



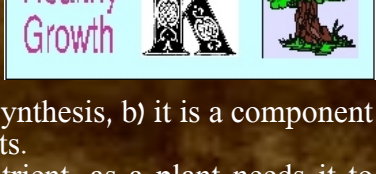
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## Reminders!

- 1.) Reseed your lettuce, spinach and other greens!
- 2.) Continue with fruit tree spraying as needed.
- 3.) Fertilize your lawn as needed. It is a great time to apply Weed & Feed to your grass. It will fertilize while taking care of broadleaf weeds. Spray dandelions before they go to seed.
- 4.) Plant warm season crops and/or harden off the warm season crops previously started indoors— weather permitting.
- 5.) Remove spent pansies and primrose from your pots and replace with heat loving, colorful annuals!
- 6.) Stay on top of the weeds. You don't want them going to seed!

## The NPK's of Growing

Like all of us, plants need food. In nature, this is taken care of by the symbiotic relationships of air, light, and water with soils, animals, and decomposing plant materials. In our homes or in our yards, this natural process is generally compromised, in part or in whole, by our mere presence. Plant food nutrients can be separated into two categories: macro and micro nutrients. The macronutrients are nitrogen, phosphorus, potash, sulfur, calcium, and magnesium. The micronutrients, or 'trace nutrients', include iron, manganese, boron, zinc, copper, molybdenum, and chlorine. If any of these nutrients are deficient or too abundant, you may see burning, curling, or yellowing. So, you must be careful not to over, or under, fertilize. Now, we will explore the 'Big Three' primary nutrients.



**1.) Nitrogen (N)** — Nitrogen is essential for plant growth and is part of every living cell. The two forms of nitrogen which plants take up are in the form of either ammonia or nitrate ion forms. Most plants take up nitrogen in the nitrate form. Plants will also utilize nitrogen in the ammonium form if present and available. Lack of nitrogen and chlorophyll means that plants cannot utilize sunlight as an energy source to carry on essential functions such as nutrient uptake. Research has shown that foliar applications of nitrogen is one form of application that can supplement a plants nitrogen requirements during the growing cycle. Always remember: a) nitrogen is necessary for chlorophyll synthesis and as a part of the chlorophyll molecule is involved in photosynthesis, b) it is a component of amino acids, and c) nitrogen is essential for growth of plants.

**2.) Phosphorus (P)** — Phosphorus is a very important nutrient, as a plant needs it to complete its normal production cycle. The highest level of phosphorus in young plants is found in tissue at the growing stage. As plants mature, most of the phosphorus moves into the flower and then to the seed or fruit. Phosphorus is needed for a) photosynthesis, b) plant respiration, c) energy storage and transfer, d) cell division, and e) cell enlargement.

**3.) Potash/Potassium (K)** — An important function of potassium is its influence in efficient water use. It helps in the process of opening and closing plant leaf pores called the stomata. Potassium is found in cell walls which surround the stomata. Adequate amounts of potassium decreases stress conditions on plants during drought. Potassium is needed for a) protein synthesis, b) the breakdown of carbohydrates, providing energy for plants, c) the translocation of nutrients and water, d) the plant overcoming the effects of disease, e) fruit formation, and f) the activation in over 60 enzymes which regulate plant growth.

So, as you can see, all of the 'Big Three' are necessary for all the basics of plant growth. These primary nutrients can be applied directly on the plant tissue or to the soil for root uptake. Plants respond quicker to foliar applications, but these application do not last long as soil applied nutrients.

You may choose to apply the 'Big Three' using man-made chemical fertilizers or choose to apply organic products. Many options are available to you, so stop by for a mini-tour of all the possibilities!

## SAVING SEEDS - THE BASICS

Every new day brings more and more people into the store who are interested in saving their own seeds. Besides being considered a satisfying hobby, there are a couple other reasons interest in this once dying art has been peaked. The first is that in times of economic hardship it is a way to save money—a good reason. The second, which is the reason I lean toward, is to preserve and perpetuate varieties that we don't want to lose as the years go by. As Marc Rogers puts it in his book, *Saving Seeds— The Gardener's Guide to Growing and Storing Vegetable and Flower Seeds* (a GREAT resource), "You are producing seed for YOUR garden, seed best suited to YOUR climate and YOUR gardening conditions... Flavor, pest and disease resistance, early bearing, and size are among the many characteristics that can be enhanced by judicious selection over a period of years."

There is one benefit [in saving seeds] which only you can put a value. Let's say you first attempt something easy— saving peas. The year that you plant those peas, you will put them in the ground with a little extra care. They'll get the choice compost for encouragement. You'll spend a minute or two longer with them each time you cultivate around them. And sure enough, they'll taste a bit sweeter than any other peas you raise that year. There will be a deeper satisfaction in growing them. What's that worth to you?  
~Rogers

When gearing up to begin saving your seeds, you need to be sure to start with the right kind of seeds. You may have heard the words "open-pollinated" floating around in garden centers, especially in the past couple years. Open-pollinated (OP or heirloom) seeds are seeds which when gathered will produce the same plant that your original seed produced. In other words, if you plant an OP Connecticut Field pumpkin seed, gather seeds from it, and then plant it the next year, you will get a Connecticut Field pumpkin again. (The same product is not guaranteed if you plant two different varieties of OP pumpkins. If you want to gather seeds and are serious about the varieties you end up with, just choose one variety to grow.) The risk you take with hybrid (non-open-pollinated) seeds is that you might end up getting one of the parent plants (one of the plants crossed to create the hybrid variety), rather than the one you desire. You will notice on our bulk seed list that some of the varieties have an OP next to their name. If you want to gather seeds, choose OP varieties!

After you have chosen seeds and planted them, you need to prepare yourself to keep a close eye on every plant. You want to gather seeds from the most superior plants, so here are qualities that Rogers (author of the aforementioned book) recommends you watch for: flavor, yield, vigor, color, size, disease resistance, insect resistance, storage life, early bearing, late to bolt (lettuce, etc.), good germ in poor weather, absence of thorns and spines, seeds (few & small in juicy fruits, large for sunflowers, tender for tomatoes), texture, tenderness, juiciness, suitability for purpose (eg. tomatoes you would like to use for tomato paste should be drier and more meaty), stature, weather tolerance, and aromatic appeal. You should only desire to perpetuate those plants that produce the best results!

Once you have determined which plants are the best, it's time to collect! TIMING is everything in collecting seeds. Here are a few examples: a) seeds found in pulpy fruits, such as tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, etc., should be allowed to ripen fully, even a little overripe, before you collect seed, b) crops where the seed is the part you eat; wheat, corn, beans, etc., can be harvested anytime, but make sure seed is dry, and c) shatter-prone seed heads, such as, onions, lettuce, flowers, etc., should be collected in small amounts as seed is ready.

Be thinking about what varieties you want to collect from this year! **Next month: How to extract, dry, and store your seed!**  
~L

## May Day

The tradition of May Day has always been fun for me. As a young mother, I would have my three children make hand-picked bouquets and put them into glass mason jars. We would walk to nearby neighbor's houses and try to sneak the flowers, so carefully arranged, by their front doors, knock, and then run for home. The point was to have them try to guess who would of thought of them on May 1st!



I am not completely anti-electronics (hence the use of a computer to write this), but I, and a great majority of people that I have visited with, agree that we are all searching for more tranquility in our lives. So maybe, on May 1st, we will stroll through our yards, picking flowers or pretty "weeds" (dandelions) to fill glass jars with. There just might be neighbors and friends waiting to be thought of by you.

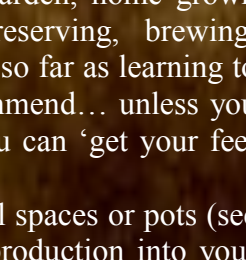
Handing out May Day baskets is a charming and gentle activity for children and adults.  
~Louisa May Alcott  
~S

## The Value of Your Backyard

.....A backyard is priceless—no matter the size.....

With the recent craze of backyard homesteading, you can learn how to put your backyard (or front yard for that matter) to work. Maybe it's the current economic state or the thought of living independent of society and it's "products" that nudges us toward this way of life...or perhaps it's because by living this way we can live healthier, fuller lives. Who knows? Either way, it is never a bad thing to return to our roots!

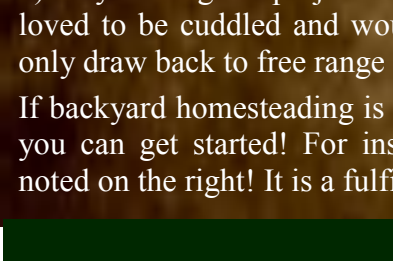
I had somewhat of a "live off the land" sort of upbringing. Though I am now thankful for the knowledge I was given; I wasn't always (particularly when I was given an alder bark salve for scratches and a fir bark vodka gargle when I complained of a sore throat), but I would take all the gargles and salves you can throw at me for all the great things I learned: how to cook (from scratch), how to card, spin, and knit your own yarn, how to make soap, how to grow and raise your own food, etc. Now, as an adult, I have explored how to make my own butter, discovered the wonder of hand tools (e.g. hand crank ice cream freezer and hand powered coffee grinder), how to build a chicken coop and keep chickens (enough to know that hens are still too loud to keep in town...only my opinion), how to sew (not a professional by any stretch of the imagination, but I can get the job done), but the best thing was the confidence gained to try new things and the tools with which to make them a success.



Backyard homesteading includes several activities that vary depending on location and space (i.e. you can't have a cow in town; but you can have chickens!). The activities usually fall into one of these categories: vegetable garden, herb garden, home grown grains, meat & dairy, poultry, fruits & nuts, cooking & preserving, brewing, cheesemaking, composting, and beekeeping. There are people that go so far as learning to do their own plumbing, electrical, etc. (not something I would recommend... unless you are a professional in said trade). The two easiest areas, the areas you can 'get your feet wet' in, are the following:

**1. Growing your own food.** You can fit all sorts of produce in small spaces or pots (see last month's article for a great book reference on how to squeeze production into your space, all while being pretty to look at!) With more produce in the backyard, you can feed your family long past the "off-season" by canning, drying, preserving, or freezing produce! Think of breaking open a bag of dried homegrown, organic apple slices in February, eating fresh garden sweet corn on a cool spring night, or blending up super sweet, nothin'-like-homegrown strawberries into a wonderful smoothie in the middle of winter. You control what you grow, how it's grown, and how it's preserved. Sounds wonderful doesn't it!? Even if you don't have room for an orchard (or even a fruit tree or two), there are wonderful farmer's markets that sell organically grown produce for reasonable prices when they are in season. Stock up and eat up all year!

**2. Feathered Friends.** Keeping chickens is as easy as keeping a garden, and almost everyone has room for them—even in town. Most towns have a restriction on how many you can have if you are within the city limits, but you don't need a huge flock to feed a family. Even 2 hens (which is what I kept) gave me two eggs per day— 14 eggs per week. That's a lot of eggs. Getting set up to raise chickens has an initial cost (varies depending on how fancy you want their coop to be), but once you get going— fresh farm eggs EVERYDAY. There are other benefits too: a) meat, obviously, though not something I was interested in doing when just keeping two; b) they are a great project and learning tool for kids; and c) they make great pets (mine loved to be cuddled and would follow me around as I worked in my flower beds). The only draw back to free range chickens—Darla loved my lettuce patch... enough said.



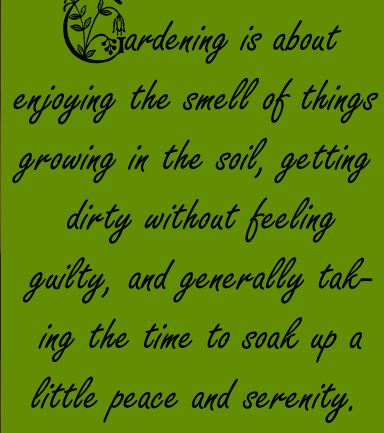
If backyard homesteading is something that interests you, you should read up about how you can get started! For inspiration and information, check out the suggested reading noted on the right! It is a fulfilling and fun hobby!  
~L



'Gold Bar' is a show-stopper with it's dense, dramatic gold striping from the base of the blade all the way to the tip! This miscanthus is extremely upright and compact in habit. In the fall, burgundy plumes rise above the blades. It's a great selection to be used in containers as well! It prefers full sun and will grow to be 3-5ft. This zone 5 grass, will bring beauty to your beds every year!

## SCREEN IT!

Do you need to block out an unsightly view, create a windscreen, or block the scorching sun??? We have a beautiful selection of evergreens, vines, and shrubs that will create beautiful living screens! In fact, we have so much to say about it that we are teaching a whole seminar on the subject next month! Don't miss it on Saturday, June 18th @ 10am!



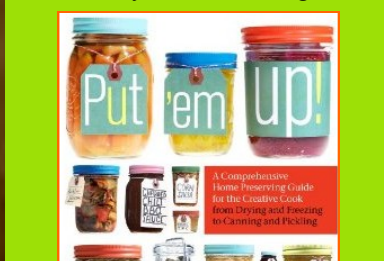
## Quotables

Gardening is about enjoying the smell of things growing in the soil, getting dirty without feeling guilty, and generally taking the time to soak up a little peace and serenity.  
~Lindley Karstens

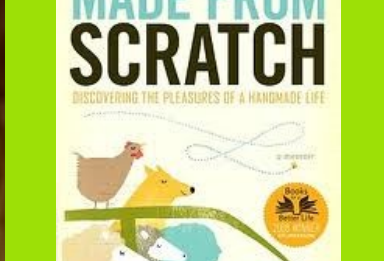
## HOmESTEADING GUIDES



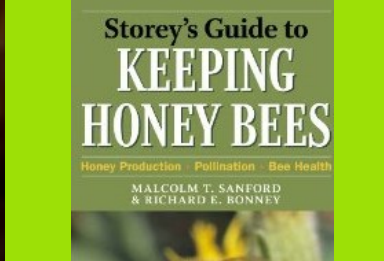
By John & Martha Storey



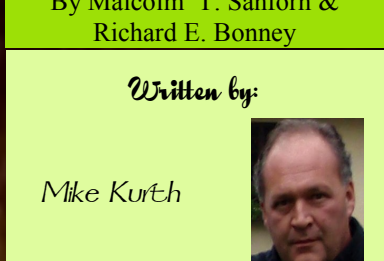
Edited by Carleen Madigan



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Written by:



## 2011 SEMINAR SCHEDULE

- May 21st** The Essential Herbal
- June 18th** Living Fences
- August 13th**
- Victory Gardens for Fall**
- September 17th** Creating with Fall Bulbs
- October 22nd** Winter Birding
- November 26th** Garlands, Wreaths and more!

\*ALL SEMINARS BEGIN AT 10AM & ARE FREE TO ATTEND