

# 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.

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# Missing Emma

As we bury our fifth chicken we can't help but feel loss. She was such a pleasure to watch frolicking on her own, catching grasshoppers, eating grapes, scratching in the dirt...

Our backyard hens provide entertainment, companionship, and eggs. We will miss her and regret not knowing what was wrong when she tried to stick it out. While trying to diagnose her ailments once again we were overwhelmed with ideas. We know that doing an autopsy is one of the best ways to detect what it was although we didn't do one. Some of her symptoms were decreased coloring in her wattle and comb, as well as inflammation in her comb. This could be linked to several things through our research; SHS, vitamin deficiency(though not likely), Merek's(we've lost others to this), but without doing testing we will never know what it was.

This leads us to believe that it is even more important to hatch your own chickens for pasture-raised hens or even have chicks. We had purchased or bartered our chickens when they were 8 weeks old. I still believe that if we would have gotten them younger we could have bypassed a lot of issues that we had to begin with. We've heard that they have less problems when they are pinned up because there are so many things that can work against them in the wild. However since we lost all four of our naked necks we think that there was a correlation to that lineage even though we were told that they were the most disease tolerant. Experience in our case has been some of the hardest lessons to learn as we hone skills in homesteading. We can't help but get discouraged.