



Michigan Organic Connections

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A Message from the Chair

Welcome friends to another newsletter. If you are a farmer or gardener, we know as you do that the busiest time of year is underway and we thank you for taking the time to check in with us to see what is new. We have lots of news to share. Firstly, we need to bid farewell and good luck to three departing board members. Emily Shettler, who was elected to the board in 2016, brought experience with an organic food company as a procurement specialist with Sunopta. She also runs a cash crop farm with her husband and children of which more than half of the acreage is certified organic. Julie Studier's experience was in the transition of an orchard to organic production. She and her husband also added two acres of organic vegetables and one of organic blueberries to their orchard enterprise. With this variety of organic produce Julie shared a unique view of the world of organic transitioning ever since she joined the board in 2014. And finally Emily Nicholls who (before joining the MOFFA board in 2016) had experience growing organic produce at all four points of the compass in North America and spent seven years as the farm manager of Giving



Tree Farm in Lansing. Emily was then elected chair in 2018 and she, as well as our other departing members, helped in the crafting of our current vision statement. For the betterment and enrichment of family these three organic farmers have had to make the difficult decision to leave our board. They had brought years of experience in their respective roles and their influence will be missed. But change is in the nature of a self-sustaining system, and so we would also like to welcome our new board member, Tony Browne. A resident of the Lansing area, Tony brings his experience as an urban farmer (vending produce at several markets) and an interest in the rare, unique, and nutritious plants to be found in our world. I, too, was asked to take a different role in our organization and was invited to be the chair, which I gladly accepted. I look forward to an exciting year of activities and challenges. We are grateful for all our board members, past and present, as we all take a role in promoting organic agriculture.

We are planning numerous events this year where you will be able to participate in different aspects of the organics community. Indeed one has already taken place, 5% Day with Whole Foods (see below). This fundraising event was a success and we only have you, our members, farmers, and Facebook followers, to thank for making it so. As the spring flowers reach their final peak we are already thinking of this summer's farm tours. We are presenting four this year beginning in June at Crane Dance of Middleville. August will be a very busy month with three farm tours starting with Nature and Nurture of Dexter and a tour John Biernbaum's compostponics and vermicomposting operations at MSU the following weekend. Our final tour, also in August, will take participants to Plymouth Orchards and Gateway Farm of Plymouth. You will learn more about each of the tours below, including dates and times. Please consider taking some time out of your schedule to join us at one. The farm tour program presents a wonderful opportunity to learn, be inspired, and network with the organic community of Michigan. You will also have the opportunity to join or renew your membership in MOFFA.

Our theme for this newsletter is Homesteading, a subject near and dear to the organic movement. The ideas and principles have changed little over the years and can still be defined as a home and group of people working to support themselves off the land by growing and preserving their own food and producing articles for use and/or sale. In recent years the idea of urban homesteading has grown. The two may not seem to immediately go together but the classical literature on the subject has always emphasized the ability to be self sustaining on minimal land. John Seymour's book *Self-Sufficiency* introduces many of the skills necessary to self-sufficient homesteading and details a plan on one acre of land. William Cobbett (1763-1835), an English farmer and member of parliament, was concerned with the poverty he saw in the farm laborers of England and published pamphlets meant to bring them closer to a self sufficiency they lacked with little property of their own. In these writings he included the use of public grazing lands and in a way foreshadowed the use of vacant city lots for urban gardening on this side of the pond and the 18th century. Many of the articles included in this newsletter will give you an idea of how homesteading is defined and carried out today. So if the location of traditional homesteading has changed I believe we can say the definition has expanded for the better.

Again, thank you for joining us for this break from the numerous chores and events that the start of a new season brings. May the coming year be successful for you all.

—Jessie Smith

Jessie Smith was raised on her family's organic farm in Barry County, Michigan. She attended Michigan State University and completed a Bachelors of Science in Crop and Soil Sciences and a Masters in Entomology, where she studied nematode community structure under Dr. George Bird. After working on the family farm for 20 years, she has moved to Indiana where she continues to raise chickens and garden organically. Her close ties to Michigan keep her an active member of MOFFA. She was elected Chair of MOFFA's Board of Directors in April, 2019.

MOFFA 2018 Annual Report

Each year the Chairperson of the Board of Directors prepares an annual report to share with the Board and membership. The purpose of this report is to document and review accomplishments and growth while providing inspiration for the next year of activity.

Perspective and Context

2018 marked 26 years since the founding of the Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance as a 501(3)(c) non-profit, statewide organization. We continued to build on our long-standing commitment to education and outreach in pursuit of our mission

of “Promoting organic agriculture and the development and support of food systems that revitalize and sustain local communities.” MOFFA members can be very proud of their organization as a valuable contributor to the long term growth of healthy soils, healthy crops and livestock, and healthy people.

This was a year of looking inward, with significant time at several in-person and conference call meetings spent on discussing our collective values, priorities, and vision. We greatly appreciated Julia Darnton from MSUE traveling to the meeting to facilitate a long discussion, a culmination of two years of brainstorming and intermittent work from all board members. We came to a consensus on several key values that we all, as an organization and as individuals, hold dear to our hearts: **environment, community, cooperation, health, inclusiveness, and education.** Each of those values is intrinsic to our organization. We discussed these values and more, including the word “organic” and its continued shifting political economy. The statement we have settled on remains, like much in life, both imperfect and fully functional. It has been a reminder to all of us why we volunteer our time to discover, share, and promote an agricultural system we believe in.

Board of Directors

The [Board of Directors](#) maintained its core strength during 2018. Continuing members included: John Biernbaum (2009), Dan Bewersdorff (2015), John Edgerton (2017), John Hooper (2009), Amy Newday



The Board in July: (back row) Nicholls, Biernbaum, Rossman, Terrill, Bewersdorff, Edgerton, Hooper; (front row) Shettler, Newday, Smith

(2016), Emily Nicholls (2016), Dan Rossman (2015), Emily Shettler (2016), Jessie Smith (2017), Julia Studier (2014), and Dane Terrill (2012). The board continues to be the sustaining force in the organization. The officers for 2018 were Emily Nicholls, Chair; Jessie Smith, Vice-Chair; Dane Terrill, Treasurer; and John Hooper, Secretary. Our goal is

to keep the Board at a minimum of 12 to 15 members and to have improved representation from each of the geographic regions of Michigan.

At its Annual Meeting in April, the board adopted a document covering the position descriptions and responsibilities for board members, officers, committees, and administrative staff. The hope is that having a living document addressing the expectations for each role will make for smooth and effective functioning in the future. This document is available upon request to any member of MOFFA.

Membership

Membership numbers fell slightly in 2018 to 118, eight members less than in 2017. The membership included 62 individual or family memberships (\$40 per year), 21 small business memberships (\$60), 7 larger business memberships (\$100), and three students or persons with limited resources (\$20). We added two more life members in 2018, for a total of seven. Total membership revenue was \$6,080 in dues with an additional \$480 in donations members included when paying their dues, for a total of \$6,560.

Board Meetings

To facilitate involvement of members from across the state, the Board of Directors uses a combination of in-person and conference call meetings. We have established a schedule of eight meetings per year with three in-person and five conference phone calls. The Annual Meeting is held in the Lansing area during April. For the July in-person meeting we included a social component, enjoying a meal together in the afternoon. A [schedule of meetings](#) for 2019 is available on our website, and we invite members to join us for any meeting.

Organic Connections Newsletter

The quarterly [Michigan Organic Connections](#) newsletter continues to be a core method of connecting and reaching our membership and many more organic supporters. Leah Smith became the editor beginning with the May issue, and has contributed many hours and much thought toward improving the newsletter’s content and reach. In 2018, we continued and were relatively successful at attracting articles from experts and thinkers outside the MOFFA board. We continue to request contributions from members and others. The complete archive of the newsletter from 1992 through 2017 was made available on our website this year. At the end of the year, the newsletter was reaching 1,563 email addresses.

Website

The [website](#) has continued to grow into a reliable source of information about organic farming and gardening, local food and business related events, and announcements. Historical aspects including past newsletters and annual reports are available. Information about educational and employment opportunities and land available for organic production is maintained up to date for the community.

Publications

MOFFA published an updated paper version of the online Farm Guide in 2018. At the end of the year, the guide listed 151 farms all over the state, 98 of which were certified organic. [The Organic Movement in Michigan](#), published by MOFFA in 2017, along with the paper version of the [Farm Guide](#), are available for purchase through the website, and royalties from these publications provide a small but consistent source of revenue. We continue to add to our collection of [fact sheets](#), which are available on the website free of charge.

Conferences and Meetings Attended

Michigan is fortunate to have a diverse and distributed array of organizations that support ecological and local farming initiatives and development of beginning farmers. While distributed systems are a hallmark of sustainability, to be more effective the organizations also need to be networked and responsive to each other. To that end, a standing MOFFA goal has been to be a trusted collaborator and partner that encourages sharing of information. In 2018 we continued to participate in the diversity of educational activities in Michigan where we could share organic ethics and methods. These conferences include:

- Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference (January)
- Michigan Family Farms Conference (February)
- Organic Farmers of Michigan Field Day (September)
- Michigan Good Food Summit (October)

An important contribution of MOFFA at these conferences is providing friendly conversation and answers to questions about organic farming and gardening and certification methods. A wide range of books is also made available to stimulate learning and discussion. In 2018 book sales totaled \$2,290. Our thanks to Board member John Hooper who

most often is the friendly face that conference participants greet at the MOFFA table.

Education Programs

In 2015 the previously recognized “signature” Michigan Organic Conference event was



reconfigured to the “[Organic Intensives](#)” (OI). The OI was modeled after the successful MOSES Organic University with the goal to allow more in-depth presentation and discussion of a smaller range of topics. In 2018 the fourth annual Organic Intensives was held on January 6th on the MSU campus. The topics included:

- Diverse Grain Options for Farms and Homesteads
- Organic Transplant Production: Secure a Stellar Season with Successful Starts
- Small to Medium Scale Livestock for the Integrated Farm

The OI is a project and event that most all of the Board of Directors work on together. It requires advance discussion and selection of topics and speakers. One goal has been to select a range of topics that will interest all of our members: — large scale farmers and businesses, medium scale diversified farmers, smaller scale urban and homesteading farmers, and gardeners, and consumers of organic food. Participants provided overwhelmingly positive comments and reviews of the 2018 event and speakers.

Farm Tours

In 2018, MOFFA organized three farm tours in collaboration with the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Alliance, which currently lists over 30 tours in Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and Michigan in its annual brochure. Participants gathered at Westwind Milling in July (with a lovely farm lunch as part of the tour), Plymouth Orchards in August, and the Zilke Vegetable Farm in September. We plan to continue the farm tours in 2019 with four to six events in different parts of the state.

Policy Efforts

MOFFA is active as a member of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC). Julia Christianson (in her role as a MOFFA member and volunteer Chair of the Policy Committee) is the primary contact who participates in the calls and keeps the Board informed of developments with the organization. The integrity of the organic label continues to be questioned because of the reticence of the USDA National Organic Program to adopt the recommendations of the National Organic Standards Board, its lackadaisical enforcement of existing regulations, especially in the area of dairy and poultry operations and hydroponic production, and its failure to identify and reject large shipments of grain from overseas which are falsely labeled as organic. MOFFA supports the **Real Organic Project**, the **Organic Farmers Association**, and other organizations which are working to hold the NOP to its legislatively mandated function.

Financials

In 2018, we began to consider our sponsors—previously focused solely on Organic Intensives—as contributing to the support of not just OI but all of our programs. We would like to recognize the support of the following organizations in 2018:

North Central SARE
 Bay Shore Sales
 Herbruck's
 Blue River Hybrids
 Everbest Organics
 SunOpta
 George and Anne Bird

MSU CRFS
 GreenStone Farm Credit Services
 Crop Services International
 Growth Products
 Grice Farms
 Ruesink Organic Farms
 The Fertrell Co.
 USDA/NRCS
 Organic Valley

Total revenue for the year was \$24,423 on a cash basis, which was 8% less than budgeted, largely because we were not able to do an educational event in Detroit in the fall, as we had hoped. Total expenditures were \$24,456 (18% below budget) resulting in a net loss of \$33 for the year.

Emerging Priorities for 2019

Priorities for 2019 include:

- Continue the Organic Intensives program with a date of January 12, 2019 at the Plant and Soils Sciences Building at MSU
- Consider possible regional Organic Intensive type events on other dates and at other locations
- Maintain and increase membership and membership involvement
- Add at least three new members to the board of directors
- Four to six farm tours arranged and publicized in partnership with OEFFA

Respectfully Submitted by Emily Nicholls, Chair

Whole Foods Invests in MOFFA

In mid-March we received an email from the Midwest headquarters of Whole Foods to let us know that they would be devoting 5% of the proceeds from their sales on April 18th to local organizations whose mission relates to organic farming, and in Michigan they chose MOFFA. We are grateful for this unexpected source of funding which will allow us to bring in more nationally-known presenters for

Organic Intensives, as well as update our website and display materials, which we hope will help us to connect with more people across the state who share our values. Thanks, Whole Foods!



Homesteading in a Changing Climate

by Maynard Kaufman

It was surely a prescient decision by the board of MOFFA and the editor of its newsletter to focus on

homesteading in this issue. This little essay will explain why homesteading, which can be defined as

living in a household where the goods consumed are also produced, is important in our time. On a more general level, homesteading is thus an aspect of the agrarian ethos as it tries to avoid dependence on goods produced with industrial methods. The leading agrarian thinker and writer in this country, Wendell Berry, emphasizes that the small farm should raise food for use in the household first and then also for the market. Since the word "homesteading" was popularized by the Homesteading Act of 1862, which offered land on the Great Plains to people who settled on it, homesteading was considered a rural activity, although it could also be practiced in towns or cities. The August 2018 issue of [Acres USA: The Voice of Eco-Agriculture](#) was devoted to homesteading and included a feature article on "Urban Homesteading."

Different socio-economic conditions have provided different incentives for homesteading. After the country was settled and most people lived in cities, the automobile opened the possibility of country life. This was promoted by Liberty Hyde Bailey as he proposed "subdividing the land" for rural residents and it was supported by President Theodore Roosevelt as the Country Life Movement in the early decades of the twentieth century.

The emergence of a strong environmental awareness in the early 1970's shaped the homesteading movement of that time as people tried to live in a more ecological manner. This was also the time of a decisive back-to-the-land movement when, for the first time in our history, populations in non-metropolitan areas grew at a faster rate than populations in metropolitan areas.

Now, as we move toward the 2020's, the awareness of climate change (also called global warming) is finally filtering into public awareness. For many people this is a new and unfamiliar phenomenon. It is caused by the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The environmental awareness of the homesteader is still strong enough to recognize greenhouse gases as pollutants and resist them. Although climate change began many years ago with bad farming practices and deforestation, the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere grew rapidly with the burning of fossil fuels in the last century. That amount is now over 400 parts per million as compared to 280 ppm prior to the industrial age. Carbon dioxide, along with methane, is called a greenhouse gas because it retains more of the sun's warmth in the atmosphere and thus causes global warming.

Because oil companies spent millions to deny climate change, it had become a debatable issue for

many years. The fact that it thus became a political issue rather than a scientific reality inhibited actions to curtail the burning of fossil fuels. Scientists knew that the climate was changing since 1988, and in 1997 the nations of the world signed the Kyoto Protocol as they agreed that the planet should not get more than two degrees Celsius warmer. But in the twenty years after 1997, despite some concern and climate advocacy, there were more emissions of greenhouse gas than in the twenty years before.

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The Paris Accords, signed in 2016, also established two degrees as the upper limit of warmth. Our President withdrew from that agreement early in his term and has done much to increase the burning of fossil fuels. And, of course, emissions of carbon dioxide continue to rise—up to 411 parts per million in 2018. As I was writing this essay I received the May 6 issue of The Nation magazine which featured a long article documenting the poor reporting on climate change and resolving to promote more honest reporting. Americans produce more greenhouse gas than any country but our leaders seem unable to take action to curtail it.

This issue of The Nation also reported on the Green New Deal which is being promoted by left-leaning Democrats, led by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and co-sponsored by Senator Ed Markey, as a program to finally deal with climate change. The publicity generated by this program will reinforce the concern that nearly three fourths of American citizens already feel about climate change. It will not be surprising if people begin to express the need for a change in our lives of affluence to a way of life that generates less effluence of greenhouse gases.

The fact is that climate change has already begun and is very rapidly getting worse. This is the emphasis in a book just published early this year, *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming* by David Wallace-Wells. The book opens with the following words: "It is worse, much worse, than you think. The slowness of climate change is a fairy tale. . ." He then proceeds to list a few of the many catastrophes we learned about on the news during the past two or three years. "In the late summer of 2017 three major hurricanes arose in the Atlantic on once. . . Hurricane Harvey, when it struck Houston,

delivered such epic rainfall it was described as a '500,000 year event'." He goes on to list such disasters for two pages, and mentions the California wildfires in 2018, "including the deadliest fire in history—the Camp Fire which scorched several hundred square miles outside of Chico, killing dozens and leaving many more missing." These disasters, along with record-breaking temperatures of 121 degrees Fahrenheit in places which also killed many people, led Wallace-Wells to conclude that "climate change is here." (*The Uninhabitable Earth*, pp. 1-18.)

Climate change is emerging as the biggest issue in our time and it will be worse than we think. It is likely to be the incentive for the next homesteading movement as at least some people want to withdraw from complicity with it. This is a strategy of withdrawing from the industrial reliance on fossil fuels. This may be inadequate by itself, but it could be seen as an exemplary strategy which could lead to legislative actions.

Homesteading can help to reduce the pollution produced by burning fossil fuels, but there is also a need for "negative emissions," for removing the carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. In *The Uninhabitable Earth*, Wallace-Wells mentions "negative emissions" at various points and distinguishes between natural and technological strategies. But he is not confident that either strategy would work. The technological strategy, sometimes called "geoengineering," is very expensive and might have bad side-effects. He also admits that he is unfamiliar with natural strategies, but does mention that they include "revitalized forests and new agricultural strategies" (p. 169, also 45-46 and 107-108) and worries that they may take a third of farmland. He apparently fails to see that these strategies can sequester carbon as they raise food.

As a native of New York City, Wallace-Wells does not seem to know much about organic methods of raising food and does not mention the word "organic." But organic methods do thrive by using photosynthesis to take carbon from the air and sequestering it in plants and, eventually, in soil as humus. The formation of humus is enhanced by mycorrhizal fungi which secrete a protein called glomalin that builds humus in the soil and makes it more stable. This data is gleaned from a paper published by the Rodale Institute: "[Regenerative Organic Agriculture and Climate Change](#)." The paper argues that it is possible to sequester as much carbon as is emitted—eventually. It provides data to support this from studies in several countries, but it is dependent on a transition to regenerative methods of organic farming, which is

very slowly happening. The value of the Rodale paper, which is highly respected, is that it shows that global warming can be slowed so that other strategies to combat it can be developed. Other studies corroborate the Rodale conclusions.

Since homesteaders tend to use organic methods to raise food, it is here that they can make a second contribution, beyond using less fossil fuels, toward the sequestration of carbon. By heavy mulching to control weeds they add fertility to the soil, conserve moisture, and avoid tillage which allows for the oxidation of carbon. It is necessary to increase organic matter in the soil because chemical farming practices have depleted it in soils. Fifty to eighty percent of the carbon in the soil has escaped into the atmosphere. Cropland, which should have around 5% organic matter, is down to 1 or 2%. Undisturbed prairie soils can contain 10 to 20% of organic matter, which was put there naturally by photosynthesis using carbon dioxide and water, but was lost by repeated plowing.

Another practice that helps to retain carbon in the soil is through permaculture. It could be seen as a version of what Wallace-Wells called "revitalized forests." This is a food producing technique that relies much more on perennials, including trees. Many homesteaders find permaculture very congenial, partly because it avoids the need for tillage and tillage equipment which uses energy. This also conserves carbon in the soil, while tilling the soil allows carbon to oxidize. Also, the deeper roots of trees can help them grow through droughty periods and still produce food. The wood in trees is 50% carbon and can be stabilized as biochar when it is past maturity or harvested and preserved as lumber.

Homesteaders have always kept a diversity of livestock on their small farms. The manure from the livestock was used to maintain soil fertility in farms and gardens and some were butchered to provide food in addition to milk and eggs. In these ways homesteaders were able to bypass the food and fertilizer that was made available through industrial methods. They may also learn from Amish communities that it is still possible to use horses to help with farm and garden work and for transportation. Some Amish communities may permit the use of stationary engines, but in general their use of fossil fuel is very minimal. Of all existing communities, the Amish live in a way that may be most suitable to minimize climate change, but their religious doctrines may not be acceptable to most secular folks. We can, however, all learn from their practices.

It is urgent that policies to mitigate climate change get started. To begin with, this country needs a carbon tax to pay for some of the damage caused by a changing climate and to penalize fossil fuel use. The longer we wait the more it will cost. Global warming will soon be one and one half degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, we now have only twelve years to cut emissions in half if we hope to keep global warming below two degrees. And the longer we wait the worse it will be. According to a team of scientists who tried to quantify how much worse 2 degrees would be over 1.5, 150 million more people would die from air pollution alone at 2 degrees (*The Uninhabitable Earth*, p. 28). It is also important to bear in mind that the costs of the damage caused a changing climate

According to a team of scientists who tried to quantify how much worse 2 degrees would be over 1.5, 150 million more people would die from air pollution alone at 2 degrees.

already exceed billions of dollars, and these costs will increase rapidly. Energy companies that want to

make money now by burning more oil are likely to lose that and much more later. We are on the verge of a new era of Hard Times.

This essay is not proposing that homesteading is the only solution to the problem of climate change. But it is one solution and it is easily available. Given our cultural history it is very likely to be adopted by at least a few people who are already inclined to do it. As climate change makes it harder to raise food and food prices rise, more will try to raise their own. If early adopters show they can enjoy life with less fossil fuels, others will follow. Organic farming may not be trusted by policy-makers, at least not yet, but if it is seen to work it could be one of our main defenses, and certainly safer and cheaper than geoengineering projects for the sequestration of carbon.

Maynard Kaufman was a founding member of both Organic Growers of Michigan and MOFFA, as well as a professor of Religion and Environmental Studies at Western Michigan University, and ran the School of Homesteading at his farm in Bangor during the 1970s and '80s. He was an organic farmer from 1971 to 2003, when he retired and sold most of his land to three young organic farmers.

Homesteading for Health (with Expert Advice): Interview with Dan Kittredge

by Leah Smith

Many people who wish to homestead do so out of a desire to produce healthy food for themselves and their family. And who would be better to ask about the production of nutrient-dense food than Dan Kittredge, globally recognized as one of its leading proponents? Founder and executive director of the Bionutrient Food Association, Dan also has more than 30 years experience as an organic farmer. In a recent conversation, I asked him about the advice he would have for homesteaders in pursuit of healthy food.

LS: Many if not most people who wish to build a homestead are motivated by the desire to raise healthy food for themselves and their families. What would you suggest be the first steps in doing this? What would you identify as the most important farming techniques to produce healthy food?

DK: It all starts with understanding plants—their connectedness with the microbiology in the soil. Your aim is to keep the soil alive and active. I want to see the actual soil of my garden less than two weeks out of the entire year. Whether this takes the form of green manure, cover crops, mulch such as

hay, straw, wood chips, whatever. The point is to keep the soil covered.

Your soil must be supplied with basic minerals. A general approach is the application of 75 pounds of sea salt and 2 tons of rock dust (basaltic or granitic are best) per acre of ground. Your soil should remain aerated and moist as well; you should always be able to push your hand 6 inches down into the soil, and a handful of soil should always be moist enough to hold together when squeezed.

The least costly, least time consuming, biggest bang for your buck is by simply inoculating your seeds with a microbial mixture; getting your seeds in contact with a variety of microbes before they are even in the soil.

When starting your seeds, you want to take the first seeds that germinate and transplant them into a pot or soil block that is “too big” for them. Plant them in the ground in a space that seems too big for them. Plants must go in soil only when it is sufficiently warm; this is very important. Don’t think that you want to put large transplants out as soon as

possible, and so push it. You want to put out smaller transplants two weeks later in soil that is nicely warmed. Mulch them, and step back and prepare to be amazed.

LS: And you are well on your way to healthy food, yes?

DK: Absolutely!



LS: How important do you rate variety selection in nutrient density?

DK: It's very important. I don't plant any hybrids at all. I read through

the seed catalogs very carefully, and whenever exceptional flavor is mentioned I am likely to get the seed. Flavor comes from nutrition, so whenever flavor is noted in a description it means that variety intrinsically has a greater potential to produce nutritious food. The Fedco catalog has very good, detailed descriptions of varieties and flavor. Baker Creek obviously has a wider variety of seeds to offer than Fedco, but I have found Fedco's descriptions to be more accurate.

LS: You place extreme importance on quality seed. Where would you rank seed saving in a listing of possible homestead improvements? Number 1? Top 10?

DK: Oh, Top 5. No, Top 3. You get your sea salt and rock dust applied, wait for your soil to be warm before you start planting, put out your good quality transplants from quality seed, then you let it happen. Homesteaders need to be efficient with their money and time, and it doesn't need to take a lot of expensive steps to be successful. Nature has been doing this for a very long time, we should trust her more.

LS: I believe you don't place much value on compost, is that correct? As working a compost pile is a common activity for many homesteaders, what would you suggest they put their energies towards instead?

DK: Compost is not bad if it is good compost. But soil which is covered, mineralized, and kept moist will support tremendous earthworm populations. In healthy soils, over 1 million earthworms can be present per acre. They can produce 40 tons of castings per acre per year, which is well over any compost application rate, and the nutrients will be more readily available. Why not let the worms do the work for you?

LS: Wow! On the subject of manure, animals are a part of many homesteaders' plans. Where do you think they fit into a homestead? How do you make use of animal manure in a no-till operation?

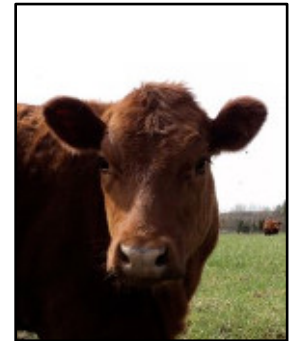
DK: If you take bedding from an animal pen and pile it in an area mixed with your rock dust and let it sit, you will have something really good to mulch with. This can be particularly useful for raspberries, blueberries, fruit trees, perennial areas.

LS: So you don't need to worry about tilling in animal bedding, you can just put it on the soil as mulch and leave it?

DK: Nature will do your integrating for you, you don't need to till it in. And there are plenty of other places to fit animals in to your homestead as well. If you want to move a chicken tractor around your garden plot, go for it. If you want to plant a cover crop in your garden at the end of August and run your cattle through at the end of November after the ground is frozen, go for it. Animals are a great addition.

LS: Well, my last question is kind of intuitive. How can YOU, or the average homesteader or grower, tell the food you produce is nutrient dense?

DK: Its smell and taste will tell you. We are all animals, after all, and we know what is good.



Leah Smith has been the Michigan Organic Connections editor since May, 2018, and is a Michigan State alumna (B.S., Crop and Soil Sciences). She works at Nodding Thistle, her family's farm, which has a history of organic gardening and farm marketing since 1984.

Homesteading: A Non-Homesteader Perspective

by John Biernbaum

Over the last 20 years, there have been a few MSU students who have asked about homesteading and whether I could help with ideas to consider. I have shared what I have learned to help them develop some broad perspective. For me personally, it is not correct to say that I am a homesteader, or that I have “homesteaded.” I can say that I have learned and practiced several aspects of homesteading for 20 years. It is fair to say that it is easier to learn new skills while your livelihood does not depend on it, and you can afford to go at a slower pace and fail without going hungry. I have also had financial resources to invest that have allowed me to experiment. This is a short summary of a handout that I have used to help guide discussions.

What is Homesteading?

Key concepts as I understand them are self-sufficiency, self-reliance, subsistence agriculture, and “small holder” agriculture. Others that are included are back to the land, folk schools, native or primitive skills, and a more recent emphasis on community sufficiency found through team work. Often a homesteading discussion jumps quickly ahead to how to grow stuff and agriculture related topics. But it can also include survival skills, though not those discussed by “preppers” or apocalypse, end-of-the-world folks.

I will often ask students what they know about the recommended priority for addressing food, fire, shelter, and water as a way of assessing what they know. I also share with them that in some sense, homesteading is a connection to the concept of wholeness or oneness. I like to help students see a possible connection between the Earth Traditions—the classical elements: earth, water, fire, air, space; and the Perennial Philosophy—matter, body, mind, soul, spirit. It is a chance for them to think differently about careers and how we spend our time, living to earn or earning to live.

Reasons for Homesteading

I started this list with one found at activistpost.com, and then added some ideas.

- Independence from potential social disruption
- Craving for the highest quality food
- Gain authentic human experience—(living as we were meant to live)

- Live in better balance with nature—have some fun
- Financial independence—“stick it to the man,” “pay no taxes,” “work for yourself”
- Getting away from the “rat race,” computers, electronics, commuting, stuff, etc.

Ten Topic Areas or Components of Homesteading

One can find lists of 100+ homesteading topics like the one here: www.theprairiehomestead.com/2014/01/modern-homesteading-skills.html

Here is my attempt to distill the list down to ten topic areas that are common to homesteading.

1. Foraging, Wild Harvesting (or wild crafting foods and plants)
2. Food Production: gardening, farming, etc.
3. Food Processing and Cooking
4. Food Preservation and Storage: ferment, brew, dehydrate, freeze, can, etc.
5. Hunting, Fishing and Animal Husbandry, Aquaponics, etc.
6. Cloths and Shoe Making: sewing, knitting, fiber, leather, tanning, etc.
7. Building and Construction Skills or Trades: carpentry, electrical, plumbing, masonry
8. Shelter for Protection—earth shelters, barns, sheds, cold cellars, etc.
9. Alternative Power—solar, wind, water, etc.
10. Health and Medicines—birth (midwives), death and all in between; herbal medicine

What Does Homesteading Look Like? What Are the Challenges?

Most of the students I have talked with have not had an opportunity to see either historical homesteading or recent homesteading efforts. We talk about how to get a mental picture by finding some good example to observe. The process is often about finding some land, then building some shelter and infrastructure while investing in equipment and tools. The process is influenced by learning how to assess and make use of locally available resources. Today there are many You Tube examples, although many of these are not at the same level as historical homesteading.

How Has Homesteading Changed Over Time? Is Homesteading Changing Over Time?

Talking about what homesteading looks like has led me to share my perceptions about how it has changed over, say, the last few hundred years. It is not hard to see how things have changed.

- Focus
- Survival: what many people did, the way of life
- Choice: a simpler, economic, connected way of life (1960's?)
- Education: learning once common skills—Urban Homesteading of 1990's and 2000's
- Methods of Knowledge Transfer:
- Oral Tradition
- Written Tradition—Books
- Video and Recorded Tradition—YouTube, Blogs, Facebook, Other Electronic Methods
- Amount of Tools and Technology?
- Hand Tools
- Fossil Fuel Powered Tools
- Solar, Wind, Water, and Battery Powered Tools; Electronics
- "Location" or Life Style
- Country Farming
- Rural
- Urban Personal/Self-Sufficiency to Community-Sufficiency

Life Direction and Choices for Getting Started

There are choices that have to be made depending on whether you are approaching homesteading from a survival perspective where it is not a choice, or if it is a choice that you can afford not to make, but consciously value homesteading as something you want to do for your health. That can lead to looking for income producing or marketing opportunities to make a living off the land.

These choices are influenced by multiple factors:

- The required cultural/political legal expenses like taxes and fees that must be paid
- What transportation is necessary—can be a big cost today—children going to school and sports or social events in town that require multiple trips
- How much debt one has or is willing to take on? Training/education?
- How will medical or health expenses be managed, particularly if children are involved?

My discussions about homesteading with students often focus on helping them develop a personal learning or action plan. This usually starts with asking foundational questions like "Who are you?" "Where have you come from?" "What makes you the person you are?" "What are your gifts or skills?" "What are you good at?" "How do you learn?" The answers are important to begin to understand what

kind of a person it takes to be a homesteader. Homesteaders often mention that "attitude" was the most important thing for success as part of an answer to the question. The same person also made the important point that both members of a partnership or marriage need to have a shared attitude, as well as other members of the family. One person/team member who is not happy can make life miserable for all the others.

Having a philosophical foundation to build on can be helpful. Permaculture provides a foundation for larger-scale planning and a system based on ethics and principles; there is also an emphasis on working with the local landscape to minimize disturbance and disruption of natural patterns. Holistic Management is another planning strategy that starts to build on values and focus on assessing the environment. A common teaching is that it helps to learn some of the pieces before trying to integrate or put them all together.

Some Sources of Homesteading Information

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homesteading>—does not say very much
- Homesteaders of America website: <https://homesteadersofamerica.com/>
- Mother Earth News Magazine: <https://www.motherearthnews.com/>—decades of published articles available electronically with a paid subscription, a very good source of information
- Mother Earth News Fairs: <https://www.motherearthnewsfair.com/>—seven regional events scheduled for 2019, would be nice to have one of these in Michigan?
- Homesteading Schools—Mother Earth News has an article listing 25 schools: <https://www.motherearthnews.com/homesteading-and-livestock/self-reliance/homesteading-schools-zl0z0903zvau>
- Mid—America Homesteading Conference: <http://www.homesteadingconference.com/>
- Michigan Options:
 - Tillers International: <http://www.tillersinternational.org/>
 - Michigan Folk School (Ypsilanti): <https://www.mifolkschool.com/>
 - Quaker Farm Sustainable Living and Arts Center (Harrisville): <https://www.quakerfarm.com/>
- <http://thriftyhomesteader.com/>—Deborah Niemann
- <http://antiquityoaks.com/>—Cornell, Illinois
- <http://anamericanhomestead.com/>—An American Homestead; many videos
- [The Foxfire Books](#); Twelve Volumes

- The Good Life: Helen and Scott Nearing's Sixty Years of Self-Sufficient Living (1990)—a commonly recommended starting point to get ideas and perspective.
- The Ultimate Homesteading Resource Guide: <https://www.realfoodhomestead.com/2017/01/homesteading-resources/>
- 20 Great Books Homesteaders Should Absolutely Get Their Hands On:

<https://morningchores.com/homesteading-books/>

John Biernbaum is Professor of Horticulture at MSU, was instrumental in the founding and growth of the Student Organic Farm at MSU, has been a member of MOFFA for over 15 years, and served as MOFFA's Chair 2015-2018.

How to Eat Local All Year Round: Preserving Summer's Bounty for Winter

by Anneliese Abbott

It's spring and it's time to start planting gardens here in Michigan! Soon we will be able to eat our own fresh, local, organic vegetables—fresh green kale, crisp turnips, savory asparagus—and maybe some rhubarb for a pie.



Canning works well for acid foods; the only expense is for the jars (which are reusable) and a large pot to use as a canner. Shown here (from left to right, back to front) are cherries, tomatoes, blueberries, applesauce, peaches, black raspberries, more peaches, salsa, dill pickles, more cherries, and red raspberries.

And then will come summer's bountiful harvest, when the tomato, eggplant, and pepper plants we are carefully nurturing in our greenhouses will be loaded with their delicious fruits. As the days start getting shorter and the weather gets colder, it will be time for golden pumpkins, creamy squashes, sweet beets and carrots, tangy rutabagas—oh, there's nothing better than fresh veggie season in Michigan!

But then will come the winter frosts, when the once-lush tomato plants wither and die, and finally the deep cold and snow that kills even the hardiest kale and Brussels sprouts. With cold frames and high tunnels, we might be able to keep a few hardy brassica plants alive for the winter, but the abundance of summer will be only a distant memory. Like the squirrels, the only local produce we will have during the winter is what we have carefully stored away—and that is why, even when we're just planting our gardens or enjoying the abundant

summer harvest, we need to remember that winter will always come.

Some vegetables are easy to store for winter, especially those that ripen in the fall. Most varieties of pumpkins and winter squashes will keep for a couple months at room temperature, long enough to have a fresh pumpkin pie for Thanksgiving and maybe for Christmas. Root vegetables, such as beets, carrots, turnips, rutabagas, and of course potatoes can be stored in a root cellar; packing them in moist sand will help keep them from shrinking too quickly.

With these exceptions, most vegetables need to be preserved in some way to make it through the winter. The three main preservation methods for vegetables and fruits are freezing, canning, and dehydration, each of which has its pros and cons.

Freezing has lots of things going for it. It doesn't take much time, many kinds of produce (especially



Freezing is quick and easy, but requires purchase of a chest freezer if done in sizeable quantities. Shown here (from upper left to bottom right) are broccoli, cauliflower mix, green beans, hot and sweet peppers, broccoli, and pumpkin.

things like green beans and broccoli) will taste almost as good as fresh, and it retains the highest levels of vitamins. The main downside of freezing is that freezers are expensive, take up a lot of space, and require a constant supply of electricity to keep the food frozen.

Another easy method of food preservation is canning. Canned food takes no energy to store and is the most convenient to use; just open the jar and it's ready. The main downside is that most vegetables have to be processed in a pressure canner for over an hour, which destroys a lot of the vitamins. Tomatoes and most fruits, however, are acid foods and can be processed in a water bath canner, which leaves a better-tasting and more nutritious product.

The third major method of food preservation is dehydration. Dehydrated food takes up much less space and weighs a lot less than canned food, and is a great way to keep things like greens or mushrooms from getting soggy. The biggest downside to dehydration is that it takes longer to cook dehydrated vegetables and some things (like green beans) can get tough when dehydrated.

For detailed instructions on how to can and freeze vegetables, I highly recommend the [Ball Blue Book](#). A great book on how to dehydrate almost anything is [How to Dry Foods](#) by Deanna DeLong.



A plastic dehydrator like this Nesco model is inexpensive and efficient. Some of the vegetables and fruits that dehydrate well are (clockwise from lower left) kale, apples, blueberries, peppers, and summer squash.

As you enjoy this summer's abundance of fresh veggies, don't forget to preserve some for the winter. With careful planning, it's possible to eat local Michigan produce all year round!

Anneliese Abbott earned her B.S. in plant and soil science from The Ohio State University and has been researching sustainable agriculture and agricultural history since 2015. She also runs an organic CSA for Abbott Farms in Otsego, MI and can be contacted at <mailto:abbott.222@osu.edu>.

Technology and Homesteading: Then and Now

by Leah Smith (with excerpts from Maynard Kaufman's Essay "The New Homesteading Movement: From Utopia to Eutopia")

In 1971, Maynard Kaufman wrote the essay, "The New Homesteading Movement: From Utopia to Eutopia," to explore the motivations of the new crop of back-to-the-landers, as well as the challenges they faced in their new lifestyle. The wave of people was not due to economic strain, but rather to various social factors. Though Kaufman's paper had many interesting points, the aspect that stood out the most to me was the discussion of technology and the (then current) techno-culture. Technology, "good" and "bad," exerts a strong influence on society in this day and age, as I think most people would agree. Sometimes it seems to be nothing but a race to newer and newer technology. What about 1971? Pertinent excerpts from "Utopia to Eutopia" follow below. Let's have a look.

"The utopian phase in the counter culture emerged gradually as the prevailing techno-culture became so total and all-encompassing that there was literally

no place to go to escape except to drop out. Thus a 'turned- off' generation becomes 'down and out' instead of 'up and coming,' as Gibson Winter put it, as it 'embodies the antithesis of techno-man and his controlled world.'"^[1]

Are the homesteaders of today trying to escape technology, too? I have seen a lot of them embrace and use it rather than shun it. Maybe this was occasionally the case back then, too. Read on.

"Some of the utopian aspects of the counter culture are opposed to the prevailing techno-culture, but others are carried over directly from it. In *The Greening of America*, Charles Reich has, more than other interpreters of youth culture, perhaps, succeeded in bringing its utopian elements into focus. He maintains that the new consciousness will bring with it a non-violent revolution—sometime, in the future. This revolution will not negate the culture

built on technology, but will humanize it and thus fulfill its promise. 'We have all heard the promise,' explains Reich, 'affluence, security, technology make possible a new life, a new permissiveness, a new freedom, a new expansion of human possibility.'^[2] Most of us grow up to be skeptical about this promise, but many young people, according to Reich, drop out because they feel this promise has been betrayed. Reich's revolutionary "Consciousness III" is thus a more stubbornly-believed version of the kind of utopian aspiration engendered by the Industrial Revolution. Most utopian thought today, according to Northrop Frye, includes technological themes: 'And because technology is progressive, getting to the utopia has tended increasingly to be a journey in time rather than space, a vision of the future and not of a society located in some isolated spot on the globe.'^[3] Reich, however, may have projected his liberal aspirations into the youth culture movement."

Can technology make homesteading easier than it would be without it? The homesteader tries to be self-sufficient and to create a home that is both inviting for the people in it as well as productive. Of course, part of being productive is often producing a bit extra for sale to others. And technology can bring them closer.

"Many of those who find it difficult to give up the material comforts of the techno-culture eventually get a job and are reabsorbed into the system. But an increasing number are disillusioned with utopia either in the techno-culture or outside of it ('like, man, that's nowhere'). They literally move out in search of eutopia. In his very personal but beautiful story of today's communal movements Robert Houriet describes this process. 'The first phase of the movement was implosive, that is, an escape from the all-pervasive influences of a plastic, fragmented mass society and a return to the primal center of being and man. In the classical utopian tradition, the commune was an island, a free space, a cultural vacuum. It was the ideal situation for spiritual revelation—for regaining the vision of a simpler, unified life and the pristine consciousness of uncomplicated, tribal man. But unlike the desert island, the communes were not naturally surrounded by an ocean to keep the 'outside' society at bay. Exiles in their own country, they had to erect psychological defenses against the 'outside' by drawing a 'we/they' dichotomy that often verged on paranoia.'"^[4]

Well, that doesn't sound good! Of course, many homesteaders would not want to be on a commune, and I think many who might have gone to a commune in search of answers wouldn't have found those answers on a thriving homestead. A thriving homestead isn't just about answers, it is about work, and dedication to a lifestyle that isn't always easy. To live it happily, you have to really want it. Then, I think, you will find your answer quite quickly.

"The basic problem which faces communes and homesteaders is to learn how to handle technology. Robert Houriet observes that 'those who sought exile in communes initially rejected technology *in toto*, making little discrimination between the tools that liberated and those that enslaved. They went back to the past for tools.'^[5] It was part of the 'we/they' split that 'their' technology was to be distrusted. After all, it was modern technology and the way of life it engendered which caused them to drop out to begin with. But at least two factors were at work to mitigate this uncompromising stand. The first was practical; some modern tools and services, such as vehicles and roads, are necessary, while others, such as electricity or chain saws, were useful, in addition to the tools and skills of the past century. Considerations about modern technology are simply unavoidable. The other factor leading to a limited acceptance of technology in communes was, ironically, the ecological awareness which originally prompted the move into the country and to nature."

This is a problem which faces us all, namely how to make good use of technology without it making good use of us. You can use so much technology to save physical labor that you have to find your physical exercise elsewhere for the sake of your health. And I have read that a sedentary lifestyle punctuated by periods of extreme exertion is not a good replacement for a consistently moderately active lifestyle. You can use technology to eventually connect with people in the physical space, or you can use it to only connect with "people" in cyberspace. When I was young, we did not have a large set of encyclopedias in the house. With the internet, I can have the equivalent at my very fingertips. But I can also have a lot of, well, let's just say fiction, at my fingertips. And all of this technology has to be paid for. To what extent do you work to pay for technology to enjoy your homestead, or just cut out the middle man and enjoy your homestead? Life at the height of the pendulum swing is unstable and hard to maintain, and that is when it is swinging to either side. Hopefully I will see you where the pendulum is more stable, in the happy middle ground.

Footnotes

1. Gibson Winter, *Being Free* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), p. 91.
2. Charles Reich, *The Greening of America* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 218.

3. Northrop Frye, "Varieties of Literary Utopias, in *Utopias and Utopian Thought*," ed. Frank E. Manuel (Boston: Beacon Paperback, 1967), p. 28.
4. Robert Houriet, *Getting Back Together* (New York: Coward, McCann, & Geoghegan, Inc., 1971), p. 210
5. *Ibid.*, p. 215.

Seven "New Wave" Homesteading and Gardening Educators

by John Biernbaum

I have admitted many times that I have an addiction to learning. One way that I recently feed my habit is allowing my email Inbox to be cluttered by several educators/bloggers that share primarily online and some printed homesteading and/or gardening information. Following are seven people that I subscribe to and have viewed to learn both what they are sharing and how they share it. Mostly I hear from them about once a week. Several of them share information about the others. You may notice that these are geographically diverse, but there isn't one from Michigan or the nearby Midwest. I have looked around some for Michiganders, but have not found anything on par with these presenters. I am hoping that maybe someone that reads this might have a quality Michigan example to [share with me](#)?

Justin Rhodes, Abundant Permaculture,
<https://abundantpermaculture.com/about/>

- Entertaining and willing to learn by doing; includes his children in the process
- 75-acre farm near Ashville, North Carolina; gardening, livestock, butchering, permaculture
- Many free resources, others in a "member area" with fee required
- YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOSGEokQQcdAVFuL_Aq8dlg, 500,000 subscribers
- Great American Farm Tour Movie: 2 hours of farm visits by family with 3 children traveling in a school bus: <https://www.amazon.com/Great-American-Farm-Tour/dp/B07NZ2RYDL>

David the Good, The Survival Gardener,
<http://www.thesurvivalgardener.com/>

- Entertaining and comical; part of me likes his *laisse-faire* attitude
- Subtropical (Florida) and tropical (an island) permaculture and gardening
- Good composting resources, also permaculture principles
- YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/davidthegood>, 64,000 subscribers

Melissa Norris, Pioneering Today,
<https://melissaknorris.com/>

- Washington state, more emphasis on food preparation and cooking; also livestock
- Radio Show, Podcast, Books, some free, or option for Monthly/Annual Membership
- YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCM7-S8Q0uqUxG0kKfX_dOzw, 13,500 subscribers

Jill Winger, The Prairie Homestead,
<https://www.theprairiehomestead.com/>

- Wyoming, cold climate, farm living; another example of looking for a healthy lifestyle
- YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/theprairiehomestead>, 30,000 subscribers

Stacy Murphy, Grow Your Own Vegetables,
<https://growyourownvegetables.org/>

- Brooklyn, New York, also BK Farm: <https://bkfarmyards.com/>; backyard gardening basics that should be helpful for beginners
- Online courses and materials, Garden Hack Summit
- YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCK8WWphD0zYS4c5jsLOOmg>, 11,300+ subscribers

Marjory Wildcraft, The Grow Network,
<https://thegrownetwork.com/>

- Located in Texas; gardening, livestock, herbs; connects with many others; grow your own groceries materials and program
- Thousands of pages, many videos, mostly all free, also e-books
- Annual online summit with several days of recorded presentations
- YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=marjory+wildcraft, 12,000 subscribers

DaNelle and Kevin, Weed'em and Reap,
<https://www.weedemandreap.com/>

- 1 acre urban homestead in a Phoenix, Arizona neighborhood, livestock and gardening

- YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/user/DaNelleWeedemandReap/featured?disable_polymer=1, over 250,000 subscribers
- E-books and online classes available, some free or for a fee

Homesteading, Old School: The Original Text, And More

by Leah Smith

Time passes and things change, or at least they seem to. Of course, some things never change, and often everything old is new again. In that spirit, I have here reflected on some of the familiar homesteading books of old.

Cottage Economy, by **William Cobbett**, has been called the original classic on self-sufficiency. As the book was originally published in 1822, the statement has every chance of being absolutely true. Could something that old possibly have anything in it pertinent to today? Yes. I will start by saying that Cobbett is a writer, and an entertaining one. So if you prefer quick, clean facts that are simply stated and readily accessible, and want to focus on the how-to of homesteading with none of the philosophy, this might not be the book for you. And there are other reasons that his book might not be a good fit for everyone. Some of his information is dated. He speaks of the best bee hives being made of rye-straw, and not many people need instruction on ice-house construction these days. If you don't eat meat, his brand of homesteading is not for you. However, the book contains so many subjects that there is something for everyone. Beer brewing, bread baking, cows, pigs, take your pick. What I think Cobbett really does for the modern reader is make you think. When Cobbett says economy he means management, so cottage economy is how to manage the home. Inputs and returns, time and money required (or not). He examines everything in terms of if it is really worth doing. But he also speaks of a happy family living a good life. Actions have to make sense practically, but also in terms of quality-of-life. For example, on the subject of pigeons, he points out that though not much profit is ever attached to them, their care is minimal, they are very pretty creatures, very interesting in their manners, and they are an object of delight for children and will give them the early habit of a fondness for animals and of setting value on them. Knowledgeable, humorous, and highly entertaining, I would call him the Gene Logsdon of his day.

Gene Logsdon. We have more books of his in our family library than any other agricultural writer, as we have always gone to him for his knowledge and

accessibility, as well as his humor, on practically every subject. Homesteading is no exception. Homesteading: How to Find New Independence on the Land is a beginning-to-end breakdown on the important aspects of homesteading, namely site selection, soil, crops, animals, foraging, natural energy, and lastly, in typical Gene fashion, a chapter on how and WHY you should simply enjoy the country life. The format is conversational. He shares his own experiences to make his points, but also has a wealth of general knowledge to share. Reading a book written by Gene Logsdon is like having a great neighbor who has knowledge and advice that he is happy to share.

The Guide to Self-Sufficiency by **John Seymour** is no doubt one of the better known homesteading books. In his book, subjects are only touched on, but almost every possible subject is touched on. Clearing land, growing field and row crops, making cheese, dealing with garden pests, making jam, spinning flax, making bricks. If you really want to take on one of the more complicated subjects you will probably want to find other sources that go more in-depth, but like Cobbett it is another great book to get the wheels turning.

I could continue on (and on and on) describing the pros and cons of the many homesteading books that have been published. Why have there been so many homesteading books? Maybe because there is as much diversity amongst homesteading books as there can be amongst homesteads themselves. Homesteads are intended to produce items you would otherwise buy so that you don't have to buy them.

So what do you like or want? Steaks, strawberries, red bell peppers, duck eggs? Do you want to produce your own wheat or wool or wind energy? A homestead isn't a success unless it gives you what you really want. So read and research as many "whats" and "hows" as you can, just make sure you supply the "whys" yourself!

MOFFA 2019 Farm Tours Announced

For 2019, MOFFA has arranged a series of four Farm Tours in collaboration with OEFFA, all available at no cost. The farming operations to be visited are widely diverse, offering something for everyone. And they are—

Crane Dance Farm (Multi-Species Rotationally Grazed Livestock Farm) Middleville, MI on Tuesday, June 18



Crane Dance Farm nestles among the rolling hills, woods, and wetlands of Middleville in Barry County. They raise GMO-free, pasture-raised pork, turkeys, and chicken eggs as well as 100% grass-fed beef and lamb. And no

sustainable, regenerative farm would be complete without honeybees, so raw honey is also part of their enterprise. All of their cattle, pigs, and lambs are bred, born, and finished on their farm. The farmers (and tour guides) at Crane Dance, Jill Johnson and Mary Wills, are passionate about the connection of their farm to the health of the plant, their livestock, and people. They were the first farm in Michigan to be certified for pork (in 2010) by Animal Welfare Approved, one of the most highly regarded animal welfare certifications.

Nature & Nurture (Organic Vegetable, Mushroom, and Seed Production) Dexter, MI on Sunday, August 18



Nature & Nurture LLC is an independent, organic farm based, diversified business rooted in Michigan. For almost two decades, Erica Kempter and Mike Levine have operated a residential landscaping service and plant nursery in Ann

Arbor (specializing in edible and native gardens) while also growing and marketing organic, log-grown shiitake mushrooms. In 2013, they moved to their current farm location and founded Nature & Nurture Seeds to protect and promote open-source, bio-diverse, and regionally adapted seeds. On this tour, you will see an organic seed production farm in the

Midwest region, plus experience their fruit orchard and how they produce gourmet shiitake mushrooms.

Compostponics and Vermicompost: New Perspectives Holt, MI on Saturday, August 24



This research and education site tour conducted by John Biernbaum will focus on methods of making compost specifically for organic growing in containers and raised beds (with materials readily available to the

urban grower including wood chips, leaves, hay, straw, coffee grounds, and food scraps), growing vegetables and herbs in containers and raised beds, and making vermicompost for the betterment of soil fertility and microbiology (and without having to screen out the worms).

Plymouth Orchards & Cider Mill / Gateway Farm Plymouth, MI on Thursday, August 29

This tour will begin at the Plymouth Orchards & Cider Mill with two great workshops: Matt Sattelberg of Bay Shore Farms and Harold Wilkens of Janie's Farm will present a discussion of larger-scale organic grain, corn, soybean, and dry bean farming and organic milling, while John Edgerton will present the small grain trials (including upland rice) that he has been conducting for the last few years on his farm in west central Michigan. Then it will move to Gateway Farm where farm manager Ben Kasmenn will conduct guests through the 8-acre certified organic vegetable and cut-flower farm that markets through a csa program, wholesale, and an on-site farmstand. The tour will then return to Plymouth Orchards & Cider Mill, the 100-acre certified organic apple orchard and farm that grows small grains, raspberries, blackberries, asparagus, hay, and cover crops. Owner Mary Emmett will lead the tour of the orchards and farm on hay wagons, and discuss organic apple tree management, small grain production, multi-species cover crops, and cane



berry management. Manager Alicia Estrada will also take guests on a tour of the Cider Mill to see the organic processing of dried apples, cider making, and donut production.

Can't pick just one tour? Why not come to them all! For more information, click [here](#).

Organic Certification Cost-Share Funds Once Again Available

The 2018 Farm Bill renews assistance to producers and handlers of certified organic products to help them cover the costs of obtaining or maintaining organic certification under the USDA's National Organic Program. Eligible producers include any certified producers or handlers who have paid organic certification fees to a USDA-accredited certifying agent. Eligible expenses for cost-share reimbursement include application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement and arrangement requirements, travel expenses for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments, and postage.



If you paid for USDA organic certification between October 31, 2018 through October 31, 2019, you are eligible to apply for USDA Organic Cost-Share in 2019. You can receive reimbursement of up to 75% of eligible certification costs, with a cap of \$750 per

certificate. For example, if you have a certificate for layers and eggs under the USDA Organic Certification program and another for vegetable production, you can apply for two separate organic certifications and receive up to \$1500.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices throughout Michigan are accepting Organic Cost-Share applications now through October 31, 2019. The application is easiest to complete if you visit the FSA office that serves your county. You will need to take with you:

- Organic certificate(s) (they will photocopy it for you)
- Receipts for payments for organic certification
- A deposit slip to your bank as your refund will be direct-deposited to your account

To find which office serves your county visit <https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>.

Opportunity to Share Land, Resources, and Infrastructure—Van Buren County

Earthen Heart LLC, which is located in Bangor, Michigan, is a Community Homestead guided by Permaculture Principles with a focus on sharing a holistic lifestyle with a small group of homesteaders, a lifestyle that is low impact and high quality. "By producing more (energy, food, entertainment) and consuming less from off-site, we collectively shift away from the hyper-consumption model of an

endless growth paradigm. By sharing land, resources, and infrastructure we reduce the need for outside income and minimize waste." See more at http://moffa.net/f/EH_2019.pdf. If you are interested in a short visit or potentially becoming a co-owner of Earthen Heart LLC, please reach out by filling out the survey at the website: earthenheart.com/survey/.

Results of the 2017 Census of Agriculture

Delayed by the government shutdown, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has at last released the long-awaited 2017 Census of Agriculture. Conducted by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the Census surveyed nearly three million potential U.S. farms and ranches, and is the most comprehensive source of

agricultural data for states and counties across the U.S. and guides most federal farm programs, policies, and funding decisions. A lot has changed since the last census in 2012. The number of farms, acreage in farming, and farming income all continue to decline, while the number of beginning farmers, organic farms, and local food sales continue to rise.

The number of mid-sized farms continues to decline, while the number of very small and large farms increased (anybody homesteading?) Additionally, the number of young, beginning, and women farmers in decision-making roles has been increasing, and the number of farmers in general (again, an increase in homesteaders?) Overall, farm income declined in 2017 while expenses per farm increased.

To view the complete 2017 Census of Agriculture Report, go to: https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/index.php#full_report

You might also like to note that the NASS will be contacting organic food producers early next year for the 2019 Organic Survey, with results expected for release in December 2020. It will be collecting data on acreage, production, and sales for various organic crops and livestock commodities from all certified organic, exempt from organic certification, and transitioning to organic operations. With the increasing interest in organic agriculture from consumers, the results of this survey are particularly important to help farmers and policymakers identify the best tools, technologies, and policies to grow the industry (hopefully responsibly and honestly) and to keep it competitive.

From the Editor

Spring is a highly anticipated season for practically everyone in Michigan. The theme of this edition of our newsletter is homesteading, and of course for the homesteader spring is particularly exciting. Animals to be born, new varieties of produce to try, different gardening techniques to put into practice. After spending much of the winter reading, going to conferences, sharing with other enthusiasts, and researching current homesteading passions, now is the time for action. Once it stops raining for a moment, that is! We hope this newsletter added something to your homesteading motivation and process. And thank you to all who contributed.

Before I go, I wanted to mention Senate Bill 174. It contains a clause that would repeal Section 46 of the Animal Industry Act. This is the clause pertaining to minimum space standards for egg-laying hens, breeder sows, and veal calves. The repeal of this clause, which has been in place for a decade, would be another green light for CAFOs and another injury to responsible agriculture in Michigan. To learn more about SB 174, look [here](#) and/or contact [Donna](#), who can send you information and would also be happy to add your name to the list of opponents to SB 174 if you desire.

Leah Smith
MOFFA Newsletter Editor

MOFFA News

Board – We are still actively seeking a member from the southeastern area of the state, ideally someone who is involved in urban agriculture. In fact, no matter who or where you are, if you are a MOFFA member who would be interested in serving on the board, please [let us know](#).

Michigan Organic Connections Newsletter – We continue to be interested in featuring new voices in the newsletter. The remaining newsletters for this year will explore the themes of on-line agricultural resources and the question of organics and nutrition, or rather where does one find nutrition in food. If you are interested in contributing, or if you have a suggestion about future content or can recommend someone who would be interested in contributing, please [contact Leah](#), our newsletter editor. If you're

not interested in writing an article, please consider contributing photos of your farm or your harvest; we're always looking for more illustrations.

Sponsors – MOFFA is now accepting Sponsorship from organizations and individuals who are willing to demonstrate their support of our mission with a financial contribution. The change to soliciting sponsorships generally, rather than specifically for Organic Intensives, will enable us to increase our activities throughout the year. Please take a moment to view the logos of those who have already pledged their support at the end of this message, and let them know you appreciate their sponsorship. If you are interested in becoming a sponsor for 2019, please [email us](#) or view the [sponsorship page](#) on the website.

WHY JOIN MOFFA : To position yourself and every dollar you donate toward spreading a wholesome, just, ecologically focused organic ethos across all of our local Michigan communities. Join online at <http://www.moffa.net/membership.html> or call 248-262-6826.

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