

A large white barn with a gambrel roof, featuring a large American flag hanging on the side and red barn doors. The barn has several windows and a ladder on the right side. The background shows green trees and a grassy field.

When the first issue of *Hobby Farms* rolled off the printer back in the summer of 2001, Facebook wasn't a website, the iPhone didn't have a dial tone and Donald Trump wasn't even a reality star. My how things have changed!

One thing is still constant: Good farming information is still good farming information. So we thought it would be fun to go through each issue and find some great tips to share. So whether this is your first issue or you've been with us for all 20 years, here are some informative nuggets from the past two decades of *Hobby Farms*.

BUYING THE FARM

So how much is enough space? Depending on the scale that you want to operate, 1 to 10 acres is usually plenty to get you started with the most rural hobby-farming adventures.

GROWING GREAT COMPOST

Don't compost diseased plants. The bacteria can survive and infect another crop.

FARM SITTERS

To find a professional pet or livestock sitter in your area, check with your veterinarian.



GOOD FENCES, GOOD NEIGHBORS

Hard to contain animals such as goats like to climb. Woven-wire fencing is highly effective.

TRACTOR TALK

Before buying that used tractor or attachment advertised at the side of the road, carefully evaluate its condition. You can access its condition by its dents or if parts have been sprung out of position, or if tillage tools are worn severely.

CHILL FACTOR

When winterizing livestock barns, remember that adequate ventilation is vital to prevent respiratory problems. Don't plan to button up your barn tightly — eliminating drafts is sufficient.

OUT TO PASTURE

If the pasture is fenced with wire, attach strips of light-hued cloth or high-visibility tape to the top strand. This makes the fence more visible to horses.

NATURE'S NASTIES

To remove a tick safely, grasp its mouthpiece close to its host's skin and pull straight back.

MAKING HAY YOUR WAY

Store your hay in a well-ventilated area, out of direct sunlight. Don't fork it directly on the floor; place it atop wooden pallets to prevent ground contact spoilage.

BUILDING A BETTER BARN

Pay attention to the prevailing winds on the property. Orient the stalls and breezeway to take advantage of airflow, keeping the barn well ventilated.

WINTER SQUASH

Delayed planting can be one of the most effective means of avoiding squash bug damage. If the overwintering bugs are unable to find host plants when they emerge from dormancy, they will starve or fly away.

HAVE A COW

Hooves need trimming every few months.

DEWORMING DEMYSTIFIED

Reducing the time your critters spend eating off the ground will cut down on [parasite] infection.

FARM SCIENCE

In general, soft-bodied plants, such as vegetable starts, are transplanted in the spring, and harder plants, like trees and grapevines, are best transplanted in the fall.

ALPACAS: DOLLARS & SENSE

Pregnant females may require more nutrition than what is readily available in pasture and hay, so an owner may consider additional nutritional supplements.

FLORAL FARMS

In general, flowers should be cut during the cool mornings of warm months and should always be put in the shade as quickly as possible.

HERITAGE TURKEYS

Turkeys are big, powerful birds, so use caution when catching them or working closely around the flock. Inquisitive hens love pecking at bright jewelry or even your eyes, so consider wearing eye protection.

MARKETING YOUR FARM

Contacting your local press to see if they are interested in doing a story about your farm can be a great way to raise awareness for your business.

HAPPY CHICKENS, HAPPY FARMERS

Chickens need protection from predators like raccoons and foxes, so providing them with a safe henhouse increases their odds of survival.

SPEAK TO ME

One reason you brush your [livestock] is to look for injuries. Pet them, play with them, spend some time with them; you'll spot something real quick.

GARDEN CHECKLIST

Planning a fall garden? Thin your earliest plantings of lettuce and carrots, and get the last round of turnips, peas, beets and other cool-weather crops in the ground by mid to late-August for a crisp, fall harvest.

FOOD PRESERVATION PRIMER

Foods high in acid, including all fruits, tomatoes and pickled foods, can typically process in a simple boiling water bath. For low acid foods, including all vegetables except tomatoes, you must use a pressure canner.

SHUTTERSTOCK.COM: JOYCE MARRERO; GEORGE SHELTON



SEASONAL LIVING

Start a seasonal journal, keeping brief records of key items such as first frost, harvest times and amounts to help put seasons in context.

BREEDER READER

Before buying animals, find at least three producers and go see their animals and farm, and learn from them. A reputable breeder will take the time to mentor you.

SHEPHERDING FOR SUPERIOR WOOL

The type of feeder you use will affect the cleanliness of your flock's fleeces. Try a bale feeder that sits on the ground rather than wall-mounted types that rain hay onto the animals as they eat.

HEIRLOOM QUALITY

Tomatoes are one of the easiest seeds to save, so beginners should start with them.

SUPER DUCKS!

Ducks relish hunting for slugs, succulent grasses and other fare, and allowing your flock to grub for some of their own food will save money on your feed bills while reducing your pest population.



THE STAFF OF LIFE

Be careful that [grain] has dried down to 10 to 15% moisture before storing. Grain that isn't dry enough will mold.

RURAL ROUNDTABLE

Newspaper is a wonderful environmental bedding [for animals]. It is readily available, it decomposes rapidly, and when recycled as bedding, it reduces the amount of solid waste entering the landfills.

GET OUT NOW!

Always have one lead rope for each animal and hang it in plain view at the gate or door you will use to evacuate that animal.

ASSET MANAGEMENT

Fresh manure should never be applied to gardens or crops that are typically eaten raw. In these applications, use aged and well-composted manure for the best and safest results.

THE NO-TILL GARDEN

At the end of the season, it isn't necessary to clean every last stalk out of the garden. Remove big and bulky stalks and vines and diseased plant material. The rest can be chopped up and left until next spring.

FARM SCIENCE

Keep flower heads on young basil plants pinched back to promote bushing and, as plants mature, continue to remove any flower heads to prolong your harvest and maintain flavor.

UP YOUR SUSTAINABILITY

The rule of thumb for crop rotation is: Never grow the same annual crop in the same soil two years in a row.

HERE COMES WINTER

With ruminants, one thing we find that helps them if they're going into a cold period is to have



the farmer increase the fiber content in the feed. Adding a little more fiber stimulates the rumen and the rumination process will create more heat, helping the animals weather the cold.

BEAUTIFUL ROOTS

Root crops grow best when started by direct seeding into the field or garden. Plant the seeds to the depth noted on the seed packet, and be prepared to thin all varieties of root crops to reduce competition for growing space and nutrients.



GETTING GOOD EGGS

If eggs are found clean, there's no need to wash them since it would remove the bloom, or cuticle, which is the invisible, protective layer naturally found on eggs.

THE ART & SCIENCE OF HAY

Legume hay should be fed to livestock when a high level of performance is expected, such as dairy cows and growing cattle.

BEAUTIFUL BERRIES

During dry spells, blueberry plants should receive deep watering — approximately 1 to 2 inches per week.

PUTTING DOWN ROOTS

Potatoes are best stored loosely in a root cellar, either on the floor or on shelves.

HEIRLOOM BEANS

Plant beans when the soil has been at least 65 degrees Fahrenheit or warmer for five or more days and all frost danger has passed.

HORSES FOR YOUR HOMESTEAD

Before purchasing a horse, check local laws pertaining to keeping a horse on your property, such as requirements for acreage, fencing and housing.



MOTHER NATURE'S PLANTING GUIDE

The fourth quarter of the moon is best for pruning because there is less sap in the plants' stems.

EAT THIS, NOT THAT

Greens plucked in early spring will be much more palatable than those picked during the height of summer, since most plants grow tougher and more bitter-tasting once they've flowered and set seed.

FARM GARDEN

Keep raccoons out of your cornfield by placing motion-activated sprinklers in your field. They send out a sharp stream of water when the raccoons come in, hopefully scaring them away.

ALL-SEASON FARMING

Cloches, designed to protect fragile plants from cold temperatures, can be as simple as a 1-gallon plastic jug with the bottom removed.

COVERING UP

Clover can be grown under beans, followed with spinach the next spring, which loves the extra nitrogen.

FARM GARDEN

Many deciduous trees (with the exception of maple, birch and elm) are best pruned during the winter months when growth is dormant and branch structure is easily visible.

PUT YOUR SOIL TO THE TEST

If your plot is situated along an established roadway, test your soil for lead even though gas is no longer leaded. Trees used to filter the lead from the air and collect it in their leaves. When the leaves dropped each autumn, the lead could find its way into your soil.

PROFITABLE PLANTINGS

Store your seeds in a cool, dry place. A handy formula is the temperature (in Fahrenheit) plus relative humidity should be equal to or less than 100.

PICK A PECK OF HEIRLOOM PEPPERS

Start your peppers indoors. The fact that they need a lengthy growing season — coupled with their sensitivity to frost — means you'll probably need to extend your growing season in some fashion, and starting the seeds indoors is the best way to accomplish this.

DESIGNER PUMPKINS

Pumpkins are ready to be picked when the rind is hard and the vine begins to die.

ALL IN A DOG DAY'S WORK

Look for breeders who are candid not only about the talents but the drawbacks of their breed. A respectable breeder will not sell a dog that's not the best for your needs.

GENERATOR INVESTMENT

Generators are in short supply after disasters, so invest in one and learn about generator safety before the worst happens.

STINKIN' GOOD CROPS

Cure alliums in a warm, well-ventilated location before storing in a cool, dry place.

CHERISHED CHERRY TOMATOES

Inter-plant your tomato crop with flowering herbs like thyme, cilantro, dill, fennel, chamomile and chervil. They will lure in all the species of beneficial insects that help control common pests.



WEEDS BE GONE

Turning your weeds into the soil before they can mature and go to seed helps reduce the number of future weeds.

FASHIONABLY LATE

Late-season planting is particularly useful for farmers who offer community-supported-agriculture (CSA) subscriptions or sell at winter farmers markets.

MEAT & GREET

When raising hogs for meat, start with a 40-pound weaned female (gilt) or castrated male (barrow) pig. Choose a large, strong-looking pig; these mature faster than their smaller siblings.

THE COLE KIDS ON THE BLOCK

Rotate brassicas with other vegetable families, such as alliums or nightshades, to reduce their susceptibility to disease and insect problems.

LAYER BY LAYER

Examine your coop closely from the perspective of a predator. Are there weak areas where an animal can squeeze through to access your hens?"

WELCOME TO THE FIBER FARM

For sheep or goat raisers who want truly pristine fiber, blanketing or coating may be the ultimate solution. A cover will keep the fleece

cleaner and keep the tips from getting damaged by weather.

CUT & DRIED

Cover sunflower heads with cheesecloth or row cover immediately after blooming to keep birds from feasting on the seeds.

LEAN ON ME

Bison are a good choice for small-scale farms. Raising bison is no more difficult than raising cattle.

MIGHTY MULCH

Apply fresh grass clippings sparingly. Their high nitrogen levels can burn young plants.

FARM GARDEN

Examine houseplants carefully for signs of overwintering pests. Shiny, sticky leaf surfaces could mean an infestation of sap-sucking pests, such as scale, aphids or mealybugs. Control them with horticultural oil or insecticidal soap.

THE NEW QUEEN BEE

The most important investment in your bees is to have a young queen. Hives with older queens are more likely to swarm.

PLANT ELIXIRS

Growth-enhancing sprays are best applied in the early morning or on a cloudy day when rain is not expected for at least 48 hours.



POLLINATOR CENTRAL

Use cover crops during the off-season to conserve soil and to provide food and habitat for native bees.

THE A-TEAM

Carrots must be weeded well, with constant moisture to produce a well-formed and sweet root vegetable.

POOP HAPPENS

Allow poultry to free-range in manure piles to speed decomposition. As a bonus, the birds can eat the parasites living in it.

RADICAL RADISHES

Radishes are ready to harvest when you can see the shoulders of the bulb breaking out of the soil line.

MALE CALL

Bucks and other intact male livestock should be housed separately from the herd but not kept alone, which can increase aggression.

THE GOLDEN FLEECE

To properly store sheared fleeces, roll the fiber up and place in paper sacks or cardboard boxes.

IN FULL FORAGE

Limit corn intake of your foraging animals, as too much too quickly can cause diarrhea and bloat.

AUBERGINE REGIME

Starting eggplants indoors under grow lights eight to 10 weeks before the last expected frost allows you to get a jump on the growing season.

'SHROOM TO GROW

Moisture and shade are key factors in successful mushroom cultivation. Patience is too, as fruiting can take up to 18 months, depending on the variety.

CHICK MAGNETS

If exhibition stock is desired, it is best to purchase chicks from breeders rather than hatcheries. Hatcheries have many breeds, but they may not be good examples of the breed and won't usually do well in exhibition circles without some generations of selective breeding.

A SWEET DEAL

Just before harvest, mow sweet potato vines with a walk-behind brush mower to make them easier to harvest.

WORTH THE SQUEEZE

Not every fruit and vegetable was made for juicing. While berries can be juiced, they often produce little liquid at the sacrifice of fiber-rich, edible seeds.

WHEN THE HEAT IS ON

Digestion produces body heat, so try feeding animals in the evening, if possible.

KICKIN' COUSINS

Ginger likes loose, deep, well-drained acidic soil that should be amended with compost ahead of planting.

RAISING RABBITS FOR MEAT

Sanitation and ventilation are keys to raising meat rabbits. Rabbits do best in all-wire hutches in some kind of enclosure that protects them from the environment.

GREEN THUMB

Wine corks can be repurposed as filler for orchids and as a permanent, attractive mulch for container plants, such as dwarf citrus trees.

TALKING TURKEY

You'll need about 2 gallons of water each day for every dozen mature turkeys you keep.

WEATHER WATCHING

Provide your pasture-based livestock with plenty of shade to evade heat stress, which can cause a decrease in milk production, feed intake, weight gain and fertility.

SOLVING THE DEWORMING DILEMMA

You can tell if a sheep or goat is anemic by pulling down the eyelid and checking the color. A bright red or dark pink eyelid correlates to a high hematocrit, while a pale pink eyelid correlates to a low hematocrit.

GOING UNDER COVER

As a cover crop, oats add biomass to the soil. The tops can be harvested and sold as is, and the leftover stalk can be dried and sold as oat straw.





GREEN THUMB

Square-point shovels are best for horizontal digging, such as removing sod and leaving a flat spot for stepping stones.

BETTER CROPS FROM BETTER SOIL

Root crops don't grow well in very acidic soils. A soil sample for pH and nutrient analysis will help you apply fertilizer and/or lime appropriately.

THE MAKING OF A MENAGERIE

Free-ranging chickens work wonders in a cattle pasture, keeping fly populations down by eating maggots and mixing manure into the soil.

HONEY OF A SINGULAR NATURE

In order to harvest a specific honey varietal, bees need to be placed in a location where one type of plant is primarily in bloom. The honey collected by the bees must then be harvested immediately following the bloom and before the plants in the area start to flower.

STRETCHING YOUR CALF MUSCLES

When housing calves indoors, be sure it's clean, dry and draft-free. Outdoors, they should have access to shelter from bad weather.

PURPLE REIGN

For a fresh lavender bouquet, pick blossoms when half of the flowers on the head have opened.

MARKETING WARES IN WINTER

Spread fallen leaves around your plants for extra protection during winter months.

POP GOES THE FARM

Popcorn can be microwaved right off the cob by placing the ear in a brown paper bag.

CHICKEN FEED FINANCIALS

Chickens will waste nearly 30% of the feed in a full trough, while wasting only 10% of one that's $\frac{2}{3}$ full, and only about 1% of a trough that's $\frac{1}{3}$ full.

SPRING CHECKUP

Change air, fuel and oil filters at least once a year when you change the oil — more frequently if the tractor is often run in dusty conditions.

ON THE FENCE

Barbed wire is suitable for cattle because cows have thick hide. However, it's not appropriate for horses or sheep. If you keep all these species in one pasture, an electrified high-tensile fence is safe and effective.

TO COPE WITH MOLT

Basically, 80% of what you serve your chickens should be prepared feed, and the rest they should clean up in 10 or 15 minutes. Otherwise, they'll fill up on treats and skip the good stuff. **hf**



**LOOKING FOR
ANSWERS?**

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