Spring Fever!

Here in Texas we've experienced spring weather for quite some time. You can really tell it's spring when all the plants are blooming like crazy and there is green growth everywhere!

My lemon balm is crazy right now! Thank goodness the chickens love it and it smells incredible. Lemon balm, or Melissa, is excellent to grow anywhere in your garden. It's great to promote beneficial insects and deter pests. It's in the mint family.

I wanted to update you on some of our latest projects and with pictures because there have been so many this past year that the website doesn't do our backyard justice! So bare with me, I'm on my one week vacation from school, thank goodness! However the week isn't ever long enough, because the intensive six weeks classes can sometimes be pretty brutal. Just being honest and from me, you get nothing less. I don't sugar coat it, I'm sorry if that's what you wanted. This website is based on honesty.

Moving right along. I will attempt to blog more often, in my defense, I'm engaged in lengthy discussions online with school, so I will continue to share some of those blogs because often times I've done a bit of research and you may find them a lot more interesting since they are very informative in the food movement. My next class is vegetables to table, 5050.

Spring Ahead Locavores!

Spring ahead and become a locavore (Strolling of the Heifers, Inc. 2014)! But apparently Texas is last on the locavore index according to this Vermont organizati



on.
Although it's slightly outdated too, but Vermont is a tiny state and Texas is enormous so the fact that it's last on this chart is depressingly not surprising. At any rate size doesn't matter. Even though it clearly does to Vermont and y'all know the Texan saying, "everything's bigger in Texas!" But Texans probably aren't as concerned with the title of locavore as they are about doing what they've done for centuries, by living off the land. Keep it simple, support the community by buying from farmers you know or create your own food supply. You will find simpletons and sustainable homesteaders throughout this vastly and drastically different state with a variety of growing conditions in different ecoregions. I would say the Austin food system is doing well and on its way to getting better.

Do what you can to support your local community. Find out who the farmers are that live closest to you and find out if you can volunteer for them or join their CSA (community supported agriculture). CSA is when you sign up and pay dues to a farm of choice and they guarantee you a share of goods for a certain number of weeks out of their harvesting season. This is one of the best ways that you can support your local food system and help to create more food secure neighborhoods. By paying upfront for a share of the upcoming harvest, you help support the farmer before they plant the seeds that grow into the foods that feed us! Now you know what it means to join a CSA, muy importante!

If you aren't ready to make that kind of commitment just yet but are interested in gardening and having access to fresh produce, go to a farmers market and ask

some of the local vendors what they like to grow! There are generally very good ideas that evolve and transform at farmers market booths and you can also learn exciting new ways to cook unique produce and other goodies too! It's what I love most about going to the farmers market or selling at one myself. It's amazing the things you learn while talking to the community!

You can also go to a local nursery, preferably not a big box chain store, and ask them for help on what plants would be best for your area! If you want to start growing your own food, just know that you are amazing and you can do it! Don't quit after your first try and don't tell yourself that you have a black thumb because a plant died. There are a lot of things to contend with which is why it helps to go the experts at the garden center and I've found that'll help you get started on the right path if you don't have any other options. Many of nurseries have free classes about gardening, especially in the spring! Another reason to buy and learn locally!

Agriculture extension services are one of the best free gardening, farming resources out there. Take advantage of them, every state has extension offices that offer a variety of courses. Texas has some outstanding courses for new farmers and ranchers. I attended the Texas Agrability Workshop in January in Georgetown, Texas. It was fantastic!

Catching up with you, as usual my nose is in my studies and my blogging falls by the wayside! We have also been working on a bunch of outdoor projects this winter and we can't wait to post pictures. We will be updating all of the Late Bloom Homestead photos since we have made drastic changes in the past year. You'll be shocked as

to the progress. We also have had our 2nd flock of heritage breed chicks for almost 2 weeks! Please join our Late Bloom America Facebook to see pictures and any videos that we've posted. I posted one today to show you the chicken brooder with the rainwater drip nozzle system that Davin built.

I'm studying Sustainable Food Systems now at Green Mountain College, for my Master of Science Degree. I'm almost in my 3rd week of Sustainable Agriculture Theory and Practice. The program is very intensive and unparallel to any program of it's kind in the US. You may see some of my postings as a spin off of my discussions at school since I spend quite a bit of time preparing mini papers for grades, aka "discussions" are mandatory usually 6 times a week. So you can see how bad my website is slacking in this arena!

Ole man Winter, I was happy to see snow, play in it, go cross country skiing, and learn about the food systems in Vermont a few weeks ago. I also attended the NOFA conference in Burlington. Some of the workshops that I went to included a commercial mushroom farming presentation, the benefits of growing elderberries by four different farmers, secrets for growing popcorn, ginger, and sweet potatoes. Some others too. I personally found the Mother Earth News Fair ten times more educational at a fraction of the price. But the NOFA conference food was spectacular all presented from the local foodies throughout the region. They had an ice cream social Sunday evening from a local creamery and I was able to get fresh coffee and]cream ice cream, man it was good, can you believe it in -15 weather! Ha!

Works Cited

Strolling of the Heifers, Inc. "Strolling of the

Heifers 2014 Locavore Index highlights benefits of food from local farms.” *Strolling of the Heifers.* April 7, 2014. http://www.strollingoftheheifers.com/locavoreindex/ (accessed March 9, 2015).