



7 Tips for Beating the Winter Farm Blahs

Accomplish a few things and beat the winter blahs with these practical and appealing ideas.

By Lisa Kivirist

Got the Winter Blahs? Winter is a season wrapped in contradictions.

After the chaotic rush of the fall harvest, we crave slowing down and hibernating around the woodstove. But by the time we pack the tinsel after the holidays, the groundhog reminds us we still have a long stretch of winter to go and cabin fever hits big time.

Don't despair. A dash of freshness can thaw winter blahs.

Here are some tips for beating the winter blues and enjoying those slower weeks leading up to the flurry of spring activity:

1. Purge

Undoubtedly, there's something in your house right now that could use an ambush purge.

Create some needed breathing space by decluttering, donating or freecycling your old stuff. You'll feel like you lost ten pounds instantaneously. The top areas that could probably use a purge: kitchen drawers, bathroom cabinets, clothing closets.

2. Rekindle

Now is the time to revive and finish projects that have been floating half-mast for a while, things you started with good intentions and never had time to finish.

To keep from getting overwhelmed, just pick one thing to complete.

Finish that cross-stitch Christmas stocking Paint the bathroom Add stencils to the hallway.

Revisit back issues of Hobby Farms or Hobby Farm Home magazine and rekindle article ideas that intrigued you but got stuck on the back-burner, such as making homemade yogurt and kefir ("Create Your Own Culture," Hobby Farm Home, Spring 2007).

3. Connect

Use the farming off-season to draw inspiration and learning from other farmers.

Renewing the Countryside presents hundreds of engaging profiles of small, diversified farm operations nationwide; search the site geographically or by your area of interest.

Now is the time of the year to research whether, for example, adding goats to your operations is a good idea. Learn how other farmers have done it and garner resources that might help your plans.

4. Expose

Depending on where you live, you may need to bury under layers of clothing this time of year, but you can still think of ways to expose your mind to new perspectives.

Websites such as www.dailyyonder.com bring together an array of rural news and www.alternet.org compiles perspectives from independent media worldwide.

Rent a documentary DVD that highlights different perspective on our food system, such as "King Corn," a new documentary that questions industrialized farming by following the prevalence of corn in processed foods.

5. Pamper

Gift your body with a little exfoliation TLC before the gardening season imbeds soil back under your nails. Try a homemade sugar scrub and relish the softness, a frugal alternative to pricey spa treatments.



Mix the following ingredients until they resemble a paste: 1 cup brown sugar 1/2 cup almond, safflower or sesame oil 1 T. honey 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract

While in the shower, massage the entire scrub in gentle circular motions from your shoulders to your feet, focusing on dry areas such as hands and heels. Rinse with warm water, using a little soap to wash off the oil. Dry off and moisturize.

6. Play

Sprinkle some silly into your day with an unexpected surprise.

Garner giggles from your kids by: serving popcorn for breakfast, setting up camping gear in the living room for a fun sleepover or hosting a formal dinner fit for royalty, princess and knight costumes encouraged.

Or ... play with your food with an evening of made-from-scratch, homemade pasta making.

7. Dream

A dose of fresh ideas goes a long way during the dead of winter. Shake off the blahs with an afternoon at the library perusing periodicals.

Your challenge:

Leave with three new ideas in whatever categories you choose--new recipes, travel ideas, gardening techniques. What images spark your interest?

About the Author

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