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GREETINGS

A MESSAGE FROM PEAVEY INDUSTRIES LP PRESIDENT AND CEO, DOUG ANDERSON

Welcome to the Spring 2022 issue of Connected to the Land. As Canada's largest farm and ranch retailer, we are an essential service to those who, in turn provide so much to all Canadians. We are grateful to have been able to continue to serve our valued customers and friends without mandated closures or severe measures over the last two years. Remaining open and available did require some pivots along the way in various regions and provinces - plus great care, steadfast protocols and true effort to ensure the safety and comfort of our customers and employees. We are rooted in the communities and agricultural regions we serve and we take our commitment to you very seriously. We have faced many of the same significant challenges as other retailers in supporting our extraordinary customers and their needs in 2020, 2021 and into 2022 - and will continue to do our best to overcome those challenges. It is springtime, the warmth is returning, and the outlook can be nothing but positive!

This issue includes articles for the agricultural crowd and the green thumbs out there; though, overall we have endeavoured to provide a little something for everyone once again. Ever popular with our readers, we have provided a couple of fantastic new recipes for the foodies - the healthy Strawberry Cookie Bars look and sound amazing!

I hope you enjoy the Spring 2022 issue as much as the last, and if this is your first, welcome to Connected to the Land. Please share any comments or suggestions by email to feedback@peaveyindustries.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

I invite you to check out connectedtotheland.info for more great information, insights and how-tos. 🌟

Doug Anderson

Photo by Drew Kenworthy.

DON'T MISS AN ISSUE!

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connectedtotheland.info



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SPRINGTHYME RACK OF LAMB

In a Delicious Marinade.



HEALTHY KETO GLUTEN-FREE STRAWBERRY COOKIE BARS

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DIY NATURAL DISINFECTANT

AN ALL-NATURAL WAY TO FIGHT GERMS, BACTERIA AND MORE

Story and photos by Kiri Martin.

So you have some stuff to clean, eh? If you're looking at this DIY Natural Disinfectant then I can only imagine it is a serious cleaning job because this cleaner is no wimp. Jam-packed full of natural cleaning powerhouses it is my go-to if we are sick. It's not my day-to-day cleaner, for normal cleaning tasks I use my DIY All-purpose cleaner if the task needs a bit more firepower then I use my Natural Orange Cleaner. However, if sickness rears its ugly head then I bust out the big guns, aka this DIY Natural disinfectant.

So let's take a look at what this bad boy contains. The list of ingredients isn't long (3 to be exact) but they are very powerful alone but even more so when combined. It's like the perfect cleaning trifecta, all you need are vinegar, alcohol, and essential oils.

VINEGAR:

Let's look at the first ingredient, vinegar, which is a respectable cleaner in its own right. It is one of those old-time cleaning products, your grandma probably swore by the stuff. Acetic acid (vinegar) is a great disinfectant but had the added benefit of also being able to cut grease and deodorize. Plus it can help to kill mould. Vinegar works well against 'gram-negative' bacteria, including such nasties as salmonella and E.coli. How does it do this? Well, the acetic acid kills the cells by causing a release of protons when it crosses the cells membrane, which is why I include it in this DIY natural disinfectant. I would suggest you hunt down some cleaning vinegar as it has a higher acetic acid content, 10% vs the usual 5%. But in a pinch regular vinegar will work just fine.

ALCOHOL:

So as far as the second ingredient, alcohol, you have three choices and either will work well as the other. You can use either isopropyl alcohol, rubbing alcohol or Vodka, Everclear 190 to be exact. While regular vodka has an alcohol content of about 40% Everclear 190 contains 95%. According to the CDC, you need to have an alcohol concentration between 60-90% to be effective against viruses and bacteria. Using alcohol in this DIY natural disinfectant also helps it to dry quickly after it is applied as the alcohol evaporates. It also helps to increase the disinfecting power of the cleaner.

OILS:

To complete the cleaning trifecta we are going to need some oils. You may be thinking olive or vegetable, but that's not what I mean. For cleaning power, we are going to need some essential oils. The nice thing about using essential oils is that you can customize the scent to one that is perfect for you! There are quite a few to choose from and I have listed some oils that are reputed to have antiviral and/or anti-fungal properties. Plus they smell awesome.

- Bergamot
- Peppermint
- Thyme
- Clove
- Oregano
- Cinnamon
- Tea tree
- Thieves
- Lavender
- Lemon
- Orange
- Rosemary



THE NECESSITIES

The great thing about this DIY Natural Disinfectant is that it only has 3 ingredients and it is super quick to make! So here is the very short list of thing you are going to need to get started. Amber glass bottle with nozzle (amber glass protect the essential oils), measuring cups and funnel.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Put the funnel in the amber glass bottle.
2. Pour in all the ingredients (1 1/2 cups Isopropyl alcohol, 1/3 cup cleaning Vinegar, and 20-30 drops Essential oils)
3. Put the nozzle on the bottle and swirl it all around.
4. Go clean stuff... Naturally of course.

Making your own natural cleaning products is a great way to reduce the number of chemical in your home. It also works out to be cheaper than buying products in the store. But more than that you will know exactly what is in them, which for me is the most important part. 🍁

Well hey there! I'm Kiri and I'm so glad we've found each other! If you want (or have) a micro homestead and you love DIY and gardening you should feel right at home here! I'm a just city girl who wishes she was a country girl, who is currently living in the suburbs.

You can follow along with Kiri and her blog at ourlittlesuburbanfarmhouse.com.



RAISED BED GARDENING

TAKING THE BACK STRAIN OUT OF GROWING

Story by Ashley Labrecque.

When it comes to raised bed gardening there are few things to think about. Raised bed gardening is easier on the back and is a great way to keep furry friends out. In this article we will be looking at placement, height and how to fill your raised bed garden.

RAISED BED PLACEMENT

When it comes to the placement of the garden, you want to determine what the majority of plants you want to grow would like for lighting. If your intention is to grow tomatoes and peppers you will want to find a full sun location. If you want to grow brassica species such as cabbage you may want to consider partial sun locations.

What is underneath the bed will also matter. If you are placing the bed onto a hard clay, cement or brick surface you will want to place a catch at the bottom. Soil will find its way out of the raised bed over time on these surfaces. Whenever possible place the bed on top of tilled soil to help reduce losses.

HEIGHT OF YOUR RAISED BED

The height of your raised bed is going to come down to the substrate beneath the bed. If the bed is placed on top of a cement or brick area then you will want the bed to be 12+ inches in depth. If the bed is placed on top of an existing lawn or garden the depth can be as low as 5". This is due to the root needs of the plants but also the water holding capacity of the soil within the raised bed.

HOW TO FILL YOUR RAISED BED

One of the most effective and inexpensive ways to fill your raised beds is with the hugelkultur method. The key to doing this properly is by using aged wood, leaves, and compost. The bottom of the bed should be filled with wood, sticks and twigs of all sizes that are over two years aged. Meaning they can be cut and allowed to decompose for two years.

You can fill half of the bed with this type of material. The second layer should be leaf mould and old grass clippings. Leaf mould can be made easily in garbage bags. All you do is rake your leaves into garbage bags and allow them to sit for a few months until they decompose. The end product will look like a lighter colour peat product.



This can be placed on top of the logs and twigs to fill in the gaps. This means the remainder can be filled with a combination of both compost and a loam soil. Using the hugelkultur method of filling will ensure fertilizer and higher moisture retention.

If you bokashi compost, then placing the compost in between the leaf mould and soil will work perfectly. Once you are done be sure to water in the layers well and consider a quick walk across the top to limit the air spaces in the soil. Large air spaces are considered death zones where the roots will not survive. This can harm your yields.

HOW MANY PLANTS CAN GO INTO A RAISED BED?

The best method for deciding what to plant is square foot gardening. The easiest way to do

this is with strong and twine placed across the bed surface. Then determine how many seeds of your plant will fit per square foot of space. This is easy to manage and allows for high yields. The more plants you have the more watering and fertilizer that will be required.

MAINTENANCE FOR RAISED BEDS

Every year you may notice the soil level in the beds decrease. This is completely normal as the wood decomposes and the soil compacts over time. This means you will want to consider adding compost every year and possibly mulch as well.

If you are adding new mulch in the spring, you will want to remove and compost it in the fall. Never incorporate last year's mulch into your soil because this will cause a nitrogen

lock up. Once you remove the old mulch you can top with your well aged compost and then remulch the soil with fresh mulch.

There you have it, a complete guide to raised bed gardening. Remember to have fun and don't over think the process. You will have high yields and a bountiful harvest this year! 🍁

Ashley is an agronomist who has had a passion for plants since she was a small child. Some of Ashley's interests are YouTube, in which she posts informative videos about plants and gardening. The focus of Ashley's YouTube channel is to bring science to gardening in a way that is informative but also helpful to others learning to garden. She also talks about the importance of having your own garden and the joys of gardening indoors.



SYNTHETIC FERTILIZERS

REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE, AND THE IMPENDING FOOD CRISIS

Story by Dick Nichols.

Canadian fertilizer companies are going full-out to combat a worldwide shortage of fertilizers, increasing their output of key crop nutrients in the face of a global scarcity. But there's only so much even the world's largest fertilizer-producing nation can do.

Financial analyst Matt Arnold recently told CBC News that there's a good chance sanctions by western countries on Russia—the second-largest producer—will make already strained global supplies even tighter.

Fertilization is the key to keeping corn, soy, rice and wheat yields high enough to feed a growing worldwide population.

In Brazil, the world's biggest soybean exporter, imported fertilizers accounted for 38% of the crop nutrients it used last year. Russia and Belarus were the sources of almost half of those shipments.

Attempting to minimize the crisis, Brazilian farmers are applying less fertilizer to their corn, and some legislators are even suggesting that protected lands be opened for potash mining.

In Zimbabwe and Kenya, rising input costs have forced small landholders to go back to using manure to nourish their crops.

Here in Canada, one canola farmer has already stockpiled fertilizer for the 2023 season, anticipating both continued shortages and higher input costs.

What makes the problem even worse is that Russia and Ukraine are also major grain producers. Together they account for about 30% of global wheat exports and 20% of corn exports.

The fertilizer shortage could also inhibit food production in other countries that have the

potential to help take up the slack, according to Maximo Torero, chief economist for the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization.

"If we don't resolve it...we'll have a very serious problem of [food] supply next year," said Torero.

However, developing potash and phosphate mines, not to mention nitrogen production facilities—which rival oil refineries in their complexity—are all multi-year projects. Meanwhile, earth's seven billion people will still be faced with the daily task of finding food. So, what can be done in the interim?

One, and perhaps the only, long-term solution, according to the Noble Research Institute, an independent agricultural research organization headquartered in Ardmore, Oklahoma, may be regenerative agriculture.

Regenerative agriculture is the process of restoring degraded soils using practices (adaptive grazing, no-till planting, no or limited use of pesticides and synthetic fertilizer, among others) based on ecological principles.

While a goal of regenerative agriculture is to reduce the need for fertilizer by rebuilding soil biology, the question remains whether there is any place in it for synthetic fertilizers.

(Continued on following page)



... Increased use of nutrients obtained from organic sources is part of the solution but it's not nearly enough. Strategic use of synthetic fertilizers will also be necessary to avoid widespread famine...

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According to The Noble Research Institute, the answer is “yes,” but the fertilizer must “provide a production benefit that exceeds any temporary negative impact on soil biology.”

When implementing regenerative practices, farmers inevitably face the challenge of surviving the reduced yields that generally occur when synthetic fertilizers are removed or even just decreased. It cannot be denied that plants will still need nutrients if yield levels are to be maintained to meet production goals, especially in the first two or three years if soils have previously been degraded. Until the soil becomes biologically diverse enough to continually provide adequate nutrients, farmers would find it difficult to accept the

production and revenue losses that would occur during this period.

Increased use of nutrients obtained from organic sources like composted agricultural waste, livestock manure, industrial waste, and municipal sludge is part of the solution but it's not nearly enough. Strategic use of synthetic fertilizers will also be necessary to avoid widespread famine.

THE “4R” SOLUTION

The industry advocates the “4R” Solution.

- The Right Source - matching the type of fertilizer with crop needs to achieve the optimum balance of nutrients.

- The Right Rate - matching the amount of fertilizer with what the crop needs to ensure nutrient application meets, but does not exceed, the crop's nutrient uptake.
- The Right Time - making nutrients available when the crops need them to maximize uptake and reduce losses.
- The Right Place - placing nutrients appropriately for each crop to reduce losses to the environment.

This may eventually be the solution that facilitates plant growth without impeding the development of soil biology. 🍁

Dick Nichols is a writer and voice actor from Okotoks, Alberta. dicknicholsnarration.com

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A close-up photograph of a large flock of white sheep. The sheep are densely packed, and the focus is sharp on the sheep in the foreground, showing their thick, white wool and their faces. The background is slightly blurred, showing more sheep. The text "PERFECT FOR EWE" is overlaid in the center in a bold, red, sans-serif font.

PERFECT FOR EWE



A SMALL FARM OPTION WITH BIG POTENTIAL

Story by Mary MacArthur.

Sheep farming runs in Nicole Schieck's blood. The fourth-generation sheep farmer spent years showing and owning sheep.

"There is not a day I have never had sheep. I can't not imagine not having them," said Schieck, of Two Hills.

But, Schieck doesn't just love every woolly sheep. She loves the Southdown breed.

"They kind of look like teddy bears, honestly. They have wool from the tip of their toes to the tip of their nose and tips of their ears. I have had Southdown since I was two. That was the first animal I showed, and I can't seem to get away from them."

Schieck's 100-head flock lambs from December to February. With only 30 acres of land, lambing early allows the lambs to be raised and sold before the ewes are back on pasture. She believes sheep are the ideal animal for small farms.

"There is increasing interest from people who recognize that you can be profitable on sheep with a smaller land base."

Brittany Walker, chair of Alberta Lamb Producers, said there are about 1,600 lamb producers and about 100,000 ewes in Alberta. While there is no dominant breed, farmers choose the breed that fits their operation.

Walker and her father raise 400 purebred Rideau Arcott, plus a commercial herd of lambs made up of a variety of breeds. Her sheep lamb in February and March, so the lambs are old enough to be sold before summer. Prices are higher in spring during Easter and other holidays where lamb is the main meal.

Sheep are the ideal animal to sneak into small corners of a farm among the grain fields and cattle pastures. The family doesn't have enough pasture to increase the cow herd, but sheep are the perfect complement to their operation, said Walker of Strathmore.

The Rideau Arcott have two to four lambs at a time. If a lamb has more than two lambs, Walker bottle feeds the extras to ensure every lamb has a good start in life. Walker describes the first two weeks of lambing as the "honeymoon stage."

"I enjoy the beginning. Then I love the ending when you see the lambs are growing."

Walker believes sheep are a good fit for women farming on their own.

"If I am out and about, nobody is worried I got trampled by a sheep. They are a lot easier to handle than cattle. It is easier to pack a 10-pound lamb than a 100-pound calf."

Judy Buck has no problem staying busy on her farm near Peers, where she raises Romanov sheep. Some of the offspring are bred to the Charollais breed, and the lambs enter her son's flock of 800 sheep. They lamb about 200 to 250 lambs each January, April, July and November as a way to spread out the work and income.

"It is busy. It is challenging, but I enjoy it."

The lambs are born and raised in an old pig barn. Half of the barn was turned into a machine shop and the rest is used for sheep. Raising lambs from such a prolific breed is a lot of work. The barn checks begin at 5 am and go until 10 pm. If Buck is

(continued on following page)

lucky, she makes the last round and goes to bed. If not, she will be in the barn for a few more hours.

"It is very busy. It is exhausting. I am not young anymore. I am 63 and losing a little bit of the oomph."

The family believes they have hit on a winning formula for their farm and plan to expand.

"What works for one operation doesn't work for the next one. It depends on your management style and what facilities you have," said Buck, who knows there is so much potential for expansion of the industry.

"We don't begin to produce enough lamb in this country to even meet our domestic market. There is definitely room for expansion, and I hope to see it grow."

Emilie Rowe, of Arrowwood, enjoys the wide variety of sheep operations in Canada. Originally from the United Kingdom, Rowe and her husband started with five sheep and now have 150 head of commercial ewes made up of Dorset, Suffolk and Rideau Arcott.

With an accelerated lambing program, their sheep lamb three times in two years. The couple bought an old sheep feedlot and have plenty of space to raise their sheep and custom raise sheep for another producer.

"It is an industry that has potential to grow," said Rowe, who said sheep are the ideal animal to allow newcomers to get their foot in the agriculture business. 🍁

When Mary MacArthur isn't writing stories about agriculture she is busy mowing grass and pulling weeds on her central Alberta acreage. An avid hiker and jogger, she currently serves as President of the Professional Writers Association of Canada and Co-Chair of the Canadian Freelance Guild.

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TRACTOR SAFETY

MAINTENANCE BEGINS FROM THE GROUND UP

Story by Dan Kerr.

When I bought my tractor, I also purchased a complete shop manual that set me back about 300 bucks. Included as part of that package was an operator section of dos and don'ts, so I sat down and read it. Good reading with little drawings for those that can't understand "don't go up the hill on an angle with the bucket up" or "with a load up on the 3pt hitch," which doesn't surprise me when Tim Hortons has to print "Hot Coffee" boldly on the cup.

THE WALK AROUND

Tractor safety begins from the ground up every day I go to use it, and just like my airplane, it starts with a walk around. Looking at the front I have an overall look at the machine, specifically how it sits; it should be straight and level with no puddles underneath, flat tires or pieces dragging.

Then starting at the driver's door with the hood up, I walk slowly and put my hands on every component giving a light shake for a firm fit. I once found a cracked alternator mount doing this one. Next, the fluid levels are checked along with belts and the hood is secured.

At each tire, I check the tire pressure and (for the first time) write the manufacture specification PSI (pressure/sq. inch) on the inside of the rim with a permanent marker (along with the nut size).

Cylinder pins: are all the cylinder pins secured with the proper presto spring pin, or is there a collection of nails holding them in place? Nails are great for building birdhouses; they don't, however, stand up very well when put under load and usually shear off, allowing the cylinder pin, a major part of the lift system, to simply fall out.

Wiring: so, are there wires simply going everywhere like a plate of spaghetti? Now is

the time to clean that up. With a little electrical tape and a handful of nylon ties, you can tidy it up to an acceptable level until you have downtime to really go in and make it right, or you could get at it now. The objective is to group the wires into bundles then wrap them in an anti-chaff protector to keep all wiring free from moving parts and hot spots. There has been more than one tractor simply burn because of sloppy wiring. Oh, did you get a fire extinguisher? It was the first thing I put in my new cab; the second thing was a toolbox. Cheap insurance and organization.

ROLL-OVER PROTECTIONS (ROPS)

My tractor came used with no roll-over protection. It didn't have a seat belt either. I didn't like being bounced all over the seat when mowing so I installed a lap belt. I also didn't like getting covered in snow while blowing the miserable stuff, so I installed a second-hand cab that happened to be rollover rated. If you have a ROP, I would suggest that you use it along with the seat belt. The idea here is that the seat belt keeps you directly under the best position of the ROP should you make a booboo. Not wearing it will allow your body to slip to the wrong spot and possibly ruin your day. If you have a cab, wear the seat belt as well, if nothing else it will keep you where you want to be, the operator's seat.

If you have neither ROP nor cab, I would suggest that you look into some protection. Tractor roll-overs are not very common accidents, but it seems when they happen it's usually tragic.

HYDRAULICS

When the tractor is off and cooled down, now is the time to check the hydraulic lines. This little grab and shake thing found me a bad hose another time. The entire line along

the back had the plastic coating split. If you suspect a line is losing oil, DO NOT check with bare hands if the equipment is hot or still running—at 3000 PSI, the oil will penetrate your skin, leaving you with an emergency operation for an "oil penetration injury." Not very common but very deadly and often misdiagnosed as a metal prick or bee sting. Good idea here is to always have available a copy of the oil data sheet that you use, should such an accident occur.

Other overlooked safety devices are lights. At least two white at the front and one red at the rear is the standard with the Highway Traffic Act for motor vehicles. But with a tractor, I would say more is better, and marking all four corners, top and bottom, gives a good impression of what an oncoming vehicle is bearing down on. This is, of course, if you are on the roadway at any point, and if you are, you will also need your slow-moving triangle on the back. Mine is missing in the photo as my tractor hasn't been off the property since I bought it, and besides, the triangle is an integral part of the FM aerial on the shop stereo.

The last safety point is not to be afraid to power wash off your tractor once in a while at least so you can tell if there are any wheel nuts on the hub.

There you go! A quick rundown on what to look for with your new tractor. And remember, none of them, big or small, are toys; they are all machinery. Treated respectfully, I have had hundreds of hours safely mowing, rotary-tilling, swatting mosquitoes etc. and hope for many more. 🍀

Dan Kerr learned photography in his dad's darkroom, then progressed to providing photos and articles for magazines, and crime scene photographs for the Ontario Provincial Police, as a forensic identification officer. Dan is the author of K.I.S.S. My Maintenance.

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STRETCH YOUR BUDGET

PLANTING YOUR OWN VEGETABLE GARDEN HELPS SAVE ON FOOD

Story by Doreen Pendgracs.

I've always had a large perennial garden in my backyard. The experience has been good and bad. The beauty of the flowers is the good. Dealing with an ongoing battle with weeds and undergrowth is the bad.

We decided to convert to a plant-based diet last year for health and environmental reasons, and so converting the flower garden to a vegetable garden this year is a good choice for us. But what is the best way to make this transition in a cost-effective, easy-to-manage way?

Several considerations for this multi-faceted endeavour may include:

- 1.** Do you have arthritis or any other condition that makes bending or kneeling difficult? If so, incorporating raised flower beds would be a great idea. They are far easier to manage as no digging or bending is required, and weed management is much easier as you can just pluck the intruders out before they get too big.
- 2.** Is your motivation for growing your own vegetables primarily financial? If so, growing plants that are high yield or are ones that your family purchases on a regular basis will likely save you the most money and should therefore get the most space in your garden.
- 3.** Is your motivation to give youngsters the opportunity to learn about gardening and how plants produce delicious food? Then the process becomes more fun, and you can let the kids choose what to plant and then assign them tasks to grow and transform their seedlings into featured ingredients for family meals. They will be proud and pleased to share the fruits of their labour.
- 4.** Do your neighbours who have vegetable gardens complain about wildlife nibbling on (and in many cases destroying) their treasured harvest? If so, it's best to find out which birds, animals, or vermin are creating the most damage in your immediate area and which plants the intruders traditionally go after so that you can plant other veggies that are desirable to you and less desirable to those unwanted visitors. You may have to invest in a fence that will keep the thieves out. Ask your neighbours what has worked for them.
- 5.** What are the growing conditions in your garden space like? It's important to consider the amount of sunlight your garden gets. Some flowers need very little sun and can still appear healthy. Vegetables need 5-6 hours of

direct sunlight per day. Drainage of the soil is also very important. If you've had standing water in your flower garden in past years, the drainage is likely insufficient for growing vegetables. That leads us to the quality of the soil itself. Your garden bed should be properly prepared for this transition. That means not just turning over the soil but digging down 6-12 inches, cutting out any roots from weeds or other unwanted plants and fully aerating the soil before planting.

- 6.** Review your space carefully and visualize how big each plant that you intend to plant is expected to grow. Be sure to leave sufficient space between those future full-grown plants to ensure easier weed control and optimize drainage of excess moisture.
- 7.** If you're like us and enjoy savoury dishes, don't forget to plant some herbs. Varieties such as thyme and rosemary winter well and will survive easily in your garden, raised beds, or in flower pots placed on your deck or patio. Lemon thyme is extremely hardy and pleasantly aromatic if you place it close to a sitting area.

Above all, be honest with yourself regarding your gardening ability. If you're a novice like me in the vegetable growing department, it's

best to begin with small plants that have been started by a nursery in organic fertilizer. That way, you have a much better chance of achieving success in your first harvest. You can always grow from seeds next year once you've got the routine in place and have had a good experience in your fledgling year.

For those of us who are unsure as to our gardening abilities, a good tip to keep in mind is to grow plants that take the least amount of care and are ideal for new gardeners. Vegetables such as onions, peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes, kale and lettuce are good choices. Be sure to confirm that what you intend to plant is ideally suited for your geographical location as growing conditions from region to region and province to province can vary greatly.

During spells of hot, dry weather, watering twice daily (early morning and late evening) is most effective as the water will not evaporate nearly as quickly as watering during the midday heat.

If you live in or near a community with a good garden centre, make friends with the staff and take their advice. They want you to succeed and will do everything they can to ensure that you do. But don't give up if you have difficulties! Pretty much every gardener has had bad luck with certain types of plants and has had to replant. Hang in there, and don't give up.

In addition to your garden centre, another great resource for gardeners (both novice and experienced) are the gardening clubs found across the country. They often have Facebook pages, and their Master Gardeners are generally willing to help solve any questions you have about planning, planting, maintaining, and harvesting the fruits of their labour. Good luck with it! 🍀

Doreen Pendgracs is a Manitoba writer based in the Interlake region of Manitoba and regular contributor to Connected to the Land. You can read more of her writing at Chocolatour.net.



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SPRINGTHYME RACK OF LAMB

IN A DELICIOUS MARINADE

Spring is here, whether we can see it or not. Let's welcome the longer, sunnier days with a delicious rack of lamb! This simple, versatile recipe can be paired with a variety of sides. Pick your favourite green salad or grab some root vegetables and get roasting.

RECIPE

LAMB

- 2 racks of lamb, Frenched (1 ¼ - 2lbs each)

MARINADE

- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme (1 tsp dried)
- 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary (1 tsp dried)
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- Salt and fresh ground pepper, to taste
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

CALORIES*	762
PROTEIN*	62 grams
FAT*	56 grams
NET CARBS*	1 grams
FIBER*	0 grams
SUGAR*	12 grams

* may vary depending on specific ingredients & brands used.

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine thyme, rosemary, garlic salt and pepper in oil and mix well. Rub all over racks. Set the racks in a baking sheet, fat side up, stand for 1.5-2 hours. *
2. Preheat the oven to 450°F
3. Score the fat (make sharp cuts about an inch apart). Roast in the oven for 15 minutes, or until the surface is browned.
4. Lower the heat to 300°F and cook until a meat thermometer inserted in the thickest part reads 52-54°C (125-130°F) for medium-rare, 58°C (135°F) for medium, about 15-20 minutes.
5. Remove rack from oven, cover with foil, and rest 15 minutes before serving. The cook will carry over during rest to ensure a perfect temperature.

6. Carve between the bones and serve immediately with your favourite side.

*You can do this step the night before and let the lamb marinate overnight in the fridge. After rubbing, place in a zip bag, remove as much air from the bag as possible and seal. Be sure to bring your racks out early enough for them to come to room temperature before cooking to ensure they are cooked thoroughly. 🍁

Jenna Malcolm is a busy mom of two in Calgary. She enjoys coming up with recipes to find something to feed the picky eaters, and a good roasted meat is usually the winner. If she gets any free time available, you can find her in the woods photographing birds.

SERVINGS: 4-6 PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES COOK TIME: 35 MINUTES



HEALTHY KETO GLUTEN-FREE STRAWBERRY COOKIE BARS

SURE TO IMPRESS

Recipe by Samantha McKenna.

Easy fresh Strawberry Cookie Bars loaded with strawberries and secretly healthy! Made eggless, these bars are sugar free, keto, and paleo!

BASE AND TOPPING

- 1 1/2 cups almond flour
- 1/3 cup monk fruit or granulated sweetener of choice
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter, chopped into squares
- Pinch of salt

STRAWBERRY FILLING

- 1 cup chopped strawberries
- 1/3 cup monk fruit or granulated sweetener of choice
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 tsp lemon juice
- 2 tsp cornstarch or tapioca flour

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350°F and prepare an 8x8 inch pan with non-stick spray and set it aside.

Place the strawberries, monk fruit and lemon juice into a pot over medium-high heat and bring to a boil. Once boiling, reduce to a simmer and let cook for 10-15 minutes. Use a potato masher to smash your strawberries. Stir in the cornstarch and continue to simmer for 3-5 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool.

While the strawberries simmer, place your almond flour, monk fruit, butter and salt into a food processor and pulse until a loose dough forms. Remove 1/2 cup of dough and use your hands to break it into small crumbles. Place the crumbles into a bowl and place in the fridge until ready to use.

Press the remaining dough into the bottom of your prepared pan and press it down evenly. Bake the crust for 10-15 minutes or until the edges are golden brown. Remove and let cool.

Pour the strawberry filling over your crust and spread it out in an even layer.

Top the strawberry filling with the reserved crumbles and bake for 20-25 minutes or until the crumbles are golden brown. Allow to cool completely, cut into even squares and enjoy!

CALORIES*	90
PROTEIN*	2 grams
FAT*	8 grams
NET CARBS*	3 grams
FIBER*	1 gram
SUGAR*	0.9 grams
SODIUM*	0.2 milligrams

* may vary depending on specific ingredients and brands used.

SERVINGS: 16
PREP TIME: 8 MINUTES
BAKING TIME: 30 MINUTES

Samantha McKenna has a passion for creating healthy and delicious desserts that are gluten free and sugar free (and mostly also keto and paleo friendly) and publishes them at www.fitandfull.ca. When she is not baking up a storm, you can find her running around with her rescue animals. She is on Facebook, Instagram (both [@fitandfullwithsam](https://www.instagram.com/fitandfullwithsam)) and Pinterest.

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