



## A beginning (or ending!) thought for the weird spring of 2020

Food –is the essential ingredient in life – any life at all. It doesn't matter how big or how small – the whole world runs on the energy exchanges that we humans call food. That's become incredibly obvious as our manic culture gets ground to a halt. The quality of food you (or any other organism) consumes directly correlates to your base line health. Now is an absolutely perfect time to really get a handle on where your food comes from, how far it travels and who it supports in the process – you vote more clearly with the money you spend than you do when you vote in November. Your money can strengthen your own community or feed the coffers of a multi-national corporation.

We live in very strange times...I read all kinds of reports and articles and I found this piece to be a remarkable encapsulation of where we find ourselves at this particular point in history - <https://forge.medium.com/prepare-for-the-ultimate-gaslighting-6a8ce3f0a0e0>

It remains to be seen what we can make out of this point - but we're all part of the way forward. I'm interested in healthy plants, animals, humans and soils - a healthy planet - that's where I spend my life's energy. For the first time in a very long time, (never in my conscious life time) all of our preconceived notions of "get big or get out" are being challenged. Bigger, faster, more is the driving theme of American life and has been since before WWI (never mind what WWII did to that mantra!) and the country has been brought to its knees by a microscopic organism that will take MONTHS to control.

We have massive food shortages and, at the same time, farmers plowing their crops under or dumping their milk. There is NO WAY for BIG to pivot - it takes a LONG time to stop an aircraft carrier...a metaphor most of us can understand. Perhaps this is a time to actually *look at what it really takes to create healthy communities that work for all who share it*. It's work worth doing. *It's the tapestry of people and their local ecology that make up a community - not the massive corporations that dictate to and seek to control that tapestry*. Always follow the money - and see how many hands it moves through in your own small part of the larger economy before it moves on. The more times the better for your community. You have the time right now...interesting trail...kind of like a good mystery...

Cheers and good luck to us all  
as we navigate our economic re-entry!





## ML's Greenery in Motion 2020 Newsletter



*"To dream a garden and then to plant it is an act of independence and even defiance to the greater world."*  
– Stanley Crawford, *A Garlic Testament: Seasons on a Small New Mexico Farm*

Welcome to the 2020 Newsletter for Greenery in Motion and Woody End Farm. I had another letter entirely scripted for this year – and then the year changed...and how it did change! I hope that you and your family are safe and healthy – and not going tooooooo stir crazy! Life here at the farm is going along. Our first sets of kids just entered the world, the ducks have come through the winter well and are starting to lay again . (If you need duck eggs, kefir or milk during these crazy times, just let me know. There's a cooler box just inside the barn door – no need to worry about 6' social distance!), the hugelkulture (HK) beds are being prepped for growing and the first seeds are down (and up!) in the greenhouse – the season begins regardless of what is happening in the human world. Check the last page of the newsletter for more on raised beds! You'll find info on a new raised bed workbook ☺

And this may be why gardening is the perfect antidote to the stress that surrounds us. Seeds are flying off the shelves and crashing seed company websites. There are no baby chicks to be found. 'Tis the year of the Victory Garden

Redux! And for all that there's a lot in this newsletter about growing veggies, DON'T forget the flowers!!! They are the joy of the plant world. People love them, relax around them but they're also essential for the support of your local ecosystem known as your back yard. The more varieties of flowers the better. Natives are great (explore them here!! - <http://www.bringingnaturehome.net>), but so are the classic zinnias, salvias, cleomes, cosmos and marigolds.

Everyone is looking around their immediate space as if they've never seen it before – and that may actually be true! Up until March 16<sup>th</sup>, almost everyone was strongly focused outward We'd go away to school, away to work, away to eat, away to shop, to recreate, to do almost anything! And now we're stuck close to home for school, work, recreation and 3 meals a day – the ultimate in a staycation... that none of us would have chosen. Having said that though, it might be time to do a rethink about how we're all running our lives (and I'm just as much a culprit here as anyone else!!). Did you know that the air is clear over China for the first time in decades? That the water in the Grand Canal

*"No matter the state of the world, or how dark the shadow that has fallen on our city, I find it curiously comforting to know that if you plant a seed and give it sunlight and water, it will grow." - Sarah Jio, All the Flowers in Paris.*

of Venice is so clear that you can see the porpoises swimming? Never mind those traffic problems that we were constantly hearing and dealing with in our own back yards. Traffic reports are a short-term thing of the past... a VERY weird time. I know it's hard to think about the pandemic as an experiment in living but it kind of *is*... Nobody would have wanted to set up an experiment like this – too brutal by half but...at least it's another way of looking at the current "shelter in place". Even those words tell a story that we haven't really explored in over 70+ years.

*The aware and interested human being is the critical bridge between the built environment and the natural world. There is something to be said for championing the working landscape, both working with the local ecosystem and assisting that ecosystem to work with us – understanding HAS to go both ways. This is the best we can offer to a very complex world.*

So, back to that explosion in interest in gardening and chickens (personally we prefer ducks and goats!)... As you know from earlier newsletters, my favorite topics are healthy soils and growing healthy plants and animals (we're really proud of our goat herd). Those are still my professional goals but I've also always had an intense interest in how gardens support people on multiple levels and have really valued my time working both at a low-income nursing home and at Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, MA creating gardens and garden activities that allow all kinds of people to connect to the wider living world – makes it easier for them to sleep well at night! Gardens and spending time in the outdoors is incredibly therapeutic and that's a fact that's over 2500 years old (think the Hanging Gardens of

Babylon) – don't have to take my word for it!!!

- Gardens of all kinds (and some farms) can help people to reconnect to themselves, to each other and to the planet itself. This idea is "cropping" up in all sorts of places.
  - **Classical horticultural therapy** is the professional practice that uses plants and gardening to improve mental and physical health. I've seen it make incredible change possible at a personal level both at Perkin's School for the blind and at the nursing home. Imagine smiling as you approach a nursing home to visit your mother – I've seen that happen when we planted the front walk with lots of color – and a few peppers mixed in for food and conversation – and then those family members would bring their mother out to see the flowers – fresh air, color, expansion of mind and lung – a better day all the way around.

Check out:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/25/style/plants-hospital-horticulture-therapy.html>

*"The single greatest lesson the garden teaches is that our relationship to the plant need not be zero-sum, and that as long as the sun still shines and people still can plan and plant, think and do, we can, if we bother to try, find ways to provide ourselves without a diminishing world." - Michael Pollan, The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*

- **Then there's Forest Therapy** -forest therapy??? Yup! In Japanese, it's Shinrin-yoku. Another idea with a long history behind it. People are drawn to wooded areas -especially if there's a path winding through it. Imagine it in your head and you'll feel your attention tugged along the path and the midline of your body will open up, shoulders swing back



and a whole lot more air enters your lungs. Try it – and try really hard to listen to both the internal song your lungs are singing and the external chorus the forest is singing.

Check out:

<https://www.natureandforesttherapy.org>

Must be working because Mount Wachusett – my back yard – has been absolutely swarmed by humanity since the “shelter in place” order was issued. There have been days when it’s almost impossible to get a car through with over 40 cars at a “parking” spot... Pretty sure that’s not what forest therapy has in mind but at least the impulse to move is there ☺ but I’m not sure at all how physical distancing is working out...

- How about this for an idea – *a therapeutic farm*. Now this is an idea to get behind. Again – an idea that’s been around for a long time that’s resurging now. My



mother was one of the smartest people I’ve ever known and she determined that her children needed a herd of dairy goats to raise and manage right along with their school work in order to turn into reasonable adults. Take that approach and codify it a bit, tailor it to an individual and you have the backbone of a therapeutic farm. Many, many people are disconnected from the lives that they’re living and there’s absolutely nothing like another life form (in this case a farm animal -goats are GREAT for this!) that needs your help and likes to have you around. Very soothing!! (if exhausting occasionally!). Cuddling a brand-new baby goat can make the rest of the world seem a bit brighter. Harvesting the eggs that you’ll eat for lunch can provide a strong sense of connection – you get the idea! Cleaning out

the pens at the end of winter...hmmmm...well, at least it’s a good physical workout! You can imagine the gardens that will grow from the composted manure (and tomatoes, squashes, potatoes, cucumbers etc. all LOVE composted manure!). Learning to care for something alive that isn’t you -priceless... Check here for a productive farm long in existence with just this kind of approach:

<https://www.camphillkimberton.org>

I use their calendar...

*There’s also equine therapy* – a study unto itself and not to be forgotten. Personally, my “vacation” is to take my horse to a quiet indoor ring for the winter and work with her almost as if we were in a training dojo with chi kung exercises for entertainment (and muscular discomfort!). Then she comes home to be a lawn ornament for the growing season... but... others have come up with superb ways of using the

horse/human connection (that goes back at least 6000 years) to help with human physical, emotional, mental and spiritual development.

Did you know that the bilateral motion of a horse’s back at the walk can feed up into the human sitting on its back and create an echoing response – waking up nerves and muscles as it goes along...? It’s a pretty cool world when you get right down to it...

Check here for more info:

<https://www.pathintl.org/resources-education/resources/eaat/198-learn-about-therapeutic-riding>

Keep in mind not everyone loves working with a garden or children or animals and that’s fine too. They can enjoy them from a distance or enjoy a brief visit, but not have the care of them.





### ***Introducing the Curiosity Hook:***

One of the foundational ideas that runs underneath all of these approaches is the fostering of the *curiosity hook* in people – the impulse that pulls you out of yourself to really see something (anything!) that’s not “you” as clearly as you can. **If you really think of curiosity as a hook that you can cast outward, you may find your world a LOT more interesting place.** There’s a freakingly big and wonderful world (COVID-19 aside) just outside your door. Besides, the more you use that hook, the longer your brain will stay flexible and healthy – not a bad trade off! Look up the art and craft of curiosity if your curious ☺

Next time you’re outside, cast that curiosity hook and – regardless of what you’re doing for yard work at the time – see how many insects you can discover in your yard. Now, how many can you identify? Do you see them as “good guy” bugs or “bad guy” bugs? Worldwide, there has been a dramatic drop in insect numbers of



all kinds – not just our beloved pollinators that we hear about so often. Way too many people would think that this is a good thing – no bugs!!! What could possibly be the down side....

There’s a HUGE downside.... And not just because we need pollinators to keep food in our stomachs.... Insects are responsible for HUGE swathes of the recirculation of all kinds of organic matter from fallen leaves to dead animals, to manure break down to soil aeration and mineral redistribution. They are the garbage collectors of the plant world, removing weakened and deficient plants (those insects we call pests!). They are also the backbone of the food chains that support our reptiles, amphibians, birds and

mammals. There’s really a lot riding on their chitinous exoskeletons... Respect them, learn a few names, learn to manage them with minimal ecosystem trauma.

And this brings me to the mosquito control companies that abound. I’ll name none specifically, but you all know what I’m talking about – you’ve seen the signs throughout your neighborhoods and you may have used them yourselves. Have you ever wondered why they spray during the heat of the day when mosquitoes can’t fly then? (Mosquitoes fly at dawn and dusk and on moist grey days – you’ll never see those crews spraying then -state crews yes, commercial crews no) When do pollinator and generally perceived as “good guy” bugs fly (during the heat of the day)? Have you ever asked for the chemical formulas for the material that’s being sprayed? Asked how long it lasts? Asked if there are other means of limiting mosquito pressures? You get the picture -cast that curiosity hook out next time you want to hire an insect control company and get the answer to all of those questions before making a decision... I cringe every time I see the signs on the lawns...

Now cast that hook again and...

**Think about where your food comes from.** Up until very recently (that live-in-infamy date of 3/16/20) most people thought that their food came from whatever local box store suited their ideas and expectations of a shopping experience. The true reality is that your food, ALLLLLLLLL of your food, comes from a farmer somewhere, working on land to manage a process called photosynthesis. That’s the backbone of

Stephanie Anderson argues that in order to provide nutrient-rich food and fight climate change, we need to move beyond sustainable to regenerative agriculture, a practice that is highly tailored to local environments and renews resources. Emphasis mine.

every bite of food that you consume. Another very weird thought isn't it? Have you thanked a farmer recently, even just mentally acknowledged that individual's contribution to your quality of life – of life at all?

If you wish to make anything grow, you must understand it, and understand it in a very real sense. 'Green fingers' are a fact, and a mystery only to the unpracticed. But green fingers are the extensions of a verdant heart." – Russell Page, *The Education of a Gardener*

This circles back again to the explosion in interest in gardening.

Most of the people reading this newsletter already garden – and congratulations to all of you! For those of you just getting started though there is no perfect way to begin. Just get started...the scale is up to you! Make sure the garden is as close to your living pattern as you can manage and work on growing whatever size you choose to the best of your ability – and PLEASE!!!!!! – start smaller than you think you need. Gardening is a bit more complex than using a magic wand and wishing it so!!!!

Start with

- A pot of basil/mint/rosemary or thyme on your deck just outside your kitchen door. Use them as frequently as you can to get use the concept of harvest – funny thing, that's the step that's hardest for new gardeners to grasp – that whole harvest the plant thing....weird but true...
- A tub of marigolds, petunias and alyssum (then check who comes to visit!) Calendula, zinnias and salvias will bring in a different group – can you see the difference?
- A whiskey barrel with one tomato (and only one!), or 3 peppers, or 2



cucumbers in that one sunny spot at the corner of the garage.

- A square foot garden that gets morning sun to grow lettuces and greens for salads all season. Greens are one of the best health promoting veggies you can grow and they age rapidly once harvested and many will grow through Thanksgiving.
- A series of raised beds that provide for all of your summer needs with a bit left over
- A full garden, well managed that feeds you and your family for most of a year and provides all kinds of diverse flowers to support the widest array of insects

Now you know the variety of options, it's time to **answer some basic questions:**

We can complain because rose bushes have thorns or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses. Abraham Lincoln

Start by understanding yourself.

What do you want the yard and gardens to do? Provide color and a place to relax? Food? Play and exercise areas?

How much time to do you have to spend on care of the yard?

- Does working in the garden act as stress relief or create additional stress?
- Can you afford to hire assistance for part of the work?
- Do you want to change some of the conditions in your yard or select plants to match what you already have?

And then understand the plants. Different plants have different needs. Some have very specific sun/soil/temperature needs.

Others are generalists and can survive in a wide variety of settings. Start cutting out pictures of what you like to look at and

listing down the plants that make it come to life for you. Get help from garden centers and botanical gardens.

Once you have your list – take the time to do a little research and get at least the basics of each plant down on paper. See if you can determine if the plants you are selecting are generalists or whether they need special conditions.

With this information you can now craft an appropriate garden plan for you and your family – no magic - just clear and clean thinking!

But – you’re still likely to have questions (we all do – it’s that *curiosity hook* of course!)

One of the most asked questions that I get is **“why are my–pick any plant** (tomato, cucumber, squash, marigolds, zinnias – any basic annual plant you can name)**–dying off so early in the season?**

If you’ve had a garden for any length of time then you know that this happens a lot. You get the garden started well at the end of May. It grows pretty well during June and into July and then ... August comes along...it’s hotter, more humid, less rain and the plants are ready to really produce ... and instead... the plants begin to fade away. They get diseases of all kinds, insects attack, production of flowers or fruit falls off and it looks like the season is done before Labor Day.

Sound familiar??? In fact, it’s so familiar that a lot of people think that that is the normal life cycle of garden plants. It’s frustrating to spend so much time at the beginning of the season only to have it all end in a whimper. It doesn’t have to be that way at all. You can have solid plant production up to and (believe it or not!) through a light frost if you want it.

Here’s the simple explanation that is true for all plants, but especially for those that grow from seed and complete their life cycle (germination, growing, flowering and producing seed) in one growing season.

**The plants are literally running out of energy, like a battery running out of charge.** The neat thing is that this is something you can learn to manage ☺

You can *cast your hook* out to

[http://www.greeneryinmotion.com/Garden\\_trouble\\_s\\_hooting.pdf](http://www.greeneryinmotion.com/Garden_trouble_s_hooting.pdf) for specifics, but the nutshell is that plants need more energy at the end of their reproductive life than they do at the beginning – and that’s where most of the gardens let them down.

Plants can’t vote with their feet so they vote with their energy – sacrificing everything to mature their seed and complete their life cycle. Your job is to support that energy demand to the best of your ability and reap the plentiful harvest that results ☺ This line of questioning is actually one of my absolute personal favorites and I highly suggest that you check out <https://www.advancingecoag.com> and John Kempf’s work. He’s one of the best speakers I’ve ever had the pleasure of listening to...

The greatest fine art of the future will be the making of a comfortable living from a small piece of land. – Abraham Lincoln

***Cast that hook again*** and look at the possibilities for creating a productive community out of the current pandemic disruption. We can support our local farmers at their farm stands, at the farmer’s market, buy a CSA share and support local Chefs that support local farms. Learn to garden yourself – learn what it takes to do the job of growing a part of your own food supply...

Have you ever thought about what it takes on an annual basis to feed one individual? Here are some statistics from the 1942

version of Grow a Garden and Be Self Sufficient by E. Pfeiffer/E. Riese to feed on adult woman/active boy. Mature men and teenage boys needed more. Gives one a different perspective on the food supply doesn't it?

105 lbs. cereals	20 lbs. dried fruit
365 Milk/quarts	75 lbs. sugars
100 lbs. potatoes	70 lbs. fats/butters/oils
10 lbs. dried legumes (peas/beans)	325 lbs. other fruits/veggies
110 lbs. citrus/tomatoes	225 lbs. meat/poultry/fish
150 lbs. leafy veggies	30 dz. eggs

How much of this could you supply yourself? Could you create a "circle of supply"? This is an idea that came from Pat Stewart of Hames & Axle Farm. You could produce the honey for example, and someone else the eggs, a third person picks up the greens production, someone else raises milk goats, a pig or two, someone else grows hazelnuts and beans – you get the idea. It's a form of cooperative growing that might catch on. That way, you only need to learn how to grow one kind of food well – **one that interests you or that your land is particularly suited for**. I have a friend who has a real talent for beans and another that has a talent for all kinds of

"The first supermarket supposedly appeared on the American landscape in 1946. That is not very long ago. Until then, where was all the food? Dear folks, the food was in homes, gardens, local fields, and forests. It was near kitchens, near tables, near bedsides. It was in the pantry, the cellar, the backyard." — Joel Salatin, *Folks, This Ain't Normal: A Farmer's Advice for Happier Hens, Healthier People, and a Better World*

greens. For my sister and me, it's squashes and tomatoes, goats and ducks... and there are so MANY kinds of foods to choose from!

Granted, our old patterns of visiting the box stores with relatively little thought will probably be back in full force by the end of

the summer, but that doesn't mean that we can't take this very large hiccup in routine and make it into something that supports our own local community.

Community – now that's a word with a deep and wide definition... There's a community of soil microbes and macrobes that dance with the roots of plants to create a convergence of energy and minerals that grow healthy plants, help to sequester carbon and buffer the water cycle.

Those plants are the backbone of the land-based community of insects, birds, amphibians, reptiles and our beloved mammals of which we are one.

And that land-based community could be and (I think!) should be the foundation of our human communities. Perhaps, and only perhaps, this interruption in our headlong rush into our industrial future just might allow us to create healthy human communities that are more in line with the best of what it means to be human not the meanest of what it means. I can dream...

And now – a word from our sponsor – the 2020 growing season!

*...I know a gardener needs to respect his land  
I know he must be kind  
which is why I take only what I need  
and leave the rest behind...*

*...To all the creatures and to the land  
I leave behind a little food...  
It is a way to show them my respect  
to spread my gratitude...*

*...Yes...her father had the most beautiful gardens...  
he understood the land and how things grew...  
but perhaps the biggest reason was how he adored the land  
and how the land adored him too.*

*Jim Yerman*



## What's New at Greenery in Motion

I begin each year looking through the seed catalogs often not seeing the new and different that sparks my curiosity. And I think...okay well I have lots of favorites on the list; we don't need new varieties to try. And then....something happens and my list ends up with new varieties of tomatoes, peppers, greens, annuals (check out all the new Cosmos this year) and the season is off and running.

I know all of you want to race out there and plant. Keep in mind, the soil temp has to reach a certain point before the majority of vegetables and flowers can really grab and grow. They will always be happy to sit there and sulk for several weeks if you plant them too early, but that's not really the best way to grow a healthy plant.

This year order pick-up at the Greenhouse will be on Saturday, May 23, 9:00-3:00, Sunday, May 24, 12:00-3:00, and Saturday, May 30, 9:00-1:00.

If possible, please let me know which day you be picking up your plants. If you need to arrange pickup for a time other than those listed, drop me a note at [altobelliml260@comcast.net](mailto:altobelliml260@comcast.net), and we'll find a time that works for both of us. The expectation at this point is that you will find me at the Westminster Farmers Market beginning May 29 with seedlings as well.

## Growing Up!

As you are all aware, I am a strong believer in healthy soils growing healthy plants. Well, that's not always possible by going down into the earth (in our case it's mostly podsol clay – a very old and denatured clay). So, we went up! All of our production beds are raised and I work with raised beds and containers on almost every site....that led to a PowerPoint presentation...and that was a hop, skip and a jump away from writing a short book on working with raised beds! I've put together a practical manual on how to create and maintain raised beds and containers. It's filled with tips, recipes, and ways to approach "thinking up". You'll find it on the plant order form if you're interested. In addition to better soil, you can grow lettuce in one container and tomatoes in another and have an easy handle on fabulous salads for summer without mega work (although there's always SOME work!). It can often pay for many reasons to Grow Up!

Here's looking to a great growing season and a world that has for the most part returned to normal or maybe a new normal, but filled with the people, plants, and animals that make it fun and interesting.

Go catch that curiosity bug!

ML

