

Basic Backyard Composting

by Justin van Oeveren

So, you want to compost. Get started this summer. Read more on page 2.

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BACKYARD DIRT

LEARN TO COMPOST THIS SUMMER

Why start a compost?

Besides helping to reduce your garbage, when mixed with soil in your garden, finished compost adds healthy nutrients that are key to helping you grow more and bigger vegetables!



Thanks to volunteer and Master Composter Justin van Oeveren for sharing these basic steps for getting your backyard compost project started!

Step 1 - Buy or make a bin to put your compost in. It can be pallets screwed together into a square or it can be one that you purchase.

Step 2 - Collect your produce kitchen scraps in a container. Do not compost anything from any animal, ex. cheese, meat, feces, etc.

Step 3 - Place a layer of brown leaves or grass on the bottom of your compost bin. Place your container of collected produce scraps into your bin and place two to three more containers full of brown leaves or grass on top.

Step 4 - Repeat the process as much as necessary. Your food scraps will take between 6 and 12 months to become fully composted, and usable in your garden.

Step 5 - Harvest your finished compost from the bottom of your pile. You can also purchase or build another bin; this will allow your first bin to finish composting while you add to your second bin.



Troubleshooting Tips

If you are concerned about critters such as bears, raccoons, etc. having access to your compost try purchasing an enclosed compost bin such as a tumbler.

To reduce the smell, add a few buckets of dry, brown material such as leaves or grass clippings. Mix them in and then add another couple of buckets to cover the pile entirely. Less smell will help to attract less animals!

MAKE PEMMICAN

RECIPE BY ELDER AUDREY LOGAN

Ingredients

Dried meat or fish (you want it to be crumbly)

Purchase, or dry in the oven, air-dried under a fan, or dehydrator

100 g Dried berries or fruit

Saskatoons, cranberries, blueberries, haskaps, strawberries, raisins, etc.

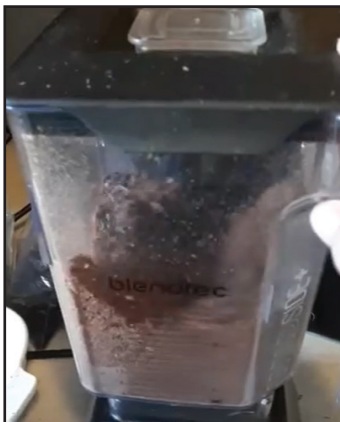
100 g Bison fat or bacon grease



Finished pemmican. Yum!



Use dried meat, berries & fat



Grind meat & berries together in a blender

1. **Grind up the meat and berries** together using a good blender or food processor. Grind until there are no “strands” of meat, and it’s powdery.
2. **Mix in the fat slowly** one small scoop at a time, until mixture sticks together.
3. **Spread the mixture out** on parchment paper and let it sit to let meat and berries absorb the fat.
4. **Put in fridge** to let it solidify completely.
5. **Cut into squares** (1 square inch should be enough for a meal/snack)!

Audrey has posted some helpful videos on the Facebook group, Dehydration Nation

How to make a pemmican pouch

www.facebook.com/groups/dehydrationnations/posts/723145468402215

How to make pemmican:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/dehydrationnations/permalink/716883092361786>

See more on the “Dehydration Nations” facebook group, a place where Audrey and others share traditional teachings on using plants, trees, berries, etc for food and medicine. Check it out!

SPRING SEEDS

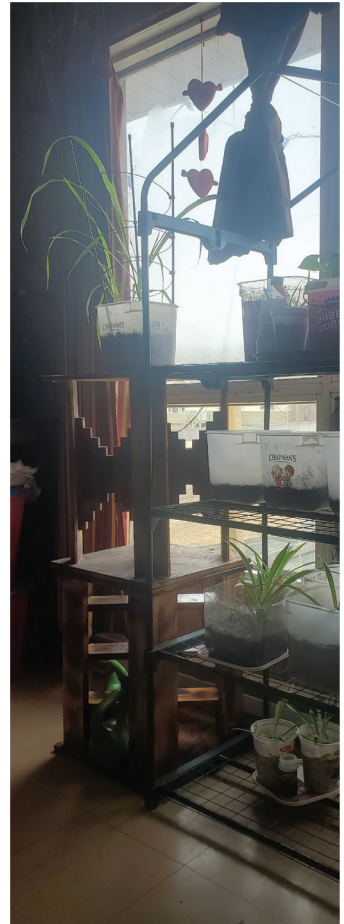
VEGGIES, FRUITS & FLOWERS

In April, we put in a big order to T&T Seeds for over 18 people across all of our 13 northern partner communities—seeds to plant in shared community gardens, seeds to plant in their own gardens, and seeds to share with other community members.

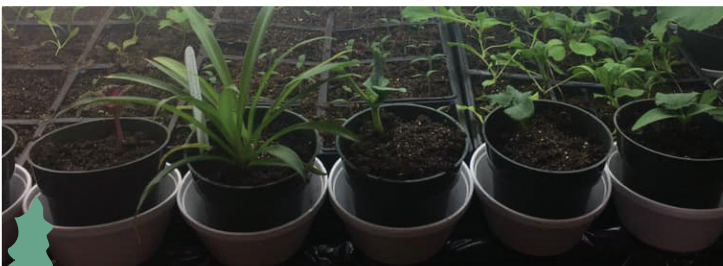
Happily, everyone received their seeds well in time to start them indoors before the growing season. By the time you are reading this in late June, it will finally be just about warm enough for those seedlings to go in the ground!

Everyone was able to submit a custom order, but where they didn't have a preference or weren't sure what they wanted, we put together a standard order of some tasty staples that grow well further north. People ordered everything from tomatoes, peppers, carrots, onions, zucchini, cucumbers, corn, lettuce, beans—to some more unusual fare like rhubarb, turnips, and watermelon! Plus, some apple and crab apples tree and raspberries bushes, which will be producing fruit for many years to come.

Once everyone had got their vegetable orders in, we put out a call for flower seed orders and received orders for marigolds, zinnias, petunias, cosmos, sunflower, and some bee, bird & butterfly wildflower mixes---because pollinators are important too!



Belinda starting seeds in Moose Lake



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Vivian from Split Lake, Chief Sam Cook school is growing growing snow peas, green beans, carrots marigolds, paper daisy, and some mixed vegetables, mainly different types of lettuce, tomatoes, and basil.

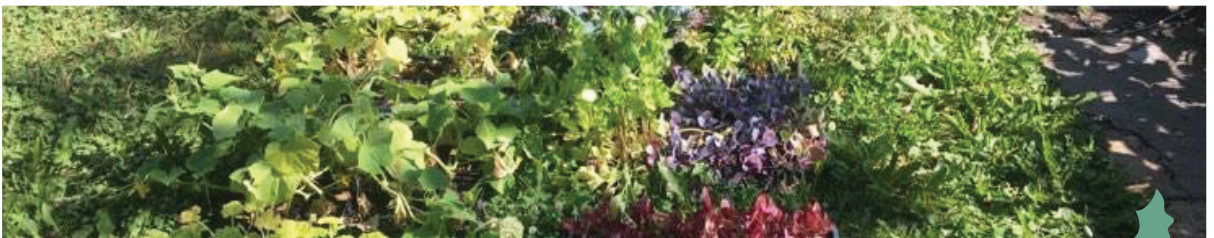


Later in May and June, our partner Barry Little distributed over 40 bags of seed potatoes, grown at his farm near Thompson, to several of our partner communities.

A big, big thank you to Barry and T&T Seeds, as well as the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative program for funding these activities.

At the end of June, Danielle at T&T Seeds, Carmen at Shelmerdine Garden Center, Agnes at Schriemers Market Centre, and Dharma at Fort Whyte Farms also very generously hooked us up with donations of over two hundred bedding plants! We had several carloads full of squash, cucumbers, kale, spinach, cabbage, onions, and basil, and lots of tomatoes and peppers.

Demian, Food Matters Manitoba's Northern Partnerships Coordinator, has already dropped some of these plants off to folks in Grand Rapids, Norway House, and Fox Lake, and is bringing more up in the coming weeks. We can't wait to see everyone transform these seed and seedlings into an abundance of vegetables, fruits, and flowers for their families and communities!



CROSS LAKE FARM

MEET ROY & LEE ANN

AND D-DOG, PINKY, LUCY, MOUSE, WOLF, CAESAR AND ALL THOSE LAYING HENS

Thank you to Roy and Lee Ann in Cross Lake for sharing their thoughts on their farming experience

(and for the wonderful photos of the whole team).

Roy and Lee Ann had always talked about having their own farm and self-sustaining homestead. Roy's parents had a farm when he was a young boy, and always wanted to live off the land.

Starting off has been hard; there have been no quick fixes or easy answers along the way - they've had to find out on their own where to buy and get animals.

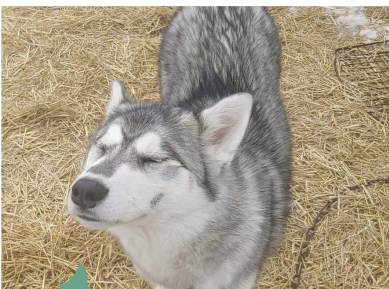
"We really want to be able to share this experience with anyone willing to learn. In five years, we will have all poultry chickens, hens, cattle for milking. Hoping to show Cross Lake that you can do what you want to feed your family. In ten years, I can see the farm running at peak performance, selling my poultry, eggs, beef products, having a butcher shop, smoke shop, and more



Goose and chicken eggs



Everybody wants to be in the shot!



"Wolf" sharing a big smile



Lucy the Goose enjoying the sunshine



D-Dog the bull taking a bottle from Roy



Pinky the friendly pig



The hens hanging in the yard



The hens ready to lay some delicious eggs

The Biggest Challenges

"Having to cross border security to travel to pick up food for the animals!" has been a big challenge. Roy and Lee Ann have gone to Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Swan, the Pas, and all the co-ops in the area to get what they need. And of course, the travel is costly on top of all the farm expenses!

The Biggest Success

Having a family farm has given Roy and Lee Ann a chance to research and learn more about the circle of life. They are planning to use the farm as a place to help teach others to realize that food doesn't have to come in plastic wrap.

"And this shouldn't be a challenge - since, for every ten people who come out for a tour or a visit, five always want to stay around and help with some of the chores or maintenance while on site."

Roy says, "There is so much I want to show and teach. Some people are saying they really enjoyed visiting and want to come back."

Moving ahead

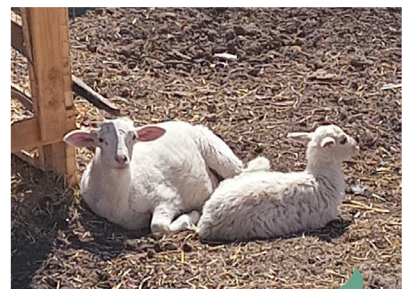
Finding community support has it's challenges too. Roy says, "The Chief in Cross Lake is on board, but the Council doesn't want any farming - they say 'why have a farm when we have a store.' But I told them the stores won't be there all of the time. And the stores have high prices, COVID has made shopping for food even harder. I have three supporters on Council, now I'll work on getting the others."



So many eggs!



Caesar the Rooster



Baaaaaa

WENDY MCKAY

IN MEMORIAM

It is with great sadness that we recognize the passing of Wendy McKay of Cross Lake. Wendy was an incredibly important person in her community, who over the years taught many people about traditional and healthy foods, created opportunities for them to grow, cook, and harvest their own food, and besides that, was always creating spaces for people to be healthy, have fun, and be included. She was a generous and thoughtful person, who often went out of her way to support others.

As an Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative worker, Wendy ran programs for children, parents, and Elders, teaching cooking skills, healthy eating, canning, gardening, budgeting, and more. One of the most memorable workshops she ran was when she and her husband, Jeff, taught children at the school how to make moose chili starting from a whole moose, including sharing how to be respectful of the animal and not waste any meat.

Wendy was instrumental in getting raised beds set up at the Kasayak Centre, the Cross Lake old folks home. She also ran monthly activities for the residents, giving them a chance to exercise and socialize. Wendy's activities were a bright spot for the residents, who greatly looked forward to them.

On her own time, Wendy would often be out with her husband, berry-picking, or hunting geese, ducks, muskrats, beavers, or moose. The two of them would always share what they got with the Elders in the community.

Florence Benson-Umpherville, friend and family to Wendy, says that it will be hard to fill the space Wendy leaves behind: "I don't think people realized all the things she did. She never complained, she pulled her own weight. She was gentle, and always grateful for anything someone else did for her. She was such a generous, generous person."

Our thoughts are with Jeff McKay, his and Wendy's two adopted girls, and for everyone in Cross Lake and beyond who are grieving this tragic loss. For those who didn't get a chance to know her, we hope sharing this story gives a sense of the incredible person Wendy McKay was.



Wendy McKay, photo provided by Jeff McKay



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