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Week 43 of 52: Gardening and Livestock

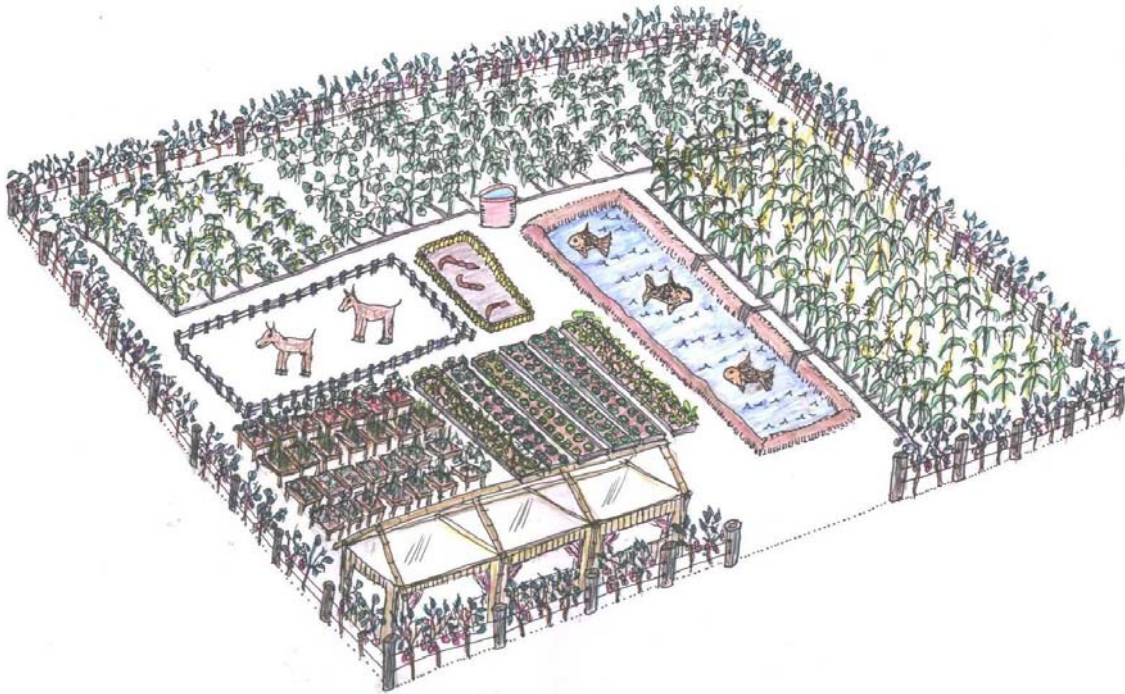
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On May 4, 2012 @ 12:47 pm

Category: 52 Weeks to Preparedness

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Our survival homesteads will be our safe havens to protect us and help us thrive. Consequently, living through a long-term emergency will require our attention on many matters. Therefore, we want our land to work for us in the most productive manner possible.



The image above is a good example of a micro farm and should give you a good indication of how to make the most use out of the land you have. You want to plan on creating a relationship between your livestock and your gardens for the most efficient, healthy and cost-effective homestead. This is particularly important in a post-disaster world. The more food you can produce for yourself, the better your chances of survival in a long-term situation.

Especially on a smaller homestead, [micro-livestock](#) ^[1] can be a vital element. The smaller animals, such as chickens, goats, ducks and rabbits, are a great addition because they require less space, less care and less food, but can still provide your family with meat, dairy and eggs. Manure from the livestock can be added as a rich fertilizer for your gardens. Bloodmeal and bonemeal can both be used to amend the soil, and can also be added to the [compost pile](#) ^[2]. My favorite type of gardening is sheet mulching, or composting in place. This allows the compost to slowly decompose and be present for the plants that have been planted on top.

Micro-livestock can also make helpful farmhands: you can press them into duty and use them to help clear areas of weeds, roots or cover crops; all the while fertilizing the land at the same time.

When planning your garden, it's important to remember your furred and feathered friends. Be sure to stock up on seeds that will provide food for them as well. Poultry are fond of millet,

sunflower seeds, certain types of corn and grains, sorghum and of course, left over garden clippings. If they are allowed to free-range they will eat grass, weeds, and wild seeds, as well as worms and insects. [Click here](#)^[3] to learn more about growing your own poultry food. Larger animals like goats are grazers, and rabbits thoroughly enjoy the scraps from your garden.

The most vital element for your garden is, of course, a selection of reliable heritage seeds. Stay away from anything GMO (Genetically Modified), as you won't be able to [save seeds for following years](#)^[4] from these plants. When choosing your seeds, look for the most nutritional value in the least amount of garden space. The top 25 seeds to have for human consumption as well as their nutritional information can be viewed [here](#)^[5]. Further consider planting some perennial vegetables that come back year after year. This will make less work for you in the long run. Berry varieties, asparagus, Jerusalem artichokes, horseradish, garlic, perennial onions, and herbs of both culinary and [medicinal](#)^[6].

Below are a list of easy to grow vegetable and fruit varieties that will be good seeds to begin practicing your gardening skills with. They are not only easy to grow, but will also provide lots of nutrition for your family.

- Nut/Fruit Trees – To learn more about essential nut and fruit trees for a survival homestead, [click here](#)^[7].
- Squash/Zucchini
- Berries – Blackberries, strawberries, raspberries, etc.
- Grapes
- Peas/Beans
- Kale
- Broccoli
- Peppers
- Tomatoes
- Cucumbers
- Lettuce
- Pumpkin

Seeds are the key to long-term survival, so it is vital that you carefully choose and collect seeds to be [stored properly](#)^[8] and protected from the elements.

For long-term sustainability, learn to understand the natural cycles of your small farm. The waste products from both plants and animals can be used to nourish the soil, which in turn helps the garden flourish, which in its own turn, feeds the animals. Understanding this symbiotic relationship can allow you to work smarter, not harder. Finding ways to use what most would consider waste is the ultimate form of recycling. Embrace the old ways of farming to enhance your long-term sustainability.

To conclude, I want to emphasize how important it is to practice your gardening skills before you need to rely on them. Learning from master gardeners, gardening groups or from those with more experience can help the learning curve we all seem to experience when starting something new. Marjory Wildcraft has created a DVD series on how to [Grow Your Own Groceries](#)^[9]. In the series, she shares all that she knows about gardening, companion planting, water catchment systems, as well as some handy tips she has learned along the way. This would be a great way for you to learn from the convenience of your own home.

Preps to Buy:

- Books or dvds on homesteading, gardening, permaculture and animal husbandry
- Heirloom or non-gmo seeds
- Garden tools
- Containers for long-term storage of seeds

Action Items:

1. Research the available resources in your area. Are there plants growing wild that would be good grazing foods for your animals? Is there an abundance of organic material for compost?
2. Learn about composting and how to reuse plant waste.
3. Consider taking a vegetable gardening course at a local nursery, community center or gardening club.

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URL to article: http://readynutrition.com/resources/week-43-of-52-gardening-and-livestock_04052012/

URLs in this post:

[1] micro-livestock: http://readynutrition.com/resources/how-micro-livestock-can-be-used-for-suburban-and-rural-sustainability_08042011/

[2] compost pile: http://readynutrition.com/resources/composting-feeds-the-earth_03112009/

[3] Click here: <http://www.motherearthnews.com/Sustainable-Farming/Grow-Poultry-Food-What-Chickens-Eat.aspx>

[4] save seeds for following years: http://readynutrition.com/resources/seed-collecting_12102009/

[5] here: http://readynutrition.com/resources/survival-gardens-25-seeds-you-need_05112009/

[6] medicinal: http://readynutrition.com/resources/survival-food-series-medicinal-plants-for-the-survival-garden_04012010/

[7] click here: http://readynutrition.com/resources/survival-food-series-essential-trees-bushes-and-berries_18122009/

[8] stored properly: http://readynutrition.com/resources/securing-long-term-survival-with-seeds_30122009/

[9] Grow Your Own Groceries: <http://www.growyourowngroceries.com/indexb.php>

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