

“ IN ALL THAT YOU DO
IN ALL OF YOUR LIFE,
I wish you
the STRENGTH and the GRACE
to make those choices which will allow
YOU AND YOUR NEIGHBOR
to become
THE BEST
of whoever you are. ”

— wisdom from everyone's favorite neighbor,
Mister Rogers

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 Potluck Pizzazz

Nothing brings people together like food. Plain old potlucks can be a snoozefest, so give folks a way to flaunt their kitchen know-how while indulging in some good grub and gab. Plan your potluck around a fun theme like BBQ Bash, Going Green, or Margaritaville. Supply all the noodles for a pasta party and ask everybody else to bring their favorite sauce, or buy dough and cheese for a pizza party and have everyone bring a fun topping. (Or make the dough from scratch and have 'em fainting in their boots!)

3 Armchair Travelers

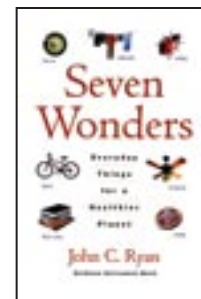
Love your city and want to learn more? Stoke the mental fires and refresh your outlook by starting a book club that reads local-interest books. You can host meetings in your home, or support small business owners by meeting at local coffee shops or bars—try new places each time. Letting each member make suggestions of what to read will keep things well-rounded. Tired of home? Pick books set in exotic locales instead. No time for reading? A foreign film club keeps the intellectual kick with less time investment.

4 Life's a Stitch

I've got a hunch some of your neighbors are crafty types. Knitting is an old homesteading skill turned trendy, and a knitting circle is a great way to work on projects while getting in some good girl gab. Invite people of all skill levels, supply a pot of tea and some fresh cookies, and enjoy. Before you know it, recipes will be exchanged, stuck projects will be unstuck, and you'll have as many opinions about your love life as you have new yarn samples. Behold the power of fiber.

SimpleSolutions

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/SimpleSolutions.



7 tips for good neighborin'

Country life has many things to offer, but anonymity isn't one of them. We tend to know our neighbors, but city folk are often so independent that they have no idea who lives right across the hall. Privacy is great, but good neighborin' (both having one and being one) is necessary, too. Neighbors can be your security system, support network, and information hotline. Here are seven solutions to help you say "Howdy!"

1 Be the Host

Organize a good old-fashioned meet and greet. Pick a place (a building's common area or a nearby park), put up some fliers, and let the meetin' and greetin' begin!

seven wonders

5 Welcome Wagon

Whip up some neighborhood mojo without even throwing a party. Ask building management to let you know when a new tenant is moving in and get two or three neighbors to help you get together a welcome package. Be creative! A loaf of banana bread, a keychain for their new house keys, a map with the nearest grocery stores circled, some delivery menus from local food joints, the names of the best local watering holes. And don't forget to include your contact info for lending that proverbial cup of sugar.

6 Movable Feasts

Progressive dinners were all the rage in the '50s, and they're making a comeback among the hip, young, urban folk. Start in one apartment for drinks, then move to a different home for each course of the meal. Not only are they fun and a great way to better know your neighbors, progressive dinners also spread out the work and expense of hosting a dinner party. Eating out while staying in!

7 Flower Power

A couple of years ago, I attended an Urban Farmgirls' neighborhood chapter meeting in Charlotte, NC. These women gentrified an entire city block and gathered together to garden, cook, and sew. For another gathering, they used an idea from my *Outpost* book: they wrapped duct tape around their wrists, sticky side out, and walked around the neighborhood making flower bracelets, visiting along the way.