



1943 Women's Land Army, WWII Haying. Group 130: Women Students, Special Collections and University Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

A Few Tips for a Simple Life

by Michael Guilfoil, *The Spokesman-Review*

Organic farmer MaryJane Butters long ago embraced Thoreau's dictum to "simplify, simplify." As a Forest Service ranger in the 1970s, she spent two summers roaming Utah's Uinta Mountains with her home on her back. Later, she maintained the most remote wilderness ranger station in the Lower 48. Today, Butters and her family live eight miles outside Moscow, Idaho, on their farm, headquarters of her mail-order dry-foods business. But even e-commerce hasn't tempered Butters' enthusiasm for simplicity.

MaryJane's

2. Freezing

You aren't limited to making jams and jellies only when fruit is in season. If you can't get all your fruits processed at the peak of the harvest season or if a neighbor offers you several flats of strawberries all at once, lay them out on cookie sheets and put them into the freezer. Once frozen, transfer them into containers for storage in the freezer for another month (but no more than two) until you have time to properly turn them into wintertime fruit spreads. More on p. 55.

3. Vacuum Packing

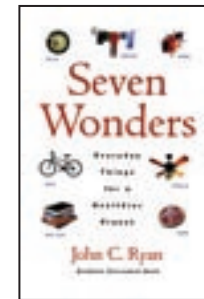
Tired of brown lettuce in the back of your fridge or strawberries that last only one day after you bring them home? You need a countertop vacuum appliance and a variety of different-size canisters that you put your produce into and then insert a hose into a port in the lid to suck out the oxygen—the stuff that makes your fresh produce go brown and spoil. It's just the coolest thing to use. It's super-easy and it really does keep your food fresher three to five times longer. Who knew? More on p. 56.

4. Canning (Bottling)

It seems everyone knows of a grape arbor that comes ripe all at once. Cut bunches from the vine, rinse, and put them into a steam juicer. Process and seal the juice in quart jars. Later, if you want to turn the juice into grape jelly, first test the pectin content. To determine if the juice will gel properly, mix 1 T juice with 1 T Everclear (grain alcohol). If no clots form, there is not enough pectin in the juice to make jelly and you will need to use a gelling agent like my ChillOver Powder (p. 57). More on p. 56.

Simple Solutions

for everyday ORGANIC™



In December 1999, a newspaper reporter from Washington called. He was writing a review of the book *Seven Wonders: Everyday Things for a Healthier Planet* by John C. Ryan. Michael Guilfoil of *The Spokesman-Review* newspaper asked me if I had my own "seven wonders." The story that ensued was headlined

"Simple Solutions." Here, then, is the continuation of that story. Each issue of *MaryJanesFarm* will feature in detail new solutions, and will give you all the information you need to make them your own.

Solutions from previous issues are available in the magazine section of my website: www.maryjanesfarm.org



seven wonders

5. Salting

For centuries, salt has been used to preserve food, making it a highly valued commodity. Roman soldiers were paid wages in salt, hence the word "salary." Without salt, and before refrigeration, our ancestors could not have preserved meats and vegetables. Modern-day table salt is not suitable for use in food preservation because of the extra additives it contains. Word to the wise: buy an unrefined sea salt for all your needs, culinary as well as food preservation. Trace minerals are an important part of our diet and sea salt contains them. More on p. 58.

6. Drying

Drying is the easiest, quickest form of food preservation. I have a countertop model where my extra bananas go, the one tomato that I won't be needing after all, the tops of celery ... you get the idea. It's just as easy to toss them into my dryer as not. Veggies (or even their parts) never need go to waste. Boil them up later on, pour the liquid into ice cube trays, add a dash of salt, and you have "bouillon cubes." More on p. 58.

7. Fermenting

Six weeks ago, I had some extra purple cabbage on hand, so I quickly shredded 3½ cups and mixed it with 2 t sea salt. I packed it in a sterilized quart jar, filled a plastic bag with water to create a heavy lid that also sealed it, then put it in a dark cabinet in my kitchen. Tonight, I'll have not only great-tasting cultured cabbage, but a centuries-old health food cure. More on p. 60.