

January 16, 2013

Issue 7

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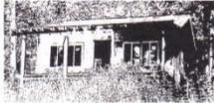


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Sustainability – Sufficiency – Sanctuary – Personal Responsibility

Summing Up 2013 on The Gray Homestead

By Richard Gray at The Gray Homestead

Here I sit on New Year's Eve, preparing to watch the final sunrise of 2013. I expect to be rewarded with a beautiful finish to the year, as the sky is crystal clear. Of course, the sun will not actually rise over our horizon until about 9:30 or so due to our geographical situation. The top of the bluffs, which are about 100 yards east of us, could be as much as 100 feet higher than the cabin. That makes for a late sunrise. Somebody should tell the roosters in our coop. They start crowing at 5:30ish every morning and this morning is no exception.

I can't help but reflect on this year, even though a year is just a measurement of the earth's movement. A year is made up of days, and is designed to describe where the earth is in relation to the sun. It is also used as one component of the measurement of time. Time is a man-made construct. Time doesn't exist in the way that physical objects exist. Time is omnipresent. All time exists at once, and not at all. I would argue that we live in the past, present, and future, all at the same time. Time doesn't change. The only thing that changes is the location of physical objects.

Enough on my philosophy of time – my intention was to reflect on the collection of time that is known as 2013.

We made it through 2013 alive, so I guess it was a success. In that regard, it was almost a failure, because according to at least one doctor, I almost didn't make it due to a case of flu and double pneumonia. And I have to qualify the term "we", because all of us on the homestead didn't all make it out of 2013 alive. We lost 3 guineas, 2 ducks, 2 chickens, and 1 cat. We include these animals in our losses because they were important to us. We don't equate the loss of these animals to that of those who lost human life, but they were important to us nonetheless.

theless.

We had other successes and other failures. We tried gardening. We were largely unsuccessful. Establishing a garden in the understory of a forest is an epic endeavor. A lack of appropriate sunlight, a lack of appropriate soil, a lack of appropriate pollinators, and an abundance of inappropriate pests, all but squashed our efforts. That being said, we did produce a little. What we didn't gain in nutrition, we gained in experience. We are looking forward to applying that experience to the 2014 growing season.

We managed to keep some of our chickens and ducks alive. Both goats will exit 2013 unscathed. All 3 of our dogs fared well throughout the year. We also inherited 2 dogs from my mom. They are doing well, but Toby, mom's 70lb supposed lab mix is walking on thin ice. He is one incident away from taking a long walk in the woods.

The sky is brightening, so I'll have to reflect a little faster now. The back door of the cabin requires some attention. After the door, I have to cut some wood. Then I have a wall to build and a water system to plumb.

Jennifer's income ended at the very end of the year because she did not want a flu vaccination.

Just before Jennifer's employer took her off the schedule, we received some really good news, news that we aren't ready to share with the world yet. Let the speculation begin. When we are ready to share, read about it here.

We survived the floods that came in the spring, the heat of the summer, and the ice storm and cold of the winter. Jennifer griped about the flooding, the heat, and the ice. She is griping about the cold.

I worked on writing a book. It's a groundbreaking work that will shift

paradigms. I will become a household name. I will be immortalized by academics and laymen alike. Seriously, if anyone reads it and is entertained I will be happy. If anyone finds it educational, I will be thrilled. Send me your email address for a sneak peak. It has nothing at all to do with homesteading. Look for the book to be ready in the first half of 2014.

I became a civil disobedient. Read about my civil disobedience here.

We have had a little success with our newsletter, Ozark Homesteader. Ozark Homesteader's Facebook page has just over 300 fans. Our blog, The Gray Homestead, has had over 6000 views. We are using both to help promote self-sufficiency and personal freedom. If you read the blog or the newsletter and you are on Facebook, please consider liking our pages.

It's 8:15 am now, and Boomer is on the bed with Jennifer, safely tucked away from the rest of the world under the covers. It seems that all this particular pitty wants is to spend mornings in the bed with us. The sky has changed from gray to blue. An orange hue is appearing over the bluffs in the east. Sunshine is quickly moving down the ridge on the other side of our valley. It won't be long now – so much for 2013.

We are looking forward to the opportunity to grow in 2014. We will actively try to reconnect with friends and family from which we have grown apart in the past few years. We will continue to promote self-sufficiency and personal liberty.

To sum it all up, the year known as 2013 was good, and we will work hard to make the year that will be known as 2014 even better.

Read the whole article at:

www.thegrayhomestead.com

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Let's Talk About Herbs! Pt 2

by SS Alexander

Now that we have talked a bit about pots let's talk about what to grow in them.

As much fun as it would be to grow every herb available on the market most of us have a limited amount of space in our homes for potted plants. This being said it is a good idea to think about your style of cooking and the herbs you actually use the most. I personally tend to keep three pots behind the sink and the contents of these pots have changed as I try new herbs in my kitchen in a search for basic herbs I use and enjoy most often.

For instance you may do a lot of southern cooking; parsley, sage, and peppers are a good start for this. While peppers require more space than most some are quite small and hot and will happily live in a pot providing never ending peppers and flowers. They can be purchased during the spring and summer as plants and then kept in your pots for several years running with careful maintenance. If your plant grows too large you can trim it back, just remember that peppers produce on new growth and it will take time to produce new growth but a little extra fertilizer will speed this up a bit. Sage and peppers will require less water, prefer an unglazed pot, and a careful watch on the new growth and tender leaves will be your best indicators for watering. Parsley on the other hand is happy to have the bottom inch sitting in water or to use a self-watering pot and will not mind the moisture holding properties of plastic.

Perhaps you enjoy more Euro-

pean cooking? Consider keeping sage, rosemary, and thyme.

These are the three basics of roasted birds and wild game. Many herbs overlap in culinary fields and can be adapted for multiple uses. As all three of these herbs are of the drier types they would be very pretty in unglazed pots lined up in the window. You may even wish to have some fun with them by painting them in a food safe or vegetable based stain to add color to your decor. Each of these will need careful trimming as sage will stay nicely in its pot and will produce more the more you trim it while rosemary will tend to grow slower and it is possible to quickly trim your herb to an ugly stick when it is still young, if it is not given time to mature. Thyme tends to spread and your biggest challenge may be what to do with all your trimmings made to keep it from taking over your window in its search for new rooting places. As mentioned in the first part of this discussion this growing habit makes this a lovely candidate for hanging pots as the stiff and yet delicate looking tendrils drape over the edges of the pot. In contrast the rosemary will grow straight up or sometimes lean a bit to the side and is perfect to slowly stain into topiary shapes. If it leans, and you wish it not to, a small boulder or rock set to the side can push it back upright and can be removed when desired or after a couple of weeks have given the herb a chance to harden into its new position.

Another common style is Italian, which once again uses a lot of rosemary but with the friends

of oregano and basil being most common. Oregano, like thyme, also does not like to sit in water but will be happy with a glazed pot. As a prolific producer of leaves it tends to put out runners and can be hard to control in an outdoor garden, but in a pot this works well for constant and easy use. Some forms of oregano produce heads of multiple tiny flowers in fall before dying back for the winter. By trimming these off you can stave off this die back or you can wait, let them bloom, and then cut them all the way back. In the warmth of your house they will quickly recover from this cutting and be ready to provide again in no time. Basil will be happy with both plastic and glazed pots and handles a self-watering pot just fine. It is possible to keep it alive for a couple of years running but not forever, simply reseed your pot from time to time. As you water the new sprouts will grow up with the old plants and as they die off or are cut away entirely the new ones will replace them. The more you trim basil the more it grows but as soon as it starts to flower it is a good indicator to reseed as the herb often dies after seeding.

There are many other combinations of culinary herbs and many also have uses in your medical pantry. In the upcoming articles I will cover herbs in more detail; sprouting methods, cultivating, harvesting, and some of the uses of each featured herb.

Reader Introduction – Kathryn Griffin

Hello! Just happened upon your Ozark Homesteader News-letter and really enjoyed it. We are newcomers to Arkansas, moving southeast of West Fork about a year and a half ago, but old-timers regarding self-sufficiency.

My husband installs solar PV panels, solar hot water heating systems that he manufactures himself and he built a solar tractor which we use on our 30 acre farm. I wrote an article on the

solar tractor which was featured in the online Mother Earth News in its entirety, then in the print magazine in condensed form in the last issue. I am attaching the original article and some photos; if you think it is something your readers would enjoy hearing about, please feel free to use all or part of it. My husband also built a solar cooker for me which I absolutely love. The article about the cooker is on my sustainability blog which I virtually

abandoned during our move and am now trying to re-start,

We have chickens, horses, (large) Great Pyrenees puppies and are working on getting some cattle and rabbits as well.

We are always happy to connect with like-minded people and it seems like Arkansas has many more folks working on self-sufficiency than any other state we have lived in. (We are from New Mexico, but lived in Arizona for about a year and Texas for

five years before finding our paradise in Arkansas). Keep up the good work!!

Editor's Note: What a small world! We read the article about the solar tractor when it was published in Mother Earth News.

Welcome to Arkansas. We hope to hear more about your place and what you are doing.

Chris's Story

by Richard Gray

The subject line read "Picture of the Week", and it had an attachment. I opened it with anticipation, but that anticipation quickly faded to confusion. My first thought was that the picture was a joke. It turned out that I was right, but not for the reason I first thought.

Complicated? Yes.

The picture, out of context, is easily misconstrued. Instead of dismissing it, as was inclined to do, I decided that there was probably some level of satire

Change - It's a Good Thing

by Chris

In the quest to be more self-sufficient, live off the land, lower your bills and just live a healthier, cleaner life, you have to start somewhere. When you first think about all that it entails it seems too impossible and makes you just want to bury your head and say "Nah, I will just continue to live like I am because it is easier". Yep, been there done that. So it's funny how changing one little thing then motivates you to want to keep changing. I would like my articles to motivate everyone to make a change.....

Between 2007 and 2010 I was an extreme couponer. I was making/saving tons of money while getting products for free. Using the overage (when the coupon value was more than the price of the product) I was able to start toward our new way of life by getting things we needed- gardening supplies, a new freezer, new push mower, guns, ammo, survival gear, etc. Couponing changed my life in so many ways and when my type of couponing ended (I was making/saving \$45,000 a year) it was time to move on and find other ways to change and enhance our life.

In 2011 my husband and I both decided it was time to get healthier. I joined TOPS (Taking off Pounds Sensibly - a very affordable weight loss support group) because I wanted to lose 10 pounds. I ended up losing 23 pounds! We changed our diet to include more real food, I read all the books and information I could for a whole year, we got rid of all the plastic Rubbermaid in the kitchen, switched to all

involved. A quick Google search led me to believe that I was right.

After some research, I emailed Chris for some clarification about the intent of the picture. I'm glad I did. The reply I received was much more than I had hoped for. Chris has a story, and it's a good one.

Her story, in her own words is below.

stainless and cast iron cookware, and switched to olive and coconut oil. I started making our toothpaste, gave up lotions and went completely to using essential oils and carrier oils for moisturizers plus many other things. The list goes on and on. As we changed one aspect of our life, we wanted to continue to live even healthier. We wanted to live more off the land. It gave us a feeling of power and freedom! But if someone would have mentioned doing all of these things all at once, we would have bucked and done nothing! It is amazing what change can do.

At the end of 2012 we got rid of cable television and since we do not live in town, that means we got rid of television PERIOD! It was absolutely one of the greatest things we have ever done. When we tell people we live without television, they cannot believe it. I even had one lady tell me that she would "go into a corner and cry" if she didn't have tv! WOW. Not only did it save us \$24 a month (we were of course, on the cheapest package) but it really did make us think more clearly.

We struggled for a long time when we considered getting rid of television, not for the reasons that most people would, but because we have neighbors, close neighbors and they have kids that make noise. We don't have kids and we don't like noise, unless it comes out of something gasoline powered, lol. But we honestly haven't had a problem. By getting rid of the television we can focus more on things that matter. The way I



see it is this: (1) the television wasn't making me famous (2) the television wasn't making me money and (3) the television wasn't good for my health. I think when people put it in perspective, it allows them to see outside the box.

Our goals in 2013 included putting up a clothesline, getting a generator big enough to run the house, getting a building big enough to house our toys and start working on a chicken coop, all of which we did. Our goals for 2014 include moving our gardens and getting chickens- the latter is something neither of us has experience with. In the 10 years we have been married, we have made several strides towards living more frugally and being more self-sufficient. It is a process that never ends and if it did, your whole existence would be strictly about survival. I prefer to live as frugally and self-sufficient as possible in order to fund my habits- old vintage Harleys and hot rods.

Our lives vary from most peoples. We don't have kids (by choice- I actually got my tubes tied for FREE in my 20's), we live in a modest home on 2 acres, I only spend \$100 a month on groceries. A lot of the things we do have evolved - I used to go to town and shop once a week, then twice a month and now just once a month. The only meat we eat is what we kill, hence the reason we are going to add in chicken! We re-load our own ammo. We have a hot water timer installed and only heat water for 3 1/2 hours a day. Most of the things we do we have to plan out in order to

live like this. It is a little more inconvenient, but totally worth the pay off financially as well as healthier. I spend less than \$100 a year on clothing and when I do shop it is 99% in thrift stores. We don't have a microwave, a dishwasher or toaster. We don't use paper towels. I cook all of our meals - mostly in a crockpot - and mostly with deer meat and vegetables.

I ride a motorcycle as much as possible to save gas and I've spent two weeks selling off unnecessary stuff, duplicate stuff and just stuff I don't use and netted over \$1500! It is amazing how we all have too much stuff. Each year I decide to live with less. I will make more of a conscious effort to not buy so much. Most of this stuff was bought 8-10 years ago when I discovered Ebay! So add that to 2014 goals of being more self-sufficient, living even more frugally and getting healthy. Along with my personal goals, these subjects are always on the list and each year I progress.

The point I am trying to make is that as far as we have come there is still so much more we can do. Nope, we're probably never going to live in a 200 square foot cabin in the woods with no Entergy, and to be honest, that is not our goal, but we can all move closer to being prepared, learning to do more, change our habits to healthier ones and live more self-sufficient.

I have a goal, do you?

Picture of the Week



Chris and Gabe's Christmas card pic.
Read more about it on page 2.

Email your amateur or professional picture to ozarkhomesteader@gmail.com to submit it for Picture of the Week. No copyrighted pictures, please.

Ozark Homesteader is a publication of:

The Gray Homestead
PO Box 71
Dennard, AR 72629

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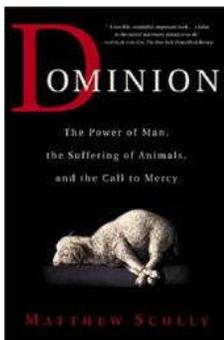
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— Benjamin Franklin

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Podcasts

by Richard Gray

I listen to many podcasts. I find most of them mildly entertaining and some of them mildly informative. I like podcasts that provide informative content. Most of the podcasts to which I listen have something to do with liberty.

If you aren't familiar with podcasts, I'll fill you in. A podcast is just like a radio show, only it is posted somewhere on the internet. Once you find one you think you will like, all you have to do is stream it or download it. Streaming a podcast means that your device connects to the place where the podcast is stored. Then your device downloads a very small piece of the podcasts and plays that piece immediately on your device. When the podcast is over, the podcast is not left on your device. Streaming requires a decent internet connection. To stream a podcast, you have to have a continuous internet connection for the duration of the podcast. Downloading works best for me. I download the podcast to my laptop and then transfer it over to a portable device that I can carry around as I work. This allows me to multi-task. When I lived in Atlanta, where I had an excellent internet connection all of the time, I did a lot of streaming.

Podcasts work well for me because I don't like listening to music on the radio. I also don't like listening to religious stations, and I don't care for regular left or right talk shows. Rush is right? I don't think so. But neither is the other guy. One of our readers suggested

I listen to the Chicken Thistle Farm Coop Cast. I did. I liked it in general. It's a podcast about one couple's experience with a farmstead. Being a vegetarian, I wasn't exactly into all of the talk about slaughtering hogs, but it was a fairly decent podcast. I do enjoy learning from people who are successful at living off of their own homestead. Thanks for the suggestion.

My favorite podcast, Free Talk Live (www.freetalklive.com) is actually a recording of a radio show. It has a variety of hosts. They aren't Democrats or Republicans. Free Talk Live promotes libertarian views. Some will find these views radical. In our country, there seems to be lots of people who want government to control my life. You won't find that on Free Talk Live. What you will find is a live and let live attitude, where the only rule is basically don't hurt anyone else. There is a lot of talk about morality, but not from a religious point of view.

If you are a die-hard fan of

public schools, anti-gay marriage laws, or laws in general, then this podcast will probably infuriate you. However, if you consider yourself an open minded individual, give it a try.

On Free Talk Live, the listeners choose the topics. It truly is an interactive experience. I wish I could hear it reliably on the radio instead of having to download it when I'm on a free Wi-Fi connection. Try it out and let me know what you think.

I have a whole list of podcasts that I listen to on a regular basis. Email me if you are interested. If you have a favorite podcast, tell us about it and we will share it with everyone.





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Free Presentation: Wild Ozarks Herbs

By Richard Gray

Madison Woods has created a useful guide to the herbs that grow wild in the Ozarks

Wild Ozarks Herbs is a Power-Point presentation that describes some of the herbs and other plant life that can be found in the Ozarks. Madison has captured some of these plants in amazingly detailed photographs.

Madison describes many different types of medicinal, edible, and ornamental plants.

Madison is a homesteader and

writer, among other things. She maintains a blog where she shares her experiences as a modern homesteader. It's well written and Madison includes many pictures. Better hurry, according to her blog, it's free for a limited time only.

Here's a link to her blog:

<http://www.wildoark.com/madison-woods-blog/>

