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Poor Will’s Countryside Almanack — 100/5

July 26th, 2016

By W. L. Felker
THE SUN

Autumn equinox occurs on September 22 at 10:21 a.m. as the Sun enters Libra.

Cross-quarter day is October 23, the halfway mark between autumn equinox and winter solstice. The sun enters Scorpio at the same time.

THE AUTUMN MOONS SEPTEMBER:
THE PUFFBALL MUSHROOM MOON

New moon Sep 1: 4:03 a.m.

2nd quarter Sep 9: 6:49 a.m.

3rd quarter (full moon) Sep 16: 2:05 p.m.

4th quarter Sep 23: 4:56 a.m.

SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER:
THE FROG AND TOAD MIGRATION MOON

New moon Sep 30: 7:12 p.m.

2nd quarter Oct 8: 11:33 p.m.

3rd quarter (full moon) Oct 15: 11:23 p.m.

4th quarter Oct 22: 2:14 p.m.

OCTOBER – NOVEMBER:
THE SECOND SPRING MOON

New moon Oct 30: 7:12 p.m.

2nd quarter Nov 7: 2:51 p.m.

3rd quarter Nov 14: 8:52 a.m.

4th quarter Nov 21: 3:33 a.m.

Lunar Perigee, the moon's most powerful position closest to Earth, occurs on September 18 and October 16. Lunar Apogee, the moon's weakest position farthest from Earth, occurs on September 6 and October 4.

THE PLANETS

Venus is the dominant evening star throughout the autumn. Mars flirts with her nearby in Sagittarius. Saturn shadows them both, seeming to almost touch Venus on October 30. Jupiter becomes the morning star on October 10 and keeps this position throughout the remainder of the year.

THE STARS

Autumn evenings bring the Milky Way from east to west across the sky. As midnight approaches, the red eye of Taurus will have risen over the horizon, pulling December's Orion with it.

THE SHOOTING STARS

October 7-8: The Draconids

October 21-22: The Orionids (in Orion)
METEOROLOGY

Weather history suggests that cold waves usually cross the Mississippi River on or about the following dates: September 2, 8, 12, 15, 20, 24 and 29; October 2, 7, 13, 17, 23, and 30. Fish, game, livestock and people tend to feed more and are more active (and more troublesome) as the barometer falls one to three days before these weather systems.

A CALENDAR OF HOLIDAYS AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS
for Gardeners, Ranchers & Homesteaders

September 5: Labor Day

September 12: Eid Al-Adha: (Festival of Sacrifice)

September 15: Harvest Moon Festival

October 1 – 9: Navaratri /Navadurgara

October 2 – 30: Al Hijira

October 3 – 4: Rosh Hashanah

October 11: Ashura

THE ALMANACK DAYBOOK

SEPTEMBER

1. Today is new moon day, the beginning of the best two weeks in early fall for planting and transplanting plants that produce their fruit above the ground.

2. Fertilize cool season pastures to maximize their growth potential.

3. Hickory nutting season opens.

4. Consider marketing to the high number of ethnic feasts in September and October.

5. Defoliate cotton plants to increase fiber quality.

6. Lunar apogee today creates ideal lunar conditions for harvest, working with livestock and marketing your produce.

7. The percentage of cloudy days increases quickly now throughout the nation.

8. Farmers are cutting corn for silage all across the nation's midsection.

9. The sweet potato harvest has begun in North Carolina, the potato harvest in Wisconsin, the peanut and sorghum harvest in South Carolina.

10. Autumn grass may be lower in protein than its spring counterpart. Consider a protein supplement for livestock.

11. Lush fall grasses have been related to laminitis; inspect hooves on a regular basis.

12. The nighttime chorus of insects diminishes in direct proportion to the drop in temperatures and the reduced number of surviving species as fall advances.

13. In the fields, goldenrod is peaking, forecasting the end of wildflower time.

14. Dig tender gladiolus and dahlia bulbs, and store them for the winter away from frost and moisture.

15. Keep your horses away from acorns when the September 15 cold front brings wind and rain.

16. Today's full moon increases the chances for colder weather and light frost.
17. Early fall is bulb-planting month in the northern half of the country. Plant now as the moon wanes.

18. Lunar perigee today, so close to full moon, doubles the likelihood of frost across the northern states.

19. Harvest silage and cut hay and tobacco as the moon wanes. Then cut the nails on all your pets.

20. The cranberry harvest begins as berries darken in the cooler weather.

21. Get ready to seed or re-seed spring pasture and the lawn.

22. The waning moon also favors clipping hair, trimming hooves, worming livestock, pruning shrubs or trees to retard growth, cutting firewood, and having surgery.

23. When the day's length falls below 12 hours along the 40th Parallel (along a line between New York City and Denver), then the sugar beet, pear, cabbage and cauliflower harvests commence.

24. Cobwebs become much less common as insect populations cede to the cold.

25. The slowness of the calls of crickets and katydids as the nights grow colder reflects the weakening of the sun's power.

26. Complete autumn culling now before feed supplements become necessary. Animals that can be kept at relatively low cost in the summer turn out to be much more expensive as pastures become dormant.

27. The slaughter of chickens is recommended when the moon is dark, especially just when the weather turns cold.

28. The last cold front of September and the first weather system of October will be strengthened by new moon on the 30th.

29. Dogs and cats can spread their fleas to hogs and other livestock. Keep your pets free of parasites throughout the fall and winter to come!

30. Once again this month, the moon is new, increasing the likelihood of storms and frost.

**OCTOBER**

1. As the weather cools, keep warm water on hand for your brood ewes and does. They will be drinking more now.

2. Fertilize fields after harvest in order to decrease the springtime workload.

3. Transplant new trees and shrubs, and then make sure they have plenty of water.

4. Lunar apogee today should help to bring mild weather as the moon waxes through the week.

5. Middle fall, the time that most leaves turn and drop, now arrives along the 40th Parallel.

6. Dig gladiolus bulbs prior to heavy frost.

7. Woolly bear caterpillars suddenly multiply.

8. As cold weather settles across the North, be especially careful your pigs don't get chilled.

9. Place salad greens in the cold frame in northern states. Mulch root crops there too.

10. Pull or plant posts during the low-pressure systems that arrive before cold fronts. Temperatures are often warmer and the ground may be more cooperative at these times.

11. In the garden, the addition of manure and compost throughout the autumn months allows full incorporation of that material with the soil.

12. Bulbs intended for winter and spring forcing should be placed in light soil now and stored in a place where temperatures remain cool (but not freezing). Then force and sell them in early spring.
temperatures remain cool (but not freezing). Then force and sell them in early spring.

13. The October 13 high-pressure system marks the transition from leaf-turn to leaf-fall in the mountains of the Northwest and Northeast; in the central states maples become orange and red.

14. Make sure ventilation in the chicken house is adequate at the floor level and near the ceiling.

15. The moon is full today, bringing frost and a good chance of snow to the northern states. Be alert for poisoning in your flock and herd due to toxic changes in the chemical composition of grasses and alfalfa after frost.

16. Lunar perigee today increases the likelihood that middle October weather will be challenging.

17. Provide free choice hay to livestock in order to reduce the chance they will gorge themselves on fresh growth as pastures grow back in milder autumn weather.


19. Colder ground temperatures (in the 40s and 50s) combine with a reduction in the average amount of daylight and sunlight this month to bring an end to the grazing season in much of the northern half of the nation this month.

20. Gradually increase feeding of grain and free choice hay as the weather cools.

21. Before you let your pastures rest for the winter, do your soil test and add nutrients as needed. Soil tests after harvest of corn and soybeans let you plan ahead for spring fertilizer requirements.

22. The shorter days bring a surge of hormonal energy to many animals and people; take advantage of that energy to get ready for winter.

23. Today is Cross-Quarter Day, when the sun reaches halfway to winter solstice.

24. If you want your hens to lay all winter, consider providing 14 hours of light for them — the period that usually produce best production.

25. Be careful of giving your animals the wrong percentage of grain in their fall and winter diet. Too much grain can lead to too much fat in the udder and reproductive tract.

26. Feed your trees after all their leaves are down. If you put the leaves in bags and leave them behind the garage or barn, they will turn to compost and be ready for the garden in March of 2018.

27. In the cranberry regions of the country, most of the berries have been brought in from the bogs.

28. The moon is new on the 30th, intensifying tides in the sea and creatures. In the North, seed the last of the winter greens and plant winter grains under this dark moon.

29. In the South, a gradual alteration in leaf tone forecasts November's radical transformation.

30. The moon is new today, and the weather should be brisk, keeping some of the trick-or-treaters at home.

31. High pollen counts are over in most of the country until early next spring.

**LUNAR FEEDING PATTERNS FOR PEOPLE, FISH AND BEASTS**

When the moon is above the continental United States, creatures are typically most active. The second-most-active times occur when the moon is below the earth.

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<th>DATE</th>
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<tr>
<td>September 1 – 8</td>
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<td>September 9 – 15</td>
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WINNERS OF THE JULY-AUGUST SCKRAMBLER

Poor Will promised $5 to the 1st, the 10th, the 25th, the 66th and the 130th person to return their correct Sckrambler solutions before the answers appeared in the next Countryside.

The first correct respondent (who also identified the typo and therefore wins $10) was Judi Gasior from Lisbon, Ohio. Jeffery Goss from Billings, Missouri, was the 42nd correct respondent to the May-June Sckrambler.

ANSWERS TO THE JULY – AUGUST SCKRAMBLER

ELESK — LEEKS

NIPSHCA — SPINACH

TEEBS — BEETS

SIDARHES — RADISHES

ILOCCORB — BROCCOLI

VCBGAAE — CABBAGE

TELTCUE — LETTUCE

NOOISN — ONIONS

RRACSTO — CARROTS

AAAUSPRGS — ASPARAGUS

RDOLLASC—— COLLARDS

RABIKOHL — KOHLRABI

SAEP — PEAS

NESAB — BEANS

NURTIPS — TURNIPS

EALK — KALE

AIGLRC — GARLIC

SNOODRAC — CARDOONS

RAPINI — RAPINI
THE SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER SCKRAMBLER

If you are the 2nd, the 12th, the 27th, the 65th or the 139th person to return your correct Sckrambler solutions before the answers appear in the Countryside to Poor Will, P.O. Box 431, Yellow Springs, OH 45387, you will win $5. There should be no typos in this puzzle, and no typo prize will be awarded. If you happen to find a typo, however, you may simply skip that word without penalty.

SEOUH
HOEM
DHSE
NARB
TOUGNIBIUD
SEOUHTOU
VYRPI
SPTCIE SSTMYE
UINGBMPL
EEIIYLCTRCT
ACEFURN
SUINNIOTAL
EFRI OWOD
LCOA
LFUE LIO
AUANTRL SGA
RMSTO WWNDSOI
TSORM ODORS
RETHEAW OROPGINF
KINGLCAU

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Tags: a, and, animals, best, chicken, chicken house, cold, compost, countryside, cut, deviled, does, dogs, fiber quality, for, free, fresh, fruit, goldenrod, hole, horses, in, insects, last, livestock, make, manure, most, pigs, plant, planting, plants, regions, salad, soil, spring fertilizer, that, the, to

It's Time to be a Helper

July 26th, 2016

By Alexis Griffie
The world of agriculture is so vast that people can spend generations involved in farming and ranching and still not be fully versed. This vastness combined with the constant new technology and scientific advances makes this uncharted territory for those new to agriculture. The face of farming is changing and more and more, and people everywhere are heeding the call to return to their roots. While this is terrific news for the future of agriculture, this does create a problem since many of these new farming families did not have the advantage of growing up in agriculture.

While we live in the “Information Age,” information does not always translate into knowledge. Since anyone can have a blog, book or website, facts can become misconstrued and misinformation can be spread erroneously even with the best of intentions. Like a game of telephone, true knowledge can be passed along incorrectly, or with a slant of personal opinions. This can be a very misleading and confusing world to navigate for the new farmer!

While books abound on all subjects and aspects of agriculture, area specific knowledge is vital. What may work for the author of that particular book in Florida will not help the farmer in Alaska. Even if you do not feel like it, your area specific knowledge is invaluable. If new farmers mistakenly follow a book that is wrong for their location and fail, how long do you think they will be a part of agriculture? With the numbers of farmers, ranchers and homesteaders falling steadily each year, we must all pitch in to offer any service that we can to help out those new to farming.

Words that have long resonated with me were from Fred Rogers. Perhaps it was because as a child, myself and countless others grew up with his kind, moral guidance. Rogers simply said, “When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’”

I have tried to keep this approach in my life. As we have been through different experiences, I have found that it goes far deeper than one might interpret at first glance.

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A lot of things in life can be scary. “Scary” does not always come from disaster, but sometimes it can come from a journey into something new and unknown. Many people are recently following a calling back to land and agriculture. People are leaving their safe lives behind and venturing into this new world, and that is scary. Despite the fear, the uncertainty of entering a new world, the large financial investment of farming and homesteading, these people wade in undaunted. So, the question is, if someone new comes into the world of agriculture is looking for a helper, will they be able to spot you?

A lot of people truly have the desire to help others. It is not due to lack of care that they cannot be seen as they do their good works. Often times, well-intentioned people have no idea how to help beginning farmers! Depending on where your experience lies, there are several possibilities.

Some people may have an affinity for working with youth while others may enjoy public speaking. By being honest with yourself about your gifts, abilities and passions, you can come up with a plan to be a helper.

Not only does getting involved in youth programs help educate the youth, but it also helps to guide them as well. By volunteering your time, you become far more than a teacher; you become a mentor. There are far too many negative role models that our kids look up to these days. Guiding them, supporting them and helping them develop an understanding of something that could possibly become their livelihood will never be forgotten. Programs like 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA) are always welcoming of those within their local community who want to assist. It does not necessarily take a lot of time to go and speak at a 4-H club meeting, but the effect that you could potentially have on those children could literally be life altering.

Local fairs can also be extremely educational and full of advocates of agriculture. Unfortunately, many fairs have turned away from their agriculture roots to chase after fancy shows and rides. Traditionally, fairs are where people can highlight their agricultural feats. Modern fairs that still embrace agriculture often have booths, events and displays that promote certain local areas of farming and ranching. By joining the fair board or volunteering, you can help to make sure that your local fair continues to stay on the correct path and supports farming. By even showing up to the planning meetings, you are stating that agriculture is still important and valid in your town! If you want to take things a step further, you can offer
A lot of time, especially if we are in the business of agriculture, we mistakenly see newcomers as threats rather than allies. I have seen frequently where newcomers are given the cold shoulder and treated like outsiders. Not only is this discouraging and morally inappropriate, if you’re in the business of agriculture, it is seen by your buyers—especially if it is at a setting where you are face to face with your customers. The biggest fear is generally loss of sales if more people start coming into agriculture. While this may seem like the logical assumption at first, the truth is far different. Instead of being competition, these new farmers should be your allies! Strength in numbers applies to far more than just battles. By fostering a relationship with those who have similar interests, you are able to work together to ensure that you are on the same page with matters like pricing, public education, marketing and more. This relationship will ensure that you do not undercut each other and it will keep any bad mouthing at bay as well. You do not have to tear down other producers to build yourself up.

On another note, there are some times where the farmers have to come together to stand up for each other or to fix a problem. With farming land under constant threat of encroachment, this scenario has become all too common. In cases like zoning changes, one farmer may have a powerful voice, but a group of farmers that have become allies are a force to be reckoned with. On a smaller note, there have been numerous times when a piece of equipment breaks down on harvest day or the cows get out where you need help. If you have created and fostered a caring and generous relationship with others, they will always be the first to offer to help when you find yourself in a time of need.

Your local extension office can be a wealth of information. While the agents may have degrees, they may not necessarily have experience. Even if your extension team is well versed in some areas in agriculture, there may be other parts that they have no firsthand knowledge about. This is often the case when it comes to various types of livestock. Since most people are familiar with their extension office, this is a great way to reach out. By going in and introducing yourself to your local agents and offering to help, you could potentially become a valued resource. Even if you leave your name and number for them to give out when they get a call for help on certain issues, this is a great way to reach out and also get involved in the community.

If there is a particular aspect of agriculture that you are experienced in, consider offering a class or an open house on your farm. Even if you charge a small fee for your time, your willingness to help and mentor will not be forgotten. For example, with the recent local surge of beekeeping, there are several people that jumped in head first without a full understanding of what was needed to keep bees. Many local farms are now offering classes that teach the aspects of beekeeping that are so often overlooked. Sometimes, all it takes is the invitation to your farm for people to get ideas. You will be surprised how easy it is to teach a class once you get started!

Even if you do not feel experienced enough to teach a specialized class, just seeing how you set up your barn or manage some other part of your farm may be helpful. While these simple things may seem insignificant to you, it may really help out someone that is new. Another similar option is to simply offer farm tours, and not a full class. Farm tours will help to engage and encourage the general public. You never know whose fire for agriculture may be sparked by the generosity of you opening your farm to them. Generally, farm tours and classes will be advertised by your local extension office, 4-H or even your local newspaper. Aside from the benefit of uniting the community and truly exposing others to what it takes to get food on the table, this is an excellent way to reach youth as well. Many schools will sign up for field trips to farms that offer farm tours and have friendly and educational opportunities. Farm tours do not have to be terribly in-depth. The biggest thing is to provide basic understanding of agriculture and then just let their questions flow! By letting people see firsthand, you have opened up a whole new world of understanding to them and there will be questions that they did not even know they had!

Similarly, if you live around a local college that offers agricultural or veterinary programs, another suggestion is to contact the professors to offer your assistance. Despite the best efforts of professors, there is only so much that they can truly teach their students from a book. Many schools with veterinary programs are searching for local farms they can visit with the students. This opportunity will allow for the students to interact with the animals, practice basic procedures like blood draws, hoof care and general evaluation. Often times, veterinary programs are very lacking when it comes to large animals. One large local veterinary college stated that it only spends one chapter on studying goats! Nothing beats hands-on education from kindergarten to college! By getting involved in a program like this, you will literally be setting up the next generation of veterinarians and farmers!

A lot of time, especially if we are in the business of agriculture, we mistakenly see newcomers as threats rather than allies. I have seen frequently where newcomers are given the cold shoulder and treated like outsiders. Not only is this discouraging and morally inappropriate, if you’re in the business of agriculture, it is seen by your buyers—especially if it is at a setting where you are face to face with your customers. The biggest fear is generally loss of sales if more people start coming into agriculture. While this may seem like the logical assumption at first, the truth is far different. Instead of being competition, these new farmers should be your allies! Strength in numbers applies to far more than just battles. By fostering a relationship with those who have similar interests, you are able to work together to ensure that you are on the same page with matters like pricing, public education, marketing and more. This relationship will ensure that you do not undercut each other and it will keep any bad mouthing at bay as well. You do not have to tear down other producers to build yourself up.

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No one is innately born a farmer. Some are fortunate enough to be born into a family who farms, but that still requires the passing on of knowledge and skills. At one time or another, we were all beginners. There is nothing greater than the agricultural community coming together as one united front. It is time that we stop asking, “What do I get?” and start saying, “What can I give?” With the changing face of agriculture, farmers now have a rare opportunity. Not only can we be role models when it comes to agriculture, but also morally as well. Due to all of the newcomers to agriculture, we have a chance to set the bar high when it comes to how we help each other. We have a chance to model all that a farmer stands for, sustainability, freedom, strength and kindness. A farmer alone is strong; yet a farmer backed by other farmers literally supports the world.

Tags: a, and, animals, beekeeping, bees, best, cold, cows, deviled, does, experience, facts, for, friendly, goats, growing, guide, head, hole, homesteading, how, how. to, hydroponics, in, livestock, local farms, long, make, most, that, the, to, types of livestock, what, whole

Sweetgrass Holds a Special Place in the Hearts of Charlestonians

July 26th, 2016

By Anita B. Stone

Homesteaders, country crafts and cultural traditional art seem to thrive in a parallel universe across the globe. Regardless of location, everyone has become doorkeepers of their own eco-friendly environments, sustainability and green space in an attempt to preserve tradition and maintain a healthy society. So it is with basket weavers who collect and weave from the land in order to create artistic forms. Unforgettable crafts and traditions continue to thrive, some reaching the boundaries of extinction.

Agritourism and history weave a tangle of tradition in the city of Charleston, South Carolina, and continues to amaze visitors through generational crafts. Although noted for its charm, elegance and aesthetic magnetism, the city is popularized for a culture that began more than 400 years ago during the plantation era—the artistry of sweetgrass basket-making, one of the oldest forms of basket weaving.

Originating in Africa, sweetgrass basketry remains popular in the 21st century. Although time has not depleted the art, progress has begun to affect the tradition because of land development. So you might say that progress has begun to deteriorate one of the greatest and oldest forms of art.

The history and equipment is simple. Sweetgrass weavers utilize a perennial known as Muhly (Muhlenbergia capillaries filipes) grass as a staple.

Ascertained botanically in 1843, Muhly Grass Basketry has been handed down through generations, introduced into the low country in South Carolina. Sweet oil resonates from these baskets; hence, the sweetgrass basket logo. Today Sweetgrass basket making involves four woven ingredients, including bulrush (Scirpus lacustris), long leaf pine needles (pinus palustris), sweetgrass (muhlenbergia), sewn with strips of palmetto leaf (Sabal palmetto).

Muhly grass is a flexible, soft material and grows in rich moist soil. The baskets themselves suggest salty marshland and fresh hay. The major component of grass grows in bands along tide lines, usually near sandy soil and as some report being close to dunes along the ocean. Because of the depletion of sweetgrass, new areas are being explored, extending from South Carolina, along the coast around islands such as Kiawah (where Indian tribes once inhabited the land), Seabrook and Hilton Head, to name a few, to Texas.

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In its prime, sweetgrass baskets were woven by African slaves who not only crafted them but sold them to patrons and plantation owners. Those who purchased the baskets began filling and transporting vegetables. If we fast forward from plantation days to current life, sweetgrass baskets continue to be used as an agricultural tool, as a continuous cultural enterprise and as an ornamental flare. Basket weavers carried on the tradition for centuries. Because the grasses grow in wetlands and marshes, water will not hurt the baskets. They can be washed in soapy water and rinsed in cold water and should then be air-dried.

Basket making has always involved the entire family. Men and boys would gather the materials, while women designed several baskets of different size and proportions for everyday storage, including bread baskets, fruit carriers, sewing paraphernalia, and clothing. Men also began the craft, weaving large baskets from bulrush, marsh grass found in the area. Rice baskets became popular during the rice and cotton plantation era. Each time the rice was collected the process would rid the rice of the husk. Rice baskets were used for carrying cotton, seafood, grain and bread. Fanner baskets were woven to resemble fan-like art and would become a staple in the homes of many plantation owners.

From field to trade, this traditional craft has survived generations and will continue to do so. An impressive interview with sweetgrass weaver, Celestine Flippen, revealed that she and her four sisters, as well as six grandchildren, practice the art of sweetgrass basket making. A weaver of 22 years, she explained how time-consuming it is to make one basket. She exuded a sense of pride as she spoke, as though she were at the top of her class. One could almost feel her enjoyment through the sparkle in her eyes and the sureness of her voice. “It can take as much as two and one-half months to make one basket,” says Flippen. “It is very hard work,” she added.

During the rice and cotton plantation era, large baskets became increasingly popular for carrying agricultural products from place to place. Many people wove, collected and stored vegetables in sweetgrass baskets, which held their needs. The same farmers often sold their baskets to other plantation owners.

What is causing the depletion of sweetgrass? Due to an influx of land development along coastal islands and marshlands, developers often ignore preservation of sweetgrass because it is visualized as a weed or brush that requires clearing. If we are not careful natural sweetgrass may become extinct and a historic art form will be lost along with part of the culture of a people. To curb extensive growth is a complex situation. As a horticultural and educational community we need to be concerned with the preservation and cultivation of this perennial. Search for materials has taken basket makers outside the community from North Carolina to Florida. Public interest and land access must continue if the art is to progress.

Basket makers are both designers and technicians of their own creation. That is why no two baskets look the same and premium prices are requested.

Not far from Charleston, once a small fishing village for half a century, Mt. Pleasant offered a large source of sweetgrass basketry. Today it has dwindled also because of land development and, therefore, roadside stands have lessened in number. Roadside basket stands are directly accessible to tourists, where you can see the weavers working hard. Many descendants of slaves hold the distinction of being the only place where this particular type of basketry is handmade.
The Sweetgrass Preservation Society is doing what it can to keep this traditional trade alive. A South Carolina politician introduced a bill to allow sweetgrass baskets to become the state craft. The palmetto, a major material within the basket, is the state tree. And the tourist trade enhances the thriving of the industry.

In 1988, a biological and ecological assessment was made regarding sweetgrass resources and the impact of coastal development. The results of the conference were positive, including several public and private industries that pledged support of the sweetgrass. Even city zoning progressed forward by the pledge to make preservation of the basket stands a goal. The Association of Mt. Pleasant Basketmakers is leading the way to promote, preserve and protect sweetgrass tradition.

In June 2003, Charleston Sweetgrass was formed to bring 21st century support to basket makers. Descendents of slaves from West Africa continue the tradition with over 100 styles of baskets available and for sale. There is even a sweetgrass basket repair service for those who require it.

The mission statement of Sweetgrass is “to preserve the heritage, legacy and traditions of the culture and their basket-making art form. To protect the sweetgrass natural habitats and its environment from destruction by: utilizing the yearly Sweetgrass Cultural Arts Festival as a venue to bring focus and attention to the declining natural habitat locations where basket makers harvest the sweetgrass needed to produce their art form. ...To be totally inclusive of all sweetgrass basket makers...in our efforts to protect and preserve the culture.”

A variety of basketweavers continue to thrive on the homestead, beginning with a practice that has lasted for centuries. One of the most important concepts to remember is if we want to hold and keep any art forms intact for future generations, we must take responsibility to preserve the environment and its natural resources.

Not only is sweetgrass important to Charleston's history, it's interwoven into family histories. With the determination and dedication of sweetgrass weavers such as Celestine Flippin, her family and descendants, the historical art form, with its one-of-a-kind beautiful designs and patterns, will continue to grow and prosper.

Anita B. Stone writes regularly about plants and gardening for Countryside.

Tags: a, and, cold, countryside, deviled, dried, for, fresh, friendly, fruit, head, heritage, hole, homestead, how, in, ingredients, long, make, most, natural, outside, plants, popular, preservation, sandy soil, soil, that, the, the homestead, to, what

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The Benefit of Growing Weeds

July 26th, 2016

By Marshall Nych, Pennsylvania

From personal experience, allow me to save you, the reader, any embarrassment associated with punching “benefits of weeds” into one's preferred internet search engine. In addition to instantly becoming on a first name basis with local law enforcement, I have compiled a list. I have also unearthed an undisputable fact: the officer and the gardener focus on very different weeds.

We will examine the latter.

Like most gardeners, I used to gripe about the stronghold weeds have on my homestead. Not anymore. I have come to not only accept weeds, I now welcome and encourage them.

Let us look at the perks of such lush, hearty vegetation. One must admire a weed's liveliness and will to survive. When flowers have wilted and expensive shrubs have faded to brown, which species still proudly remains green and perky? That's right—weeds. Such is the life of lowly, underappreciated weed. There is something to be said for the loyal friend who is first to arrive and last to leave our yards and gardens. Even after it is attacked, sprayed, spat upon, chopped and cursed, weeds rebound with resolve. No plant life embodies perseverance and forgiveness quite like a weed.
Come late summer, in my humble opinion, there is nothing tastier than a tomato straight from the garden. Sadly, my dad feels the exact same way. In his quest for a top-notch source of lycopene, my father often beats me to the first ripe tomatoes. When I staked them, their ripeness glistened in the August sun for all to see. Those who witnessed such luster simply helped themselves, leaving me without my favorite garden goody.

One year I accidentally forgot to stake my tomatoes. My tomato plants loomed below, amidst the garden floor with the various species of weeds. Dad complained, “With all that pokeweed, I couldn't find me a single red, ripe tomato!”

Thank you pokeweed. Now, following a bit of sifting and lifting, I get first crack at those plump, ripe tomatoes.

Weeds redeemed themselves once more when my wife and I were building our home. Ever so handy, my father-in-law was ever-so present. More often than not, my wife's dad was the task manager and I was the lowly grunt. As we neared project completion in the fall, my father-in-law cautioned, “If you can't keep the ragweed under control around here, I'm gonna quit coming over to play!”

I had no idea deterring father-in-laws could be so easy. I allowed ragweed to take hold. The next day, I ran out to buy fertilizer for my newfound friends. I even tried to transplant the wild weed from remote locations. Shamefully, popular seed catalogs don't carry ragweed. I've noticed a significant reduction in visits from my new dad.

While on the topic of in-laws, I learned my mother-in-law was severely allergic to a wide variety of vegetation, namely some of the local weeds. Hence, I felt compelled to order a bountiful bouquet for her at once. In addition to the overpriced roses and lilies for which my mother-in-law has an affinity, I snuck in a few estranged members of the weed family detested by her respiratory system.

The advantages to weeds are seemingly infinite. Consider the average burglar. Imagine the following domiciles are next-door neighbors. House number one boasts perfectly trimmed, expensive shrubs and is surrounded by fancy, well manicured landscaping. The second home, assuming it possesses grass somewhere, has let weeds run rampant. The yard's theme seems to either be jungle or dandelion. Which house do you suppose the burglar will break into? There is no better home security and natural burglar deterrent than weeds.

While on the subject of dandelions, I am offended when people are so strong opinioned about specifying they are not a flower. The very name dandelion (dent-de-lion) is French for lion's tooth. Anything French must be fancy. Dandelions add rich, vibrant color to an otherwise bland yard. When they fade from blonde to white, like a sweet grandmother's hair, dandelions provide countless hours of free babysitting. My daughter can blow dandelion seeds all day long. It's a good thing too, for she is planting next year's crop. Plus, dandelions can be used for salads or wines. The former I could care less about. The latter has my undivided attention.

Let's face it: learning the science of botany or mastering the art of gardening can prove monumentally challenging. No plant can boost confidence and self-esteem like a weed. For budding gardeners, starting with various species of weeds may bear the most fruit (sans fruit of course). Weed seeds will grow wildly successful in hands with uncoordinated green thumbs. Such novices can merrily hone their skills and perfect the craft with weeds.

Another advantage to weeds is the natural barriers and borders they create. Robert Frost, a delightful poet, once penned, “Good fences make good neighbors.” I can think of no better fence than one studded with weeds that are barbed and bristly, prickly and poisonous. This deliberate arrangement will foster a relationship built of respect and distance.

Employing a similar vocation, I promote weed growth around my valuable trees. I personally believe weeds conceal the arbors from deer, beavers and other lumberjacks of the natural world. Though it is true the weeds compete for light, nutrients and my affection, the added protection is worth the stunted growth.

The next time your inner-gardener stands staring confusedly at the wall of herbicides in the local hardware store, recall these benefits of weeds. Though I would strongly recommend plucking weeds from your computer's search engine and browsing history.
Organic Poultry Production in India

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In India, like much of the rest of the world, during the last four decades, the poultry and dairy industry have transformed from backyard farming to a commercial, organized, scientific and vibrant industry, but the issues of food safety and quality remain unaddressed.

Poultry and dairy sectors play a significant role in improving the socio economic condition of the rural population. Day by day, the consumers are becoming more aware about safety and quality of their food products. As the purchasing power of common people increases, they are interested in consuming safer products without bothering to pay more. Hence, the priority now is to lay more emphasis on organic farming in order to produce safer animal products without compromising on the animal welfare issues.

STATUS OF ORGANIC POULTRY FARMING IN THE WORLD AND IN INDIA

In 2005, poultry accounts for about 75 percent of the total organic meat market and consists of nearly 26,000 tons of organic poultry, which is dominated by chicken. Chicken has become the most important organic meat due to its short production cycle, which permits producers to quickly increase supply. Organic poultry meat production has comparatively lower cost of production than other livestock meat.

The demand for research and development efforts in the poultry sector is also going up as the world trade in organic poultry products is increasing. Currently, 130 countries are producing certified organic products. Some developing countries like Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, are now exporting organic animal products to the developed countries. Our country has a vast scope for promotion of organic farming in the export market, without compromising national food security, as farming by tribes and under rain-fed conditions is generally organic oriented, since very little chemicals are used.

WHY ORGANIC POULTRY PRODUCTION?

The main issues that push producers and consumers to enter into organic are chemical residues in the meat and egg and poultry welfare.

ORGANIC ISSUE IN “THE HINDU”

The environmental science journal Down to Earth, in its 1-15 August, 2014, issue, has highlighted the problem by analyzing the antibiotic content in the chicken meat obtained from various markets in its labs, and the results are alarming. Typical antibiotics found in the chicken liver, muscles and kidney are the tetracyclines (such as doxycycline), fluoroquinolones (such as enrofloxacin) and aminoglycosides (such as neomycin).

Why are these dangerous? Repeated and prolonged exposure will lead to the emergence of resistant strains of bacteria.
And these resistant strains will be passed on to the humans who consume them. Even the un-mutated bacteria in the meat can directly unleash an assault on the microbes in our guts.

And note too that the antibiotics used in poultry are the same as the ones used for humans.

What about the inedible parts of the chicken that we throw away or bury in the ground? Resistant strains from the feather, bone and such are now transferred to soil, ground water, ponds and streams. In effect, as *Down to Earth* points out, as a microbe becomes resistant, it influences other microbes present in the gut of the chicken and then those in the environment, making them resistant to a wide range of antibiotics.

**AIMS OF ORGANIC POULTRY PRODUCTION**

The aims of moving to a more organic poultry production system in India would be:

- To produce food of high quality in sufficient quantity;
- To interact in a constructive and life-enhancing way with natural systems and cycles;
- To consider the wider social and ecological impact of the organic production processing system;
- To encourage and enhance biological cycles within the farming system involving micro-organisms, soil flora, plants and animals;
- To maintain and increase the long term fertility of soil;
- To maintain the genetic diversity of the production system and its surroundings, including the protection of plant and wildlife habitats;
- To use as far as possible renewable resources in locally organized production systems;
- To create a harmonious balance between crop production and animal husbandry; and
- To minimize all forms of pollution.

**DISADVANTAGES OF ORGANIC POULTRY**

Challenges to moving India's poultry industry to organic include:

- Organic poultry products are costlier;
- Poor people cannot afford these costlier products;
- No quick accessibility for the consumers;
- Certification problem;
- Difficult to spare more housing space;
- Conversion period for conventional system to organic practices is very long; and
- Prolonged withdrawal period of six weeks if treated with any antibiotics or other drugs.

**MANAGING LOSSES**

In free-range systems with large flocks, including organic farming systems, too many cases have been observed in which hens have started to perform feather pecking that lead to a high rate of cannibalism and a 20 percent mortality rate per year.

An experiment is to be incorporated in breeding programs to eliminate these behavioral traits to make sound and acceptable welfare systems.
In Sikkim, more than 70 percent of people have an agricultural background and 80 percent of these people keep livestock of different species as a supplementary source of income. Sikkim is the first state in India converted into a fully organic state. About 75,000 hectares (about 185,329 acres) of agricultural land was converted into organic land and certified by APEDA, the government agency responsible for food management.

The state shifted its focus toward organic agriculture, where the role of livestock and poultry sector shall be of paramount importance particularly to supply the organic manure. The enormous demand for poultry in the state is due to an increased flow of tourists every year. A wide gap exists between demand and supply of poultry products. To meet the demand, the majority of the poultry was imported from neighboring state of West Bengal.

Farmers of Sikkim realized they could improve their chicken production and increase their earnings. Some improved breeds of backyard chickens were proposed to start poultry farming in rural areas. They combined all the good traits of the various strains, that is, can lay for a long time (more than 12 months) and with characteristics of disease resistance, high-growth rate and starting to lay eggs earlier as compare to local Desi chickens.

As recommended by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Sikkim’s region introduced two high yielding backyard poultry breeds: the Vanaraja and Gramapriya.

**PROBLEMS DEVELOPING ORGANIC POULTRY PRODUCTION IN INDIA**

Some serious problems are still restricting growth in organic farming. Some of these potential obstacles, especially when exporting livestock products, are as follows:

- Lack of knowledge;
- Small farms;
- Problems in livestock feeding;
- Sanitary regulations;
- Traceability;
- Disease; and
- Lack of training and certification facilities.

**THE FUTURE**

What the organic food movement in India must work on going forward:

- Convert conventional agricultural land into organic land;
- Ban of antibiotic growth promoters;
- Provide financial credit to the farmers;
- Earn subsidies from government;
- Augment integration systems;
- Train farmers and create awareness among people;
- Aid veterinary services;
- Provide market facilities.

**CONCLUSION**
The rural and backyard poultry production in India is not yet considered organic because organic principles are not regulated and certified, even the backyard poultry production somehow related to the organic principles and practices.

The organic standards have to be set, followed, certified and marketed as organic, which fetch more income to the farmers. But the fast-growing poultry industry cannot afford this slow production and business loss. For this, strict legislations have to set to ban antibiotics and other synthetic products usage, so food safety can be assured.

Second, the poultry welfare issues are also unavoidable in organic poultry production, but more sophistically and comfortably the birds are reared in cages and environmentally controlled houses with biosecurity, so this ensures poultry welfare.

What we need more than this. Poultry welfare, food safety, and quality issues will be vanished in upcoming days. But if we convert agriculture and animal husbandry into organic, the bond will increase and eco-friendly farming will root in India.

WHAT IS ORGANIC?

FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission definition of organic as:

“A unique production management system which promotes and enhances agro-ecosystem health, including biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity and this is accomplished by using on-farm agronomic, biological and mechanical methods in exclusion of all synthetic off-farm inputs.” Organic guidelines are more stringent than free-range, and include:

• The choice of breeds or strains should favor stock that is well adapted to the local conditions and to the husbandry system. Preference should be given to indigenous species.

• The need for grains in the finishing phase of meat poultry.

• The need for roughage, fresh or dried fodder or silage in the daily ration of poultry.

• Poultry must be reared in open-range conditions and have free access to an open-air run whenever the weather conditions permit. The keeping of poultry in cages is not permitted.

• In the case of laying hens, when natural day length is prolonged by artificial light, the competent authority shall prescribe maximum hours respective to species, geographical considerations and general health of the animal; and

• For health reasons, buildings should be emptied between each batch of poultry reared and runs left empty to allow the vegetation to grow back.

SPECIFIC CRITERIA FOR ORGANIC FEED:

• Feed of plant origin from non-organic sources can only be used under specified conditions and if they are produced or prepared without the use of chemical solvents or chemical treatment.

• Feed of mineral origin, trace elements, vitamins or pro-vitamins can only be used if they are of natural origin. In case of a shortage of these substances, chemically well-defined analogic substances can be used.

• Feed of animal origin, with exception of milk and milk products, fish. Other marine animals and products derived therefrom, should generally not be used, or as provided by national legislation.

• Synthetic nitrogen or non-protein nitrogenous compounds shall not be used.

SPECIFIC CRITERIA FOR ADDITIVES AND PROCESSING AIDS:

• Binders, anti-caking agents, emulsifiers, stabilizers, thickeners, surfactants, and coagulants. Only natural sources are allowed.

• Antioxidants: only natural sources are allowed.

• Preservatives: only natural acids are allowed.
• Coloring agents (including pigments), flavors and appetite stimulants: only natural sources are allowed.

• Probiotic, enzymes and microorganisms are allowed.

ARE ORGANIC EGGS HEALTHIER?

According to the research done by authors of this story, here are the overall health benefits they discovered:

• Organic foods are both safer and nutritious than conventional foods
• Deep yellow-orange yolks
• No salmonella issues
• No meat spot/ blood spots
• Twice as much omega-3 fatty acids
• Three times more vitamin E
• Six times more vitamin D
• More B vitamins
• Seven times more pro-vitamin A beta-carotene
• Rich in lutein and zeaxanthin
• A quarter less saturated fat
• A third less cholesterol
• Maximum flavor
• Leaner
• Shorter shelf life

References


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