

# Mid Summer Garden

Well I don't think I can ever get caught up in the backyard these days! My gardens have become so large that I'm constantly cultivating the soil! It seems as if just as I've finished one thing, another bed needs redone!

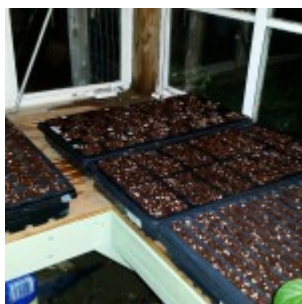
It has been a very successful tomato season for us even though many farmers have said the complete opposite due to all of the rain! Plenty of heirloom tomatoes here! At this time I have planted about 102 in my small space. The reason for that is a greenhouse lesson learned. In the years prior I seed started in the house where the environment wasn't ideal for sprouting. Davin was able to finish the greenhouse coop last fall and I was able to start my favorite varieties successfully for the first time. I put 3 seeds in each pod, and guess what, they all came up! So, I was able to sell a few at the farmer's market, and donated about 40 to a few local families. Lesson learned! We will be expanding our greenhouse coop into a full greenhouse with aquaponics in one section and a chicken care station below, in addition to our seed starting stations. That will be our next big project after Davin remodels the new coop again. I swear, how many times can you rebuild something until you are satisfied with the end result?

Our chickens are 20 weeks old on Wednesday! One of our Campines has been laying for almost 2 weeks straight now but none of the other ladies have begun yet. The campine eggs are tiny, a little smaller than a guinea egg actually. The new flock is having a hard time adjusting to the heat I think because we had so much

rain in the spring that it was actually pretty cool for much longer than it usually is. Since it's dried up for the past month or so it's been pretty hot and they are struggling, even though it hasn't reached 100 degrees yet. Luckily we have multiple fans in both the new coop and the old coop so all of our hens are getting some relief. It does help them to lay in the summer if they have places to cool off. We have multiple locations for water and I like to give them refreshing frozen or chilled afternoon fruit treats.

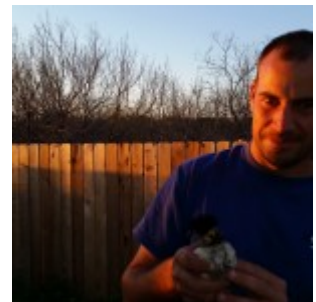
We also have ten different breeds, within the 20 birds we own. Four of them are 16 months old and three of them are consistently laying. The Ameraucana hasn't been laying eggs but has a deformed dorsal, which I've read is how some of the original Arcaunas were shaped. She did have some very soft shelled eggs and I'm not sure if she will lay again or not. So right now she's helping to control the bad bug population, and fertilization. She is one of the original ten pullets that we bought 8-10 weeks old and lost 60% for different reasons. Davin calls her Corky. For anyone considering raising chickens, get them as chicks, not as older pullets. They'll have a much better chance of survival and be much healthier if they grow up in the same environment.

Here are a few pictures to show you what's new at our market garden-backyard homestead and some of the things we've done this spring and summer!



A few plants that  
we got from  
Sunshine  
Community Gardens  
annual spring  
plant sale, 2015

Seed starts in  
the greenhouse



Davin's favorite.



Adjusting the new  
system.



Drip system runs  
off of rainwater  
and is very  
efficient.



Drinking  
harvested  
rainwater, packed  
full of  
electrolytes!

Another compost  
pile located in  
Sustainable  
Garden Bed



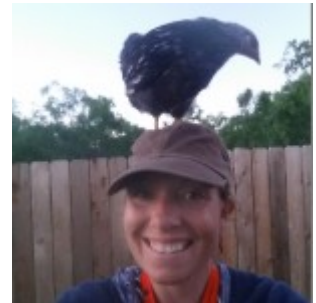
New grape bed and  
added garage sale  
decor to the gate



French Heirloom  
Creme de lite  
Carrot



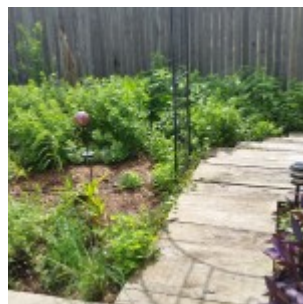
Walking onion



Yes, early  
bonding. They  
like to jump on  
my head!



Table grapes from  
Stark bro's.



Herb garden in  
the spring 2015



Citrus and  
succulents





New coop



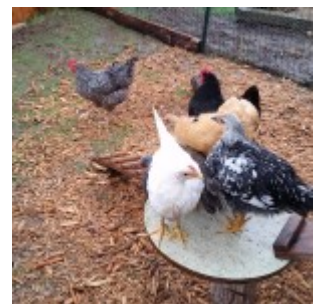
Just a little wet  
from the rain



Grew buckwheat to  
build the soil  
with nitrogen, as  
a beneficial  
insect promoter,  
and for chicken  
scratch



Compost for the  
chickens to  
scratch in

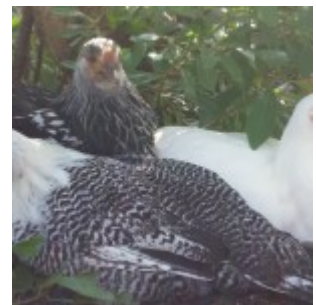




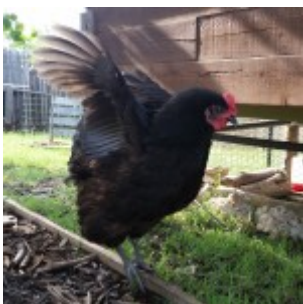
Everbearing  
raspberries



1015, Red, White,  
Texas Sweet  
Onions, were  
harvested early  
because of all of  
the rain and  
flooding.



Silver Campine,  
Leghorn, Heritage  
Breed Hens



This was our  
broody Australorp  
hen this spring!  
We got her back  
on track after a  
couple of weeks!



Buff Orpington,  
Ameraucana, J

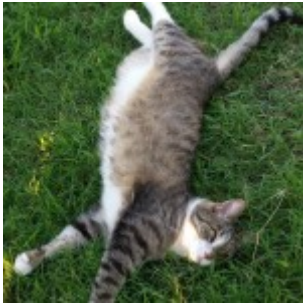




Brabanter  
Heritage Breed  
Hen



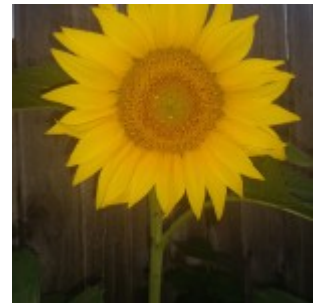
Norwegian  
Jaerhons,  
Heritage Breed  
Hens



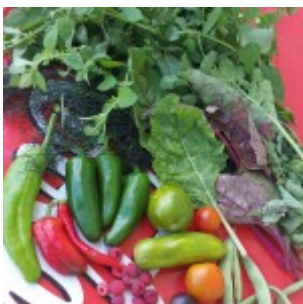
Mic relaxing



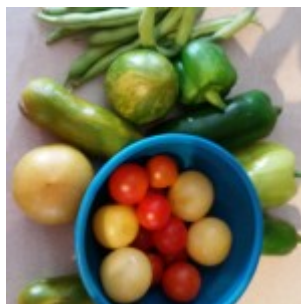
rattlesnake that  
I went face to  
face in while  
cultivating the  
corn bed



sunflower



late spring/early  
summer harvest



Some of the first  
harvests in the  
spring.



Heirloom Garlic





Giant Zinnia



A peek in the new coop



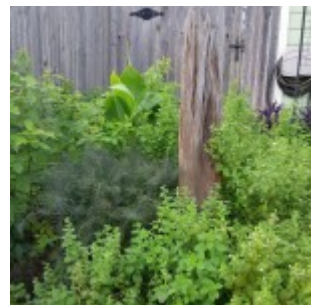
Garden in June



crimson  
watermelon that  
came up on its  
own free will



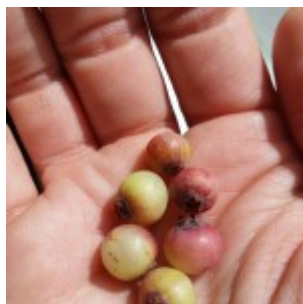
For some reason  
we have two  
banana spiders  
hanging above our  
nesting boxes on  
both coops. I'm  
ok with that too!  
They are well  
fed!



Melissa, fennel,  
raspberries,  
roses, cana, and  
an old log that  
we turned into  
garden art in the  
herb garden



Cinnamon basil



Pink lemonade  
blueberries



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# May Moments Bring Us Joy

Another Wednesday at the Manor Farmers Market. I met quite a few wonderful people today! I always enjoy engaging conversations with others who are involved in similar projects and experiments at home. We were talking citrus and although I love this fruit dearly, it has been an ongoing challenge of mine to get our Meijer Lemon, Lime, and Tangerine to grow fruitfully in the past. I reluctantly gave up this winter only to find myself getting new varieties this spring and more literature. The fact that I didn't have a single book on the matter is quite silly since I am immersed in so many others that revolve around food and dirt. My most favorite reads this spring have definitely been carried around with me wherever I go, thinking I'll have a minute or two.

*How to Grow More Vegetables* by John Jeavons, which John recommended (Natural Gardener). When I interviewed him in March I asked, if you could suggest one book, what would it be, and that was the one he promoted. I encourage you to get your hands on a copy. It incorporates biointensive growing methods, how many plants and calories you need to feed a certain number of people, and companion planting, ecosystem balance, charts,

soil fertility, sustainability, composting, open-pollinated seeds, propagation, seed saving, and of course so much more that I can't go into detail. You'll just need to get a copy yourself □ Build that library, put stickers-the ones you get sent to you in the mail with your address on them, in your paper passions and share them with your neighbors and friends who could use to earn a little more. Currently also reading the \$64 Tomato.

In that past month we've literally transformed our backyard haven with Davin adding gates to the gardens closest to the house to prevent our feathered friends from embarking on beans, peas, eggplant, and grapes. For some reason Davin thought it'd be funny to show them new things they could eat, before he built the fence, which meant flock sitting was necessary.

Our biggest accomplishment of the year in promoting sustainability is from our direct influence and education to our friends and neighbors on the importance of growing your own food, harvesting rainwater, repurposing materials, and alternative methods to grow plants, fruits, and vegetables. Right before we got the April/May issue of Mother Earth(ME) we sent a subscription to our neighbors the Calebs, since they had begun their conquest in transforming their backyard. Once we got that issue in the mail the letter from the Editor of ME asked readers to send a

subscription to someone new, I was gleaming with joy knowing that I did this right before they told others to! The stars are aligned. When affordability of growing a garden was brought up, I piped up, "you can't afford not to!" And thus their journey began. It has been extremely exciting watching them get enthralled in projects that procure Mother Earth. More importantly their children are also learning new skills too! We will be sharing pictures with you and the impressive strides they've made since February. The picture displayed is a picture with one of their girls helping Davin with beak trimming. When the Calebs started asking some basic gardening questions I decided they needed more than my blundering mind so I put together a small resource booklet for them of some of the things that were important. I included crop charts for the year, Ag Extension charts on crops that do well in our county, companion planting information, farmer's almanac info, basic gardening principles for handling drought and intense heat, seed companies to order from and gave them a stack of my Spring seed catalogs from various companies. I also advised them on local gardening centers, online resources and opportunities that might interest them. We've also opened up our green library to them which includes books and old issues of Mother Earth News. They sprung forward and have already learned the ever challenging journey that attaining a green thumb isn't always promising and definitely not easy. They take pride



in the fact that they have joined just in time to learn from all of our mistakes. It makes Davin and I chuckle for sure. We have had years of disappointment on growing certain crops here and are always researching this seasons insect challenges. We are very flattered that our methods of living have rubbed off on someone new, especially a family of six! We are thrilled to exchange ideas and lessons learned each week. Gardening humility keeps us humble and surely reminds me of what I'm here for and what my great grandmother taught me.

I got extensions on my two research projects at the University. I hope to finish them in the next month. I still have marketing surveys for seaweed compost and can email you one if you are interested, message me on Facebook or send me a message through our contact form. The sustainable agriculture project on agrivoltaic methods is more like farming in a third world country. I'm learning new skills that I didn't know I had, including learning how to balance extreme circumstances in the dirt, adversity against all odds, farming in the field alone.

Our spring projects combine different endeavors. Davin's been keeping busy learning about Hugulkultur, bee collecting, watching countless Wranglerstar youtube videos, searching for Morels in Texas and Missouri, and fishing Trout. He also went to Engineering school for work

and has been actively building new projects most every weekend. This past weekend he made a Heat Hut-a place for animals to dwell in the shade in the heat of the sun, three gates, and fenced in our greenhouse chicken coop, outdoor kitchen and shower, grapescape, long garden beds and clothesline lounge.

Some of our updated project pictures are shown. We will try to upload them by projects to our Project section on our site including new pictures of the updated Greenhouse and Chicken Coop that Davin finished in April. Some of the projects you see are my Ag Research Project on Agrivoltaic Systems, Heat Hut, Outdoor Garden Fencing, Spring Landscaping Projects in the front yard, Gardening Methods, Beneficial Insects, Rainwater Drip System, and Free Range Waterer.



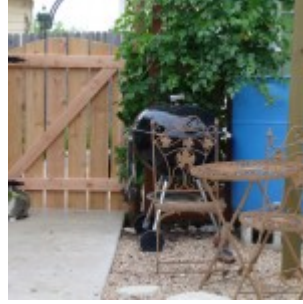
Papilio glaucus-  
Eastern Tiger  
Swallowtail



Herbs in the  
garden designated  
for beneficial  
insects



Davin's May  
Project 2014



Mic fenced in...



Herbs,  
Blueberries, and  
Table Grapes



Back Gate



Cover for  
Tomatoes



Tomatoes, Onions,  
Garlic, Peppers,  
Carrots,  
Radishes, Beets,





Pergola Garden  
Bed May 2014



Misty, Jubilee,  
Sweetheart,  
Sharpblue  
Blueberries



Container  
Gardening with  
Potatoes



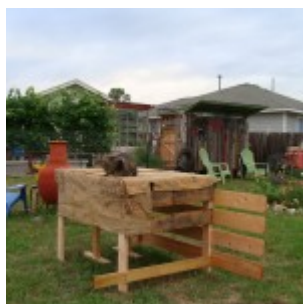
Davin stapling  
the burlap down  
to the frame



Let your free  
range animals  
find shade from  
the sun!



Rafe on the new  
heat hut.





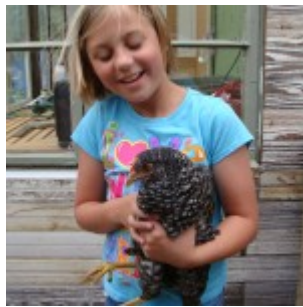
Make your own  
free range  
feeder!



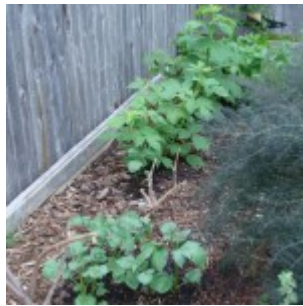
Easy to move free  
range water  
feeder



From the  
underside



Eversweet and  
Tristar  
Strawberries



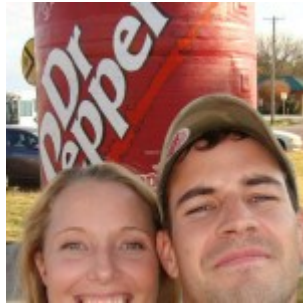
Herb Garden  
experiments



Cedar Hinged Door  
with lock for  
easy access.



Davin created this rainbarrel to collect rain from the Greenhouse coop which runs into the 4 drip feeders inside the coop.



Dublin, Texas in 2011



The ladies grazing



Prickly Pear Cactus, Cana Lily, Esperanza, Thyme, Marjoram, Bulbine



Transplants and Turf



Front Garden Bed



Kristin's Spring 2014 project:



After working soil, still



Spreading Dirt,

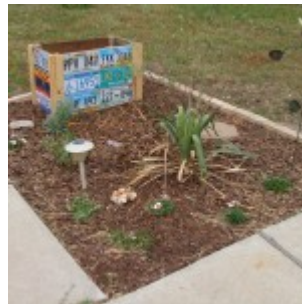


front lawn



New Front Spring  
Bed Near Curb  
March 2014

digging...



New Front Spring  
Corner Bed April  
2014, Kristin's  
Project

KK's project



Garden Music



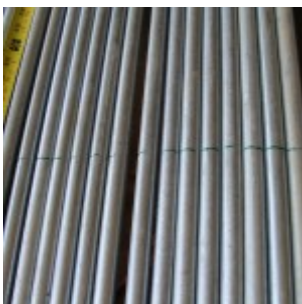
Ground I'm  
growing in,  
Kristin's Project  
for Sustainable  
Studies in  
Graduate School  
at Texas State  
University



More dirty  
madness



Sharpening the  
stakes



Measure the poles



Prop up the pole  
before you cut it



Cutting the stake



Bucket of 6 foot  
stakes



Sustainable  
Agriculture  
Project Spring  
2014



Control and  
Testing Site



Test site





Student  
Sustainable Farm  
Side Shade  
Paneling



Handpainted  
repurposed  
materials.

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## Please Take Part in Gulf Coast Seaweed Survey

So through my sustainability studies at Texas State University, master's program, I've been recruited to help finish some research that will be published; survey marketing project that is reviewing "the marketability of a seaweed-based compost as a "boutique" compost. The seaweed is an invasive species on the Gulf Coast. " We need 250 more surveys of gardeners who just look at samples of the compost. We need 10 people to actually try gardening with the compost & do interviews later. Anyone interested in taking a seaweed survey for

your garden? I am in the Central Texas area doing this research. Please sign up on my site if you are interested in participating in this study.

If you would like to read more about the impact of the latest news on the **Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative** check out the article listed to the featured picture; What Lies Beneath: Scientists Study Seaweed to Understand Gulf Oil Impacts.