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

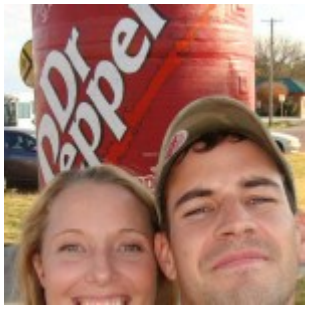
From the underside

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: front lawn

After working soil, still digging…

Spreading Dirt, KK's project

New Front Spring Bed Near Curb March 2014

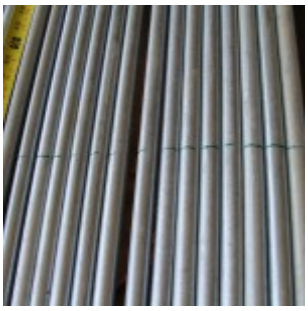
New Front Spring Corner Bed April 2014, Kristin's Project

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.

Stargazing, Mushrooms, Maples, Cliff Jumping, and Texas Adventures

UNICORN
COUNTRY

PECAN VALLEY HARDWARE

R. B. BAGLEY & SONS
PAPER SHELL
PECANS
PAPER SHELL

G&R GROCERY
EDWARD RAGSDALE
OWNER
• HOME OF •
BILL'S SEASON ALL
G & R GROCERY
BILL'S
Season All
TEXAS STYLE
GO BILLS
Thanks For
Shopping Here
$4.00
ARMADILLO COUNTRY
Reddyice

FIRE STATION

Some of the photos are from Brownwood State Park, Texas. Also

in San Saba, Texas.

We spent the past weekend exploring a new state park, Lost Maples in Vanderpool, Texas. The park is rather open which prevents privacy but ideal for RVs and each site provides a covered picnic area among the 30 sites; $20 a night. They do have six primitive sites available; $10 a night. This park really reminded me of Colorado Bend State Park because of the exquisite display of the Milky Way at night and literally every star and planet was visible. Words cannot describe the ambiance of the wilderness at night here.

We used our canopy tent frame and our mosquito screen as a makeshift tent. After using our fine mesh backpacking MSR tent and our 4 season car camping Marmot tent we have found that the minimalist approach, one step above sleeping in the open with no covering, is coolest for Texas camping. So we plan to build a pcp frame for this reason. We used our recycled pop bottle rug I acquired from Gaiam many years ago. It has proved to be the perfect addition to taking to the beach, hanging as a shade curtain at the farmers market, and for laying on the ground to establish a cozier campsite. It’s light, ventilated,waterproof, and one of the most ideal items to have for your outdoor spaces.

What’s most popular at Lost Maples State Park is the vast array of fall color changes due to the fact that there are acres of Maple trees dispersed throughout the park. Maple trees are hard to find in Texas and the majority of the state does not embody the fall color changes that the cooler parts of the U.S. do. They have a status update foliage report on the fall color changes so that visitors can come peruse the park in it’s prime on the Texas State Park website-Lost Maples State Natural Area page. Although we went before witnessing the transition of chlorophyll in action, there were just a few trees that have changed and were changing, less then 10 from what saw. They recommend visiting mid week in the fall, I’m guessing late Sept-early November is going to be ideal this

year from what we observed. We have seen some beautiful color changes in the trees in McKinney, and Northeastern Texas, while headed to Arkansas. This may be the case in Eastern Texas and perhaps Northwest Texas too.

We were able to cross this park off our bucket list of State Parks in Texas to visit and wouldn't mind going again to witness the peaking of the fall turn. We saw a lot of juniper and cypress beds which we feel this would also be a great place to find Morel mushrooms during the wetter times of the year, spring, and fall. We have learned this from the founder of the Texas Wild Mushroom Group. If you are into mushroom hunting in Texas this is a good start to becoming more in the know. We were overzealous to learn that we can actually acquire Morels here! Wohoo, this Michigander has found Morels and Maples in Texas, peace at last.

We went for a 5 mile hike the following morning and it was a pleasant excursion that ended near a spring fed pond (we hiked the East trail and the Maple trail.) Boy was that refreshing, I went swimming while Davin sat atop a cliff. I finally was inspired to jump off it into the waters below after another Texan showed me that it was safe. I'm guessing I was 30 feet up or so. It was exhilarating for sure. I've learned that the older I have gotten, the less nerve I have! Davin recorded my plight on his outdoor extreme camera, which consisted of me talking myself through the jump for the first 10 min, boring, and by the time I jumped I had a crowd of 30 or so watching. No backing out then, and alas I did it! "So dramatic," my husband said! If you know me you know this to be true. Ha ha.We recommend this park, you will enjoy the drive in and out, the winding roads submerged between rock reminded me a little of Pennsylvania and Colorado.

We stopped through Bandera, Texas on the way home. This town claims to be the Cowboy Capital of the world. We witnessed the tail end of a western enactment of Jesse James robbing a bank at the Cowboy Festival, over Labor Day weekend. We sipped on

homemade sarsaparilla soda and talked to local vendors. We went to a local restaurant that was ok but was delved in historical roots, nothing to write home about. We wished we had waited to eat because while driving through Boerne we stopped at our favorite local brewer, The Dodging Duck Brewhaus, and man, their food and beer is delectable and a place for your foodie & beer bucket list! They had a pumpkin ale on tap that resembled the taste of Chai in the form of a beer, it was exquisite. Their Nitro Stout was full of body too and Davin enjoyed their 8 time hopped IPA and their Pale Ale on tap. We had the pleasure of meeting the owner Keith and he shared his stories of playing the Trombone at the reunion of the UT Longhorn Band last Saturday in Austin. The first time we visited we met with some old friends of mine from Michigan who were in town. We had a Vanilla Pecan Ale from what I recall then, again, unparallel to others we've tasted in Texas. Don't miss this gem of a find, especially if you live in Texas!