

# 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

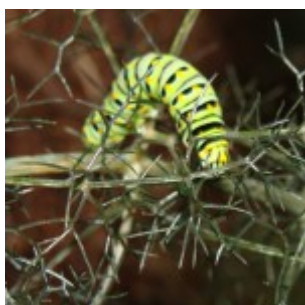
disappointment on growing certain crops here and are always researching this seasons insect challenges. We are very flattered that our methods of living have rubbed off on someone new, especially a family of six! We are thrilled to exchange ideas and lessons learned each week. Gardening humility keeps 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.



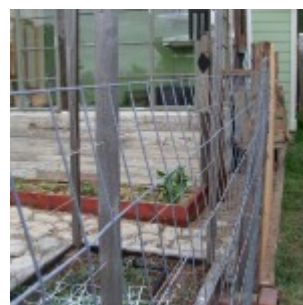
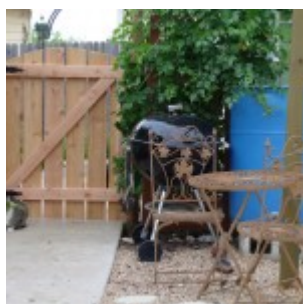
Papilio glaucus-  
Eastern Tiger  
Swallowtail



Herbs in the  
garden designated  
for beneficial  
insects



Davin's May  
Project 2014





Mic fenced in...



Herbs,  
Blueberries, and  
Table Grapes



Back Gate



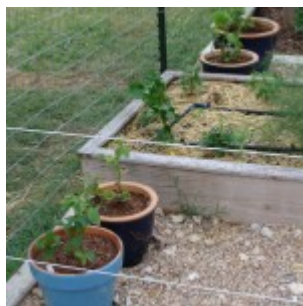
Cover for  
Tomatoes



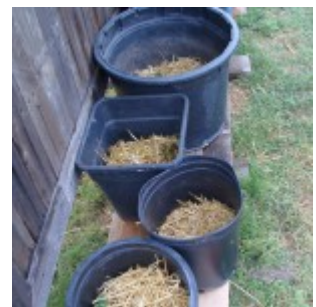
Tomatoes, Onions,  
Garlic, Peppers,  
Carrots,  
Radishes, Beets,



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!



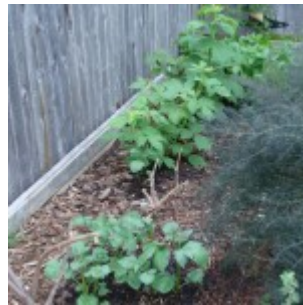
Easy to move free  
range water  
feeder



From the  
underside



Eversweet and  
Tristar  
Strawberries



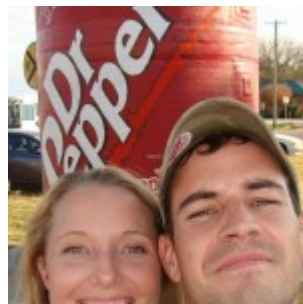
Herb Garden  
experiments



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.

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**Spring  
Fever=Ag+Edu+Bees+Onion  
Sprouting+Garden Seed Start**

# Smarts

I seriously need to get with the program. Full swing in Grad school continuing my sustainability studies and ready for the semester to be over! Did I say that out loud? 9 credit hours was too much I think. I guess 6 hours is full time when getting your Masters degree; and mine is a curious blend of sorts; Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies-Sustainability Studies. With the possibility of moving I searched for other programs in the Houston area and none came close to this one. I do wish I was fortunate enough to be in another state that has better offerings for sustainability opportunities however I've gained a lot of experience in the field just by volunteering. The great thing however is that it's a new program at Texas State. I'm also a part of three projects in my first semester which is why I'm feeling slightly overwhelmed; I'm working full time as an Intervention Teacher for Elementary kids, and doing some nannyng, while continuing my KKC creations shop online; my husband says that's a hobby. I am forever hopeful that my endeavors will turn from passions and dreams into successful and profitable differences. One day! We pray! ☐

**SEAWEED STUDY** Did you know there's thousands of kinds of seaweed?! You may recall me discussing the marketing study I'm continuing for publication. The long term goal for this class; Specific Problems in Agriculture; Independent Study, is to help clean up the sargassum seaweed; brown seaweed that evades the Texas gulf coastline. If you have traveled among these areas you will notice the build up. The proposal is to combine brown seaweed with other natural compostable materials and turn them into a marketable product; Seaweed Compost. The benefit would be shared by many; Texans wanting to contribute to education, cleaning up the ecosystem, gardening with compost that strengthens the drought tolerance of plants, supporting local products and jobs...sounds great right? There



has been quite a deal of work put into it, in fact there is another student who has been trying to also turn the seaweed into an edible product. Got your juices flowing? Getting surveys completed has been a lot more difficult than I imagined! I've done a couple days at the Natural Gardener in Austin which has been quite lovely because of the people that I've met and spoken with about various topics. One customer posed several great questions that put me to the test about what's in seaweed and why or why not; would it be toxic? Especially from the oil spills a couple of years ago, and all the other pollution in our oceans. What do you think about that question? While becoming more curious about the scientific data myself, I came across this very interesting study :Chemical analysis and toxicity of seaweed extracts with inhibitory activity against tropical fruit anthracnose fungi; not what I was searching for but yet very interesting.

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT** My other projects involve Boots & Roots; Veterans Community Garden, Venture Entrepreneurship project that is also going to be a proposed new nonprofit business for the Austin community and Veterans. One of the approaches taken to boost revenue for the nonprofit is to get grant funding and have a vermiculture farm that can make worm composting products, earthworm castings, etc. It's a pretty intensive class; we've also been reading books like Innovation and Entrepreneurship, The Monk and the Riddle, and Running Lean. Some of the books can be pretty dry from time to time but all very useful tools for the new venture. My fave has by far been Drucker. The historical references he reflects on for innovative change are intriguing.

**AGRIVOLTAIC AGRICULTURE** My final project in Special Topics in Agriculture is another study for publication. Based on previous studies done in France in 2011-2013. Renewable Energy, European Journal of Agronomy , and Agricultural and Forest Meteorology were all studies I reviewed in an effort to combine previous theories for successful biomass applications



in Agrivoltaic systems. I go to the school farm on Friday to see what kind of layout I have to work with. This project will be the most learning curve of them all because I will have to build miniature field sets with photovoltaic opaque panels(solar) and have controlled crops to test in two seasons. Yikers. I'm still working out the kinks. We are thinking about using Chard as the main crop to test the soil, moisture in soil, and biomass. If anything else comes up like the leaf proportions, I may add that too. Please send me thoughts and suggestions on this topic because it will be probably the most challenging project for me to do; simply because I've never done a field experiment like this before.

**BEES** her Earth News this month was concerning the chemicals that are found in nursery purchased plants, they harm bees! So it's very important where you buy your plant starts from, especially if they are edibles. Read more on Cheryl Long's article on what I'm talking about online regarding Neonic "pesticides that spread thorough plants and contaminate pollen and nectar." As much as I love hardware stores that give veterans discounts; Lowe's and Home Depot were mentioned. I generally buy my plant starts at other local garden centers anyways. But love to get my hands on clearance non edible plants at Lowe's that are going to be thrown out. This article may change the way you buy your living green friends, to help take care of our little fuzzy friends. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=2vQ5PV-bNtM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=2vQ5PV-bNtM)

**GARDEN STARTS** I highly recommend going to the Sunshine Gardens spring sale March 1st in Austin to get your gardens ready. Bring cash and something to transport the plants with like a wagon or cart. These community gardens are in the backyard for the School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Another great way to support your local community and nonprofits! Learn more about them by watching this video. Sunshine Community

Other garden centers to visit this spring that offer

affordable prices; Red Barn-love this place! AND they give military discounts, although they are north Austin they are worth the drive, they have a fantastic selection and are very friendly. Last year I got my onion starts there, Texas 1015 bunch for \$2.99-steal of a deal, and my red onions for the same, 120 in a bunch. So, if you have looked anywhere, online, catalog, and other places you won't find a deal like that unless you use your own onions as plant starts. We are doing that with some of our 1015s and red onions this year since I hadn't used them all and they started sprouting; I harvested them in May 2013 and they lasted until January! So our new sustainable garden start is using our own sprouted onions.

**SEEDS** I order seeds every year from various companies online. I get numerous catalogs in the mail, some of which I must discontinue since they send entirely too many. The most useful but somewhat expensive is Johnny's ; good company to support, employee owned. It's worth ordering a catalog because they give you an excellent and thorough description about what you're planting, the seed envelopes have entirely as much useful information on them as well. You could keep an old catalog for seed references because it's literally a little encyclopedia.

I also have gotten my tomato and pepper seeds from Tomato Growers Supply, and Burgess Seed Company. If I'm at Lowe's, yes I go to Lowe's, we save 10% always and we get great deals there, I may browse Seeds of Change organic seeds and Burpee Organic Seeds. This year I'm using a few new suppliers; Botanical Interests-killer deals on heirloom pole and organic seeds, Four Seasons Nursery-for inexpensive bulbs and bare root flowering bushes, Pinetree-unique herbs and fantastic prices, Territorial Seed Company-many unique items including mushroom starts, rhizomes for hops, and soap making supplies, very inexpensive seed pricing! What's important to me when ordering seeds; non gmo, organic or a good second option, heirloom, zone specific, good insect plants, North American

suppliers, company missions, quality products; free shipping, not outsourced-although I've found that some of the Midwestern garden supply companies are managed by the same companies of sorts and outsource customer service. I try not to use them for this reason because they don't understand what I'm talking about when dealing with plants.

Great fruit plant company I HIGHLY recommend Stark Bro's-guarantee to fruit, refund within the first year. Very happy with this company. I've purchased strawberry rhizomes, blueberry bushes, and grapes from them. Outstanding and personable customer service. Don't buy your fruit in a garden center when you can buy it online for much cheaper. Especially when it comes to strawberries, 25 shouldn't cost more than \$12.00, you can't buy that deal in a store anywhere.

p.s. Our chicken coop is almost ready and we are getting 4 Barred Rock Dual purpose chickens! Yeah! Look for updated photos in our Sustainable Projects link.

Gardens<http://www.motherearthnews.com/~media/Images/MEN/Editorial/Special%20Projects/Issues/2014/02-04/The%20Dangers%20of%20Neonicotinoid%20Pesticides/Flying-Honey-Bee%20jpg.jpg>