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History of a homesteader

Live You?re Dreams -Plant Your Future

Growing up in the suburbs of LA, I sought refuge from the craziness of society in the dream of living simply with a wife and family in the woods. Now I am living that dream and have been for the last 35 years.

Before I ever heard of permaculture I wanted to create a self-sufficient life style in balance with nature and humanity, a permanent culture.

In 1980 I helped to start Family Gardens a community in Northern California based on the principles of direct living and sustainability.

Direct living means that you take care of yourself directly.

If you want a house, you build it. If you want food, you grow it. Home school your children and birth your babies at home.

We were very enthusiastic and dug large gardens by hand, wore buckskins and made fire with two sticks. In the beginning we didn't even use chain saws or power tools nor have electricity.

Now I love my chain saw and roto tiller and am sure glad my wife finally has a washing machine. I even have a tractor as part of my retirement plan.

We have solar and hydro power to generate electricity, solar hot water and a freezer and satellite internet.

If your interested in learning more about homesteading check out some of these [homesteading books](#) [1]

[1]All our gardens are grown organically and I can't stress enough how important organic is both for your health and the health of the earth.

We are close to being sustainable growing about 80% of our food but only about 30% of our animal feed.

I seek to find a balance between living sustainably and being able to offer some inspiration and techniques to help create a permanent culture in this new millennium.

It is a time to blend homesteading with teaching and sharing and helping others to start gardens.

My latest project is helping the local school in Hyampom put in an organic garden.

We have large organic gardens, a barn, milk cow, horse and chickens and we feel very blessed to have been

able to live a simple life and to raise our children close to the earth and the natural cycles.

Now if you are just getting into animals then chickens are the easiest, they take relatively little care or food and produce a lot of eggs. If you live in an area like we do with a lot of natural predators then you need to build a very good chicken coop.

In 2000 our family got a horse and a milk cow and some more chickens. The horse was a friend and teacher for our kids and the cow was for milk, cheese and butter.

Next I tilled up an area in our orchard for alfalfa and planted our first alfalfa crop. On a good year we could grow all the alfalfa for our animals for 6 months of the year. We still had to buy alfalfa for the winter and grain all year long for our milking animals.

I am working on the closed cycle gardening and will plant our vegetable garden in the area that has been alfalfa and mulch with the alfalfa but since we have animals I will run it through them first and use it as manure.

Our family uses a couple different styles to feed and manage our gardening beds.

I use a roto tiller and till the garden areas in the fall and plant a cover crop of vetch and oats sometime between early October and early November which grows up until the spring when I till it in to feed the soil.

My wife uses a sheet composting method. She puts about 6 inches of manure on her beds and then it breaks down enough before planting that it just needs to be gently dug in and the weeds pulled out.

We use a greenhouse to start our flats and we also have a couple lemon trees in a greenhouse that is attached to our community lodge. We are eating lettuce by Christmas.

We also have about 60 fruit trees that we take care of and 300 feet of grapes. Most years this provides an abundance of fruit for early eating, juice and canning.

Here is a great guide to help you with everything from planning and planting to harvesting. Just what you need if your just [starting a vegetable garden](#). [2]

What to look for in finding a potential homestead.

Water is the top priority, preferably above ground but wells are definitely an option and in the case of urban homesteading, city water will do, especially if you filter it.

Next is sun without these two elements you will not have a successful homestead. You will need at least 6 hours of direct sun during the growing season.

The third is soil, it is nice to start with good soil but soil is something that can be built up and or brought in.

Don't wait for that ideal homestead start where you are! Whether you are in your apartment growing sprouts in a jar and tomatoes in pots on your balcony for your salads or growing all your food on a homestead farm you will be experiencing the joy of creation.

Live Your Dreams -Plant Your Future

The seeds of your dreams will grow into the reality of your life

Plant a seed and watch it grow

Dream seeds planted in the earth will give you rebirth

So plant your dreams and grow the future of your generation

Check out my [free organic gardening course](#) [3] and learn a lot more about homesteading and organic gardens.

What you don't plant today, will not feed you tomorrow

Farmer Dave

www.family-gardens.com

[4]

Image (optional):

