

# How to Start a Homestead

No Matter Where You Live



HOMESTEAD SURVIVAL SITE



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## Introduction

Do you ever sit and think about what it would be like to live on your dream homestead? The green fields, the swaying trees, the sound of chickens clucking, the smell of fresh earth and blooming flowers, the feeling of sunlight on your skin and a cool breeze on your face...

And then you blink, look around, and realize you're still in your tiny house or cramped apartment, and that warm feeling goes away. I've been there.

For most people, the idea of buying a piece of land out in the country just isn't realistic. Maybe you simply can't afford it. Or maybe you're tied to your location for other reasons. You need to be close to your parents so you can take care of them. Your child has to go to a special needs school in the city. You can't be too far away from your job, which your family needs you to keep for financial reasons.

How will you ever have a homestead? Well, I have some good news: You can start a homestead *no matter where you live*. No, it won't be as large as in your dreams. But you can at least get some enjoyment out of growing plants, raising meat, creating herbal remedies, and preserving your harvest. We'll talk about all these things and more in the pages that follow.

But before you can do any of that, you need to change your mindset...

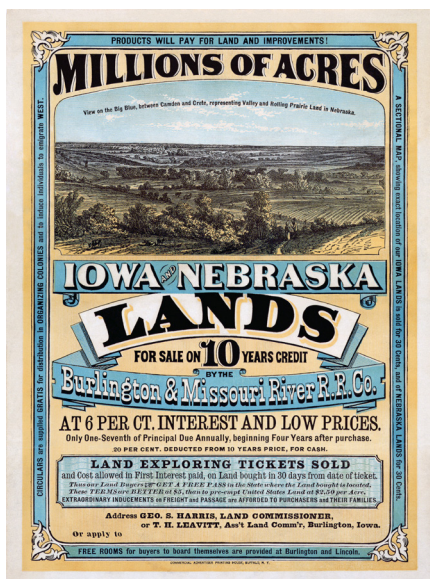


## Chapter 1: Adapting To The Homestead Mindset

Becoming a homesteader has more to do with what's in your heart than what's beneath your feet. You can live the homesteading lifestyle no matter where you are. How you go about it can vary greatly by location, but the core concepts are the same.

For most people, the word “homesteading” conjures images of a barn and farmhouse surrounded by lush pastures, but there is more to homesteading than living in the countryside. Yes, people with multiple acres are going to have more options, but homesteading is a state of mind above all else.

You can grow your own groceries anywhere. And you can preserve your harvest in a small urban kitchen just as easily as in a big farmhouse kitchen. Raising chickens or rabbits doesn't take much space and can even be done on a rooftop or patio.



The concept of homesteading began in the 19th century with the Homestead Act of 1862. At the time, the federal government was offering free land to people willing to work it. While a few states still offer free land to individuals who meet specific criteria, free homesteading land is by and large a thing for the history books.

The modern homesteading movement embodies the same pioneer spirit of the 1800s—it just doesn't come with free land. Homesteaders possess an independent streak and are not enamored with the consumer-driven society we have today.

If the following statements describe you, then you have what it takes to begin the homesteading journey:

- A desire to learn old-fashioned methods and make things from scratch.
- The will to buy fewer things and break out of the consumer mindset.
- An eagerness to buy locally and support your town or neighborhood.
- A strong respect for natural resources and a desire to preserve them.
- A natural curiosity about basic skills and an interest in teaching them.

Homesteaders don't want to rely on grocery stores any more than they absolutely have to. Instead, they want to get their hands dirty, cultivating their own food.



Sustainability is very important to the modern homesteader. Using natural resources wisely, taking care of your own repairs, and [being thrifty with your money](#) instead of spending with careless abandon is what makes someone a homesteader, not how much land they own or where it's located.

Starting small and adopting the proper mindset are the keys to homesteading success. If you live in an urban or suburban environment, there is little chance you will dive in too deeply while you're still a novice—you simply won't have the space to go overboard.

Developing the proper mindset is often the largest stumbling block for new and urban homesteaders. Your daily habits may have to change drastically. Spending \$5 on a cup of coffee at Starbucks is not the homesteading way.

You don't have to grow your own coffee tree and grind your own beans, but living frugally and never wasting money that could be put to better use elsewhere must become an unwavering habit.

For homesteaders, "going shopping" usually involves browsing through seed catalogs, not spending a day at the mall. Becoming more self-sufficient while enhancing your skills is a shared goal among homesteaders.

You must be willing to become a minimalist to a certain degree. Finding a way to make do with what you have is one of the major facets of the homestead life. Repurposing and upcycling items that other folks would view as trash will save you a lot of money—money you can funnel back into your homesteading efforts.

### ***Refuse to buy single-use items.***

Urban and suburban homesteaders must perform due diligence before buying livestock, collecting rainwater, or turning their front yards (or balconies) into food-growing operations. A lot depends on [where you live](#). Strict laws with steep fines have caused fiscal heartache for more than a few urban homesteaders, so make sure you investigate your local laws before you get started.

Don't be discouraged if you can't have as many chickens as you want, or if you're forced to grow pretty medicinal flowers instead of lettuce and onion in your front yard. Adapting and



overcoming is part of the homesteading life for everyone. When you have to change your plans, take solace in the fact that you are now officially a member of the club.

There is no reason to delay your dream of becoming a homesteader until some elusive day in the future when you have a large plot of land.

***The best time to start is right now!***





## Chapter 2: Growing Your Own Groceries

Growing your own groceries in an urban or suburban environment means you must make efficient use of each and every inch of space, all while navigating any local laws that could impede your plans.

In rural areas, you could grow lettuce as a border to your sidewalk, but in places with zoning laws and homeowners associations, such a clever use of space might not be allowed. If local laws and ordinances get in your way, you'll need a different type of gardening plan than country folks, but your harvest can still be bountiful.



It is entirely possible to grow enough groceries to feed a family of four on as little as a  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre of land. Urban homesteaders with only a balcony or patio will likely have to supplement their harvest with grocery store purchases—but only to a degree—depending on the number of people in the family.

Even though I live on a large homestead without any government intrusion, I still employ all of the space-saving growing options detailed below.

Why? I prefer to work smarter, not harder. There are only so many hours in the day. Even though we have a one-acre traditional ground plot garden on our homestead, it is reserved for sweet corn, field corn, melons, vine crops, sorghum, and barley.

The rest of the food we grow is cultivated a half mile uphill near our home. This is partially for OPSEC (operational security reasons; we are a prepper homestead), but also to make working the plants less time-consuming.

Weeding carrots takes forever and a day. Picking green beans is constant and back-breaking. But if you use containers, raised beds on stilts, and vertical growing sacks and racks, the daily gardening workload gets cut by more than half.

Before you start worrying about how little space you have to grow food, take a walk in both your front and back yards.

Look at the space with fresh eyes and ask yourself these questions:

- If I want to keep a few chickens and have raised growing beds, where should they go? (Place the large items in the small spaces first when developing a layout to avoid overcrowding and misusing full sun areas.)
- Where can I put hanging planters and how many can I have?
- How much space is there for **five-gallon buckets** or similar gardening containers?
- Can I grow vertically on a wall outside or inside near a window?
- Can I build simple cold frames to use for starting seeds or as a small greenhouse?

## Growing Food In Small Spaces

By using these small space growing options and cultivation tips, you can not only grow more food but also save time. There are only so many hours in the day and homesteading, even on a small scale, is a lot of work. Shaving time from your daily and weekly chores will help prevent physical and mental fatigue and hopefully any desire you have to give up.

### Containers

Grow vegetables and fruits on patios, decks, porches, in hanging planters, along the sidewalk as edible landscaping, and even on a fire escape using wood or plastic containers in various sizes.

Plastic five-gallon buckets make excellent growing containers for **all kinds of crops** as long as you drill drainage holes in them before planting.



### Barrels

Purchase some food grade plastic barrels or metal drums to grow carrots, potatoes, onions, lettuce, and strawberries through holes drilled in the sides. This vastly cuts down on weeding. You must also drill drainage holes in the bottom of the barrel or the crops will become waterlogged. Sweet corn can be grown in barrels or large growing containers.

### Vertical Gardening

Build, sew, or buy vertical gardening containers and attach them to a porch, house, garage, deck rail, storage shed, pool deck, or privacy fence. Decorative indoor vertical gardening containers are readily available at garden centers—or you could hop on Pinterest and learn how to



build them yourself.

## Water Crops

It is quite simple to cultivate rice in planters placed on a riser inside decorative garden ponds. If you do not currently have a garden pond, level out an area about one foot down from surface level to use as a “plant shelf” to grow rice.



### Raised Beds

**Raised beds**, either at ground level or table level, can be used to grow just about any common garden crop, except for corn.

Glass, plexiglass, or framed windows placed on hinges can turn the raised beds into cold frames or mini greenhouses. Attach a wood back and doors to table level raised beds so they can also be used as storage areas for gardening supplies.

### Enclosed Porch

Turn your porch into a greenhouse by enclosing it and using solar power to heat the space. My homesteading mentor, Rick Austin, wrote an inspiring book about how he turned a porch into a greenhouse, composting area, and young rabbit and chick-living space. A greenhouse lets you grow **dwarf fruit trees** and non-native plants that would otherwise be impossible to grow in your area.

## Homesteading Time Savers

Obviously, homesteading can be very time-consuming. If you work a full-time job, most of your free time will go toward maintaining your garden, taking care of animals, preserving the harvest, and so forth. Here are some things you can do to save time.

### Soaker Hose

Invest in a nominally priced drip water irrigation system or soaker hose so your plants are watered properly (from the ground up) and you don’t have to water them by hand on a daily basis during a heat wave. The hoses can be placed around growing containers and in raised beds.

## Automatic Water Tubes

Plastic or glass fed watering systems that are placed inside each growing container will vastly reduce the amount of time spent watering plants. The tapered design prevents over-watering and allows you to only fill it once per week.

## Low-Maintenance Plants

Invest in low maintenance plants and fruit producers that don't need a lot of tending to or pruning during the growing season. If you become overwhelmed by plants that demand a lot of attention in order to thrive, the crops will fail and you will once again be forced to rely on a grocery store for food.

## Chapter 3: Raising Your Own Meat And Eggs

Raising your own meat and eggs on an urban homestead can be accomplished with a little layout planning, as long as local laws don't prevent livestock. Homesteaders in "Right to Farm" states have more opportunities to keep small livestock, but sometimes there are stringent regulations.

Before buying a single chick to raise on your urban homestead, review your state, county, and local farm ordinances. Some restrictions placed on urban, suburban, and even small town homesteaders include a hen only rule, a maximum number of hens allowed, "quiet breeds only" allowed, prohibition of ducks, limit on number of rabbits, and specific guidelines pertaining to the keeping of goats—typically only small stature goats are permitted.

After you are armed with the knowledge of what you can and cannot raise, including any restrictions on backyard butchering, it's time to decide where you will put your livestock. The placement of pens should always be considered when laying out your growing space.

Plants will get sun placement priority, but the livestock cannot be placed anywhere without some sunlight, nor in a full sun area without shading protection. Heat stroke and scorching kill many poultry birds and rabbits during the summer months.

Always make sure the animals have access to cool and clean water during times of intense heat. Providing a bag of ice or healthy frozen treats can help keep the animals cool. Using solar powered fans to protect the animals from heat stroke might also be necessary.

### Chickens

Save space in your chicken coop by going up instead of out when building it. Chickens love to be up high and will appreciate your effort.

If your backyard is fenced in, you could allow the flock to free range for part of the day to give them some exercise and access the protein they need (bugs and worms). This way you can avoid having to build a large run.





Any chicken run area must be built out of hardware cloth (rabbit hutch wire) and not chicken wire. The thin and flexible wire is great for keeping birds in, but not for keeping predators out. If you build a chicken run, it must have a top of some type or you will lose your chickens to hawks and raccoons.

Hens need access to a dirt bath. A shallow tub filled with loose dirt, sand, or wood ash will suffice as a cheap DIY dirt bath. The hens use these baths as a social activity and as a means to rid themselves of, or prevent, parasite infestations. Sprinkle about ½ tablespoon of oregano and cinnamon over feed or in the flock waterer several times per week in order to boost your birds' immune systems.

Watch for signs of frostbite on the waddles and feet of the birds during the winter months. Untreated and prolonged frostbite can kill the birds—slowly and painfully. Also watch for sudden rises in temperature or your chickens could get heatstroke. Try to **keep them cool**.



## Quiet Chicken Breeds

Some breeds of chickens are **quieter and more docile** than others. But make no mistake about it, all roosters will crow and all hens can get loud when they cackle together in a group. Start small with just three birds to ensure you have time to care for the birds and that you can do so without complaints from neighbors.

### Top 5 Quiet Chicken Breeds:

- Barred Rock Plymouth
- Buckeye Chickens
- Buff Orpington
- Rhode Island Reds
- Wyandottes

You should get at least 100 eggs per year from any of the breeds on this list. Both Buckeyes and Rhode Island Reds lay medium to large brown eggs. The rest will lay white eggs.

## Goats

They are [many goat breeds](#) to consider. Pygmy goats and Nigerian dwarf goats are about the weight and height of a large dog such as a chow or German shepherd.



Nigerian goats are considered a dairy breed and offer a sweet, almost buttermilk, style of milk. Unlike standard goats, they cannot climb anything higher than about three feet tall.

Dog houses are commonly used as a safe enclosure for small stature goats. The structures protect them from the elements and provide them with shade.

Keeping a Billy goat (intact male) might not be permitted in some areas. Billy goats are rather loud when they get the desire to mate. Keep this in mind if you are able to purchase an intact male.

In order to get milk from a female goat, she will have to be lactating after having kids. If you cannot keep a Billy goat yourself, you could contract stud services with rural homesteaders or breeders.

If your yard is fenced, the goats can free range and take care of your weeds. However, any plant or shrub that doesn't have fencing around it will become a source of food for the goats.

Hardware cloth attached to "T" posts or wood posts—or attached to a wood panel fence—usually makes a strong and inexpensive fencing option for small stature goats.

## Rabbits

If keeping rabbits, create your compost pile beneath the hutch to save space and constantly acquire nutrient-rich droppings.

Keeping just one buck (male rabbit) to two does (females) will likely provide you with more than enough kits (baby rabbits) to supplement your family's meat source significantly.

The buck should be kept in a separate hutch from the does or he will try to mount them constantly. An overly taxed buck can kill himself from exhaustion and/or become sterile over a short period of time.

A doe must have a private nook in her hutch with materials to form a nest to use as a birthing and nursery area for her kits.

Even a docile doe can become fiercely aggressive with a caretaker who reaches anywhere near the nest while she is tending to her kits. This behavior should cease once the kits are weaned.

### Top 5 Meat Rabbit Breeds:

- Californians
- Continental Giants
- Flemish Giants
- New Zealand
- Silver Fox

While these five breeds are great, there are many other [rabbit breeds](#) worth considering.

Raising your own livestock for meat and eggs is a very rewarding experience. You know where your food is from, how it was raised, and can rest assured that the animals were given a humane life before they wound up on the butcher block.

There are [many animals](#) you can raise, but rabbits and chickens are two of the quickest and easiest types of livestock to butcher. No expensive tools are required to slaughter and butcher these animals. Just a sharp knife and a little bit of patience are all that is required to complete a process that hasn't changed since the time of our pioneering ancestors.





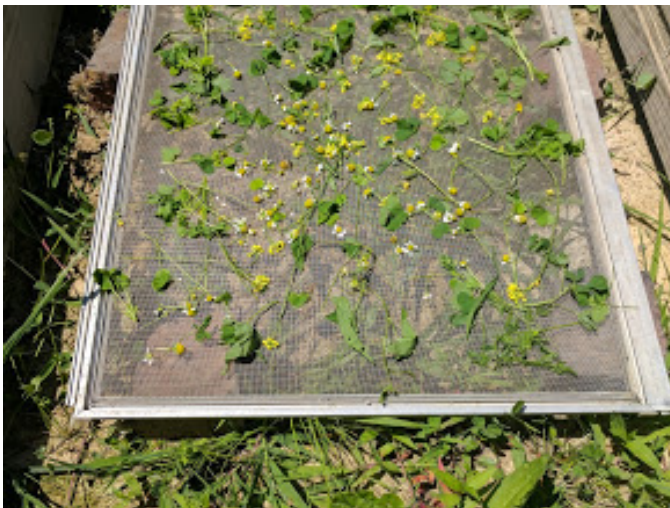
## Chapter 4: Creating An Apothecary

Your own apothecary, or backyard pharmacy, should be a vital aspect of your homestead. Cultivating [natural medicines](#) will grant you the ability to treat and prevent a vast array of conditions and injuries during a long-term disaster when doctors and nurses are hard to come by.

I am not a medical professional of any type. I am merely going to share information with you on natural herbs, roots, flowers, and so-called weeds that have been used in natural healing remedies. This is for educational purposes only.

Just because a medicinal recipe ingredient grows in the wild or comes from the earth doesn't mean you won't have an allergic reaction to it. Some herbs, roots, weeds, flowers, and essential oils are not recommended for pregnant or nursing women or for use (even topically) on young children.

After reading my list of healing herbs below, be sure to study them further and even consult your physician before using an ingredient you haven't consumed or used topically before.



Depending on the climate you live in, growing standard versions of these herbs might not be feasible. Growing dwarf versions so the plants can be relocated indoors when the seasons change is highly recommended.

If you can't grow some of the [healing herbs](#) on this list, then by all means, stockpile store-bought herbs.

Apothecary herbs, roots, weeds, and flowers can be preserved by air drying or in a solar or electric dehydrator.

I purchased a gel capsule pill maker and capsules in multiple sizes so I could preserve the medicinal herbs I was cultivating, and it cost less than \$100. The capsule maker is manually powered and very easy to use. Be sure to store both the empty and filled gel capsules in airtight containers in a cool dry place.

You may be wondering which herbs to grow since there are dozens of options. In the next section, I'll talk about my twelve favorite herbs to grow.

## Top 12 Healing Herbs To Grow

**Ashwagandha** – This healing herb has been used to boost fertility, reduce stress, fight memory loss, and decrease anxiety.

**Burdock Root** – This natural healing agent contains insulin fiber. Burdock root has been used to enhance good bacteria and microbe growth in the gut and as a natural cancer fighter. The root might aid in the conversion of colonic enzymes and may prevent them from becoming cancerous molecules.

**Cayenne** – This is one of my go-to [medicinal herbs](#). It has been used to help clot blood from moderate to severe wounds, to treat cold and flu symptoms, and to help arthritis and rheumatism. Cayenne is also frequently found in herbal remedy medicines designed to treat kidney, cardiac, spleen, headache, and digestive problems. It is also commonly used in natural weight loss concoctions.

**Chamomile** – This herb can be used in its natural form or brewed into a tea to treat stress and anxiety, ease digestive problems, help liver issues, enhance pancreas function, and topically to treat skin blisters.

**Cinnamon** – Growing a dwarf version of a cinnamon tree could give you access to a natural ingredient that has been used in a variety of organic antiviral home remedies. Cinnamon is well-known to boost the immune system, combat oral health issues, and help with diabetes and high blood pressure.

**Dandelions** – Pick dandelions from your yard or grow them in container pots in your apothecary. You can use the flowers in natural menstrual and menopause home remedies as well as insect repellent sprays, and that's [just the beginning](#).

**Garlic** - No homesteading apothecary would be complete without garlic. This powerful natural healing agent helps draw toxins and infections out of the bodies of both humans and animals. I give all of our domestic pets and livestock a small amount of garlic at regular intervals as a natural dewormer. Garlic's antibacterial, antifungal, and antimicrobial properties make it a very popular ingredient in natural health remedies of all varieties.

**Geraniums** – This common flower is sometimes used in natural home remedies to slow wound bleeding and detoxify the liver. It is also used in various organic recipes designed to offer an antibacterial boost to the body.

**Ginseng** - This root has been used in natural remedies to treat cold and flu symptoms and to

combat both mental and physical fatigue.

**Holy Basil** - This popular healing herb boasts a high concentration of chlorophyll, vitamins A and C, calcium, and zinc. Holy Basil, also referred to as tulsi, is often used in organic recipes to treat joint pain, diabetes, bronchitis, malaria, and ulcers.

**Johnny Jump-Up** – The dainty flowers of this plant boast anti-inflammatory properties and have been used as an expectorant in natural cough syrup remedies. Johnny jump-up is also a common ingredient in organic recipes crafted to treat eczema and common skin problems.

**Turmeric** - I stockpile more turmeric than any other healing herb. I cannot grow it in my region, but I am hoping that one day a dwarf version will become available. Turmeric is the only source of curcumin on the plant. Turmeric is most often used in natural remedies designed to treat swollen joints, tendons, and muscles. It has incredibly anti-inflammatory properties and is used extensively for cirrhosis, oral problems, and stomach issues. Cancer patients have been known to take turmeric to help boost their white blood cell and platelet counts in between chemotherapy treatments.

Learning how to cultivate and use these healing herbs will help get your urban homesteading apothecary off to a great start. Make a quick reference binder filled with growing and usage tips, including home remedy recipes for each herb to guide you along the way.

Remember, this list of healing herbs is not exhaustive. Branch out into growing more of your own natural medicine once you have mastered cultivating, preserving, and using these apothecary plantings.



Turmeric Plant (*Curcuma Longa*)



## Chapter 5: Home Remedies

There's no need to wait until your apothecary batch is ready to harvest before making [home remedies](#). Many of the items you'll need for these healing recipes are probably already in your kitchen.

I would absolutely love it if I could grow all the ingredients I need for my home remedies. Unfortunately, the potent ingredients I need hail from all over the world and from a multitude of different climates.

Stockpiling quality and organic versions of shelf-stable apothecary “helpers”, as I like to call them, will allow you to create a fully functioning natural “ER” right on your urban homestead.

Again, I am not a medical professional, nor am I suggesting that you totally ignore modern medicine. I am simply sharing some natural home remedy information for educational purposes and noting what I have found useful.

### Best Natural Home Remedy Recipes

#### Garlic Cleanse

1. Mix together one chopped garlic clove with a standard shot glass of carrier oil. Olive, almond, and coconut oil are my favorite carrier oils.
2. Next, let the garlic become infused in the oil for at least five hours.
3. Rub the oil onto the soles of clean feet.
4. Next, cover the feet in a clean pair of socks made of cotton, wool, or other natural fiber before going to bed.
5. Remove the socks in the morning and wash away the garlic. You will likely feel very refreshed.



#### Immune System Booster

1. Combine ½ cup of dried elderberries with 3 cups of boiling water.
2. Put the mixture into a small pot and bring it to a rolling boil.
3. Immediately turn the heat down to a simmer and allow the elderberry mixture to steep for half an hour. Stir regularly to avoid scorching.

4. Strain the mixture into a glass.
5. While the elderberry syrup is still hot from the stove, stir in 1 teaspoon of crushed cloves, ginger, and cinnamon.
6. Add 1 cup of [raw honey](#) and stir to combine the ingredients thoroughly.
7. Allow the elderberry syrup to cool off before drinking. This mixture can also be used to make a poultice for a wound to prevent infection and foster healing.
8. The recommended elderberry syrup dosage for adults is up to four tablespoons daily while fighting a cold or infection.

## Natural Flu “Shots”

### Ingredients:

- 1 ounce or 4 packets of gelatin
- 1 cup of warm to hot fruit juice. Do not let it come to a boil.
- 2 tablespoons of raw honey
- 1 cup of apple cider - Either cold or hot.
- Up to 1 ½ teaspoons total of your favorite herbs. Recommended herbs: turmeric, cinnamon, mint, powdered cloves, lemon zest, ginger, or orange zest.

### Directions:

1. Mix together the fruit juice, apple cider, and healing herbs in a medium sauce pot.
2. Simmer the mixture for approximately 10 minutes.
3. Stir in the gelatin - Sprinkle it onto the surface.
4. Now add the gelatin into the natural flu shot mixture. Stir it up to make sure it dissolves completely.
5. Pour the honey into the mixture and stir it up to thoroughly combine it with the rest of the ingredients.
6. Remove the pot from the stove and pour the natural cold and flu remedy into an ungreased 9x13 baking dish.

To speed up the cooling process, place the still hot mixture into the refrigerator. Only use a metal baking dish or pan if going this route. Glass will crack after being exposed to heat and cooled off too quickly. The natural flu shots will cool when left at room temperature in about three hours.

Once the mixture is cooled, cut them into 2x2 inch squares. Adults can consume one square daily when cold and flu symptoms appear. This will alleviate discomfort and help foster the healing process.

## Turmeric Bombs

Turmeric bombs are becoming very popular as an alternative to traditional painkillers. Here's how to make them.

### Ingredients:

- 3 tablespoons of turmeric
- 3 tablespoons of coconut oil powder
- 2 teaspoons of ground peppercorn
- Capsule maker and empty capsules

### Instructions:

1. Mix the ingredients together in a bowl.
2. Put the long end of each capsule into the capsule maker.
3. Pour the mixture onto the capsule maker and spread it out until every hole is filled.
4. Tamp down each of the pills, then repeat steps 3 and 4 as many times as necessary.
5. Put the caps onto each capsule.



## Turmeric Golden Milk

Golden milk is a centuries-old remedy used to bolster the immune system, fight the symptoms associated with cold and flu, and rid the body of infection.

### Ingredients:

- 1 teaspoon of turmeric - Because of the antibacterial and anti-inflammatory attributes it contains via its curcumin properties.
- ½ teaspoon of cinnamon - This ingredient is used because of its ability to lower blood pressure as well as its anti-inflammatory properties.
- ½ teaspoon of ginger - Golden milk recipes include ginger to harness its anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, and antimicrobial properties. Ginger may also help relieve the symptoms of motion sickness.
- 1 pinch of black pepper - Use just a tiny bit of black pepper to help the body absorb the curcumin in the turmeric.
- ½ cup of milk - You can use cow, goat, or a plant based milk like coconut or almond.
- 1 teaspoon of honey - This ingredient is included for its powerful anti-inflammatory and infection fighting abilities.





### Directions:

1. Combine all of the ingredients in a medium sauce pot.
2. Heat the mixture to a boil while stirring almost constantly to avoid scorching.
3. Once the golden milk mixture reaches the boiling point, reduce the heat to a simmer immediately.
4. Allow the natural remedy ingredients to simmer together for approximately 10 minutes.
5. Remove the pot from the stove and strain the mixture through a very fine strainer or cheesecloth.
6. Pour the turmeric golden milk into coffee mugs and sip to your healthy delight as soon as it cools enough not to burn your mouth.

### Turmeric Healing Poultice

1. Combine two parts turmeric and one part honey with just enough water to make a simple paste.
2. Spoon (slather, really) the turmeric paste onto a bandage to make a poultice that is applied to a sore or injured body part.
3. The paste will take at least half an hour to harden to the point where it pulls away from the body. At this point, gently wash the turmeric away and repeat the process up to four times a day until pain or swelling subside.

These natural remedies will help bolster your immune system and treat a vast array of common cold symptoms and minor to moderate injuries. Create a binder of your favorite natural remedies as you learn how to make them so you can build a quick reference library.

## Chapter 6: Preserving Food

If you tend your urban homesteading garden well and your plants aren't afflicted by any diseases, insect invasions, or adverse weather conditions, you should have a bountiful harvest to "put up."

There are a myriad of ways to preserve the fruits, nuts, and vegetables that you grow. In an urban or suburban setting, smoking meat to dry it might be problematic, but all of the other methods detailed below can easily be done, even in tight living quarters.

Processing the harvest may take a lot of time, no matter which method(s) you choose. When you are cutting up potatoes to blanch, chopping strawberries to make jam, or canning cucumbers to [make pickles](#), you might find yourself yearning for the days when you were bent over your garden pulling weeds beneath the hot sun.

But don't worry. All the work of preserving your food will be worth it when you pull it out of the cabinet and take that first delicious bite on a cold winter's day.

### 7 Best Ways To Preserve Food

1. Canning (both water bath and pressure)
2. Dehydrating
3. Smoking
4. Salting
5. Pickling ([fermentation](#))
6. Freezing
7. Freeze Drying

Almost any food can be preserved using the methods listed above. However, if the preservation method requires refrigeration of any sort, it won't be the best option for urban homesteading preppers who are concerned about a survival scenario.

#### Canning

There are two ways to can food: water bath canning and pressure canning. The food you are canning will dictate which method is used. For example, meat and corn must always be pressure canned. Water bath canning involves preparing the food (often boiling and seasoning) and putting it in Mason jars before placing them in a large pot filled with water for processing.

A canning cookbook, like the tried and true Ball version, will tell you how to can specific types of food, soups, stews, sauces, broths, and jellies.

### Canning Supplies:

- Mason jars
- Rings (reusable)
- Lids (not reusable)
- Pressure canner
- Canning pot
- Canning jar basket
- Magnetic lid lifter
- Jar lifter
- Metal funnel



### Dehydrating

Electric dehydrators can be purchased in a residential grade for around \$100. My first machine was a Nesco and I used it heavily for two years without complaint before upgrading to a more powerful and larger version of the same brand.

Eventually, I purchased a second one so we could process our garden and apothecary yield more quickly. All but the first dehydrator were exceptionally quiet. I have also used a dehydrator made by Excalibur, a top brand, and I was thrilled with it as well. But ultimately, I preferred the lower price tag model since it was of equal quality.



When dehydrating sauce, broth, soup, a liquid such as milk, or an exceptionally juicy fruit, use the plastic tray liner that fits your machine. Several solid liners and mesh ones are typically included with a new machine, but you should buy extras.

Uniformity is essential when dehydrating. Whether you are drying cheese or tomatoes, all the pieces should be as close as possible to the same thickness.

It is possible to use your oven as a dehydrator, but only if the temperature setting will go lower than 150 degrees.



Your dehydrating machine will have a little cookbook-style guide to help you learn what temperature settings to use for fruits, veggies, nuts, berries, herbs, meat, and dairy products. Instructions for making both meat jerky and fruit leather are also generally included.

It is best to store dehydrated food in small airtight containers as opposed to large containers. Doing so will prevent unused portions from being overly exposed to moisture when opened.

How the dried food is reconstituted varies greatly by the type of food. Typically, it only takes a little bit of water to bring most foods back to their original state. If making a soup, stew, casserole, or sauce, it is not necessary to dehydrate most dried ingredients before use.

When dehydrating meat, it is almost always recommended that you brown your beef before drying it in a machine.

## Smoking

Meat can be preserved by smoking via a smokehouse or a backyard charcoal or propane gas powered smoker.

Smoking meat is a lot like dehydrating or salt curing. The process centers around removing as much moisture as possible from the meat to prevent the growth of mold and mildew.



Smoked meat, not only jerky, always seems to have a delicious and distinctive flavor. Jerky is hard after being smoked, but once prepared, hams, beef roasts, and similar items are juicy and rich in flavor. Meat is almost always smoked at a temperature between 150 and 200 degrees.

## Salting

To preserve meat with this pioneering method, some variety of curing salt—not standard table salt—must be used. Both sea salt and Kosher salt are commonly used in home curing of meat.

The salt sucks the moisture out of the meat to help prevent the growth of harmful bacteria. The meat must be deeply and thoroughly coated with salt to prevent rotting. Any spot on the meat left exposed to air and moisture can foster the growth of mold and mildew and destroy the meat.

There should be roughly a one-inch thick layer of salt covering the entire piece of meat. The

salt must be gently rubbed onto the meat to make it stick. Covering the meat with cheesecloth is not required but is highly recommended to put a barrier between the food and bugs or debris. The meat must be hung in a cool dark place to cure and should be safe to eat for twelve months if the proper process was followed during curing.

Please note that these are just the basics and not a detailed guide to the curing process.



## Pickling and Fermentation

Vegetables and meat are the most commonly fermented foods, but nuts, fruits, and even milk can be preserved in this manner as well. Most fermenting recipes require the addition of sugar, salt, or honey to make the brine that the food soaks in.

Fermenting and pickling are slow processes that require both diligence and patience. Neglecting to monitor and follow instructions to further the process will result in a very stinky failure and the loss of valuable food that you grew or raised yourself.

## Freezing

It is safe to assume that every adult has preserved food in this manner at least once or twice. Although pressure canning is the most common way to preserve corn on the cob, it can be blanched and frozen as well.

## Freeze Drying

This is the most common method for store-bought survival food. Basically, it works the way it sounds—you freeze the food then dry it. This method is very effective on some foods, adding years and sometimes even decades to the shelf life.

There are a couple of downsides, though. Freeze drying machines are very expensive, ranging from \$2,000 to \$4,000 in price. You can freeze dry food without a machine, but the process takes several weeks. So, unless you have a lot of extra cash or a lot of patience, this isn't the best option.

## Chapter 7: Off Grid Power

Living off grid is perhaps the best way to conserve energy and natural resources. There are many ways to [generate your own power](#), and most homesteaders dream of living off the grid entirely. There is usually only one thing stopping this dream from becoming a reality... Money.

Going off grid is expensive. Sure, the monthly utility bills will vastly decline if not disappear completely, but the initial investment of solar panels and related equipment is quite expensive. Local laws in some areas may prohibit or restrict the ability to live off grid.

Always review the regulations in your area to make sure you don't spend thousands (or tens of thousands) of dollars on devices you will have to remove from your home.

My best advice to those with a desire to get off the grid as much as possible is to start small. The 20 to 30 years that a complete off grid system will take to pay for itself is an awfully long wait.

Thanks to the improvements in solar panel technology over the past decade, it is possible to power a home with solar panels even if you live in Alaska. However, the more powerful a solar panel system is, the higher the price will be.

When we vastly increased our land, we also decreased our home square footage. The hunting lodge we turned into our home is only 1,700 square feet or so.

When I did some research into what it would take to go off grid and garnered several estimates, the cost was going to be somewhere between \$30,000 to \$50,000. If we didn't heat our home with a wood stove, and if we used an electric stove and an air conditioner like most people, the expensive for solar panels would have been much higher.



The typical American home uses nearly 30kW/hr of electricity each day. It would take at least 30 solar panels getting a full day of sunshine to meet the power needs of the home. To live off grid and be able to use only solar energy year around, the energy consumption of the home would have to be reduced to about 10kW/hr per day.



## Get Off Grid In Small Doses

In addition to using solar power to take yourself off grid, there are other ways you can reduce your reliance on modern utilities:

- Propane gas powered appliances and wall mount heaters.
- Wood burning stove. They are far more energy efficient than fireplaces.
- [Wood cook stove](#).
- Wind turbines.
- Hydro power if your home is located on a moving creek or lake.
- Outdoor wood powered furnace.
- Using copper coils from a wood stove that connect to a hot water tank to warm water for showers and washing.

Reducing the amount of power you need to run your home is part of adjusting to the homesteading mindset. Make small changes to your energy consumption habits to increase your self-reliance. Cooking outdoors on a grill or smoker, except during the winter months, instead of using your stove is just one baby step you could take toward achieving your off grid goals.

Harvesting rainwater, learning how to reuse gray water, and drying your laundry on a clothesline are just a few of the ways you can live off grid without spending all your savings.



## Solar Alternatives

Consider buying some solar-powered appliances to use inside and outside your home. Check out the camping and outdoors stores in your area or online to find some of the following types of gear that can be used in place of their conventional counterparts.

- **Solar Charger** - Instead of plugging your smartphone into an electrical outlet, use a solar powered charger both in your home and when you are on the go for the same purpose.
- **Solar Generator** - You won't have to stockpile gallons of fuel to operate one of these emergency generators. They run silently, making them perfect during a survival situation.
- **Solar Hanging Lanterns** - These lights will be larger and stronger than lightbulbs. These are a great option for providing light in a shed, in the garage, or on a swimming pool deck. Simply hang them on the exterior of the building or in front of a window to charge.
- **Solar Hanging Light Bulbs** - Designed to be hung from tents but could be used on porches, patios, or indoors for bright light.
- **Solar Powered Bug Zapper** - Hang a sun powered bug killer in the yard and kill the pests silently without plugging into an outlet. Many of these devices also come as a lantern and insect killer combo.
- **Solar Powered Flashlight** - You can reduce your consumerism by not purchasing batteries for traditional flashlights. Instead, use solar powered flashlights or solar powered landscaping lights for emergency lighting.
- **Solar Powered Fountain Pump** - Do you have a decorative garden pond in your front or back yard? Instead of running an outdoor extension cord to the fountain pond and pump attachment, use a solar version instead.
- **Solar Powered Motion Detectors** - Keep the exterior of your home well lit when needed by using solar powered instead of hard wired motion detector lights.
- **Solar Shower** - Build a functional and attractive privacy shield in your backyard and use solar powered water bladders and/or a solar powered shower stand to bathe during warm weather months and when washing domestic pets or livestock.

Take baby steps to becoming less reliant on electricity and modern utilities. Not only will it save you money, you'll be more prepared in case of a grid down scenario.

## Chapter 8: Collecting Rainwater

Collecting rainwater on a homestead helps reduce your reliance on conventional utilities while conserving natural resources. Even if you can't harvest enough rainwater to meet all of the household needs, your monthly water bill will decrease.

Setting up a rainwater collection system that attaches to a roof and gutters is not a complicated or high-tech task. Depending on the dimensions of your home and buildings, it is possible to get a whole system up and running for only a few hundred dollars in a single weekend.

### Rainwater Collection Barrels

1. Choose a corner (or corners) of a house or building that has enough level ground to place a 55-gallon drum or plastic barrel.
2. Use cinder blocks or square paving blocks to line the ground where the rainwater collection barrel will be placed. Ideally, the barrel should be positioned 12 to 15 inches off the ground.
3. Next, you will probably need to shorten your downspout so there will be enough space to add elbow connectors to it, that way the rainwater can flow down into another pipe, and ultimately into the barrel.
4. Use threaded connectors to attach PVC and a spigot to the front lower area of the barrel for easy access to the water.
5. Attach a mesh screen to the barrel opening to filter out as much debris as possible.

### Rainwater Barrel Start Up Checklist

- Before connecting the barrel to the downspout, use a hose to flush out any dirt, leaves, or other debris.
- Prune back any tree branches that dangle over the rainwater collection system to prevent future debris as much as possible.
- Pour water into the downspout in small sections to check for leaks. Repair any leaks that appear or replace the piece of downspout.
- Reinforce the downspouts with either sheet metal screws or caulk if they appear to be weakening for extended use.
- Spray out the rainwater barrel or scrub it with a mild liquid dish soap periodically to prevent grime and build up if water is not used frequently after being collected.
- Consider digging an overflow area to divert water away from the structure that the barrel is attached to during times of excess rain and low water usage. You could also connect a second barrel to the first one using PVC as a dual catchment system for overflow purposes. This is highly recommended so you can store extra water in case of drought.



## Rainwater Collection Tips

### Legalities

Not every state or town allows residents to collect as much rainwater as they want, or any rainwater at all. Make sure you follow all state and local ordinances when planning a rainwater catchment system on your urban homestead.

In some states or municipalities, you might have to purchase a permit to capture rain falling from the sky onto your own property. The number of states with some type of ban or restriction on residential rainwater collection changes periodically due to pending legislation, so I will not be making a list here; it would become outdated far too quickly.

Never assume that because you were able to collect rainwater without a permit one year, you'll still be allowed to the next year.

### Equipment

Choosing the right barrel(s) for rainwater collection is the most important part of the set-up process. A clean food-grade barrel that has never contained toxic chemicals is an absolute must.

Do not be enticed into buying a used plastic barrel because of its cheap price tag. If you cannot be 100 percent positive about what was previously housed in the barrel, head to a home improvement store and shell out a little cash for a brand new barrel.



Plastic barrels explicitly manufactured for rainwater collection are going to cost more than standard barrels. Most rainwater collection barrels come with a tight-fitting cover, mesh debris catchment screen, and pre-fitted pipe and spigot connections for easy access. The PVC pipe tap system has to fit onto the barrel tightly or it will leak and you will eventually lose all of the water you've collected.

### Roof Surface

Not every roof surface is well suited for rainwater collection. The type of material the roof is comprised of could infuse various toxins or chemicals into the rainwater.

If water rolling off of old asphalt shingles is not properly filtered, toxins will likely be present in the water. This concern should not exist on a roof with newer asphalt shingles.

Metal roofs, cement tile roofs, sheet steel, and clay tile roofs are almost always certified safe for rainwater collection.

## Using The Collected Rainwater



The rainwater collected can be used right out of the barrel to shower, do laundry, water crops, wash a car, give animals a bath, and similar activities.

However, the collected rainwater must be treated before it can be considered potable (safe for human consumption).

The quality of the collected water will vary depending not only on how long it is kept in the barrel and how much debris has gotten

inside, but also where you live. For homesteaders living in an area with air pollution or other environmental problems, the collected rainwater is likely to be of lesser quality than that which rains down in the suburbs or in a rural area.

Contaminates that even a durable and fine mesh screen can't filter out include insects, bird droppings, and dirt washed in from the downspout. Typically, rainwater boasts a neutral pH level. You should always test the acidic level of the collected rainwater before using it for any purpose.

Remember, even though collecting rainwater is fairly simple compared to many other homestead activities, there are still **many mistakes** you could make, so be careful.

## Chapter 9: Upcycling And DIY Projects

Upcycling and DIY projects are another major facet of the homesteading lifestyle. Some folks mistakenly think recycling is also a popular activity with homesteaders. It is, but to a far lesser degree. Upcycling, like homesteading, requires a certain mindset.

### Changing Your Mindset

Purchasing one-time-use items is highly frowned upon in the homesteading community. The trash can should no longer be your default location for items you no longer need. In fact, there are some things you should **never throw away**. Instead, **find a use for them**.

For example, plastic bottles can be turned into individual hanging planters for herbs. Some cinder blocks and boards can be turned **into a bench**. And aluminum pop cans can be turned into art or jewelry.

Upcycling should not be limited to only the waste created on your own homestead. Make use of discarded items like wood pallets, scrap metal, and small bits of fencing to create livestock habitats, planters, and protective garden borders.



Corn Husks Turned Into Dolls

Achieving the self-reliance goals of homesteading will be best achieved when you have ample materials on hand to complete necessary projects. Upcycling scrap materials and doing the work yourself will save money, enhance your skill set, and undoubtedly fill you with a sense of intense pride when looking down at the completed project.



Upcycled Furniture From Old Barn Wood

Many homesteaders turn their upcycling efforts into a cash making opportunity for their homestead. They sell things like reusable dryer sheets, “paper” towels made out of scrap fabric, and old tires turned into planters.

Homesteaders sometimes sell their upcycled art, animal pens, furniture, garden markers, and clothing locally at craft fairs or online via websites like Etsy. Taking unwanted, broken, or old items and turning them into something useful again is one of the most fulfilling aspects of being a homesteader.



As already noted, consumerism is a lifestyle habit that must be broken when embarking on a homesteading lifestyle. Instead of going to the local mall or boutique store to shop for clothing, homesteaders hit [yard sales](#), [flea markets](#), second hand stores, and vintage stores.

Yes, they are still spending money, but they are not fostering the creation of new items (which are often disposed of before wearing out their use) and are instead taking what already exists and finding a way to make it work for them.

To build, repair, or upcycle on the homestead, you will need both tools and skills. Using [manual tools](#) and off grid power sources to complete projects is the homesteading way.



Upcycled Container Garden

## Top 10 Homestead Tools

**Axe** – An axe is most commonly used to chop wood for your wood stove or fireplace, but it can also be used for other things such as removing rotten portions of wood from a board that can be repurposed, and chipping away ice build-up on hard surfaces during the winter.

**Circular Saw** – If you plan on engaging in a decent amount of woodworking on your homestead, a circular saw and a pair of safety glasses will be in order.

**Electric Sander** – When upcycling old wood, it will need to be sanded before being turned into planters, raised bed framing, furniture, or art. Pallets often have rough edges and should be sanded before being used as vertical growing containers or turned into outdoor furniture.

**Hammer** – There are multiple types of hammers and you should own several to ensure you

have the right tool to do any job that comes up.

**Nail Gun** – Any time a tool can save you time and fits your budget, it should be considered for purchase.

**Pliers** – Use this manual tool to remove rusty nails from old boards, remove fencing attached to discarded boards, make repairs on a livestock habitat, and conduct a myriad of electrical and plumbing repairs.

**Power Drill** – A manual drill should be on your shopping list, but having a power drill, especially when new to DIY work, is also recommended. Most power drills can be charged via a portable solar charging mat or by plugging them into a generator.

**Sewing Machine** – With even a simple \$100 machine, you will be able to make and repair clothing. You could also turn scrap fabric or second hand clothing into a purse, pillow, baby clothing, or another type of useful fabric.

Don't let the idea of sewing intimidate you. I never touched a sewing machine until our first granddaughter was about to be born and I wanted to make her some cute little dresses.



A little help via text messages from a cousin and I mastered threading the machine. A few YouTube videos later and I started compiling free patterns from Pinterest to start what turned out to become one of my favorite hobbies.



**Staple Gun** – This handy little tool can help you quickly attach chicken wire to wood posts around your garden and bird netting as a protective barrier around both your growing area and above a chicken coop run.

This handy tool can help you quickly attach chicken wire to wood posts around your garden and bird netting as a protective barrier around your growing area and above a chicken run.

**Wrench** – This manual tool will be useful when working on mechanical equipment, vehicles,

and when building a multitude of upcycling projects using wood or metal.

If you have never built a workbench, made your own clothing, or generally been very crafty, the concept of doing so might be overwhelming. As with all things, start small and build upon what you learn.

Pinterest is an excellent place to get inspiration and free patterns or plans for a plethora of homesteading projects both inside and outside.



## Chapter 10: Mentors And Partners

Urban and suburban homesteaders often feel as if they are going it alone. If you are the only house or apartment on your block growing its own groceries, collecting rainwater, or raising chickens, it would be very easy to feel that way. But you are not alone.

More and more city folks are embarking on a self-reliance lifestyle. Hundreds of otherwise trashed city lots have been turned into lush organic community gardens. If no one in your immediate vicinity has discovered the value of living a simpler life centered around conserving natural resources and self-reliance, that makes you a trail blazer. The number of teachable moments you'll eventually have are too numerous to count.

Still, life as a trail blazer might feel lonely at times and all newbie homesteaders could benefit greatly from having a mentor. Hands-on learning is the best way to develop the skills you'll need to run a successful homestead. YouTube videos are great, but there is a time for watching and a time for doing. It is incredibly difficult to hold your phone to watch a video with one hand and create something useful or beautiful with the other.



### Homesteading Mentors

Connecting with a mentor not only offers the opportunity for skills growth, but also the chance to form a bond with other like-minded individuals. Being invited into the “club” could give you the sense of belonging and support you have been yearning for but couldn't find among your neighbors or work peers.

Once you are actually a homesteader, the topics you are interested in talking about are going to change. The latest celebrity gossip news or fashion trends at the mall will not be something you care to waste time talking about—not when your hens just laid their first eggs and your oregano seeds are sprouting.

Of course, if you are driven to become an urban homesteader despite space and legal obstacles, then you probably aren't the kind of person who ever cared about clothing styles and what vapid reality stars were doing. Still, your conversational interests will change. Having someone to share in the joy of each of your little homesteading victories can truly bolster you

during times when you feel overwhelmed or discouraged.

Finding a mentor probably won't be as difficult as you think. Browse the social media pages or websites of local groups, community classes, or clinics. Sign up for a workshop that will enhance your homesteading skills. You should find yourself among "your people" at such a class. Most, if not all, will welcome a newbie and will be eager to pass on [their knowledge](#). Don't be afraid to ask questions!

Everyone was new to homesteading once, even folks born into it from out in the country where I live. It is the homesteading way to pitch in and always help fellow homesteaders without even being asked.

Do not be afraid to announce that you are new to the self-reliance life. It is most likely that you will be greeted with knowing smiles and some horribly funny tales from your potential mentors about their early days of beekeeping, raising livestock, growing healing herbs, urban gardening, and the like.

You might enter the room as a stranger with few to little skills, but odds are you will be leaving with the contact information of several new friends and maybe even some open invitations to come check out their homestead and an offer to call on them at any time for help. You'd be wise to take them up on that.



## Homesteading Partnerships

A partnership with other homesteaders in both your area and in rural areas can be highly beneficial. Connecting with other small space homesteaders could allow you to pool your efforts, knowledge, skills, and even tools. The fellow urban homesteader might live on the other side of town, but that is still close enough to share (or barter) what you are growing and raising.

Such a partnership would also give you someone to share work details with on the homestead. In rural areas, it is not uncommon for someone to put out a call for a work detail and gladly wait for all the extra hands and free labor to show up. Something akin to an old-fashioned Amish barn raising occurs, with plenty of food on the grill, ice cold drinks, and more often than not, someone whipping out a guitar to entertain the group after a long day of work.

In an urban or suburban environment, it is unlikely you will have a big construction project to work on by yourself, but inviting your homesteading partners over to help put up a chicken coop or harvest the garden will still lessen the workload while bringing you closer to those who share your ambitions and goals.

Cultivating a partnership with a rural homesteader who lives on more land and functions under far less government regulation is definitely advantageous for urban preppers who want to grow more crops and raise more animals than they have space to accommodate.

This type of a partnership should be reserved until after you have gotten at least one year of homesteading under your belt. Splitting your time between caring for your own property and tending to an animal on another could be far too distracting to foster success.

If you really want to raise and consume your own beef or pork, work out an agreement for what essentially amounts to “boarding” space for larger livestock. The partnership agreement could be for space and raising services, or only for space and daily care with your help on a predetermined schedule under the tutelage of a rural homesteader.

Spending time on a larger and more established working homestead can help improve your skill set in preparation for the day when you expand your efforts beyond the space you are currently working.



## Afterword

By now, you should know exactly what I mean by changing your mindset. Stop thinking of a homesteader as someone deep in the country with a big house, a red barn, lots of cattle, and an enormous garden. A homesteader is anyone trying to be as self-sufficient as possible with whatever items they have at their disposal.

If the day comes when you can get some land in the country, you will have a huge headstart if you follow the advice in this book. But even if that never happens, you will still be a homesteader.

Plus, you'll have saved a lot of money, improved your health, and developed a deep sense of satisfaction from using things that you made or grew yourself.

To learn more about how to be a homesteader, visit [HomesteadSurvivalSite.com](http://HomesteadSurvivalSite.com) where you can find hundreds of articles about homesteading and survival.

Thanks for reading, and good luck!

