

4-1-1967

Planning on the Homestead

Beth Atkins

Follow this and additional works at: <https://research.library.kutztown.edu/greenrevolution>

Recommended Citation

Atkins, Beth (1967) "Planning on the Homestead," *Green Revolution*: Vol. 5 : Iss. 4 , Article 9.
Available at: <https://research.library.kutztown.edu/greenrevolution/vol5/iss4/9>

This Letter to the Editor is brought to you for free and open access by Research Commons at Kutztown University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Green Revolution by an authorized editor of Research Commons at Kutztown University. For more information, please contact czerny@kutztown.edu.

The Need For A Community To Live In And Live With

"Under today's disorder, there is something at work among the nations whose significance has not been adequately realized: the need for a community to live in and live with.

"The need is vague, unformulated and unsaid, but the need is great and there is something in our hearts which troubles us that we have forgotten what was once so beautifully called the commonweal.

"And if this open wound is to heal, it will have to heal like all wounds, from the bottom. And we shall have to begin at the beginning, with the family and its responsibilities, with the community and its obligations and with our universal and neglected duty to the earth."—Henry Beston

Frequently when I settle to quiet reflection — whether alone or in a group — these words from Henry Beston flow through my mind. Often they have been my silent companions in the 30 years since he wrote them. I go slowly over the four sentences, savoring their beauty, their solemnity and meaning. I ponder each of the more than a hundred words.

Today's disorder. How true and how poignant. The confusion in thinking, the welter of "surface" activities, the poverty, laws and controls, the war and suffering. Disorder so persistent that earnest people weary of it; others brush it aside in their hurry, or ignore it in apathy.

But underneath "*something*" is at work. A turning, a yearning, a need for belonging. The individual protests his loneliness; everywhere moderns decry alienation. Some seek to still this need by "union with god."

The need is for a community to live in and live with. Mr. Beston emphasizes the basic human need for each other — a rapport and involvement with one another, a deep communication, a sharing of common, meaningful goals in community.

Whose significance has not yet been adequately realized. When Mr. Beston wrote this, the great centralized, impersonal City was the dream and goal more than it is now. Men, women and youth were trading their neighborhoods and face-to-face relationships for the glamor and wealth of cities. Today they are raising questions. Sociologists, anthropologists and educators write of decentralism and small community. Common people know the frustration of over-involvement with technique and technology. Some are stirring themselves to recover and advance the *common weal*. But still, its *significance is not yet adequately realized*.

A wound. The lack of community is a wound. What a direct, elemental analogy! Everyone knows a cut finger or a stinging bruise. Who hasn't had the pain, pressure and hurt from a wound? But this is an *open* wound, says Mr. Beston. An ugly, running, festering sore! Everyone has seen an open wound in an animal or another person if he has not actually experienced it himself.

Be glad that it can *heal*. What a blessed word. What a wonderful, silent mystery healing is. The magic of blood corpuscles and restoration of the flesh. How and where does healing start? From the inside, *from the bottom*. Could any other phrase better indicate the direction for social reconstruction? *We shall have to begin at the beginning*. Patchwork, words, preaching, demonstrations, laws, legislation will not do.

So where is this beginning? Where other than the youth, the children, the infants? The first of this tri-part beginning, says Mr. Beston, *is the family and its responsibilities*.

The family? The family has many critics today, and some think that as an institution the family is outworn and passe. But one recalls that each tiny infant develops its Self and gains its Self-image from interaction with others. What other group or institution than a secure, mature family group can better supply this? If one values with Mr. Beston, *responsibility* — the ability to give and take in fairness and reciprocity — one is put to it to imagine any method better than a stable family for its part in healing the open wound of disorder.

But not just a *single* family. A second factor in social restoration is the *community* — a joining of several or many families in the community's *obligations* of education, exchange with, and inspiration from one another.

And that third aspect of true healing from the bottom — *our universal and neglected duty to the earth*. An acceptance of our place in nature, our dependence on the great mother. Not a mere looking at it and a playing in it, not the ruthless struggle to "conquer," but an understanding cooperation with nature's known "laws" and processes — which literally means our survival and our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health.

As the earth turns into the spring season for us, seeming to start a new cycle with greenness and growth, will it not increase our joy and that of others to renew our understanding of, our loyalty to, and our work with this type of healing "of the nations"?

The Green Revolution

Second class mailing privilege authorized; entry applied for at Free-land, Md. 21053.

Published monthly by The School of Living, Lane's End Homestead, Brookville, Ohio 45309.

Editor: Mildred J. Loomis.

Subscription rates: *The Green Revolution*, \$3 a year; *The Green Revolution with School of Living membership*, \$5 a year; *The Green Revolution* and bimonthly *A Way Out*, \$6 a year.

Telephone: TE 8-4522 (New Lebanon, Ohio).

Send subscriptions and renewals to School of Living Center, Heathcote Rd., Free-land, Md. 21053.

Send change of address and undeliverable copies to School of Living Center, Heathcote Rd., Free-land, Md. 21053.

Letters

Planning on Homestead

To the Editor:

Like many others, I long to get out from the regimented rat-race, the tasteless food that appears at the supermarkets, the sickly vegetation, and heavily polluted air of the city. [In Colorado Springs?—Ed.] I remember so fondly my mother's gardens, and not so long ago when I had more time, the thrill of working with and watching flowers bloom. It was the "blooming" part that never ceased to amaze me. I hope the day will soon come when I have my own homestead. I am alone now and must work to put my children through school, and have money for that plot of land, some implements, a few buildings. I certainly insist on it being debt-free.—Mrs. Beth Atkins, 1218 W. Pikes Peak Ave., Colorado Springs, Colo.

A Quiet Revolution Via Adult Education

To the Editor:

The government sponsors Medical Self-Help Classes, through Civil Defense Units. The idea is to be able to help yourself when and if no medical help will be available. Homesteaders could benefit from this — they teach emergency childbirth. Once you take the course you are urged to become an instructor and teach others. The School of Living could do the same with Action Problems of Living. You teach 12 and each of them in turn teaches 12 others. If each teaches others within the framework of the Major Problems of Living we can have our own quiet revolution. School of Living needs all types of people — instructors to teach, writers to write, men who can design communities, carpenters to build them. And we must by all means reach the young people.

We definitely need School of Living local discussion groups. Could we have discussion outlines? Unless we have excellent discussion leaders (or stick close to an outline) the group gets far afield from the subject — even those with deep interest and conviction will wander.

I'm assuming that most School of Living members and friends have the conviction that would help spread the ideas. With the cost of living going up like a rocket, what better time to discuss homesteading as a way out?—Eloise Snyder, St. Albans, W. Va.

Privacy and Community

To the Editor:

For six months we were part of the Sunrise Hill Community here, but now live in a cabin a mile from it. Our ideas of community differ from some of the members. Their idea is more like an extended family with the pooling of all finances, while mine is for more choices left to the individual. I felt I was neglecting some matters important for exploring now: learning how to be more self-sufficient, living simply and close to nature, developing a craft, meditating, examining myself (Normal Neurosis and Wilhelm Reich help), exploring the possible meanings of silence, nonviolence (especially in people's attitudes) responsibility, love and freedom, and just being aware. . . . We rent a small cabin and wooded area around us for very little. We heat and cook by

(continued on page 3)

Earthworms

Their Intensive Propagation and Use In Biological Soil Building

Part VI (continued from last month)

(Excerpted from a booklet of the above title.)

By Thomas J. Barrett

Utility Earthworm Culture Bed

In our methods for developing earthworm culture, we use lug box setup for rapid production of earthworm eggs, harvest the eggs from the boxes once every 30 days, and use the increase to impregnate large compost beds for soil-building and for development of vast numbers of earthworms.

In harvesting the increase from the culture boxes, it is not necessary to complete the work on a particular date. The incubation period of the egg-capsules is from 14 to 21 days, therefore if the harvesting operations are carried out every 21 to 30 days, practically all the increase is recovered.

After much experimenting, using many designs over a period of several years, we have finally originated the "Utility" culture bed here illustrated and described, which seems to be the most practical all-purpose bed. We have discarded all other designs in favor of the UTILITY.

The Utility may be varied in size to suit any purpose. It is of knock-down construction, with no nailing. For the small garden, a bed 3 ft. square may be all that is required. The plans illustrated here are for a bed 4 ft. wide and 8 ft. long. For large operations, a series of beds may be used to great advantage, so that the increase from the box cultures may be used to impregnate the beds in series. Thus the worms will be maturing in the different beds at different times. This is an advantage in commercial fishbait production.

The important point to note here is the way the corner posts are set to form the interlocking corners. The bed is constructed of 2x4" posts and 1x6" planking. Steel fence posts may be substituted for the wood corner posts. Light angle-iron fence posts may be sawed in two in the center, thus providing two posts. These are easily driven into the ground to the proper depth and spaced as shown in the illustration.

Side and end members are made of 1x6" sheeting or other planking material, cut to the proper length. No nails are used. Beginning at the bottom, the side members are set in place one at a time, followed by the end member, which interlocks between to hold the side members in place. After the bottom of the "box" is formed by two side members and two end members, the permanent sand and gravel fill for drainage should be shoveled into place. This fill should be about 4 to 5 in. deep, with the bottom boards as shown in the ground plan (on top of fill).

The compost is built up, layer by layer, on top of the ground boards. As the box is filled, the pressure of the composted material holds all members in place.

In preparing compost for intensive earthworm culture, good drainage in the culture bed is of prime importance. We do not consider that any ground is porous enough to provide the proper drainage. To provide this important, essential drainage, we place on the ground in the culture box a layer of from 4 to 5 in. of coarse sand and gravel, evenly spread, and on top of this we place a layer of 1x6" boards, spaced apart about 1/2 to 1 in.

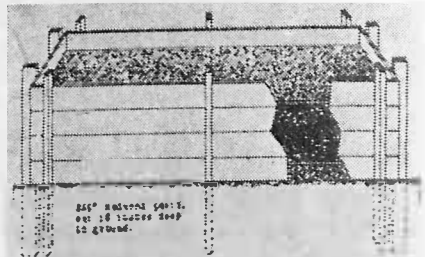
These boards make the culture bed gopher and mole proof. But the main purpose of the bottom boards is to facilitate the unloading of the contents with a flat shovel without digging into the permanent sand drainage layer.

After the worms have transformed the compost into castings ready for the final disposition, the end members and the side members may be pried out, one at a time, thus exposing contents of bed for easy loading into wheelbarrow or other carrying device for disposal to flower beds, lawn or other selected place of disposal.

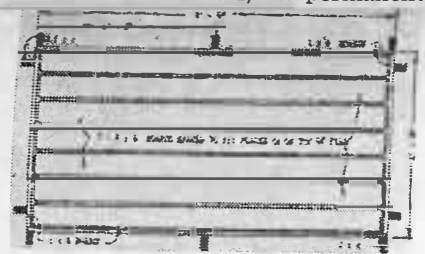
The overall depth of the Utility Culture Bed should not exceed 24 in. As 6 in. of this depth is taken up by the sand and gravel drainage fill, with the bottom boards in place, this leaves a total depth of 18 in. for the composted earthworm food. For best results in the intensive propagation of earthworms, good aeration is required at all times, as they are air-breathing animals.

Length and width of the culture bed may be varied to suit the individual, but the proper depth of not more than 24 in. should be maintained.

In watering a bed of this depth, the entire contents can be kept moist through and through without difficulty. This is very important. Earthworms have a very high water content and any lack of water slows down their activity and reduces productivity of capsules. Beds should not be flooded. Contents should be kept thoroughly moist, but not "soggy" wet. This is the reason that especially



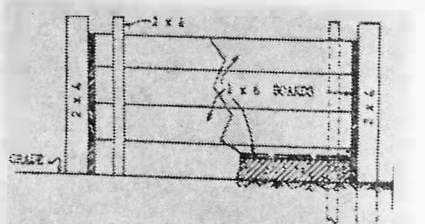
Perspective view of Utility Culture Bed, with side cut out to show drainage material and compost in place.



Ground plan of Utility Culture Bed, showing vertical section of corner posts, with bottom boards in place on top of sand and gravel drainage fill.



Longitudinal section showing depth of bed, interlocking corners, with cut-out to show sand and gravel drainage fill.



Cross section, showing interlocking corners. Cut-out shows sand and gravel drainage fill, bottom boards in place.