

Bumblebees & Birds

Sometimes the best things that grow in your garden are the biggest surprises. Like this Peppermint Zinnia with a streak of solid red. How unique and beautiful it is. The butterflies and bumblebees love it too! We haven't seen honey bees much this summer but we sure have a ton of bumblebees, butterflies, hornets, and wasps. They haven't disturbed us and seem to be working along with the garden spiders, praying mantis, and lady bugs, so we're ok with that. Having great flowers like Maximillion Sunflowers that multiply in tens and butterfly weed, are essential to your garden landscape. We love having birds around too and were blessed with another great birdhouse to add to our gardens.















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.



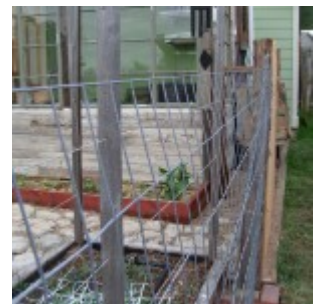
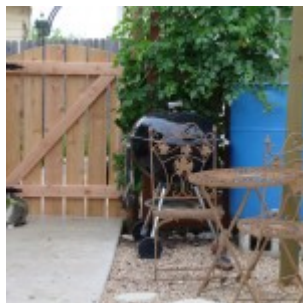
Papilio glaucus-
Eastern Tiger
Swallowtail



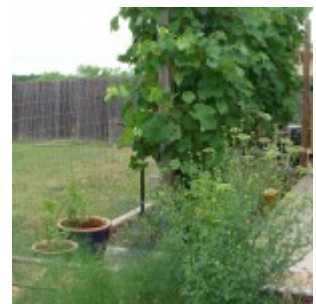
Herbs in the
garden designated
for beneficial
insects



Davin's May
Project 2014



Mic fenced in...



Herbs,
Blueberries, and

Table Grapes



Back Gate



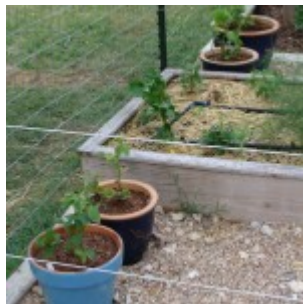
Cover for
Tomatoes



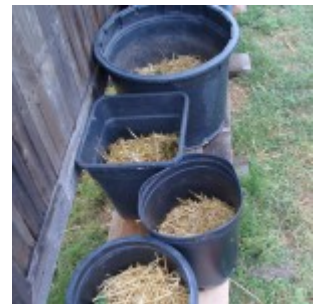
Tomatoes, Onions,
Garlic, Peppers,
Carrots,
Radishes, Beets,



Pergola Garden
Bed May 2014



Misty, Jubilee,
Sweetheart,
Sharpblue
Blueberries



Container
Gardening with
Potatoes



Davin stapling
the burlap down
to the frame

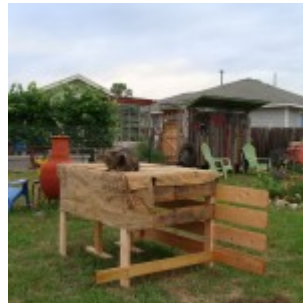


Let your free
range animals

find shade from
the sun!



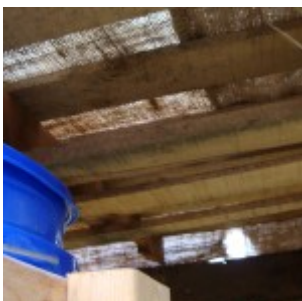
Rafe on the new
heat hut.



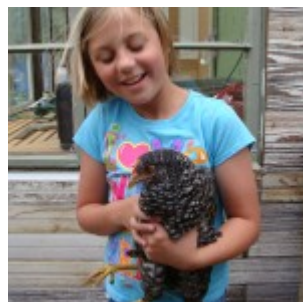
Make your own
free range
feeder!



Easy to move free
range water
feeder



From the
underside





Eversweet and
Tristar
Strawberries



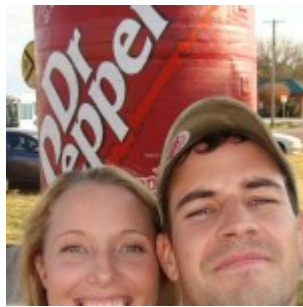
Herb Garden
experiments



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,



Transplants and
Turf



Front Garden Bed

Bulbine



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

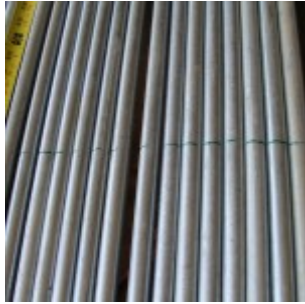


More dirty
madness



Sharpening the
stakes

Studies in
Graduate School
at Texas State
University



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.

Lady Bug Life

Well it's Friday. Another week nearing completion. It's a mighty windy day. The chickens are dodging one another in the shadows and drift ever so slightly. That's yarrow growing in my first butterfly garden bed. It's an excellent choice for encouraging beneficial insects to your yard. Flame acanthus, butterfly weed, candytuft, and sunflower are in the picture too.

I've been playing a lot of music the past two days. Rewriting old songs to make them better. Playing favorite songs of my favorite artist of all time, Tom Petty. I love all music and have so many favorites and influences but Petty stole my heart from a very young age. I started really listening to him when I was eleven. The most favorite collection that I've aquired of Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers is the Playback

album. The whole band is a masterpiece. The sound on each album is completely transformational at times sounding like the Grateful Dead and even Bob Dylan. If you are a fan, you must get your hands on it. It's my fave!

Getting ready to finish planting more in the garden beds. I've been pulling out all the giant weeds and have found oodles of lady bug nests on a variety of weeds. We are letting our front lawn overgrow with yellow clover. It naturally amends the soil and the chickens love it! I've been landscaping back via lasagna gardening style because it seems the most convenient for now. Basically transplanting my cherry bushes and some other perennials with some compost, dirt, humate, kelp, mixture, cardboard, and pine woodchips. The county gives us access to free wood chips but we haven't gotten any yet. We plan to minimize mowing by xeriscaping some areas, while also allowing the clay underneath to decompose into magical dirt by next year. If we weren't in such a drought stricken region we could turn the soil sooner. Hopefully by next winter we will be able to grow other cover crops and a variety of whole grains.



PHOTOS © HELEN M. ROMAN - WWW.HMRPRINT.COM

Lady Bug Transformation

Look for ladybugs and larvae on your weeds. They

love to eat aphids and other things on them. Also, check out what the larvae look like so that you don't harm them during their precious development stage. They look similar to other insect eggs which can make it difficult. Make sure they are in a cluster like this. I found an awesome pic from Helen M.Roman, to show you what to look for from start to finish. Pretty amazing. Now you know who the good guys are! Keep them in your gardens, and wait before you mow too soon. These beetles need all the help they can get. They are one of the best beneficial insects you can have!