a tendency to affect the vision of old men—the golden glow of youth seen in retrospect (old women are too practical to be much affected). Here again, he does it in that charming English countryman style of his, which one could never tire of listening to. I will share it here, for the sake of those who might not have the chance to read the book.

Lumley Hodgson's picture was a true and valuable one, if we only discount this one factor—the golden glow of youth seen in retrospect. But so we must in every age. I have no doubt that a senior contemporary giving evidence in 1783 would have lamented that the breed had been declining for years, that things were never the same after Manica and Jalap stopped getting foals, and that no living horse in Cleveland could match the sort their parents had seen when the Duke of Buckingham hunted from Helmsley Castle. And a similar witness, testifying in 1683, would have said things were never so good since the War between the King and Parliament as before, and worse after the war's end with all those unemployed Colonels and their Spanish horses driving out the

good old breed. And the old man of 1583 would have complained that one did not see “the same good stamp of horse about nowadays such as the White Fathers of Rieveaulx (an order within the Roman Catholic Church) bred before King Harry (a Protestant) pulled the roof off their house, God rest their souls. But don’t tell parson I said so.”

Likewise in 1983 I shall be boring the pants off an audience too young to contradict me when I tell them about the splendid horses with which Cleveland used to swarm when I was a lad, and that what they think is a good Cleveland cannot compare with what I saw when Squire Wharton, Master of the Cleveland Hounds, was at Skelton Castle, God was in his heaven and all was right with the world. This despite the fact that the 1930s were years of miserable economic uncertainty for the North Country...

He then writes a bit more about the economic conditions in the Cleveland of his youth, before finishing the book in a lovely poetic fashion. And it is a prophecy:

But I shall have forgotten that. And even while I am pontificating about the decadence of the breed my subject itself will be giving me the lie. If it is winter, somewhere across the black moorland bay horses will be following the hounds as boldly and as cleverly as ever they did in Lumley Hodgson’s or the Duke of Buckingham’s day. If it is summer, in some green dale beside some beck that runs down into the Esk or the Derwent, solid bay mares will be suckling big-boned foals that will live to gallop on into the twenty-first century.
Denby-in-Cleveland 1976-1977

And he was correct. They did live to “gallop on into the twenty-first century.” But only by a little more than the skin of their teeth. Even in 1977, few people would have predicted the extent of the casualties wrought upon the genetic heritage of the world’s agrarian landscapes, or the extent of the mechanical and the economical violence. All made possible through cheap but terribly expensive fossil energy. It seems a great number of the company not only fails to hear the music, it is not even aware of a song, and thus has come altogether “out of step.” 🐾

David Bontrager and his family have a dairy farm in LaGrange, Indiana. David is a regular contributor to Farming Magazine.

[If anyone shares David’s interest in the Cleveland Bay and Yorkshire Coach breeds, you can contact him at: 5195 W 100 N, Lagrange IN 46761 or Ph. 260.768.3241 x 1.]

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—Noah Wenger

Plowing the West Field

A few drops of rain splattered on my hat brim and the wet snowflakes swirling through the air didn't make me feel any warmer.

The muffled thump of 12 hooves on sod mingled with the pop and snap of an occasional alfalfa taproot were the loudest sounds. Wind in the barren treetops and the continuous whisper of soil flowing over the moldboard provided the abstract background noise. So far March had behaved well for the farmer riding the plow, but today it was exhibiting its unpredictable character.

Having plowed a few acres where the early produce patches were planned, I had decided to spend the day turning the soil at the west end of the farm. I hunched myself tighter inside my heavy coat and checked my watch. Three or four more rounds should fit in before it was time to quit for lunch. I decided to try and tough it out.

Giving the horses a short rest I scanned the tree line bordering three sides of the field. It would take a fair amount of furrows to fill that space, but spring was only getting started. I expected to have my share of adventure and plenty of quiet time to muse and meditate in unhindered solitude.

Along the far edge I knew of a spot where the bloodroot blooms were just beginning to open. The fragile anemones and cut-leaved toothwort were unfolding too. Today they went unobserved. I made sure the two alternate shovels on the sulky plow were clear of the soil when I unhitched. It might be a few days or more before I was back and soil has a tendency to freeze very solidly around iron. The next attempt might be on a frosty morning. Farming is as unpredictable as the temperamental weather of March.

When the sunshine soaks into the leaf-litter and the floral parade is at its height, the horses get extra time to rest.

I was snooping on a small wooded plateau, searching out the spots of color and keeping one part of my mind focused on mushrooms, hoping to spot the season's first morel.

Violets were everywhere. In the woods a few bright

yellow blooms showed among the dominating purple. In the field the dark ones grew in masses, lending color to the vast sweep sprinkled with the miniature white speckles of whitlow grass and bittercress. The fine bouquet folded away into the depth of the furrow as I progressed with the plowing.

The sleepy droning of bumblebees rose and fell as the large and fluffy overwintered queens searched for a den and food to sustain their labors.

Close to the edge of the woods I made an exciting discovery. Leathery blades on a single reddish stem showed above the loose scattering of sugar maple leaves. Irregular maroon patches shaded the broad green leaves. Trout lilies grew thick on the mushroom grounds I roamed growing up, but so far I had failed to find a single bloom on our acreage. I was very pleased as the Belgians made another pass around the widening section of plowed land.

Later that day the coppery hue of a debarked sassafras stub caught my eye. I dipped down the hill to get a closer view. The work was fresh and chips of bark as long as my hand littered the forest floor around the tree. The tree stood about 20 feet tall and was a good six inches in diameter at eye level. Not a speck of the original bark remained on the trunk. I marveled to see such industry. The workmen could only have been pileated woodpeckers. The shy and gaudy bird is often heard but rarely seen in our locale. Their ringing cry is as wild and primeval as the uncivilized laugh of the Northwood's loon. I picked and scraped at the patches of inner bark remaining on the devastated snag, amazed at the tenacious hold it still had. Here was a significant example of a chiseling power on the slender neck and heavy bill of these woodpeckers.

From the dampness beneath the fragments I loosened, a wireworm spread his pincers at me. The frass trails of insect larvae sketched aimless designs. The transparent white grubs humped slowly away in search of dark security. They were probably the reason the tree was dead and definitely the reason for the woodpecker's depredations.

As I started back up the slope I came across another

patch of trout lily leaves. Scanning them in hopes of finding a bud, I noticed a few swirled shoots of emerging Mayapples. A few of the stubby projections were ripped off close to the ground. The print of a sharp cloven hoof suggested a hungry deer had snacked on the fresh vegetables.

Spring must be a glorious time for the browsing animals.

March merged into April and the month progressed steadily. Daylight hours are always fleeting, but in the spring when the plethora of jobs of every description press around the farmer, then time seems to swirl faster.

Working ground and preparing for the first vegetable plantings took precedence the first weeks. By mid-April the plowing had risen on the priority list again and I was back at it with visions of completing the field.

From the plow seat I could see a few long stretches of row-cover undulating in the warm breeze. The tender transplants underneath would appreciate this sunshine. I stifled the urge to go peep under the light blanket for the second time today. There probably wouldn't be much of a change in a few minutes' time.

Furthermore, there were other tender plants to consider. The day before, my wife and I had agreed to spend several hours tramping the woods in search of morels. When I prioritize the pressing tasks on our farm, mushroom hunting is usually close to the top of the list. Work is patient and unending; morels shrivel and die.

I was remembering the fine specimens we had found, most of them within speaking distance of where I was working.

The plow seat wasn't overly comfortable, and I was soon scouting the edges of these patches, hoping to discover new ones.

Crushing through some briars and the field edge I almost stepped on a grand yellow sponge. Ah... Stately, beautiful. Bending to take a closer look, I noticed more standing at intervals under the protecting thorns. By the time I went to stretch another furrow, there were seven whoppers marked in my mind's eye. Perhaps after supper we could walk up and gather them. Nice surprises are always more pleasant when shared with loved ones.

I hadn't made more than a few rounds when a flash of sunlight glinted off the windows of a familiar truck. I knew the driver well and knew just what he was after. Mushrooms.

As he drew abreast I rehearsed my best artificial welcome. "Been finding any?" he called by way of greeting. "Some," I answered uneasily as I drew nearer.

He grew up on this farm and owned it for many years before selling it to me. We have a cordial relationship, barring mushrooms. He blames me for always snatching up the fungi before he gets them. His accusations aren't groundless. We always smile and chuckle but an undercurrent of antagonism remains.

"Where did you find them?" he asks next. I shift uncomfortably. This last question is bending all the rules of

mushroom hunting etiquette, but age deserves respect.

"Well," I answer slowly, "we found some around here yesterday afternoon—I know, we're just like the last of the three little pigs."

We exchange a few more pleasantries. "I'm going back to my area on the neighbor's land," he admonishes me. "You'll remember that you don't have permission to hunt behind those no-trespassing signs."

I watch him drive along the field edge, passing a scant few feet beside the outermost morels I had left growing in their natural state. I chuckle a bit unkindly as his form disappears behind the double no-trespassing signs. "Your permission is 40 years old and I renew mine every year by making the landowner a fine gift of mushrooms," I soliloquize. "But some things are best left unsaid." I had an uncomfortable feeling he might not find very many today.

A few more ribbons of sod upturned and I was casting an apprehensive eye from the parked truck to these glorious morels almost visible from my seat on the plow.

"This will never do," I decided, and without more consideration I did what human nature prompted. As I drove away seven inconspicuous mounds of bark and leaves marked where seven proud morels had stood a moment before.

My conscience smote me quickly and the longer I tried to combat the good promptings the worse it became. I considered uncovering two or three, knowing the old man often searched that area and might stop there on his way out. Or I could just gather them for him. That would be better than the embarrassment of having him discover them on his own.

Finally I saw him emerge from the woods and stumble laboriously back to his truck. I knew how hard it is for him to walk in the woods and by now I had decided to tell all.

He drove around the field and passed my secret stash, stepping close to where I waited. The window opened slowly. "I found one." He looked worn and frustrated.

I cleared my throat to commence my bitter penitence, wondering how to phrase my apology.

He reached over on the passenger seat, presumably to show me the one sorry blackcap he had gleaned. I was stuttering on the first syllables when he turned back with a gleeful chuckle. "One patch, I mean."

My eyes bulged to match the bag dangling from his hand. My good intentions fled.

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There couldn't have been less than two pounds of gorgeous morels.

"I thought I wasn't going to find any at all until I came upon these way out back and down over the bank. I'll throw out these old and shriveled ones. I just gathered them to keep others from noticing the spot. Sometimes a person can find more later."

I smiled and nodded as he gloated happily. I wouldn't be surprised if he found them right along the edge of my field. They didn't look much like deep woods morels.

I was diligently adhering to the plow seat on the first morning of turkey season. It wasn't what I had planned, but I was eyeing a narrow strip of unturned sod in the midst of innumerable rippling waves of bare soil. At the moment this seemed more correct than hunting turkeys.

The sun was nearing the zenith when my friend trudged from the distant back field and stopped to talk.

"The house was dark this morning at 5:00 so I thought I wouldn't disturb you," he apologized. These had been the terms agreed on and I wasn't blaming anyone.

"It worked out well," I assured him. "I have hopes of finishing this field today and that will be rewarding too. But to tell the truth, I was so excited about our appointment at 5:00 a.m. that I awoke at 1:30, then at 4, and again at 6. That's when I noticed the alarm clock hadn't been switched on."

We now made plans for the following morning and I focused on a small, triangular area in the far corner of the field.

The sulky plow with its alternate shovels is a real blessing along the irregular field edges.

This particular edge was close to another discovery I'd made the week before. After a few rows I let the horses puff a bit and made a quick journey to where a showy orchid grew. That is what I thought it was. At this point there were only two large leaves cupping a single short stem. There was a second plant in the vicinity, but somehow I'd managed to lose track of it, camouflaged by the other springtime verdure. I had marked this certain plant by cutting a large blaze on a nearby ailanthus tree. The compact stub had grown a bit, lending promise for another day. Even though I would be working ground in distant parts of the farm, I expected to see the frail white-lipped and violet-hooded flowers when they opened.

Being able to study the boundless extent of nature is only one of the many blessings our forefathers made of farming preserves. It isn't the swiftest way, and sometimes doesn't seem practical to our hurrying, scurrying thoughts. When your hectic responsibilities press around and try to overwhelm you with their voiceless urgency, take a few minutes to marvel at nature's steady pace. The woods are always calm. A leaf unfurls, a flower blooms, but not all at once.

Step by step, one day at a time, like a 14" furrow in a ten-acre field. Patience and dedication will overcome the greatest obstacle.

"...and run with patience the race that is set before us."



Noah Wenger lives and farms near Hillsboro, Ohio.

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Weather Wisdom

—Bruce Stambaugh

When it comes to weather, we can think too small. What may seem like a local forecast might just have ramifications across a wide geographical swath. The weather symptoms may be the same. The resulting elements just may differ.

This is especially true in the spring. If a Panhandle low system travels up the Ohio River Valley out of the Texas and Oklahoma Panhandle regions, a variety of stormy weather may result, some of it damaging and deadly.

Weather systems seldom affect one certain geographic location. In the case of the Panhandle low, both the ingredients that form the system and the meteorological products that result vary across a broad area.

When such a system develops, warm, moist air from the Gulf of Mexico is drawn into the Southwest by a powerful counterclockwise low pressure. A cold front moving out of the Rocky Mountains pushes cold air east, pulling the low northeast.

Residents in the Plains states may be preparing for blizzard-like conditions with whiteouts and extreme cold conditions. Persons from eastern Texas into western Pennsylvania may experience severe thunderstorms, including long-track tornadoes. Rain, hail, flooding, damaging winds, and frequent lightning can all be in the weather mix.

In the southeastern states, southerly warm air feeding the system can bring summer-like weather. They rejoice in their local forecasts while others cringe and hope for the best in theirs.

Weather knows no political boundaries. The Canadian providences of Ontario and Quebec can feel yet one more round of winter even though the calendar reads spring. The same is true for the New England states. They can thank the Panhandle low for those conditions.

We hear or read about local forecasts so we know how to dress and what activities we can plan for or what travel plans might be. It's important to remember that what affects one area can also influence another, even if separated by hundreds of miles.

Like politics, all weather is local. But just like politics, the weather in one region often determines weather in multiple others. Forecasts in one area are often dependent on forecasts far away.

When it comes to weather, it's wise to pay attention to the local forecasts while also keeping in mind the bigger weather picture. 🐔



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BEE TALK —Sam Miller

Jan. 10 – The hardest part of the beekeeping year is right now with cold weather here and not a thing that a beekeeper can do except make sure the windbreak is working right, and hope for a nice warm day every so often to permit cleansing flights as they need it.

This is also a good time to purchase, assemble, and paint any new equipment that will be needed during the next season. It seems I always underestimate the amount I will need since I started requeening and making splits for mite control (more on that later).

Jan. 22 – What a beautiful sunny day! The bees are flying like crazy. One of the neighbors had a few bees in the house because the door was open, so the children gathered some dandelion blossoms the bees were working on and mixed some sugar syrup, which the bees liked as well. I would say the bees were treated well on their visit.

It was warm for two days in a row, providing weather for good cleansing flights and the bees were able to cluster before it turned cold again. They should be ready for another cold month or two.

Feb. 10 – Winter has been on the mild side so far with a lot of damp and overcast days that kept the bees confined to the hives about the same as if it had been a cold winter. I expect they used less honey to keep warm. I wonder if we might have a better buildup period in the spring and then more swarming too, unless they are handled correctly (split and allowed to expand as much as they want).

Some of the hives seem to have lots of bees and my brother told me his hives are rearing quite a bit of brood already. I expect it will be interesting to make splits this spring.

A large hive is always better for splits or honey production if they are large enough at the right time. A colony of bees that is small and trying to increase in bees too much in a honey flow will end up with lots of bees and almost no honey to feed them. It seems if they

Passing the Hive Tool



—Lisa J. Amstutz

After paging through a towering stack of holiday catalogs one Christmas, our 6-year-old daughter put just one item on her wish list: a bee suit. My husband and I were pleased to see one of our brood showing an interest in beekeeping and determined not to miss this window of opportunity, so we did indeed buy her a bee suit that Christmas. She put it on immediately and has been cheerfully trailing her father out to the bee yard ever since. Only time will tell whether this small beekeeper-in-training will choose to carry on the family beekeeping tradition, but we have taken the first step toward passing it on to her.

Just as relay runners must pass the baton to the next waiting runner, beekeepers must pass on their skills and knowledge to the next generation if the craft of beekeeping is to continue. My husband and I have been on both ends of the baton (or perhaps I should say the hive tool); both of us are second-generation beekeepers. We likely would not have taken up beekeeping ourselves had our parents not involved us in the process. Even young children can start helping, and if you don't have any of your own around, there are certainly other youth who would benefit from your knowledge and experience. 4-H clubs, schools, and community groups are some of the places you might connect with them.

Why bother?

Quite frankly, it's a lot easier to work the bees without little ones around. It takes ages for them to suit up and they ask about six hundred questions every time. They get in the way. And they cry if they get stung. So why bother? Well, despite the extra hassle, teaching a young person can be rewarding for both teacher and student.

It is hard to put a dollar value on the intangible rewards of time spent together, teaching and relationship-building, but those are valuable benefits. Kids are good company—they look at things through fresh eyes, and their enthusiasm is contagious. While they probably can't schlep hives around, there are lots of little helpful jobs they can do, from putting frames together to helping extract honey. Besides, someday that 6-year-old will be 16, and if we've caught her interest, she just

might help with the heavy lifting too.

For children, experiencing success with bees can build confidence and character. They learn to watch patiently, to move slowly and carefully so as not to upset the bees, and to remain calm if a bee should find its way inside their suit. They experience a sense of accomplishment when they see and taste the end result—lovely jars of honey. And occasionally they learn to cope with disappointments—the death of a hive, a poor honey harvest, etc.

By tagging along with their father, our young beekeepers are encountering science in a truly hands-on way. There is no comparison between reading a textbook chapter about social insects and actually looking inside a hive. Beekeeping is experiential learning at its finest—besides all the activity to watch, there is sticky propolis to touch, sweet honey to taste, fragrant beeswax to smell, and the hum of the hive to listen to. Perhaps these experiences may spark an interest that will lead to a lifelong hobby or career.

In the broader scheme of things, training future beekeepers and educating others about bees and honey benefits all of us. People who understand bees are inclined to be less fearful and friendlier toward them. The neighbor child you teach today may grow up to be the farmer who is considerate of your bees when he sprays. And while kids may or may not appreciate finding out that honey is really regurgitated nectar, it's good for them to know where their food really comes from. In the process sometimes we adults even learn a few things too—we never learn so well as when we teach.

Today's beekeepers struggle with mites, Colony Collapse Disorder, international competition for honey sales, and many other challenges. If beekeeping as we know it is to survive, it needs the next generation's enthusiasm, interest, research, and support. But beekeeping has a steep learning curve; it is difficult and expensive to start up cold. Growing up involved in the process can greatly increase the likelihood of a person choosing to keep bees as an adult. And by involved I don't just mean watching Mom or Dad do all the work!

What can they do?

There are many beekeeping jobs that children can help with, and a bit of cash motivation goes a long way if they are reluctant. My father hired us to pound grommets for a penny apiece (25 years ago) and always had plenty of willing helpers. You may want to adjust for inflation a bit! Be sure to let your helpers have a taste of honey, or a chunk of clean wax to chew on too. The following are some tasks that kids may be able to help with:

- pound grommets into frames
- glue frames together
- string wire in frames
- put frames in hive
- paint hives
- puff the smoker while you are working the bees (this is a favorite)
- be a “go-fer”
- hand you frames when extracting
- uncap honeycomb (older youth)
- load frames in extractor
- remove empty frames from extractor
- fill & label buckets or jars
- help make candles



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concentrate their energy or bee power too much on rearing bees they will not have enough bees left to gather honey. Then if the honey flow is short and fast the beekeeper will say there is something wrong with some of my hives because some of them made a lot less honey than others—when really, most of the difference was only timing of peak brood rearing.

For example, a colony that is requeened, I mean forced to rear a new queen in early fall so they have lots of young bees going into the winter, will start rearing brood earlier in the spring and will have enough bees to keep a larger brood area warm in early spring. Thus their peak in brood rearing will be much earlier and they will be ready for those early honey flows that really count in this area.

Older queens will shut down on egg laying earlier in the fall. So they will have a higher percentage of older worker bees going into winter, and of course, more older and weak bees in the spring. The spring buildup period will then be much slower and later.

I know this seems like a lot of fuss about one little part of the sometimes bewildering world of keeping bees, but I feel it is the single most important part of keeping bees in today's world.

Oh, I did not even talk about the mite control part of requeening in July.

It seems the break in brood rearing will keep the mite levels low enough that I don't need to treat for mites at all. It will not eliminate them altogether but then nothing else will either.

When I first heard about this method, I requeened some of the hives (around one-half of them) a few years in a row and kept record on how they looked and what the mite levels were. There is no comparison as far as overall colony health, honey production, or anything else that you want to look at. I finally convinced myself, after a period of agonizing,

to just kill the old queen and let them rear a new one.

It is not easy to kill a good queen like that, but it helps to keep in mind that it will not be the slow and painful death of a mite overload or perhaps one of the viruses that the mites carry around.

Feb. 17 – The bees were flying quite a bit today, although I didn't see any pollen like I did a few weeks ago. It was still cold yesterday so I wonder if the flowers don't open until the second or third warm day.

Well, you all enjoy spring and don't forget to reverse supers once it stays warm, and give them plenty of room to expand to prevent swarming.



Sam Miller and his family live near Kidron, Ohio, where they farm and care for bees and sheep. Sam also shears sheep in late winter and early spring. He is a regular contributor to Farming Magazine.

Safety

A few common-sense precautions will make beekeeping a fun and safe experience for children. First, make sure there are no known allergies to bee stings. Whether or not you use a suit, I suggest you provide one for the child. Nothing will disinterest a child faster than being stung. Smokers and extracting knives can be dangerous; use good judgment as to whether a child can safely handle them or not. Hive tools can slip; boxes can land on toes. Watch fingers in the extractor as well. Small children should not be allowed near the machine when it is running. A little common sense goes a long way when it comes to keeping children safe and confident around bees.

Conclusion

Our family has found many ways to involve our children in beekeeping tasks, and sharing this hobby with them has been rewarding for all of us, on many levels. That Christmas bee suit turned out to be one of the best gifts we have ever given—it literally opened up a new world to our children. Don't pass up the opportunity to share your knowledge with the young folks in your life—take that hive tool out of your hip pocket and pass it on!

Lisa Amstutz and her family live near Dalton, Ohio. amstutz6@sbcglobal.net

This article was reprinted from the Winter 2007 issue.

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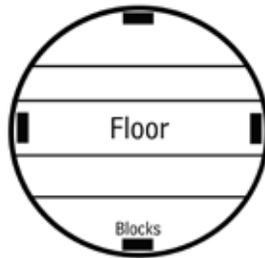
HINTS FOR FARM AND HOME

Hang a grease rag beneath your hay mower seat as an easy solution for greasy hands while mowing.
J.S.B. – Wisconsin

To protect your battery fencer and to have it as a portable unit, take a 5- to 10-gallon plastic jug (like milkhouse detergents come in), cut a hole in the side just large enough to slide the battery in. Drill two small holes near the top, one to hang the fencer on and the other to run the hot wire out. Drill one hole in the bottom to run the ground wire out. Put the fencer in and then slide in your battery. Most of these jugs come with a handle, which makes it handy to carry. Works well for fences quite a ways off from the buildings.

S.L. – Wisconsin

I made a circular wood floor to put inside my round bale feeder with four two-inch blocks added on top of floor to keep ring from sliding over the floor. My cows clean up every bit until I add a new bale. Very little waste.



J.D. – Pennsylvania

For a home gardener who doesn't have plug trays handy to start seedlings, use empty egg cartons.

C.W. - Ohio

A good carrier and storer of tomato stakes—get some pallets and put runners on them. Take some 2x4s for the sides and two for the top so the sides stay intact. There you have a sled you can drive along the row with horses and throw the tomato stakes inside. In the spring drive along the row and throw them out where needed. Works well.

J.G. – Ohio

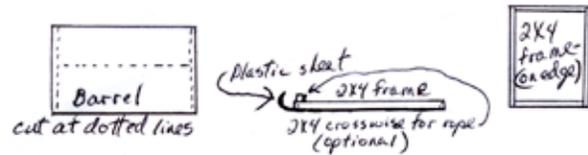
To rejuvenate your black wool hat, spray it with flat black stove paint.

G.K. – Ohio

Spray your woodstove with WD-40 after you let your fire go out in the spring. It will keep it from rusting.

E.S. – Pennsylvania

To make a heavy-duty toboggan to haul most anything—take a 15, 35, or 55 gallon plastic drum (depending what size you want), cut the ends off and cut it through from top to bottom. Roll it out flat, then make a frame of 2x4s the size of this plastic sheet. Make the frame approximately 10 to 12 inches *shorter* than the plastic sheet. Fasten the sheet to the underside of the 2x4 frame with 1½" or so roofing nails. Since the frame is shorter than the plastic sheet the end will naturally curl up. This is the front end. Fasten a rope to the front 2x4, or fasten another 2x4 on top at the front to fasten a rope to. A tough and light but heavy-duty sled.



S.J.B. – Wisconsin

Having planted a few short rows of black raspberries in the center of our yard, I didn't like the thought of unsightly support wires. So I bought a number of 1" by 10' heavy duty, white plastic pipe and cut each piece in 3 equal lengths. I pointed each piece, drilled a few staggered holes in other end, and pounded in one per plant as a support stake. Using white plastic twine, I could neatly thread it through the holes and around the canes. A trouble-free and neat support system.

E.K. – New York

Jim Dailey from Youngsville, Pennsylvania has the winning Hint of the Season and will receive \$50. Send your tips and hints to Hints for Farm and Home, PO Box 85, Mt. Hope, Ohio 44660. We will pay \$10 for each hint published and \$50 for the Hint of the Season.

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This cow is 13 years old in this picture!

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FRUIT TREE PRUNING BASICS

—Mary Lou Shaw, M.D.

Many people feel that pruning fruit trees is too complex a task to be done by amateurs, but when we amateurs learn a few basic concepts, we can keep our fruit trees healthy, well-shaped, and bearing excellent fruit. It's simple: learn the two basic pruning cuts, get equipped with good tools and keep in mind your long-term goals when pruning each tree.

Purposes of fruit tree pruning: Fruit trees grow whether we prune them or not, but a properly pruned fruit tree has a much better chance of avoiding diseases and giving bountiful and beautiful fruit. Pruning keeps fruit trees healthy by removing diseased limbs, crowded branches, or branches that grow with narrow angles. Pruning dense outer branches allows fruit buds to avoid fungal diseases by providing them plenty of sunlight and breeze.

Pruning is critical to maintain the size and shape fruit trees you want. A tree's rootstalk largely determines each fruit tree's potential size—whether it is a dwarf, semi-dwarf, or standard tree. However, annual pruning is also crucial in determining a fruit tree's ultimate size as well as its shape.

You'll barely be done with early spring pruning when it's time to thin the small new fruit. Thinning each blossom cluster to one fruitlet allows the tree to have a good number of blooms the next season. Subsequently, thinning the remaining fruit to about six inches apart allows each fruit to reach maximum size without their weight breaking branches.

Basic tree shapes: The two basic shapes for fruit trees are either the central-leader or the open-center, also called a "vase-shaped" tree. The central-leader tree will create a smaller tree with less fruit, but easily allows sunlight to all branches. The open-center shape allows a tree to grow larger, but the

upper canopy must be kept pruned to allow sunlight and air to reach the center.

It's best to envision the basic shape you want for your fruit tree the year you plant it because you'll begin with gentle pruning then. When choosing between a central-leader and vase-shape, consider not only how much elbow room your tree will have when mature, but the type and character of your tree. For example, pear trees naturally assume a central-leader shape, but peach trees seem to insist on an open center. One apple tree may easily form a central-leader, while another seems destined to be vase-shaped. Your pruning ultimately determines a tree's shape, but your work is easier when you allow a tree to express its individuality.



Central Leader



Open Center or Vase Shape

Tools for fruit tree pruning: Good pruning tools are important to avoid damaging your fruit trees and to make pruning an enjoyable task. Basic hand-shears are necessary for the youngest trees. As fruit trees grow in size, you'll want to add pruning loppers and a pruning handsaw.

The best pruning tools are made by Felco. It's not a surprise that they are made in Switzerland where quality knives are also made. Good hardware stores carry Felco bypass pruners and Felco loppers. They can also be found at www.felcousa.com. This online site is helpful in explaining what pruners will best fit your hand. Felco's sharpening tool is also necessary to keep your tools working well.

When to prune fruit trees: Fruit tree pruning takes place during the winter and very early spring, when fruit trees are dormant. For growing zone six and above (planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/), late winter is the best time to begin pruning. Start your pruning with apple trees so you can delay pruning the more cold-sensitive trees, like peaches, until late March or into April. Pruning should be completed

before fruit buds show their first pink.

The exceptions to this completion date are the unwanted growths of watersprouts and suckers. Watersprouts are often caused by stress and are recognized by growing at right angles off their parent branch. Suckers grow up at the base of the tree from below the graft line. Both deplete fruit trees' resources and should be pruned off when they appear.



Basic cuts of fruit tree pruning—the thinning cut and heading cut:

Thinning cuts remove entire branches or limbs. This cut is made just beyond the “collar,” or circular bark, at the base of the branch you’re removing. A tree heals over this cut area if the collar is not injured and if a stub is not left extending beyond the collar. This thinning cut is used to remove branches that are crowded, diseased, or weak. When branches are still small, the thinning cut is also used to remove any that have narrow angles. Maintaining branches at 10 and 12 o’clock angles will give them the best strength. Finally, use the thinning cut to eliminate any branches that grow towards the center of the tree.

Heading cuts are made just after a bud and are used to change the direction a limb is growing or to shorten a branch. It is also used to stimulate the buds just before the heading cut so they will grow out into branches the following year. Make your heading cut at a 45-degree angle and about 1/4” beyond an outward-facing bud.

How much to prune annually: A good rule is to not prune more than 1/3 of any tree annually so you don’t damage its long-term health. When pruning an older neglected tree, it may therefore take three to five years to get it to the shape and size you want. Some trees, like peaches, are such vigorous



growers that they require a fourth of their growth to be removed each spring. Young trees should be only gently pruned, but removing unwanted growth when it is still small benefits fruit trees in the long-term.

Fruit trees do survive our mistakes as we learn to prune, so feel confident in pruning with these few basic concepts as your guide. You’ll not only have healthy fruit trees and fruit, but will gradually become a confident and competent fruit tree pruner.


Mary Lou and Tom Shaw have a small farm south of Columbus, Ohio. When not gardening, milking cows, or processing food, Mary Lou enjoys writing.

Fedco Seed Catalog, www.fedcoseeds.com or request catalog at 207-426-9900 or write to: PO Box 520, Clinton, ME 04927-0520. (They have ingredients for holistic spray to buy individually or as “Holistic Orchard Spray Kit” #8590-A)

See ad on page 60.



BASIC FOUR-GALLON RECIPE FOR HOLISTIC SPRAY

- 2.5 oz. neem oil (double for first spray)
- 1 teaspoon soap (double for first spray)
- 10 oz. liquid fish (double for first spray)
- 3 to 4 tablespoons molasses
- 3 tablespoons mother culture
- 5 tablespoons liquid kelp or 0.5 oz. of dry seaweed extract

Add water to make 4 gallons spray.

SCHEDULE FOR HOLISTIC SPRAYS

Week of quarter-inch green: (fruit buds are green from tip to halfway down bud). Choose a warmer day and thoroughly wet branches, trunk, and ground.

Week of “early pink”: (fruit buds first show pink—never spray on open flowers).

Petal fall: spray to point of run-off.

First cover: This occurs 7 to 10 days following third spray. Reminder: Thin the fruit within 40 days of “petal fall.”

SINGLE AUTUMN SPRAY

When 40% to 60% of leaves have fallen. Liquid kelp can be omitted.

INGREDIENTS FOR HOLISTIC SPRAY

- Pure Neem Oil (Dyna-Gro)
- Soap (any biodegradable soap will serve as emulsifier for neem oil)
- Fish fertilizer (Organic Neptune’s Harvest)
- Liquid Seaweed “kelp” (Sea Crop)
- Unsulfured Black Strap Molasses
- Mother Culture (SCD Probiotics or TersGanix)

Is There a Place for Open-Pollinated Corn on Your Farm?

—Paul Conway

Ever wonder why open-pollinated corn is still around? Hybrid corn is now at least 98% of the U.S. corn crop and has been so for the last 50 years at least. Hybrids stand and yield better than open-pollinated corn, so open-pollinated corn should be very rare, found only in the seed banks of the USDA and the land grant colleges. But open-pollinated corn is still grown commercially. Why?

I know why. It is true that open-pollinated corns can lodge at maturity and, at best, produce roughly 2/3 of the yields of comparable hybrids. But open pollinated corn holds its own in terms of nutrition, feeding value, and the ability of farmers to control their seed sources. In fact, corn breeders have bred and released “synthetic” corns, inbreds that reproduce and are comparable to hybrids in yield and agronomics.

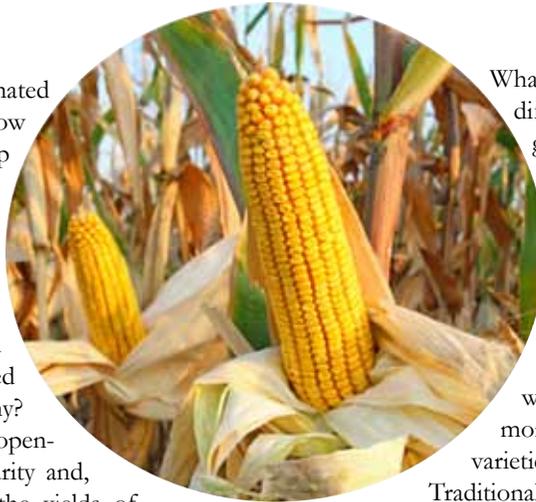
Open-pollinated corn makes sense in the context of animal-based agriculture. If you are growing corn for the commodity market, stick to the hybrids. No open-pollinated corn can produce the yields of a “racehorse” type hybrid in ideal conditions. What open-pollinated corn can do is make a nutritious and good-tasting feed that, if properly grown, has acceptable yields and agronomics.

Open-pollinated corn also offers farmers the opportunity to control their seed sources and develop a locally adapted strain. It is up to the farmer to decide what level of yields he or she will accept. I am not saying that hybrid corn is bad. There are still seed companies that specialize in corn hybrids bred for feeding value as well as yields and good agronomic traits.

Masters Choice and Baldrige Hybrids are two that come to mind. The problem is that high feed value corn is not a priority for the seed industry. The priorities for most corn breeders are yields, yields, yields plus test weight and super strong stalks.

Bear in mind that hybrid corn is not cheap and is getting more expensive, and conventionally bred hybrids are less common than they used to be. Consolidation in the seed business continues; the company you like may be gone in a year and your favorite hybrid may be unavailable.

If you have a hybrid that has worked for you, especially if you are feeding the grain, by all means stick with it. Consider open-pollinated corn as a backup especially for corn that will be harvested for forage. I will go into more detail later in this article.



What makes open-pollinated corn different? Open-pollinated corn is generally taller and more leafy with less lignin in the stalks. Open-pollinated corn does not pollinate at the same time, and ear size, placement, and plant height is much less consistent than in hybrids. This means that late season lodging can be a problem and there will be some barren stalks. This is more common with the traditional varieties than with modern “synthetics.”

Traditional open-pollinated (OP) corns, of which there are hundreds, were varieties that farmers planted before the widespread adoption of hybrids. Many of these, such as Reid’s Yellow Dent, Krug, and Lancaster Sure Crop, were bred by farmers and well adapted to the local environment. Oscar Will, a North Dakota seedsman, bred and released many corns very suited to the northern Plains. Yields and ability to stand are all over the place. Southern varieties tended to be “prolific,” producing two ears or more per stalk and were generally white with tighter husks.

“Synthetics” are a modern development. These are inbreds that are true to type; kernels harvested one year will, unlike hybrids, produce a plant that is the same as the parent. Inbreds were used to make hybrids. Synthetics tend to have more of the desirable traits of hybrids—stronger stalks, more uniformity (although still very much flex-eared), and better yields. They are comparable to “workhorse” type hybrids.

If growing any OP corn, the farmer must pay attention to two things—plant populations and fertility. Both are important but plant population is the most crucial. Keep final population between 18-20,000 plants/acre, especially for grain production. This comes out to 10-12 inches between stalks on 30-inch rows or 8-10 inches on 36-inch rows. You can push populations higher on good ground, but you risk more lodging and barren stalks especially with traditional OPs. You also get larger ears and more double ears at these lower populations. Synthetics can be planted at higher rates, I know of one farmer who plants “Multiline” (more later) at 32-36,000 plants/acre on his good ground. I would not plant this thick, even with synthetics, until I had more experience with a particular synthetic. As a rule of thumb, I plant synthetics at 24,000 plants per acre, more or less.

Fertility is the next consideration. Like all grasses, OP corn needs nitrogen, but do not apply nitrogen at the same rate as you would with hybrids. OPs work best with balanced

fertility in diverse rotations on soils with good organic matter content. OPs respond well to manure applications and following a forage legume. Too much nitrogen will cause excessive lodging. OP corns do *not* do well in corn-soybean rotations. It is no accident that conditions that favor OP corns exist on farms that combine crops and livestock.

- Grain production: The most problematical use of OPs. In general, a good- high nutritious workhorse-type hybrid will yield better most years than traditional OPs. Some traditional OPs, such as Henry Moore, have higher crude protein than most hybrids, in which case the higher protein will offset the lower yields of the OP. There may be a local market for OP corn grain. Artisan bakers and distillers often prefer OP corns, but this is a limited market. Synthetics, however, are a different matter. They are equivalent to most workhorse-type hybrids in yield and standability. The synthetics are certainly worth looking at, especially if they have higher protein and nutritional value than hybrids, as some do. For what it is worth, the larger OP ears, compared to hybrids, are easier to hand husk. There is something satisfying in husking a long, fat ear.

- Silage production: Silage is where OP corns really stand out. The agronomic traits that make OP corn less suited for grain harvest, tall leafy plants with lower lignin levels and slower dry down, make OPs ideal for silage. OP corn for silage can be planted at rates higher than 18,000/acre since the plant will be harvested only partially mature. If you want more grain in the silage, keep the plant population low, around 24,000 or less. OP corn is extremely flex-eared; higher populations mean smaller ears and fewer kernels. Some traditional OPs, Eureka Ensilage and Goliath, were bred to be grown for silage. These are very tall, anywhere from 12-15 ft., depending on weather and soil fertility. These corns are more prone to lodging even when green, especially in areas with strong summer winds. Most traditional OPs are tall enough, 8-10 ft., for silage anyway.

- “Hogging down” crops: This term refers to the practice of grazing mature or nearly mature grain crops instead of harvesting and transporting the grain to the animals. Used extensively in the past for finishing cattle and hogs, some farmers are starting to use this practice again. Thanks to portable electric fencing, feed waste can be eliminated. While any corn can be grazed, OPs have the advantage of cheap seed and tall, low-lignin plants that produce a lot of fodder. “Traited” hybrids are not suited for mature grazing, as their stalks are very fibrous and unpalatable to livestock. My personal belief is that mixing legumes and brassicas with the corn, planted in blocks, produces a better feed than just corn. My choice for the legume would be soybeans or cowpeas, but any legume would do. In any case, corn alone would be good enough, especially if you are experimenting with hogging down crops. OP corns are also ideal for wildlife food plots for the same reason. An interesting experiment is to plant OP and hybrid corn side by side and see which gets eaten first.

- Grazing corn as a green summer annual: This is much

the same technique as hogging down. The main difference is when the corn is grazed. Usually grazing starts when the corn ear fills out but grazing can begin much earlier. Indeed, “grass fed” cattle must graze corn before the kernels develop. Farmers usually must plant corn several times to have a long period of grazing as corn will not regrow after grazing. As with hogging down, my personal belief is that a block-planted mix of corn, legumes, and brassicas make a better feed than corn alone, but corn alone is adequate.

I absolutely recommend one OP corn variety for mature grazing, BMR-84. This is an OP with the Brown Midriff gene, which makes for a more palatable stalk than standard corn, just like the sorghum sudans. BMR has the additional advantages of cheap seed and the ability to thrive at very high populations, up to 60,000 plants to the acre. Animals will eat the whole plant even when completely dry. BMR-84 can also be cut for silage.

Farmers can save seed from OP corn, and can, if they wish, develop a strain that is suited to their environment. This is a double-edged sword; breeding corn is not an easy or quick task. It takes considerable time and effort. My recommendation for saving seed is twofold:

1. After corn has matured but before harvest walk the field. Look for strong stalks with well-filled big ears that are hanging over. Pay particular attention to those parts of the field that show stress. Look for corn plants that look good despite a poor environment. Prior to harvest pick these ears especially the ones from the poorer parts of the field.

2. Establish a corn “nursery” in an isolated field safe from, to the extent possible, pollen drift. Plant the OP variety thicker than normal. Again select ears from good plants. Because the populations are higher, you are picking ears from plants that survived a more stressful environment. Save this seed and replant it. It is not necessary to replant it every year as long as you store seed for the long term. Feed the OP corn from your “production” fields, which you have planted to maximize harvestable ears.

In reality, most farmers will not have the time or the inclination to breed corn. It is hardly worth the trouble if you grow OP corn for silage or grazing and grow synthetics for the grain. I am improving some very high protein OPs,

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Here is more detail about the differences between “traditional” OPs and synthetic OP corns. There are similarities between the two. Traditional OPs were bred mostly by farmers, although the land grant colleges did a lot of corn breeding starting in the late 19th century. The breeder walks through his fields selecting good ears from plants that show desirable traits, large well-formed ears on strong erect stalks. This method keeps the good traits but does not result in much improvement. A better way is to make a “composite,” which is a cross of two varieties. These two varieties are planted side by side. One of the varieties is detasseled. The ears of the detasseled variety are genetically pure, being the offspring of those two varieties. Kernels from these ears are then replanted for several generations at least. This is how George Krug bred Krugs and Robert Reid bred Reid’s Yellow Dent. The same techniques will work today. Use a corn “nursery” as isolated from other fields as possible as the site for making composites.

“Synthetics” are more complicated. Essentially, synthetics are a cross between many “inbred” lines. An inbred line is a corn variety that is self-pollinated only, usually by hand. Starting in the 1930s, the land grant colleges developed inbreds to make the crosses that led to the early hybrids. These inbreds are still available for corn breeders, both public and private. Generally only professional corn breeders have the experience and access to inbred lines to make synthetic open-pollinated varieties. Farmers can save seed from synthetics for replanting. Remember that synthetics are susceptible to pollination from other cornfields, so it is prudent to buy fresh seed every few years.

which have poor agronomics. My goal is to improve standability while keeping the high protein. I may not be successful, but it is worth a try.

Varieties: The varieties below have worked for me. I won’t make blanket one-size-fits-all recommendations because each farm is different and there are literally hundreds of open-pollinated varieties. An OP corn that grows well in New England will probably perform poorly in Alabama.

Traditional OPs: Of the hundreds of open pollinated varieties, about 12 are available commercially (larger amounts). My favorites are:

Reid’s Yellow Dent: The most commonly grown open-pollinated corn, developed fully in the late 1880s. Seed is available everywhere.

Reid’s matures in 100-110 days and is tall and leafy with 8-10-inch ears. Reids will lodge if planted thick on very fertile soil.

Krug: a yellow corn bred by Illinois farmer George Krug around 1920. A 95-day-maturity corn, long yellow ears on tall leafy stalks around 7-9 ft average. More variable in ear placement and plant height than Reid’s Yellow Dent, but I prefer it to Reid’s.

Henry Moore: Another yellow corn originally from Illinois. It matures around 110 days with large somewhat blocky ears. It often tests higher in protein and lysine than other corn. It is more prone to lodge, but the lodging rate is acceptable if populations are kept to 18,000/acre. Avoid planting in fields exposed to high winds.

These traditional OPs are adapted to most of the Corn Belt but can be grown south and north of the traditional Corn Belt. These corns will not do well in the deep South, High Plains, and northern New England and the northernmost counties of the Great Lake states.

Synthetic varieties: Thanks to corn breeders such as Frank Kutka, Walter Goldstein, and Victor Kucyk, we now have a good number of synthetics, many of which are adapted to the cooler

regions of the country. Several readily available varieties are:

Wapsie Valley: an 86-day-maturity yellow corn but with some red or brown kernels.

Greenfield 114: A later maturing variation of Reid’s Yellow Dent.

Revolt: a new yellow 105-day synthetic.

Rebellion: a new yellow 115-day synthetic. Both Revolt and Rebellion were bred by Frank Kutka.

Multiline: a 105-day yellow synthetic with higher than average levels of protein/methionine/carotenoids. These last two make egg yolks more yellow/orange. Can be planted at higher populations. Bred by Walter Goldstein.

BMR-84: An 84-day BMR OP bred specifically for grazing.

Some growers may wish to experiment, planting a package of seeds to see what happens. An excellent source for small orders is the Sandhills Preservation Center, 1878 250th St., Calamus, IA 52729, 563-246-2299, sandhillspreservation.com. They have literally hundreds of dent, flint, flour, and popcorn varieties listed. Some varieties may not be available each year.

Before I conclude, I must mention the stellar work of Seedtime Seed Cooperative, 360 Needle Eye Lane, Delano, TN 37325. This is a group of largely Amish and Mennonite farmers who are breeding non-GMO non-patented corn hybrids and synthetic OP corns.

So there is an alternative to ever more expensive traited hybrid corn of marginal feeding value and dependent on massive amounts of inputs. While good non-GMO hybrids are probably the best choice for grain, OP corn could have a place on your farm, especially for silage and grazing.



Paul Conway is a market gardener in Leavenworth County, Kansas. He also grows corn and hay for his own use plus for the neighbors. He recently discovered the joys of eating homegrown cornmeal. Paul started farming after retiring from the U.S. Army and has farmed ever since except when he was recalled for a tour in Iraq in 2007. He will answer emails, phone calls, and letters from farmers wanting more information on open-pollinated corn. Contact information: Paul Conway, 25476 183d St., Leavenworth, KS 66048. Ph. 913-775-2559. Email: pconway@wildblue.net.

Sources:

This is by no means an all-inclusive list.

- Open-Pollinated Seed Group, 8225 Wessels Rd Avoca, NY 14809, tel 607-566-9253, openpollinated.com. This company has an extensive number of improved traditional and synthetic OPs available, many adapted to short season areas. Good prices at farm-scale levels (50 lb. bags).
- Greencover Seed, 918 Road X, Bladen, NE 68928, 402-469-6784, greencoverseed.com. Carries BMR-84 as well as an extensive variety of cover crop seed. They will sell you 1 lb. or 1000 lb.

- Leonard Borries, 16293 E 1400th Ave Teutopolis IL 62467, 277-857-3377: Mr. Borries grows and sells Krug, Henry Moore, Reid's Yellow Dent, and Boone County White, a tall late white corn. My favorite source for Krugs and Henry Moore. Any amount available.
- E&R Seed, 1356 E 200 S, Monroe, IN 46772, 260-692-6827. This is an Amish/Mennonite owned company that sells a multitude of seeds—vegetable and farm as well as general farm-related items. They have a good selection of traditional OPs. Available in sizes 1/2 lb. and up.
- John Pounder, N 47240 Rd M, Delavan, WI 53115, 262-203-6133, JTDpounder@gmail.com.

Mr. Pounder grows and sells Multiline.

- Abbe Hills Farm, 825 Abbe Hills Rd, Mt Vernon, IA 52314, 319-895-6924, abbehills.com. The owner, Laura Krause, grows and sells Abbe Hills OP, a variant of Reid's Yellow Dent developed by her father.
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A Great But Hardly Known Story



—Jigs Gardner

At 8 AM March 18 our local post office called to tell me our chicks had arrived! The exclamation point is not to express joy or excitement—I've been receiving chicks in the mail for more than 50 years—but dismay, because they were ordered for mid-April, a month hence. The brooder wasn't set up and we had no starter ration. What to do? Jo Ann said she'd start on the brooder while I drove to town to fetch the chicks.

When I returned after half an hour with the chicks chirping away in their box, Jo Ann had set up the brooder and spread sawdust on the floor. The brooder is only a corner of the greenhouse walled off by boards, making an enclosure four feet by six feet, with two and a half foot sides. Jo Ann had gathered the waterers, feed dishes, and heat lamp. Leaving the chicks in the warm truck, I unrolled the electric cord that ran 120 feet from the house to the greenhouse and plugged in the heat lamp. Then we formed a length of cardboard one foot high into a circle three feet across and set it in the pen with the heat lamp suspended over the center. That confines the chicks to a small space for a couple of weeks when they are most vulnerable to drafts, before they feather out much. Jo Ann had boiled six eggs and I chopped two of them very fine, mixed them with layer mash in a shallow dish, and put that down with a waterer below the heat lamp. Everything was ready, thanks to Jo Ann's efforts, within twenty minutes of my return. Now I fetched the box of chicks, and we carefully placed each one in the pen, dipping its beak in the water before we let it go. Twenty-three White Cornish meat birds and seventeen Golden Comet pullets. We covered the pen with plywood sheets and hoped for the best.

The night temperatures seldom dropped below 20° F, but before I went to bed I always peered through the darkness at the greenhouse; I had left a chink in the plywood cover so I could see a sliver of light. I couldn't take a chance on the heat lamp burning out.

Altogether I fed them 18 boiled eggs mixed with grain (we soon bought starter ration) over the next week, and

after that they got straight grain thrice a day. By the first week in April we removed the cardboard circle so they had the run of the whole pen. When they were six weeks old, at the end of April, we moved them all from the brooder to a chicken house in the middle of a fenced yard. We fed and watered them in the house because we don't let them out for a week. We want them to be familiar with the house so they'll readily return to it at the end of the day—chasing chickens is not my favorite evening activity.

At the end of 58 days, a little over eight weeks, we slaughtered six of the meat birds, which weighed from five and a half to six pounds. We were raising most of them for one of our daughters and a friend, who wanted them larger, so we took the smallest and gradually slaughtered the rest. They weighed from eight to nine pounds.

Aside from the accident of the birds being shipped early, there seems to be nothing remarkable in my account, but behind it there is what seems to me an almost incredible story of human curiosity, ingenuity, reason, and determination—that is, the record of chicken-raising over the last century. At one time I had the record, the statistics, published by the Department of Agriculture, but it would require a thorough housecleaning around my desk and filing cabinets to find them, and I can't face that, not at my age. The figures showed how it took so many days to raise chicken to so many pounds in 1920 and how much it cost per pound compared to the same task in 1990. Agricultural scientists had been improving, by breeding,

chickens and also feed grains like corn. The aim of these improvements was to reduce the cost, in time and money, of producing food.

I have not been raising chickens since 1920, of course, but I have been doing it since 1960, and I know how much the task has been lightened over the years.

Back then it was customary to see, in late winter or early spring, small ads in country newspapers offering chicks for sale at bargain prices. These were cockerels that hatcheries were stuck with after shipping out pullets. Naturally,

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since they were males of types bred for egg production, they didn't gain weight the way types bred for meat did. In fact, as I learned to my sorrow, you can raise them from spring to fall and wind up with a scrawny four- or five-pound bird, more bone and fat than meat. But they were cheap, as little as 20 cents apiece, and I, ignorant as usual, bought 100 of them from a nearby hatchery and eventually ate or sold them all (we were then feeding Twelve people, nine of them hungry teenagers). In those days, one always suffered some losses in the first weeks, which is why hatcheries always shipped along a few extras. This is no longer much of a problem, but the hatcheries still ship some extras, which is why there was an odd number of chicks in March.

We did that for a couple of years until I learned about chickens raised specifically for meat. It must be pointed out that at that time these breeds (like Barred Rocks) were not so different from egg layers, but they were larger and grew faster. We were content with them until the mid 1970s when we began raising both meat birds and egg layers for other people. That is, we would rear them for six weeks and then sell them to those who wanted to raise chickens without going to the trouble of their initial stage, when most of the losses occur. We were raising at least 200 meat birds then, plus 100 layers. Then it was that we started raising Cornish giants, a true meat bird.

After six weeks in the brooder pen, we moved the meat birds to a house in a pasture quite a distance away but still visible from the house. Shut in at night, they were let out in the morning to roam at will. The Golden Comet pullets went into a many-windowed room in the barn (the meat birds were all slaughtered by then).

By the mid-1980s coyotes appeared on the Island, devastating wildlife. By then, in addition to all the young growing chickens wandering all day in the pastures, we had 25 or 30 turkeys out day *and* night. In the evening they would settle themselves in a group in a field to sleep. The advent of coyotes ended that easy arrangement. We built a large pen, 50 feet by 70 feet, near the house enclosed by a seven-foot slab fence, and in a corner I built a house where the chicks were fed and they could go in and out by a small door. Turkeys were fed outdoors under an open-sided and roofed shelter. At first the turkeys resented their loss of freedom, but they settled down. They ignored the chickens.

We got our chicks by mail from a hatchery on Prince Edward Island, and in the 1990s I noticed that the Cornish chickens, instead of going out in the yard as soon as I opened the door in the morning, stayed indoors with their beaks buried in the food trough. They grew as well as ever, in fact better, but their behavior puzzled me. Eventually I wrote to the hatchery, explaining that I wasn't complaining but would like to know about the strange habits of the Cornish chicks. The owner wrote back to explain that the ultimate chicken buyers like restaurants and fast-food places demanded large-breasted-tender chickens, and for the latter quality it meant that they had to be young when they were slaughtered. So they had to grow fast. Brooders worked to fill the bill, and

that was the result. He warned me to watch out for heart attacks and weak legs, but I've never had such troubles, and the chickens I've grown over the last few years are the most efficient processors of grain I have ever raised.

Today I can raise a four-pound fryer, Jo Ann's ideal size, in six weeks, something I couldn't do as recently as ten years ago. Think of the saving of time and money, all due to market forces driving workers to improve the breeding of corn and grain and chickens. It is an amazing story, but one that we hardly recognize or appreciate. 🐔

Jigs and Jo Ann Gardner live in the Adirondacks on a small farm with extensive gardens. The book they co-authored, GARDENS OF USE & DELIGHT (\$30.00, color illustrations, 304 pages, quality softcover), as well as Jo Ann's books on herbs and fruits: HERBS IN BLOOM (\$25.00, full color photos, 394 pages, softcover), LIVING WITH HERBS (\$18.00, black and white line drawings throughout, 288 pages, softcover) and THE OLD-FASHIONED FRUIT GARDEN (\$16.00, color photos, 185 pages, softcover), are available directly from the authors. Available April/May: SEEDS OF TRANSCENDENCE: Understanding the Hebrew Bible Through Plants (\$50 hardcover, \$30.00 softcover, full color throughout, 398 pages). All books are postpaid when ordered from 12 Angier Hill Rd/Essex, NY 12936.



ADA

the Ayrshire

A cluster of pink magnolia flowers with dark red centers, some in full bloom and some as buds, set against a white background. The flowers are arranged in a loose, natural-looking pattern.

The Farm HOME

After a cold spell in early winter, it has been unseasonably warm pretty much ever since. Only a sweatshirt or light jacket is needed when going outside this morning. While it does feel very pleasant, it also makes me feel uneasy when I think of the fruit trees and grapes. I fear the budding might start, we'll get cold weather again, and then the buds will freeze.

We are excited to try Mary Lou Shaw's organic recipe (see her article "Fruit Tree Pruning Basics," page 38) to spray our fruit trees. We find raising small fruits organically—strawberries, blueberries, elderberries, raspberries—is not difficult, but tree fruits are much more complicated. We look forward to trying her method, and I am sure some of our readers are also interested, and hope we can have some nice apples, pears, and peaches. Of course, much also depends on the weather.

I mentioned in the Winter issue how we were going to sort our books this winter. The project is fully underway! We will be moving into the "daudy" house this fall and the old farmhouse is getting a complete do-over, so we need to get our things out before the carpenters arrive on the scene. The books are sorted into three categories—what David and I want to keep, books the children and grandchildren want, and the rest are going on tables in the shop. The last category will be sold at a book sale we plan to have in mid-March; what isn't sold will go to the thrift shop. This all sounds good and easy on paper.

It has been interesting and often we find a treasure we had almost forgotten about. I'll admit David and I are both softies and nostalgic, which is why we have all these things to go through. We keep saying: "Oh my, look at this!" or "Do you remember this?"

It's getting closer to seed-starting time. Our little greenhouse is getting a bit dilapidated and needs some repairs before we heat 'er up. I think if we'd get some snow and real winter weather, I'd be more ready for spring. Actually, right now the Carolina wren is singing up a storm and just listening to the bird's song...give me another month and I'll be on par with my usual anticipation.

Wishing everyone a pleasant spring.

E.K.

P.S. You might notice we have a book review on *The Lean Farm* by Ben Hartman in this issue. Yes, we had one in the Winter '15 issue also, but when we received this review we decided it's a good enough book to merit another one. The book is a true winner.

Featured Cookbook

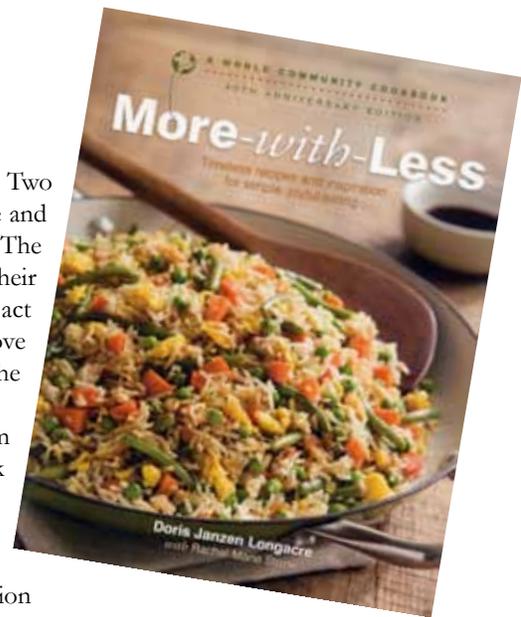
The beginnings for the original *More-with-Less* cookbook were very humble. Two families—including that of Doris and Paul Longacre—gathered around a picnic table and discussed global hunger and the world food crisis of 1974. That was forty years ago. The nonprofit Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) had asked constituents to examine their own food habits, and challenged people to “eat and spend 10 percent less—both as an act of voluntary simplicity in solidarity with people who were poor, and as a practical move toward actually consuming less of the world’s limited resources” writes Longacre in the book’s original preface.

Doris Janzen Longacre was inspired with their conversation and compiled from hundreds of recipes submitted by Mennonite cooks around the world, the cookbook *More-with-Less*, which has almost a million copies in print. How can such a holy grail of thrifty and thoughtful cooking be updated?

Leanne Brown wrote the foreword and food writer Rachel Marie Stone, author of *Eat with Joy: Redeeming God’s Gift of Food*, was contracted to update and edit the 2016 edition of *More-with-Less*.

Filled with colorful pictures of people and food from around the world, as well as recipe photos, the new volume still includes much of Longacre’s writings, including chapters on the idea of having more with less, making changes as an act of faith, tips on building a simpler diet, and eating with joy. Filled with delicious, hearty, and wholesome recipes you can make with ingredients you have on hand. *More-with-Less* will be an integral part of our awareness in cooking well for our families.

All royalties benefit the work of MCC. The new edition has 319 pages and the cost is \$22.99. It is available from www.mennomedia.org or 1-800-245-7894, as well as online and local bookstores. Or order from: Herald Press, 1251 Virginia Ave., Harrisonburg, VA 22802.



Recipes for Spring

Real Onion Dip

Sauté slowly until onion begins to caramelize:

- 1 T. oil or melted butter
- 1 large onion, minced

Blend on high speed for 20 seconds, or until liquefied.

- 1 cup cottage cheese

Add caramelized onion and:

- 1 tsp. lemon juice
- ½ tsp. salt, or to taste
- chives or parsley, to taste

Whirl until smooth, adding up to ½ cup water for desired consistency. For extra flavor pour water into the pan used to sauté the onion and use that for the liquid to thin the dip. Taste; adjust seasonings. Use on salads, baked potatoes, or as a dip with fresh vegetables.

Option: for a richer dip, substitute Greek yogurt or sour cream for all or part of the cottage cheese. Reduce water for a thicker dip.

Corn Chips

Combine in a mixing bowl:

- 1 cup yellow cornmeal
- ½ cup flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. baking powder

Stir together in separate bowl:

- ½ cup milk
- ¼ cup oil or melted butter
- ½ tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- ¼ tsp. hot sauce

Add liquids to cornmeal mixture and stir with fork. Knead a little until smooth. Grease two baking sheets and sprinkle with cornmeal. Divide dough in half. With floured rolling pin, roll out each half directly onto baking sheet, rolling dime-thin. Sprinkle lightly with paprika or garlic, onion, or seasoned salt. Run rolling pin over once more. Prick dough with fork. Cut into squares or triangles. Bake in preheated 350° oven for 10 minutes, or until lightly browned.

Cold Scallion and Bean Salad

Soak overnight:

1 pound dry white beans
2 quarts water

Drain water; cook in additional water to cover until tender. Drain and cool.

In large bowl, mix beans gently with:
4 cups raw greens, such as kale, spinach, escarole, loosely packed

Combine to make dressing:

4 scallions (including green tops), chopped
2 cloves garlic, crushed
¼ cup fresh lemon juice
½ cup olive oil
salt and freshly ground pepper

Pour dressing over beans and greens. Sprinkle with parsley. Refrigerate several hours before serving.

Fresh Asparagus Soup

In large saucepan, sauté:

2 T. butter
¼ cup onion, chopped

When onion is translucent, add and sauté until crisp-tender:
1 pound fresh asparagus, chopped

Sprinkle over, stirring constantly:

2 T. flour
½ tsp. salt
dash pepper

Whisk in:

2 cups vegetable broth

Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until mixture is close to boiling point.

Lower heat and stir in:

1 cup milk
½ cup sour cream or plain whole milk

yogurt
1 tsp. fresh lemon juice

Heat just to serving temperature, stirring frequently. Sprinkle with chives.

Hash Brown Quiche

In 9-inch pie pan, stir together:

3 T. oil or melted butter
3 cups raw potato, coarsely shredded

Press evenly into pie crust shape. Bake at 425° for 15 minutes until just beginning to brown. Remove from oven.

Layer on:

1 cup Swiss or cheddar cheese shredded
¾ cup cooked chicken or ham, diced;
browned sausage; or bacon, fried
crisp and crumbled
¼ onion, chopped

In a bowl, beat together:

1 cup evaporated milk or half-and-half
(part milk, part cream)
2 eggs
½ tsp. salt
⅛ tsp. pepper

Pour egg mixture over top of other ingredients.

Sprinkle with:

1 T. parsley flakes or leaves

Return to oven and bake at 425° about 30 minutes, or until lightly browned and knife inserted 1 inch from edge comes out clean. Cool 5 minutes before cutting into wedges.

Honey Baked Chicken

Arrange in shallow baking pan, skin side up:

1 (3-pound) chicken fryer, cut up; or 3 pounds chicken pieces

Combine and pour over:

⅓ cup butter, melted
⅓ cup honey

2 T. prepared mustard
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. curry powder

Bake at 350° for 1¼ hour, basting every 15 minutes, until chicken is tender and nicely browned. Good served with rice.

Creamy Cabbage

Cook about 7 minutes, just until crisp-tender:

6 cups cabbage, shredded
¼ cup onion, chopped
⅓ cup water
⅛ tsp. salt

Drain. Add and toss lightly while hot:

3 ounces cream cheese, cubed
2 T. butter
½ tsp. celery seeds
paprika

Applesauce Bread Pudding

Arrange in bottom of 9 x 9-inch pan:
4 slices dry bread

Combine:

2 cups applesauce
½ cup raisins
¼ cup brown sugar
½ tsp. ground cinnamon

Spread over bread. Top with:
4 additional slices bread

Beat together:

2 eggs
2 cups milk
½ tsp. vanilla
½ cup brown sugar
¼ tsp. salt
dash ground nutmeg

Pour over bread. Top with:

½ cup applesauce
sprinkle cinnamon/sugar

Bake at 350° for 55-60 minutes. Serve warm or cold.



Flowering Herbs

Part I

—Jo Ann Gardner

Our first summer on the farm in Cape Breton folks came by in their pickups just to see what “the rich Americans” were up to. They parked in the driveway, we invited them in to tea (the custom), then they left. Angus, however, only had to walk up the road from just below our mailbox where he lived on a relative’s rundown farm. Known for never having done a lick of work in his life (he lived by his wits), he seemed fascinated by our labors, especially mine—a woman single-mindedly at work among rocks and debris under an old apple tree, claiming she was making a flower garden.

By this time, Angus was used to our ways, and as long as he knew we’d invite him in for tea and bread and molasses, anything we did was fine with him. Later, when the spring garden was in bud and beginning to bloom, I remembered when the farm looked so different, when Angus had made himself comfortable on a big, round rock, surveyed the bleak landscape around him, and shook his head in wonder at our activities.

However improbable it looked, this was an excellent site for a flower garden. South facing, it occupied a prominent piece of ground close to the house and almost directly opposite the top of the lane from whence the visitor’s gaze first encompassed the farm panorama—house, barn, fields, and orchards. Once I cleared most of the rocks except those too large to haul away, I discovered that the earth beneath was deep, dark, and humusy, the best soil on the entire farm, softened by the rock pile and years of decayed vegetation. The area was roughly circular in shape, the equivalent of about 500 square feet, with an old apple tree toward the back that provided an otherwise sunny site with shade-growing conditions too. Thus the range of plants that could be grown here encompassed all types, from those needing full sun to those that prefer partial shade in varying degrees.

I raked the rubble fine, pushed away large rocks, gathered smaller ones to mark the area, then cast seeds upon the ground. As we worked around the farm that first summer

rebuilding the barn, cutting posts and rails for fences, and clearing spruce from old pastures, we were cheered by the annuals that had germinated: cosmos, bachelor’s buttons, and poppies gaily waved to us from my very first flower garden. I had for years been a hand in our large vegetable gardens, but I had never been in charge of a little piece of ground I could point to and think that it was mine to plant whatever I liked. Of course, my favorite perennial flowers, sown at the same time as the annuals, wouldn’t flower until the following season. Their first growing season they were putting down roots.

The following spring, after our first experience of fearsome maritime winds and ice (rather than snow) underfoot, I surveyed my new flower garden. The only plants that had survived were some of Jigs’s curious herbs that I had parked there temporarily until I found a suitable place to grow them. All my previous experience with herbs had led me to believe there were two types: the culinary ones such as the parsleys, marjoram, thymes, and basils, and others that were literary, the sort Jigs, a former English professor, had grown in Vermont for their literary associations, plants with odd and intriguing names like elecampane, pennyroyal, and angelica. We had always planted the culinary herbs in rows in the vegetable garden, a practice we expected to continue in Cape Breton (until we discovered germination in clay soil was poor and erratic and different techniques were needed for doing what we had always taken for granted). The literary types had enjoyed benign neglect in our Vermont home. Although we had enjoyed seeing the bright calendulas by the kitchen door, had admired the six-foot stately angelica (I learned to candy its young stems for a



White chives with pulmonaria, calendula seedling.

digestive, like after-dinner mints), my interest was not yet greatly aroused, perhaps because we had not lived long enough in one place to develop a sensitivity toward the landscape, to seeing the importance of creating beauty in our everyday surroundings.

Now, because of their initial success, I took a closer look at Jigs's literary herbs. I noticed that these plants with the odd names all produced pretty blooms, were varied in color and form, with the added bonus of aroma and attraction to bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. I became champion of these Old World medicinal herbs (for that's what they were). Plants such as lungwort, chives, blue



Lungwort hedge in bloom with tulips.

comfrey, sweet cicely, and sweet rocket proved so satisfying for their toughness and beauty that I used them freely throughout our farm landscape, matching them to habitats in sun or shade where they would flourish. I learned through these early experiences that the plants we call herbs have a role to play throughout the entire landscape, not just in a place called "the herb garden."

I could not help noticing that in addition to their beauty, flowering herbs had more to offer. I began to pick flowers and leaves from them to make teas, garnishes, flavorings, scented bouquets, and potpourris. There is an almost indefinable joy in knowing there is always something to harvest, on however modest a scale. Flowering herbs have everything I want from a plant, both beauty and practical use.

A word of caution: These plants are vigorous survivors, adaptable to a range of growing conditions. Plant them where they won't overrun their neighbors, or be prepared to reduce their roots every year or so. All are, in varying degrees, candidates for naturalizing.

Favorite Early-Flowering Herbs

Bistort (*Polygonum bistorta*/*Persicaria bistorta*)-2½-3 feet tall with stiff, upright stems growing up from a wide mound of tongue-shaped foliage, topped by masses of fluffy pink, hawthorn-scented pokers (of great interest to swallowtail butterflies). Its epithet *bistorta*, meaning twice-twisted, indicates bistort was used for tanning leather. Its new shoots were once used to flavor Bistort Pudding, a spring restorative (I have never tried it). Grows in sun or shade.

Blue Comfrey (*Symphytum caucasicum*)-Growing up to 3-4 feet tall, this is the showiest comfrey, with the same properties in its foliage to heal bruises and broken bones as the dull reddish-colored one. Its masses of dangling blue bells attract hummingbirds and bees. Chickens gobble up stalks and spent flowers, and when the plant is thrown on the compost heap, it decomposes rapidly, releasing valuable nutrients.

Celandine (*Chelidonium majus*)- Also called Greater Celandine, this weed of waste places grows up to about 2½ feet tall. I first became acquainted with it when we moved to the Adirondacks where it settled in wherever the ground was disturbed. I couldn't help noticing its attractive goblet-shaped clear yellow flowers over scalloped foliage. And while I did weed it out wherever I didn't want it, I allowed it to form a

hedge of bloom at the edges of our rock-lined driveway border where it supplanted less attractive weeds. Known for its curative properties, it is toxic in all its parts from the bright orange juice easily seen in its broken stems and leaves. I once met an old gardener (actually younger than I am now) who swore by its use as a poultice to treat warts. In late

spring it creates, all on its own, a pretty hedge interplanted with Johnny jump-ups.

Chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*)-A sun-loving plant to 12 inches tall, its flowers (white, shades of mauve and rosy-pink) and foliage are onion-flavored, useful raw or in cooking. Its landscaping uses are many: for the border as a medium-tall edger, as an accent plant in clumps, and for naturalizing in wet spots where their colors are more vivid.

Johnny jump-up (*Viola tricolor*)-Growing just 6-8 inches tall, these wild pansies are true to their name, jumping up everywhere once established. A friend calls their blooms "dear little faces" and so do I, delicately lined with black whiskers on cream and violet petals in variations, all lovable. One of its older names, "heartsease," indicates the use of this plant in folk medicine to treat heart problems. The edible petals are good candidates for candying and for pressing (see directions later). I like to insert the edible fresh flowers with stems in fruit cups. In the language of flowers, violas mean "loving thoughts."

Lady's Mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*)-12-18 inches tall, its genus name *alchemilla* means "little magical one," and may refer to the beneficial properties once associated with drops of water from dew or rain that gather in the folds of the plant's pleated leaves. Its landscaping possibilities include hedging, corner accents in a border, and as a naturalized ground cover. Be sure to cut back after flowering to encourage fresh foliage.

Lungwort (*Pulmonaria officinalis*)-Growing to 6-8 inches tall, this is one of the most important plants in our landscape,



Celandine and Johnny-jump-up hedge.

both in Cape Breton and now in the Adirondacks, where it forms an early stunning hedge of small pink and azure blue bells that attract the first hummingbirds. Its wealth of folk names such as “Jack and Jill,” “Soldiers and Sailors” refer to its flowers that turn from pink in bud to blue in flowers. Watch out for variants that stay all pink or all blue. In folk medicine its spotted leaves suggested its use to treat lung ailments. Cut back after flowering to encourage fresh foliage or expect seedlings to appear wherever, in sun or shade.

Sweet Cicely (*Myrrhis odorata*)-Reaching 3 feet tall, this is an invaluable plant for shade. It grows from a deep taproot to produce an attractive mound of light green ferny foliage with an anise flavor. You can chop young leaves into stewed rhubarb to cut the needed sweetening. Saucer-size umbels of white-scented flowers bloom atop the rising stems. The oily black seeds (they taste like licorice candy) were once used to produce a furniture polish oil.

Sweet Rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*)-3 feet tall, this long-blooming perennial with coarse leaves (edible-like mustard greens in early growth) and loose clusters of phlox-like flowers of pink, lilac, or white possesses outstanding floating aroma, sweet with a clove note. It grows well in sun or shade and prefers somewhat damp conditions.

Sweet Woodruff (*Galium odoratum*)-A 6-inch-tall groundcover for shade and partial shade, this delightful plant creates mounds of shiny, dark green, pointed leaves, embellished in late spring by masses of starry white flowers. Scent is most noticeable when the drying leaves release coumarin—the same phenomenon we notice in newly dried hay. Its leaves and flower sprigs are used to flavor jellies and in May Wine to welcome spring.

Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*)-Grows up to 4-5 feet tall on wand-like stems from clumps of long, ladderlike leaves. It grows in most soils in sun or partial shade. Its washed-out pink flowers, like miniature Queen Anne’s lace, pour forth a heady musk aroma that floats above and beyond the garden. Its odd-smelling roots are the source of valerian’s well-known sedative properties.

Candied Viola Petals

Lay fresh unblemished petals on doubled sheets of waxed paper. Brush front surface with egg white beaten with a little water, then sprinkle the surface with sugar; repeat on the back surface. Place petals on clean waxed paper and turn

them daily until they are dry to the touch. I like to use them as soon as possible, mostly to decorate cake frosting, but they can be stored in paper-lined boxes for a few weeks.

Pressed Viola Cards

Faces with some dark petals show up best when dried. Spread them flat on a thick layer of newspaper; cover them with another layer, then with heavy weights—encyclopedias work well. After a few days, change paper, add weights, and leave until wholly dry. Use this same method to press other herbs, flowers, and foliage during the season such as rose petals (for love), sprigs of lady’s mantle flowers (for comfort), rosemary (for remembrance), and horehound foliage (for health).

To use: Lightly dab the backs of pressed florals and press them onto card stock. With a fine pen identify each of them as well as their meaning, weaving your writing to fit around the plants, then seal the card by covering it firmly with plastic wrap. A friend brings her floral cards to Staples and has them color copied to great effect. ✂

For a complete study of flowering herbs, see my book *Herbs in Bloom*.

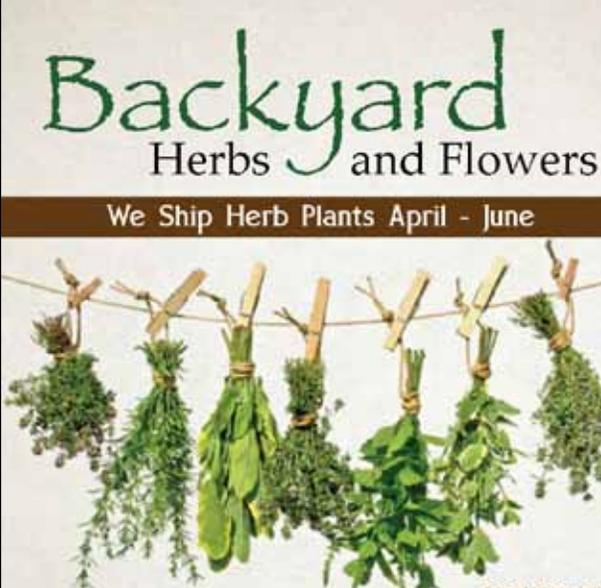
Jigs and Jo Ann Gardner live in the Adirondacks on a small farm with extensive gardens. The book they co-authored, GARDENS OF USE & DELIGHT (\$30.00, color illustrations, 304 pages, quality softcover), as well as Jo Ann’s books on herbs and fruits: HERBS IN BLOOM.



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Sign of Spring

The grass on the hillside is matted and brown
And laid down and heavy from snow
And 'neath the thick layer lies wet winter ground
With no place for moisture to go.

The sky is o'ercast and the droplets so fine
Bathe lightly the landscape of brown
The soil is so still there's not even a sign
Of the miracle deep in the ground.

A tiny seed sprouted, its life is begun
It searches for somewhere to go
And sensing a trickle of light from the sun
It pushes on upward to grow.

The rays of the sun and the moisture have met
Dissolving the rain to the sky
The seedling has got where it wanted to get
A tender green tip reaches high.

And millions and trillions all over the world
Have done the same thing o'er the years
And reaching up higher to freedom unfurled
An emerald carpet appears.

Moriah Higgins
Thorndike, ME

Seasons of the Sun

The sun, in the Spring, likes to
tend to his flowers
When Summertime comes, he
must work longer hours
In Autumn, he's painting, and
colors burst forth
He spends winters down South,
and rarely goes North.

Greg Kern
Olmsted Falls, OH

Gardens in the Night

When the dark night hours are passing
And I find I cannot sleep,
When I've visited the Shepherd,
And have numbered all the sheep;
Then I find that planting flowers
Has a quieting effect,
And in my imagination
I find gardens to perfect.

I build fences where I want them,
I am lavish with design;
I plant trees and herbs and bushes,
All to form a curving line.
And I lay a path to wander
Through the beds so full and bright,
Where the flowers bloom abundant
In my gardens of the night.

All along the lanes and pastures
I have fruit trees growing tall;
With their branches sagging earthward,
But the apples do not fall.
And the pears of golden plumpness
Are so wonderfully sweet,
That we pick them by the bushels,
And there's more than we can eat.

Cloudy days come very seldom,
But the rain falls on demand;
It is soft and warm and gentle
While it nourishes the land.
And the golden sunlight lingers
In the fairest nooks, I find,
For the weather's always pleasant
In the gardens of my mind.

Then somewhere midst the planning,
I will often drift away...
And when I wake I find once more,
A new and special day.
But those gardens flourish ever
With their colors always bright,
For anything can happen when
I garden in the night.

Darla Weaver
Peebles, Oh

The Robin

Look at lovely robin sitting there
His beauty much beyond compare.
His red breast shining in the evening sun,
His back more beautiful than anyone.
His flashing eyes, as black as night,
Glossy feathers gleam so bright.
There's not a bird that's as
beautiful; so bright.
I watch as the delicate bird
takes flight.

Lila Howard, age 9
Corydon, IN

Morning Glory

The splendor of the rising sun,
The gentle mists when night is done;
The birds that sing their morning story,
Are all together—Morning Glory!

The gentle whisper in the trees
Of softly journeying morning breeze;
And Mother singing her morning story,
Are all together—Morning Glory!

Isaac Bowman, age 13
Desbarats, ON, Canada
(Written for Mother's Day and painted on a
morning glory-shaped card)

The Jonquils

I'll think of yellow
The heart of hope
As if to wither if picked
That pretty glass vase
So temporary water
I'll tend to it in the garden
Let spring be spring
I shall and I will
The soil, so rich, beauty
Oh, nature, create.

Danny P. Barbare
Greenville, SC

The Gloryland of God

Sometimes as through this life below
on thorny paths we trod,
Some little scenes remind us of
the gloryland of God.
It may be how the sun shines in,
so bright and full of cheer,
Or how the singing of a wren
is joyful, sweet, and clear.

It may be when the sun comes up
some morning on the hill,
Or nighttime when the stars are out
and everything is still.
It may be as some little child
looks deep into our eyes,
That we grow lonesome for the land
where nothing ever dies.

It may be as the robins build
their nest with tender care,
And snow melts into muddy pools
and spring is everywhere.
Or just the way the waters glint
at setting of the sun,
That it reminds us of the time
when work on earth is done.

It may be when a friend holds out
a kind and loving hand,
Or when you fall but still can trust
that friend to understand.
Oh, heaven shines more bright and clear
when glory shines below.
I know these scenes will light my path
no matter where I go.

Miriam Brubaker
Salem, MO

Light Rain

Blue sky drops from nowhere
barred rock laying hens unperturbed
46 years waiting for this moment—
light rain falling on the roosting barn

Mark Frank
Springfield, MO

Happy Handmade Home

Beautiful Body Care

—Anna Raber

I used to trade off among

Herbal Essence, Pert, and Pantene, trying to rid myself of the malady—dandruff. Somewhere I came upon this recipe and I use it ever since. My scalp has improved, thanks to no additives and the conditioning of the egg. Best of all, I crossed off another item to buy at the store. It is easy to make and if you are a lover of thrift stores, you will often come across homemade or organic soap for 50 cents, which is a scream away from what you pay for shampoo at the health store. You can always buy bulk soap or make your own. I know what I'm putting on my head when I use this shampoo—water, egg, and several simple ingredients of homemade soap; and no matter how fancy the packaging on regular shampoo, this works best for me. When you try this recipe use a spare saucepan and an old whisk and keep it separate from your regular utensils if you plan to do it often. I use separate utensils for all my homemade body care. Try this for healthy hair and a happy wallet.

Shampoo

Ingredients:

- 1 bar homemade soap (not castile or glycerin)
- 1 cup water
- 1 egg, beaten



Grate soap into a small kettle. / Add the water. I use a 3.5 oz. bar for 1 cup, so adjust your water amount to your bar size. (You can add additional water at the end, but it seems to melt faster with the correct amount of water at the beginning.) / Heat over low heat, stirring occasionally with a whisk, until melted. / Remove from heat and cool for 5 minutes. / Add your organic or farm-fresh egg and beat well. / If you want more fragrance than what the bar soap provides, you can also now add several drops of essential oil. Lavender, tea tree, and peppermint are good for dandruff, or a few drops of olive oil. / Pour the mixture into an empty bottle or soap dispenser, shaking often as it cools. If you see some separation when you are ready to use it, simply shake well. And no, the egg will not smell—unless perhaps if you only wash your hair once a month. :)

Anna Raber lives in Holmes County, Ohio. She enjoys farming, nature, and bicycling. She is a regular contributor to Farming Magazine.

A Pale Palate

—Jessie and Leah Smith

photos by the authors

To eat a colorful plate of food has been the ubiquitous nutritional advice for the past decade. Sound advice, of course. This shouldn't mean that you never eat from the pale side of the spectrum, however. White foods should be on your plate (as well as in your garden) for a variety of reasons. Some crops have their own unique health benefits to offer. Others have unequaled flavor, appearance, and much more. But it is important that you select the best "white" variety. For example...

The White Cucumber-Silver Slicer (really the best)

You eat cucumbers because they are crisp, refreshing, and tasty. Though they do possess some Vitamin C, calcium, and potassium, nutrition has never been their attraction. Over the years, we have given various white cucumbers room in our garden. Their cool color seems to make them look extra appealing in the heat of summer. We've tried Boothby's Blonde and Lemon. Both acceptable, but neither stellar in eating quality or production. Then we tried the Silver Slicer. Wow! Very productive plants. Crisp and delicious fruits. Silver Slicer is an open-pollinated cucumber, a product of the Cornell University breeding program. When you purchase this organic seed (from Fedco Seed), a portion of the proceeds goes to support the Public Vegetable Breeding Program at Cornell.

At our homestead, we enjoy lacto-fermenting cucumbers during their growing season and seeing how long into fall they will remain in crisp condition. One year we had so many



Eye-catching stack of salad turnips

Silver Slicers that, even though they are a slicing cucumber, their body style is so pickler-esque we fermented some to see how they would last. They did wonderfully! In the mixed jars of green and white cucumbers, the Silver Slicers remained the crispest and we have stored them in the fridge until late October. Additionally, they are also great for canned pickles. As a final seal of approval, this cucumber is so noteworthy that it brought an 8-year-old boy back to our farmers' market booth week after week looking for more. A cucumber that catches a young child's eye should be looked into.

Cucumber plants are heavy feeders, so they require plenty of nutrients in order to produce fruit. We like to give ours a side dressing of composted cow manure just before they start to vine for the nutrition and as a mulch to help hold in moisture. We also spray

their leaves with fish emulsion or compost tea a couple of times during their growing season for enhanced production.

The White Garlic-Music (if you like huge cloves)

The only garlic variety that Mom planted and saved for replanting for years was given to her by a fellow farmer. Reading the catalog descriptions, Red Russian seemed to fit it rather well, judging by its flavor and mottled red wrapper, as the identity of this garlic variety. Occasionally, we would try this or that additional garlic variety out of curiosity, but years of saving the planting stock for the Red Russian put other varieties at a distinct disadvantage. They produced small heads of nothing special while Red Russian was Old Reliable. When we spotted Music in a seed catalog, it described it as Michigan State University-trialed and enthusiastically

endorsed as their top producer. It seemed the patriotic thing to do to give it a try. From the very first harvest, Music was a delight. Easy to distinguish from Red Russian with its pure white wrapper, this garlic variety produced large heads averaging four cloves per head; four huge cloves. We have been saving and replanting Music ever since and now consider ourselves as having two permanents in our garlic staple.

Garlic is an important crop to grow (so that you can use as much of it as possible) because it is the top growth inhibitor of cancerous cells in the human body, with no other edible even running a close second. To improve your garlic planting stock every year, you save and plant the perfectly formed heads with the largest cloves. True, the customers would love to buy your large-cloved heads, but they will have to wait a while. Foliar feeding will also help to increase the size of your garlic heads. Also, remember to treat your garlic gently when it is being harvested, dried, and stored prior to planting in the autumn. After you have planted your crop, store your garlic for eating in a darkened and airy location. For your planted garlic, a cozy mulch after it has begun to grow will see it through the chilly winter.

The White Potato-Kennebec (oven fries, please)

We are potato fanatics. We grow several varieties so that we have every method of cooking handsomely supplied for. We have varieties to see us through new potato time, the growing season, and winter storage and the long-term storage potatoes so that we have nothing to do with any potatoes that are not our own. And we are absolute suckers for trying a few new varieties every year, which can be tricky when we already have so many favorites. This includes, of course, a number of fingerling varieties, colored-flesh varieties, and other potatoes with special claims to fame. Diversity in potatoes has truly been booming the last decade or so.

However, Kennebec is an old, old favorite. Introduced by the USDA in Maine in 1941, we have been growing this potato from long before we became truly fanatical about potato varieties. It has a smooth white skin around a white interior. With an oblong shape and a moist, firm flesh, it makes the absolute best oven fries there are; just add salt, black pepper, and peanut oil. High yielding with excellent storage, this is not a fussy potato. It will not be derailed by dry spells or perform poorly in certain soils. Kennebec does produce large plants and large tubers, which can lead to difficulties as the plants die down in the autumn. When the stems fall over they can expose the tubers that seem to push their way out of the ground. Re-mounding their mulch is important to protect the



Oven fries, a cheeseburger meal essential.

pale and potentially exposed tubers from the sun and the development of green spots.

The White Peach-Indian Free (ready for a surprise?)

The world of peaches is divided into the yellow flesh and the white flesh. All peaches are mineral rich, and yellow flesh brings with it a certain amount of Vitamin A. However, white-fleshed peaches have considerably more antioxidants than yellow-fleshed peaches, sometimes

as much as six times more. Naturally, the peach skin is where the very highest levels of antioxidants are located within the fruit itself, and should be eaten if you want this nutrition. Peaches are routinely on the list of produce with the highest levels of pesticide residue found on it, so this is yet another occasion when you benefit greatly from the buying, or raising, of organic food. White-fleshed peaches are also sweeter than yellow-fleshed peaches.

Our standout variety is the extra-special heirloom peach, Indian Free. It has beautiful and principally crimson skin and cream flesh marbled with crimson stripes to varying degrees. Indian Free is truly as beautiful as it is flavorful and nutritious. A favorite of Thomas Jefferson and frequent top competitor in taste testings, this peach retains some tang until it reaches full ripeness. It then has a fully developed sweetness with rich and dynamic flavor sensations, sometimes described as reminiscent of blackberry or black cherry. The Indian Free is a freestone peach with a large, firm flesh. Freestone means it readily releases its pit, as opposed to clingstones in which the flesh and pit separate with difficulty or not at all. These traits make it not only a great fresh-eating peach but also excellent for both canning and baking. Additionally, Indian Free is rather late to harvest and a great way to end the peach season when you thought all of the peaches were gone.

The Indian Free is known for producing heavy crops. Heavy crops of large fruits means you must be diligent with your peach thinning early in the season to prevent damage from overloaded branches. Peaches are generally unaffected by pests or diseases in northern areas, especially if they are vigorous and healthy. The exception is peach leaf curl, a fungal disease that causes thickened, discolored leaves with a blistered appearance. This obviously impacts the leaves directly and the fruits indirectly, and so can lessen the harvest. But Indian Free has yet another attractive trait, that of being highly resistant to peach leaf curl. Lastly, bear in mind that Indian Free, unlike most peaches, is not self-fertile and so requires another peach or a nectarine as a pollinizer. Though there are many late-blooming peach variety options out there, Reliance, J.H. Hale, and Polly are some good ones to look for.

The White Salad Turnip-Oasis (salad?)

Salad turnips are tasty, tender, and very striking with their smooth, flawless skin. At our farmers' markets, most customers are unfamiliar with salad turnips. But the turnips make such an impact heaped in a pile at the corner of the table that customers are happy to give them a try. Our salad turnip, variety Oasis, is beautifully white inside and out, crisp and ready for green salads or vegetable salads, to be used as you would use a radish. But of course they possess a fresh turnip flavor, as well as the turnip's bounty of nutrition. Additionally, these tender turnips can be stir-fried or stewed, but will not require as long to cook as standard turnips.

Standard turnips take a while to grow, usually somewhere from one and a half to two months, and are at the mercy of the elements during that time. Salad turnips are a great option for those who lack patience and love turnips, as they can begin to be harvested at one month. To ensure a good salad turnip crop, you must make sure they receive regular and



The Silver Slicer will make other cucumbers green with envy!

sufficient moisture. They must be thinned, if necessary, so that there is sufficient room for the roots to develop. Turnip thinnings have especially tender greens that are wonderful in salads. Prompt harvesting when the salad turnips are up to size, which is generally 1½ to 2 inches in diameter, is also important so that the roots do not become oversized and woody. Your salad turnip crop could easily be endangered by the cabbage root maggot. Though undesirable in the cabbage patch, it is fatal in the turnip patch. It is very important that you remove all possible host roots from the garden from year to year so that they are not left behind for the insect life cycle to be completed in. Also, rotate crops so that cabbage root maggot hosts are not consistently in the same ground. During the growing season, you can also combat this pest with mulch or wood ashes, which discourage the adult fly from finding and attacking the crop. With just a little diligence, you can be harvesting tons of roots for over a month out of a heavily seeded salad turnip bed.

The White Cherry-Nugent (almost white)

Though most often referred to as a yellow cherry, we felt this pale cherry had to be included on this list of "white" produce because its lack of color is what really sets it apart. Named Nugent, this late-season sweet cherry has excellent flavor. What is more, its lack of even the faintest blush of red when it is ripe makes it of no interest to the birds that are routinely netted out of cherry trees. No need with this cherry tree!

Nugent is an early-blooming sweet cherry, and it is not self-fertile. So you will need to have at least one other variety of sweet cherry tree with a similar bloom time to act as a pollinizer for Nugent. You will have to pick a variety that seems exciting to you from the list of possibilities. Some options are Bing, Kristin, and Ulster (Blushing Gold is not an option). Sweet cherries do not ripen off the tree. Wait for them to fully ripen and then pick quickly, as ripened cherries can quickly go to rot on the tree. Also, antioxidant levels drop



Michigan State University-trialed and endorsed garlic, Music. Big producers, big cloves.

rapidly in cherries after harvest. For both of these reasons, growing your own cherries is a great idea that will bring you more flavorful and nutritious fruits. And this New York (Cornell) native is a great sweet cherry tree to try.

A great deal of care must be taken for site selection when you are planting a sweet cherry tree. Firstly, as always, domestic cherry trees should not be planted near wild chokecherry trees (potential harborers of insect pests and diseases). Not too surprisingly, it should be planted in full sun. It is more sensitive to both cold winters and hot, wet summers than its heartier brethren, the tart cherry tree. You can help both of these situations, respectively, by avoiding locations in the landscape that are low spots where coolness will settle and areas where water puddles in the spring or after a rain. As you can see, sweet cherry trees are particularly fond of good soil drainage. If you question the drainage in the area you have chosen to plant in, it is a good idea to build a raised bed for your tree to ensure its happiness. Then keep your tree happy with kelp sprays throughout the season. Our main insect pest

with cherries has been the cherry fruit fly. However, picking up dropped fruit will prevent large infestations from returning year after year. The strictest control would require picking up drops every day; hopefully, you have children or chickens that can be used to help with this. One last caution. Though the pale color of Nugent will save you from having to worry about birds, the raccoons will not be fooled and will show up as soon as they are ripe. Be aware of this, and come ripening time break out the raccoon baffles.

The White Corn-Silver Queen (that's right, all white, no bicolor) Silver Queen has been establishing a following for herself since the 1830s. Don't be fooled into thinking that pale color bespeaks a pale flavor. She is all corn taste. Nutritionally, it must be said, yellow corn is the superior and the yellower the better, as long as it is not a super sweet variety. White or yellow, beware of the super sweet, augmented sweet, and synergistic corn varieties, whether you are a grower or a customer. These are the varieties bred to be the bigger, sweeter, softer, juicier corn (with a longer shelf life) that modern American tastes seem to crave. Attendant to these "improvements" are a decrease in protein (pushed out by all of that sugar), a decrease in antioxidants and spikes in blood sugar levels (in the sweetest varieties) that can surpass those caused by candy bars. Stick to Silver Queen and other great heirloom varieties and don't neglect to mention this selling point to discerning customers.

When we plant our sweet corn, the first difficulty to overcome is getting the seeds germinated without the crows digging them up. One year we had to replant the entire patch because of their feasting, and we don't intend to do it again. Scarecrows with tin cans, bells, and CDs/DVDs dangling from them to make noise and reflect light takes care of the crow problem. Next, we have to make sure we get the rows weeded and hilled in a timely manner. Provided that some rains come, the next corn problem is when it begins to ripen and the raccoons assemble to dig in every night. We have used electric fencing, fishing line, and vining squash plants over the years, all three circling the patch at one time or another, to stem the flow of raccoons. Each provides fairly good protection, yet often some intruders manage to get in. We have even greater raccoon control when we take a radio out to the patch to play all night, tuned into a station that broadcasts voices talking

and not just music all of the time. Has your corn made it this far? Good! Now is the time to pick your ears of corn. Silver Queen, like most heirloom varieties, tastes better if picked just prior to the kernels filling out completely to the end. At that stage of maturity (filled out to the end), the corn is starting to think about seed maturity, which is a starchy thought. It is much better to pick it when it is just a little young and is sweet.

The White Cauliflower-Vitaverde (except it's not)

You can't think of white vegetables without thinking of cauliflower; it is probably the first vegetable you thought would be in this article. However, and we know you will think it a contradiction, but the cauliflower we want to tell you about is green and named Vitaverde. In general, cauliflower has some of the highest indole contents (a very potent cancer fighter) of all the members of the Brassica family, and also in the whole produce world. It is particularly high in B Vitamins, Vitamins C and K, and potassium, with some mineral content as well. Not bad for a white vegetable. Of course, the colorful cauliflowers (greens, purples, and oranges) have a healthy dose of carotenoids, anthocyanins, and phenolics (all powerful antioxidants) as well. But don't forget that white cauliflower is well worth eating, too!

Cauliflower has always been a bit of a tricky crop in our garden. It isn't its nutritional or water demands. Our ground is fertile and they only need watering during a drought. They aren't troubled by flea beetles, of course. It is only the cabbage loopers and imported cabbageworms that ever give us an occasional problem, which can be easily remedied with a spraying of Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*). No, it is the need to shade white cauliflower from the sunlight as it approaches harvest time that has always been the problem for us. We get busy with farmers' market harvesting and selling days and a bit of field crop work, and before you know it you have off-white cauliflower. Perfectly good to eat, of course, but customers are used to snow-white cauliflower. Growing colored cauliflowers has given us one less chore to not always get done on time.

So whether you grow produce or buy produce; whether your primary concern is nutrition or flavor; or whether you value produce for its uniqueness, heirloom status, or marketability, keep this "pale palate produce" in mind. They will not let you down and will certainly leave you happy. 🐾

Jessie and Leah Smith are sisters who work on their family's organic farm in mid-Michigan, called Nodding Thistle. They both attended Michigan State University to study crop and soil sciences. Every year on the farm seems to bring to the garden new vegetable varieties from the seed catalogs, as it is impossible to resist buying new vegetables and seeing how they grow; what they are like, and what you can do with them once you get them to the kitchen.



Walk With Me

—Anna Raber

Cloudy. Drizzle. It is a morning created by April. Rain and clouds tend to depress some people, but they inspire me. Rain means that although it is wet outside it will be all the more cozy when you return inside. Today's rain invites me on a walk into the woods where only baby drips get through. A short jaunt around our five acres does good things to the mind. The more you have to think about, the longer the walk you take.

The gate is open to the woods. There is a short expanse kept mown for the lively nieces and nephews that take on the place. The woods around it are largely hickory trees with some oak, beech, sassafras, and tulip trees. In April the leaf buds of hickory are swollen and light green. They are

ready to open into the divided leaflets resembling a buckeye whorl, except that each hickory leaf has a separate stem. A large part of our hickory trees are shagbark, a reason for the squirrel residents to hang around, bury nuts, and run about on the board fence. In the past we gathered hickory nuts for a neighbor to put into pies, but now they dry in the sun or get pushed into the mud.

Below the hickory trees the ground is a carpet of last year's leaves. A sea of new life, mainly Mayapples, give it color. As children we'd call them "umbrellas." We'd clear the forest floor of leaves and vines and plant our favorite wild plant, Mayapples. All those gardens have returned to jewelweed and green briar.

Later in spring, almost hidden by its leaves, a white



flower will bloom. It is followed by a waxy-looking fruit the size of a small walnut. I can never bring myself to try these, although they are edible when fully ripe. They look yellow and the fact that their taste has a hint of banana makes me believe it and leave it at that.

Hepatica and toothwort bloom and now we have the large white trillium in spring's parade. These are everywhere in our five-acre woods, although sparser in some parts. I love when these bloom in to the season of common blue phlox and the two make a glorious splash atop the flat blanket of tiny jewelweed plants.

I wind through the woods, cross the creek, and come out on the road that passes our driveway. There is a large oak stump on the far side. The neighbor cut it down years ago and

now a shelf-like fungus grows there. The robins noticed it too, and built a nest of grass and mud, round and dry. They forgot or didn't know what April rains could do. In the following week, on passing, I saw the nest was gone. I found the nest, smooth blue eggs, and a saturated and crumbly fungus in the tall grass. The robins will not build there again.

I think a few sad thoughts for the perfect little eggs that will never hatch, and then I turn around toward the house for warmth and a cup of coffee. The drizzle has turned to rain and that goes better with a book than a walk. 🐦

Anna Raber lives in Holmes County, Ohio. She enjoys farming, nature, and bicycling. She is a regular contributor to Farming Magazine.

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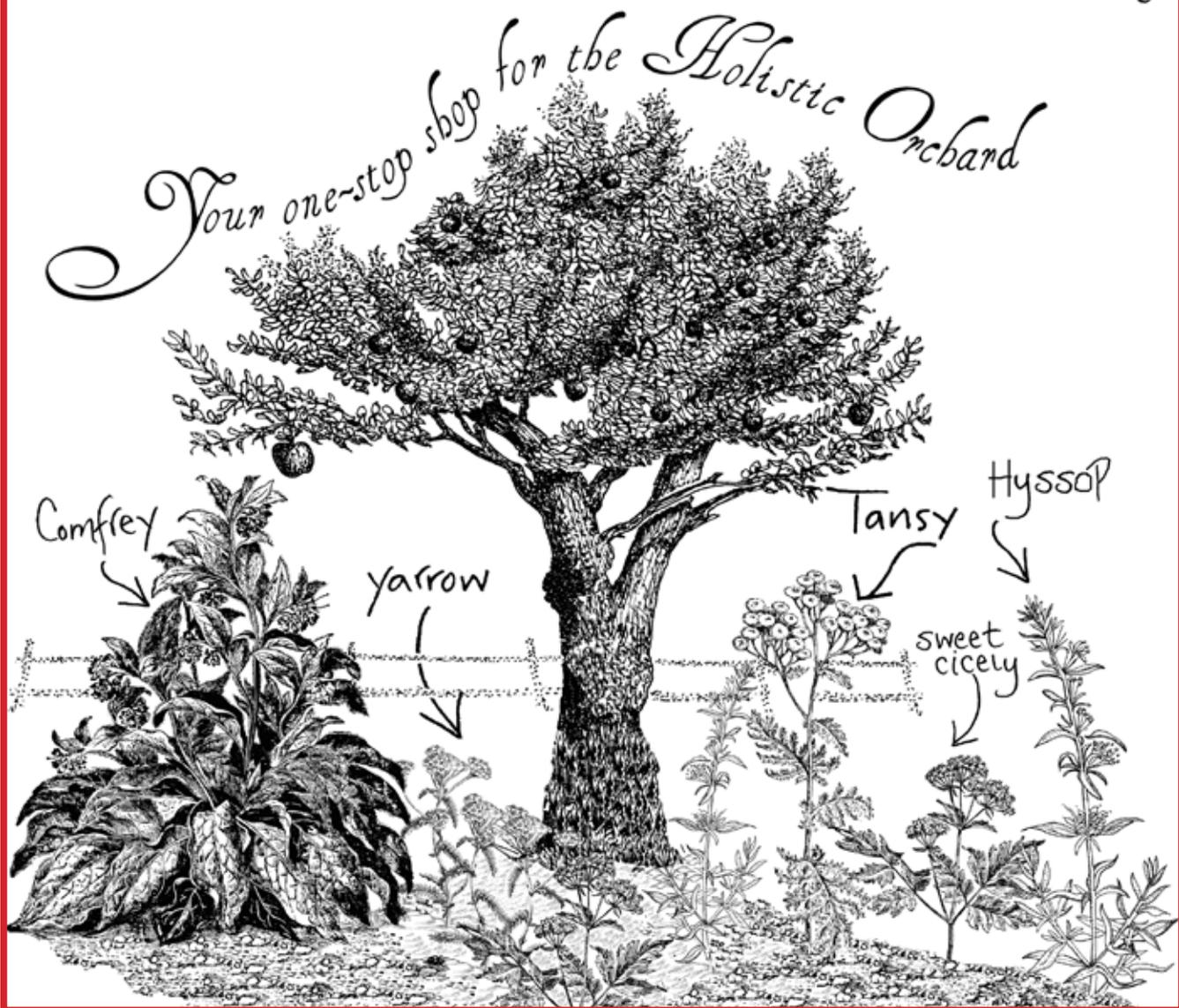
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Created Memories

—Sara Bowman

I walk slowly along the front of my garden, enjoying the plants. First the perennials: daisies, Echinacea, hollyhocks, a miniature rose, walking onions, and a new start of black-eyed Susans.

Each of these plants has a special connotation. The blooming hollyhocks in white and various shades of pink were started from seed my mother had given me. More than a thousand miles between us makes this extra meaningful. When some of us sisters helped Abigail clean flowerbeds and wash windows before their baby was born, we were sent home with daisy starts. Molly gave me many clumps of Echinacea, and I enjoy their mass effect. My aunt gave me the rosebush from her own garden soon after our first baby died. The delicate pink blossoms have poignant memories attached. The onions were from my mother-in-law, originally given to her by Aunt Orpha. My husband has always liked the cheery yellow blooms, so last fall I traded some of my started hollyhocks for black-eyed Susans.

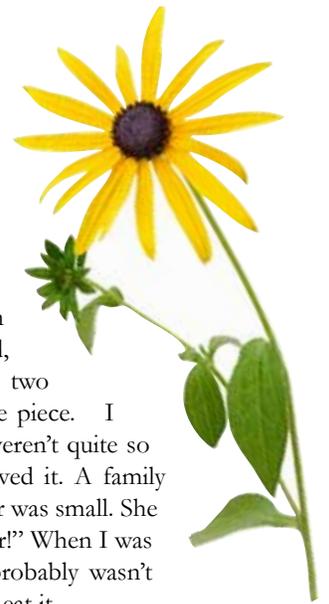
Next to the perennials are the compost bins, constructed by Timothy out of pallets, per my request.

After that is the asparagus. I can smile at asparagus now, but as a child, I abhorred it. In season, we ate it two times a day. I always had to take one piece. I usually made sure it was a tip; they weren't quite so disgusting. The rest of my family loved it. A family legend was born when my oldest sister was small. She said, "Let's have bear grease for dinner!" When I was 14, my mom finally decided that I probably wasn't going to like it and I no longer had to eat it.

I grow asparagus now since my family enjoys it. Our small patch needs to be expanded, for they too love it. I study the fern fronds of asparagus gone to seed, and smile. It's still not my favorite vegetable, but it does have lots of memories. The main reason it's in my garden? My mother. Unasked, she gifted my first starts.

As I look back down the row, my head swims with memories. Each garden, the world over, has those memories. Each garden, each plant, each gardener, is unique. We are all created by the Master Gardener to honor and glorify Him.

Sara, her husband Timothy, and their family live in Rocky Mount, Virginia.



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Book Reviews

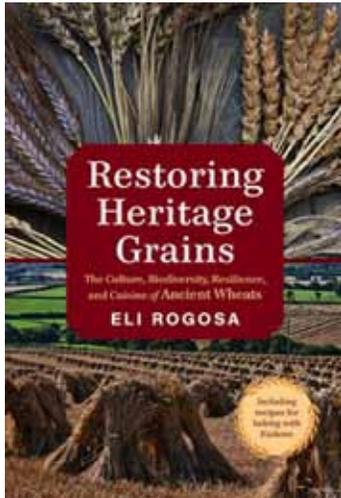
Restoring Heritage Grains: The Culture, Biodiversity, Resilience, and Cuisine of Ancient Wheats

By Eli Rogosa

272 pages with 16-page color inset

\$24.95 Softcover

Chelsea Green Publishing
White River Junction, VT



Reviewed by Tom Grissom

Farmer, seed saver, artisan baker, and New England adventurer, Eli Rogosa has combined her insatiable curiosity, passion for good food, and love for ancient cultures into a fascinating account of alternative farming and life-giving nutrition centered on the staff of life. This book discusses a complicated subject from a variety of perspectives (look at the title).

Raised in a home with kosher cooking traditions, suffering from gluten allergies, and certified as a biodynamic farmer, Rogosa moved to the Middle East 23 years ago to work for regional peace through organic farming. She soon discovered Palestinian, Israeli, and Jordanian farmers saving the seeds of landrace wheat varieties and her life changed forever. Today she operates the Heritage Grain Conservancy from her western Massachusetts farm where she trials landrace wheat from all over the world for domestication and adaptation to the northeastern United States. She sells baked goods at local farmers' markets and sells high-priced flour from landrace wheat.

Patiently and persuasively, this book explains the effect of industrialized farming on the evolution of Green Revolution

wheat production where variety selection is based on yield and agronomic consideration rather than nutrition, flavor, and native cuisines. Landrace, sometimes called a “farmer variety,” is a population of plants or animals that was developed over generations of human selection to be well adapted to its local environment.

Landrace wheat does not resemble modern wheat. Its terroir kernels grow on four-foot-tall spikes sown apart widely, its plants have 50% more leaf area in order to increase photosynthesis and an extensive root system that makes the plant more efficient in its use of micronutrients and soil moisture. Green Revolution wheat, bred for uniform height, consistent maturity, easy harvest, storage, transport, milling, baking, and shelf-life properties, thrives in a high N, herbicidal, disease-free cultivation, and is bred not to lodge or fall over.

Sections of the book dealing with gluten allergies and human celiac disease explain carefully how the high gluten levels in contemporary wheat are driven by the commercial requirements of food processing and baking interests, rather than by the nutritional needs and flavor preferences of consumers. Rogosa believes landrace grain husbandry is a way to dynamically reform industrial agriculture. This is accomplished through different systems of cultivation, saving and selecting seeds for genetically diverse landrace populations, and then placing these seeds into a community-based program of education, community ovens, and “taste of the land” seed history. Her motto is: Eat it to save it.

The book's topic is quite ambitious and its organization does not follow a simple story line. It combines cultural anthropology, genetics, botany, organic farming, and culinary arts into a message that does not follow clearly from one category to another. Readers will also find her citations difficult to follow since they depend heavily on academic journals in foreign countries and many quotes and excerpts from 19th century reports. In addition to the “notes” and “index” at the book's end, it would have benefited from a “glossary” explaining terms of genetics and plant breeding which are unfamiliar to the average reader.

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Still, the book is full of ideas for market farm owners looking for alternative crops and value-added products to improve farm income. There is a large chapter of recipes utilizing landrace flour and the section tracing cultural traditions by country in selecting landrace wheats is wonderful anthropology.

The book's author and associates are based in the Northeast and part of their motivation is to develop a comprehensive local agriculture in a region whose climate is somewhat hostile to small grain production. But for readers of *Farming Magazine* in all parts of the country, the book encourages farm families to raise landrace wheat, mill flour, and prepare baked goods incorporating better nutrition and improved flavor along with organic cultivation.

Permaculture for the Rest of Us:

Abundant Living on Less Than an Acre

By Jenni Blackmore

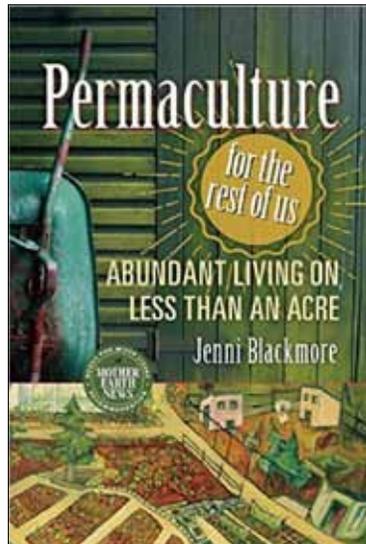
New Society Publishers

179 pages, \$19.95

Review by Stephanie Houser Fouse

Permaculture has always seemed like a big forbidding system to me. *Permaculture for the Rest of Us* by Jenni Blackmore, which opens almost like a memoir, makes permaculture seem attainable. Blackmore portrays it as a living, creative system, rather than a set of rules and designs.

Blackmore's introduction put me at ease. "I don't think it is possible to script a single, succinct statement to accurately describe permaculture," she writes. "Many have tried and indeed there are many fine words written about this system of sustainable



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living." She launches into a description of building a small sustainable farm in the harsh climate of a sea island in Nova Scotia. She uses her own trials and errors to illustrate the concepts of permaculture. She eventually developed her island to include small animals for food, gardens full of vegetables, and a "food forest" where she is able to grow some food in areas that were damaged by a hurricane. She is still experimenting and discusses new ideas and plans even up to the book's conclusion.

Blackmore wisely chooses to include the 12 principles of permaculture in one of the last chapters in the book. I was reassured after reading the list that many of us who have been farming sustainably for years have been intuitively practicing aspects of permaculture.

This book is very readable. I found myself smiling at the familiarity of farm life, as well as groaning at Blackmore's early miscalculations. The photos and illustrations are very helpful and bring credibility to the writing. Ultimately, she writes to inspire experimentation rather than adherence to a set of fixed principles. "This might well be the hidden reason why permaculture appeals to me so much," she concludes. "We are at heart all wonderfully creative individuals. Permaculture allows us to celebrate this."

The Lean Farm

By Ben Hartman

Chelsea Green Publishing

White River Junction, VT

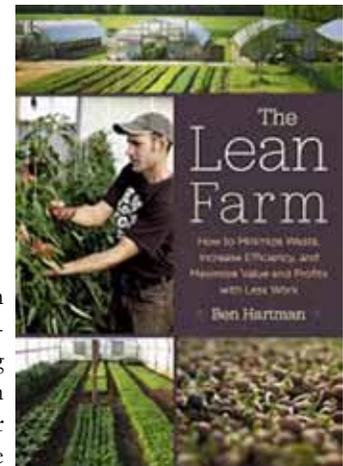
223 pages, \$29.95

Reviewed by Anna Raber

The Lean Farm is written by Ben Hartman, a small-scale farmer, operating Clay Bottom Farm with his wife Rachel and their workers. Before they were introduced to lean, they

were "making it, but workdays were long, leisure time short."

One of their customers, a lean practitioner, offered to come to their farm, watch them work, and talk about ways to "lean up." When Ben and Rachel toured their customer's



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business, they noticed that no matter what the task, the correct tool or supplies were always right where the employees needed them, and in the right amount. Their jobs were broken down into steps that were easily learned. Their bottom line was “What does the customer value?”

This book is the story of how the Hartmans used lean ideas on their micro farm to grow more food than they ever thought possible, and not by increasing acreage. The goals of Lean are to cut out waste and deliver value.

There are two sections to the book. Part I, (Lean Thinking on the Farm) and Part II, (Lean in an Agricultural Context). Part I explores lean principles, cites lean tools the Hartmans have implemented on their farm, and shows other farmers how to put them to use as well. In Chapter 4, (Ten Types of Farm Waste), we find that according to lean thinking, only three types of activities can ever occur on a farm:

Actions that add value.

Actions that do not add value, but are necessary.

Pure waste.

What are you doing on your farm that costs the customer more money, but does not add to the value of the product?

Chapter 6 discusses tools to root out waste. The Hartmans saw an incredible difference when they leaned up production and organized with these tools on their farm. Some things to consider are using the right size tools

and machinery, refraining from ordering more than needed, and precise seeding that targets crops to reach their peak when market prices are highest. Waste can also come from the management. Hartman writes “Wastes that originate in the management office—decision wastes—are every bit as destructive as production wastes.”

Chapter 10 projects ten case studies of applied thinking on the Hartmans’ micro farm. Ben writes, “We keep our operation small and profitable—by spending a lot of time deciding what *not* to do.”

Part II offers specific lean tips for new farmers and then discusses the limits of lean, as well as how lean can be used for more than profit. Anyone on any type of farm should find ideas in these pages worth implementing in their own operations.

Chapter 12 touches on lean overreached—such as confining animals for greater production per area, or using RBST for faster weight gain. Cutting costs can go too far, resulting in a farm that does not honor the living system of a farm.

Lean is not all about profit. Chapter 13 has words by Wendell Berry that sum it up perfectly: “The exploiter’s goal is money, profit; the nurturer’s goal is health---...” Not only will lean improve the health and profit of your farm, it is a step toward solving the problems we have in our food system today. 



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By George, He Sure Was Good with Wood

Anyone interested not only in carpentry but in craftsmanship of any kind that requires great integrity would be enthralled by George Nakashima's beautifully illustrated memoir *The Soul of a Tree* (1981). In Gene Logsdon's own delightful autobiography, *A Sanctuary of Trees* (2012), published near the end of his life, he wrote:

"If the only thing I accomplished with this book were to persuade more people to read Nakashima's 1981 classic . . . I would consider my effort well repaid. Not only did he become one of the most respected woodworkers in the world, but he saw in the woodland environment where he chose to live and work the necessary foundation for environmental and economic stability."

Nakashima, who died in 1990 in his mid-eighties, had a profoundly spiritual nature wedded to a radically primitive sensibility. So while his contemporaries were eager to fashion furniture out of stainless steel, Formica, or molded plastic, he remained convinced that none of these modern materials were anywhere near as good as solid wood. As he put it: "Solid wood moves, breathes, and lives." That's why he couldn't even stomach the use of veneer. And having an affection for trees, he fortuitously found a sylvan tract to call his own where he artfully built his own house and workshop. For a while during construction, he and his wife lived in a tent—much as my wife and I once did before we built our log cabin. Breaking ground in the spring, he was able to get a roof over his head late in the fall. In *The Soul of a Tree* he writes:

"At no time did we have more than fifty dollars in cash, but by scrounging materials, gathering stones off the property, digging the foundation by hand, and working evenings and weekends, I was able to build a rough structure by Thanksgiving. At one point we gave a party for friends to help me dig a pit for the septic tank. Our first winter in the house was bitterly cold, and the faucet froze in the kitchen. We built, quite literally, on the principle of laying stone upon stone. We had considerable stone on our land, and it was simply a question of hauling it by wheelbarrow to the building site."

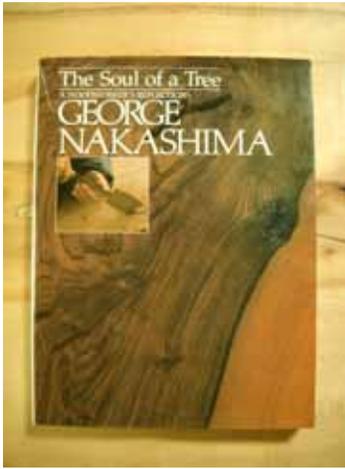
He goes on to say:

"With the assistance of a helper, we did all the electrical work and plumbing in addition to the general construction. . . . By the time the house was finished it was paid for. There was no thought of a mortgage or loans." When I showed this passage to my wife she smiled and said: "Sounds familiar, doesn't it!"

He put a lot of thought into what he did:

"Our property enabled us to test my concepts of decentralization, intermediate technology and living off the land." The productive monastic-style compound he created remained for him and his family "the core of our existence . . . our redoubt, our last stand against mediocrity. . . . It was nice to go it alone, to forge a life in the wilderness, to fight against commercialism and bigness."

Even as he became famous for his distinctive chairs and tables, he continued to be wary of the world. As he puts it: "In



a personal way my family and I have gone underground, since we have little relationship to contemporary mores, institutions, economy or systems. Ours is a search for pure truth in the most realistic of ways—the making of things. There was no other way for me but to go alone, secure with my family, placing stone upon stone, seeking kinship with each piece of wood, eventually creating an inward mood of space, then bit by bit finding peace and joy in shaping timber into objects of utility and perhaps, when nature smiles, beauty."

It was natural for him to feel like an outsider in this country, for although he was born in America—he grew up in Spokane, WA—he

was sent to a concentration camp in Idaho during World War II simply because of his Japanese ancestry. With some bitterness he recalls: "Even Eskimos with only a small percentage of Japanese blood were sent to the Western desert to die."

Something of a frustrated architect, he decided to become a furniture maker instead because it gave him much more control over the final product. As he says, it was "something that I could coordinate from beginning to end." Preferring hand tools over power equipment for final finishing and for executing the most crucial joinery, he used traditional Japanese saws, chisels, and planes. He declared: "A good workman can achieve perfect surface work with a hand plane alone." That's why he didn't believe in using sandpaper. No polyurethane went on his furniture either. He liked the hand-rubbed beauty of old-fashioned tung oil.

It's no surprise then that he was largely unimpressed by the technological achievements of the past 500 years. Like John Ruskin, William Morris, Henry Adams, and Lewis Mumford, he thought the High Middle Ages was one of the great moments in the history of civilization. He says:

"The architecture of 13th century France always impressed me as a demonstration of the peak of human spirit. I visited Chartres many times . . . marveling at the delicacy of its design and the glory of its glass. . . . That so much greatness could have been achieved by the citizenry of the small town of Chartres staggers the imagination. . . . Mont-Saint-Michel, built and rebuilt from the 13th through the 15th centuries, also represented for me a glory that our present age with all its vast technology cannot equal."

He cast an acutely critical eye on contemporary culture:

"With a prodigious drive we have built the first true megalopolis, but we have produced so little of any intrinsic value. There is not a single monument in recent centuries to express any sort of transcending human will or soul. Taken as whole, we have the poorest assemblage of architecture in the history of man, without a single building of greatness."

Even the work of Frank Lloyd Wright didn't make the grade with him:

"... Although the forms used were interesting and the results were causing a certain excitement in the architectural world...I found the structure in the bones of the building somehow inadequate...and the workmanship shoddy."

What did impress him were the old stone houses and barns of eastern Pennsylvania, near where he founded his homestead in Bucks County. Structures such of these, he said, "represent early

American architecture at its best. The stonework of the English Quakers was outstanding, the walls still straight and true, free of cracks, after roughly three centuries. The roof rafters of hemlock were often tapered. The timbers of oak, chestnut and even at times of walnut, display the same joinery as seen in furniture.”

He was a man of high standards, no doubt about that. He went so far as to think that his woods should look better than it looked, and set about trying to tidy it up. Thus he writes: “A jungle can be made into an area of beauty with a certain amount of work. . . . Caring for this space is a lifetime project. We clean out the dead brush and unpleasant undergrowth. . . . It is a great pleasure to spend several hours in the woods, putting nature’s house in order. . . . Even the deer seem to enjoy the open spaces we make. . . . When large branches split or break off, they make the woods unsightly and create dangerous situations. Over the years I’ve pulled many of these dead, split branches off of the trunks.”

He then goes on to tell a story I could readily visualize, having had much the same sort of mishap:

“Once I was pulling a fairly large branch and it suddenly gave way, knocking me breathless to the ground. As it fell, two long shards of wood broke off, each 15 to 20 inches long and as sharp as a spear. I was wearing heavy rubber boots with leather tops. One of the shards pierced one boot’s heel, while the other slashed through it. Lying on the ground, I waited for the pain to start, for it seemed as if I’d been crucified. But as my senses returned, I realized the wood had gone through the boot, but not my foot: all I had were scrapes on my sole and heel. Nature is compassionate.”

Ultimately he wanted to preserve this 25-acre forest, passing it on to the next generation for safekeeping, much as we wish to do with our own little woodland patch.

In designing his one-of-a-kind tables, he was always searching for grains with rich textures. Consequently his storehouse was stuffed with different kinds of timber from all over the world: Persian walnut, English oak, East Indian rosewood—to name just a few—as well as these fabulous slabs cut from redwood roots. Ungainly logs of little or no value as commercial-grade lumber—logs with crotches, burls, knots, rot, windshake, or whatnot—he prized most highly, for there he found “truly extravagant figuring.” He wanted to rescue such misfits from the scrap heap, and took great pains to reveal their splendor to the world. He says:

“There is drama in the opening of a log—to uncover for the first time the beauty in the bole, or trunk, of a tree hidden for centuries, waiting to be given this second life. There are fine surprises, but also disappointments.” He really dug sawing into the roots too. He says: “Some of the finest, most interesting grains are found underground, in the massive roots of trees . . . with figures as subtle and sublime as a Chinese ink painting.” He wasn’t bothered by imperfections in the wood and would incorporate them into his work. “I often find that timber with the most character is from trees past their prime, sometimes even from

trees dead a short while, before decay has set in. . . . There may be a large hole where decay has started and the tree has healed itself, a positive statement of life which makes an extraordinary design expression.”

If there was a wide split, he would employ as a brace one of his favorite bits of joinery: a butterfly inlay. He also used this butterfly key to join two large slabs that were carefully “book-matched”—which he defined as “two successive boards from the same log, laid side by side like the double-spread pages of an open book.” He made a magnificent dining table for one of the Rockefellers out of two big book-matched slabs of East Indian laurel.

George spent many hours with his trusty sawyer making sure the logs he’d selected were cut to his liking. “Few words are spoken but thickness, the direction of the cut, the positioning of the log—all must be decided with precision. . . . Cutting logs entails great responsibility, for we are dealing with a fallen majesty. There are no formulas, no guidelines, but only experience, instinct

and a contact with the divine.”

I would’ve loved to have met this man, and had I known anything about him when my wife and I lived in New Jersey in the early 1980s, I’d have made a beeline to his studio in New Hope, which was

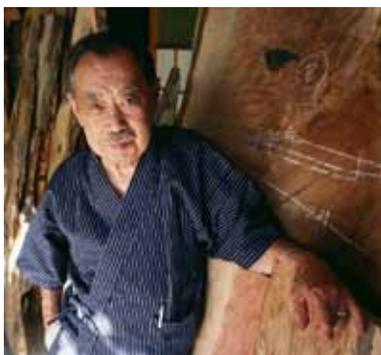


less than an hour’s drive away from us. In fact, in June of ’85 when a friend and I took a small boat a good ways down the Delaware River, we ended up in Lambertville—a town directly across the river from New Hope. Had I only known! Anyway, there I was in New Brunswick—not more than 40 miles from New Hope—making a toy cabin out of sticks in preparation for the real thing, while Nakashima was in his last years crafting masterpieces. The good news is that his workshop is still a thriving place, run by his daughter Mira (see www.nakashimawoodworker.com). So I still have some hope that one day I’ll make it to New Hope. But one can also view a sampling of his work simply by googling **george nakashima furniture** and clicking on **images**. Here you’ll see quite a collection of his creations to inspire your next woodworking project. Two “free edge” tables I’m working on now have taken a cue from his basic principles.

Near the end of his memoir, he says:

“The deep, rich movements which produced the Dipylon vase, the Doric column, the Chartres cathedral, the Katsura Detached Palace, all were significant in their youthful vigor and simple creativity. May we return to that spirit. It is not man’s prerogative to destroy himself.”

What he tirelessly sought I too seek: “small points of glowing truth.” ✍️



Dave Schultz lives on a farm near Creston, Ohio. He writes poetry and teaches English at Lorain Community College.



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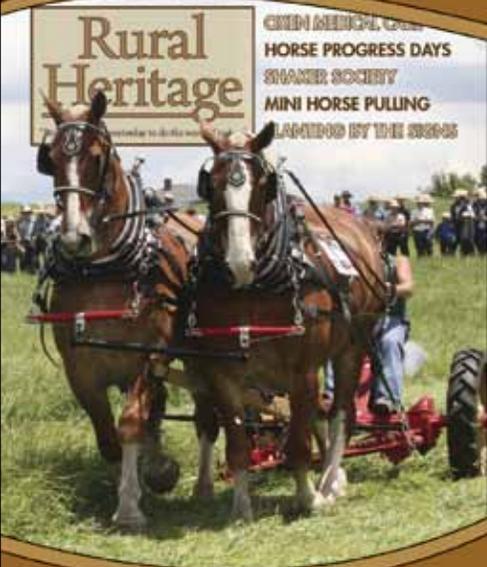
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Compaction

In the absence of knowledge we depend on tradition, but contempt of tradition is an absence of knowledge.

With a few minutes to rest, I was trying to think it through to see if I got it right.

So I speed off to a task, completely unprepared to deal with the day-to-day responsibilities and decisions.

I don't really have an explanation for why I'm doing a certain thing a certain way.

It's just the way I was taught.

I don't have to explain it, I don't have to know why.

Why should I question and wonder why?

In the absence of knowledge I depend on tradition.

The horses lurched forward and I grunt and strain, trying to force the lever back another notch. My elbow aches and it feels as if my shoulder were partially wrenched from its socket. The plowshare scrapes along at an odd angle. Sometimes it dips down three-four inches into the soil. Other times its scant purchase leaves a strip of vegetation standing along the inside edge of the furrow.

It had rained over an inch the day before and the plowshare was almost new. I could think of only one other circumstance to blame: compaction.

This farm was cash-cropped in the no-till fashion since times immemorial. When I first sank a plowshare into the beautiful, weed-free expanse, I found compaction. It was just something to deal with and I felt up to the challenge. My goal was to combat the hardpan with the plow and cover crops. Mostly ryegrass and radish mixtures. Sometimes I think it is helping. But the process is slow and my best weapon seems to be a brand-new plowshare.

This particular field had behaved surprisingly well, considering I was plowing it for my first time ever. Perhaps the five years of continuous timothy, alfalfa, and clover had made a difference.

This last small area beats everything I've experienced to date. The soil is unusually heavy and clay-like for this farm. I sift through the brittle layers of crumbled soil and marvel. Even the roots I unearth are flat. Smashed flat and branching out horizontally instead of boring down through the soil as they should.

In my desk I have a sheet of paper recently issued by the USDA. It lists the various tillage practices and the unique advantages of each. Among the 12 beneficial points granted to the no-till practice, I find two eloquent words: DECREASES COMPACTION.

I ponder this as I pick through the clumps of shale-like soil. Each piece I break apart is a small revelation.

This one holds a healthy taproot. It stretches a good three inches straight down through the soil. Fine white hairs bristle from the short length. The two halves of the clod reveal its profound secret: The root gained this depth by following an earthworm's tunnel!

And I consider the second line of my meditation.

What is tradition?

A tradition cannot be made by a person saying, "This is my opinion," nor by a scientific thesis stating, "These are the facts."

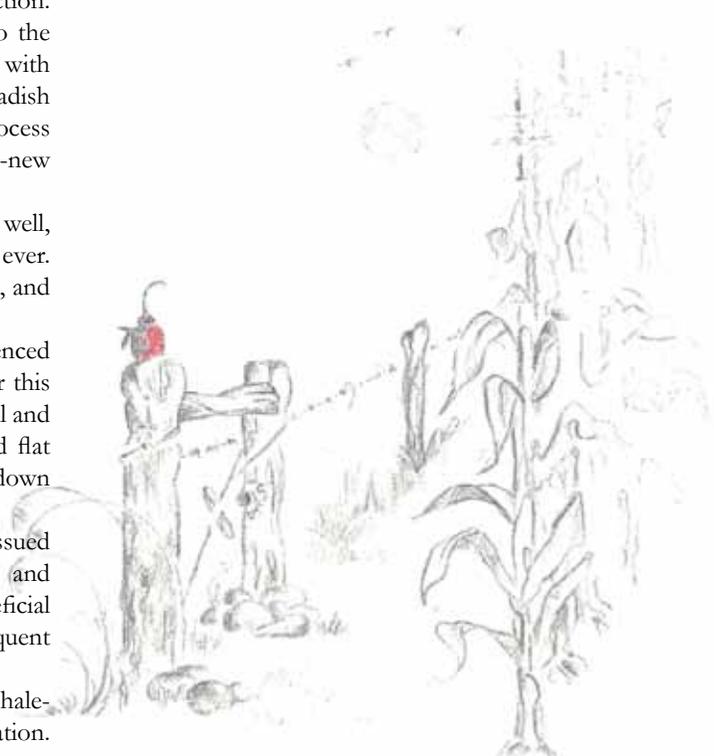
Traditions are the tried and proven practices of the many who have gone before. Traditions are the wisdom of age bequeathed to the vigor of youth. I do not suggest that we limit ourselves to traditions, but they should be a safe platform to work from. A foundation of stability while we try to sort through all the conflicting information.

Perhaps I didn't help the biological life by ripping through the soil and disturbing the microbial filaments.

Perhaps I released a wealth of precious carbon, which had built up over the past 30 years. But if the soil is dead after decades of neglect, I doubt if my traditional ignorance will damage it further.

For I do maintain—that contempt of tradition is an absence of knowledge. 🐛

Noah Wenger lives and farms near Hillsboro, Ohio.



The Best Road Map to Organic Success is Experience

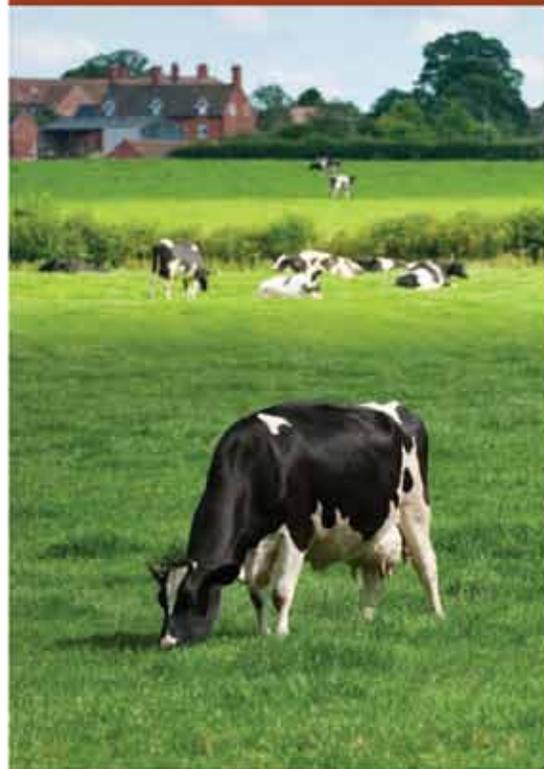
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