

TreeNN presents: Produce! From seed to feed. The growing popularity of backyard farming

Group members: Lisa Nelson, Stephanie Neitlich, and Amy Stabell

Sustainable agriculture doesn't have to happen on a large scale. In this mock news report, reporters Amy and Lisa discuss the ways in which a local backyard farm maintains its environmental stewardship while saving the family money in the process.

Lisa:

Good afternoon, I'm Lisa Nelson, thank you for joining us. Today on Tree-NN: Produce! From seed to feed. The growing popularity of backyard farming. Climate change is putting pressure on large scale farming and its sustainability. As a result, people are finding more sustainable and eco friendly ways to feed themselves and their families. From buying local, to taking it to a higher level and growing their own food in their own backyard. Not only is this better for the environment, but it increases quality of life, and can even save you money; not to mention the mental health benefits you can receive from being and working in nature, and nourishing your body with fresh healthy food.

One of our field reporters, Amy, is at a local backyard farm to see what it's all about and to get the farmer's insights into growing their own food. Amy?

Amy:

(Onscreen) Thanks Lisa, I'm here reporting live from Springville at Tom and Dawn Stabell's backyard farm, taking a look at how this family makes use of what they have to sustainably produce their own food. They have a little bit of everything here - chickens, cows, fruit trees, a vegetable garden, a maple syrup system, and more.

(Offscreen) In particular, the apples grown here on the property and the neighbors' property are a part of an environmentally sustainable food system. After the apples are harvested and peeled, the peels are dried into tasty snacks and the fruit are baked into pie or applesauce. The cores and scraps are juiced in a homemade apple press to make hard cider. After being squeezed, the remains are fed to the horse and donkey, finishing off a process that makes use of every part of the apple, maximizing the value of each fruit, and producing absolutely no waste.

This is also economically sustainable for the farmers - very few inputs are invested in on this farm - animal feed is the major cost, but otherwise, homemade and makeshift materials are the norm here. And feed costs are even reduced by providing treats for the horse and donkey from the apple process, and by growing other products on-site. The laying hens benefit from

sunflowers grown in the garden - the seeds are dried and fed to the birds as a supplement. And in turn, the chickens' eggs are enjoyed by the family and their community.

The Stabells don't make a large profit off their farm - rather they sell eggs in their community for a small return and share their produce with neighbors, but otherwise the main benefit economically is to reduce their grocery bill every week by eating their own food.

Beyond the economics, perhaps one of the most fulfilling benefits of the backyard farming lifestyle that this family enjoys is the assurance of knowing exactly where their food comes from. The cattle are raised with compassion and treated with respect and concern for their health. They live out happy lives before giving their service for the meat needs of the family. In addition, the vegetables grown in the garden are fertilized with the horse and donkey manure rather than fertilizers of unknown source and content. This confidence has no monetary value.

(Onscreen) In the end, the lifestyle itself is the most wholesome part of backyard farming. Engaging in the landscape and providing for your family on the dirt you live on is in the bloodlines of the Stabell family and they hope to continue this satisfying way of existence for as long as they live.

Lisa:

Looking from the outside, the Stabells contribute to an even larger cause than just their family and neighbors. The effects of eating as close to home as possible are vast. According to the university of michigan center for sustainable systems, eating all locally grown food for one year could save the GHG equivalent of driving 1,000 miles. In addition, according to the National Geospatial-intelligence Agency, a well maintained food garden yields a half pound of produce per square foot per growing season. So a 600 square foot garden, which costs on average \$70 to develop, would churn out 300lbs of fresh produce, worth \$600 annually.

If you are interested in learning more about backyard farming, see these sources for myths, tips, and advice.

Thank you for joining us today on Tree-NN, next time we'll be discussing does eating an apple a day really keep the doctor away. Until then, stay warm it's a little chili outside.