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Weekend Farmer

by Anne Hollwedel

I am a first year “weekend farmer.” If you asked me two years ago, I don’t think this path would have remotely been on my radar. I went to school for interior design, and my career choices since graduating have all (until now) centered around the design/architecture field. About a year and a half ago, after moving out of my apartment into a house with a nice yard, I became really interested in backyard gardening. That grew into not only cooking with my own homegrown produce, but becoming more and more aware of where my other food was coming from. What better way to know where your food is coming from than to grow it yourself? Between that and the fact that farm/backyard-grown food just tastes better, my dream of becoming a farmer developed.

I knew that in order to do things right (and to confirm my newfound passion), I would need to get some education and experience. It wasn’t practical for me to up and quit a stable job in architecture, as much as I wanted to be able to be at the farm as much as possible. After coming across PVF, I reached out, and Hana reassured me that I could have the opportunity to get my feet wet in the farming industry before plunging in head-first.

My experience so far has been really eye-opening and, luckily, has affirmed my interest in farming. Being at the farm Friday’s and Saturdays is quite the whirlwind! I come at the perfect time on Friday afternoons-- right at the start of potluck time! Everyone is always so creative with their delicious dishes, and it’s nice to be able to sit and catch up with all the people that, as a weekender, I don’t really get to see that often. After lunch, I usually get to do some field work before taking over at the roadside stand. In between customers, there’s a lot that goes



Anne, willing weekend farm worker and Zoey-holder. on behind the scenes to prepare us for the next day’s markets.

Late Friday afternoon is flower bunching. Hana, Carrie, and Grandma are the main expert bunchers at the flower party. I come in between other stand tasks to help streamline their creative process by being a “runner”-- this includes setting up buckets to put the flowers in, restocking everyone’s flower supply, and storing bunched flowers on our flower cart. When all of

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My Envious Superpower

by Adam Balick

When we are working out in the field, we workers like to have discussions on a vast number of topics. These conversations could range from what impersonations we can do to what we would grab from our house if it was on fire (We talk about actual farm things too.) Talking is helpful for making time feel like it's passing by quickly, and it distracts me from hearing my angry red skin yelling at me for forgetting to put on sunscreen. One morning we discussed what superpowers we would choose. I don't exactly remember what I picked, but this got me thinking about picking realistic or goofy superpowers. I thought about things from having the ability to be able to eat anything (which I would probably pick because I already try to eat everything raw I can get my hands on on the farm) to the ability to fly, with the catch that it could only be done while upside down and moving backwards. Then I thought about what "superpower" I, as my normal self, actually have. I would say that I have the ability to take a nap almost anywhere. Yes, this power sounds a lot like narcolepsy, but I can actually choose when and where I want to sleep.

I have been known to take naps during my lunch break on the seat of golf carts and in other areas

around the Loudoun farm. Although the floor of the green barn and the grass in front of the green barn are decent locations, nothing beats the shade of the golf cart's roof and the comfort of the couch-like upholstery on the cart seats. The golf carts have arm rests where the doors on a car would be, and have sitting room for 2 people; or 3 if we disregard the need for personal space. This gives me some time to mix yoga body-pretzeling in with my nap (also as a placeholder for when I sleep through Farm Yoga because I was unable to be woken up). I try different ways to maneuver my arms and legs through and around the bars on the cart, each one proving to be more comfortable than the next. Although my strategies can sometimes backfire, leaving me to wake up with sleeping arms, legs, and shoulders (on another note, I'm

surprised no one has been placing bets on this yet).

My history of sleeping in interesting places and ways may have continued on the farm, but has been many years in the making. At summer camp when I was much younger, I thought I forgot my sleeping bag for our "night in the woods". I wound up sleeping in a pile of dirt and scattered leaves using a towel as a pillow and a towel as a blanket. I was not happy to find my sleeping bag when I was packing up to leave (I was happy that the chiggers didn't find me in the woods though). I used to occasionally use our "flex" free period in high school for napping as well. After mastering sleeping on tray tables during flights and train trips on vacations, I was ready to try my technique on desks. The formula of earphones, relaxing music, and silent sustained reading proved to be the

perfect environment for sleep. Most people ran out of the room when the bell rang because the day was over, but I ran because of the puddle of drool on my desk. I did end up taking my napping skills to college, where I would sleep under my bed in between classes, as well as under my suitemate's bed. I lost track of how many times I made each of my suitemates jump (and our friends on our floor dropping in to say "hi") when they turned on the lights and found me sleeping or watching Netflix alone in the dark. Why under the bed? It allows me to flop on the floor when entering the room and sleep comfortably with my shoes on, using my backpack as a pillow. When I return to college in the fall, I will take what I learned from PVF to Pittsburgh and continue my napping journey, honing my skills as I go.



This is an easy one for Adam – there is room for all of his limbs.

Zen and the Art of Farming

by Yoella Diamant-Cohen

From the first moment I stepped on 2013, a friend and I hiked the Israel Hiking Trail. The trail is about a third the length of the Appalachian Trail; it took us three and a half months to complete the entire trail. We hiked it backwards, starting in Eilat which is the most southern city in Israel, going through the desert, along the beach, through mountains, and all the way to

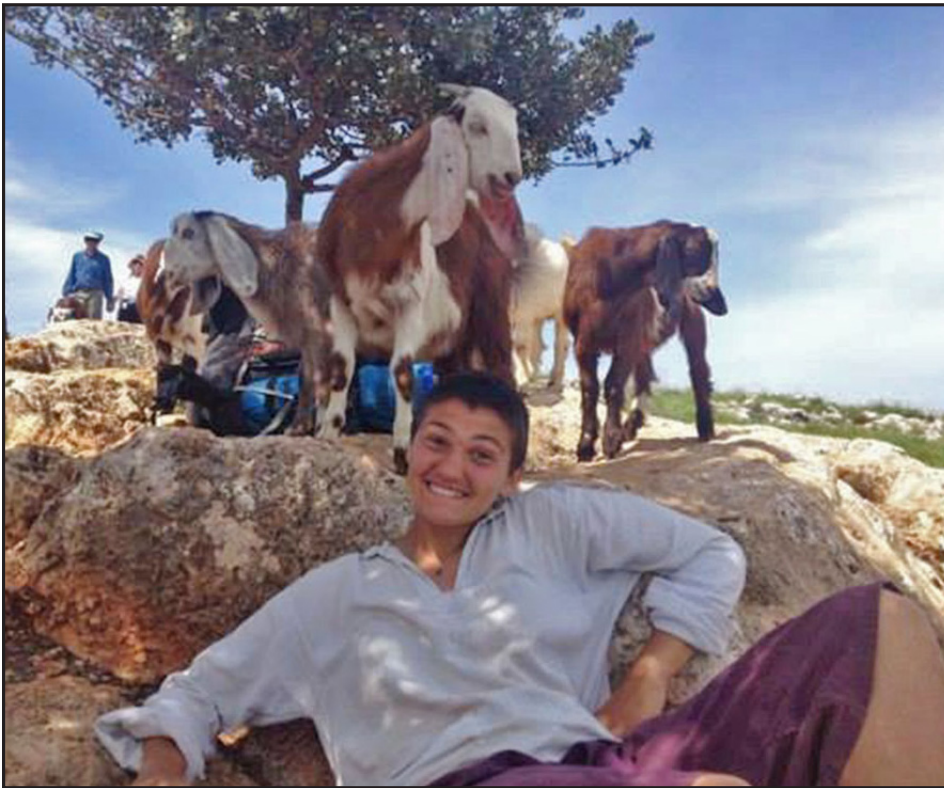
Kibbutz Dan, the end point of the trail which was also where I had been living for two years. Along the way, we were hosted by multiple "trail angels" who offered a place to sleep and/or a meal in return some hours/days of farm labor.

After finishing the hike, I returned to the desert to further explore areas that were not en route but were equally breath-taking. While walking along the road with still 5 miles to the supermarket, a sweet

(yet grumpy) old farmer stopped to give me a ride. On the way, he asked if I needed a job. His wife ran a bed and breakfast and her manager just quit that week. So instead of taking me to the supermarket, he took me to meet his wife. After a few minutes, I dropped my hiking bag in my new apartment and ran off to the supermarket because I was starving!

So that is how I arrived in the desert, but I didn't actually start farming (as a profession) then. I held many jobs while in the desert, including: farming, building houses from mud, working at a falafel stand, working at a Buddhist retreat center, at a dry cleaner, and at a Bedouin style guesthouse. And then I moved. And farmed some more...

I returned to the States in April and was job-searching online when I came across PVF. Hana responded to my email within an hour and after a two-day introduction to the Loudoun farm and staff, I committed to working the season. It has been a beautiful adventure. I feel as if I am surrounded by amazing, unique individuals and we all do a great job (and have a great time) growing your vegetables. Thank you for your support and please don't judge vegetables. Usually, the uglier the vegetables, the more delicious they are!



Some goats came to visit Yoella while she was taking a break.

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the flowers have been made into beautiful bouquets and put away, we make the lists of all the different items and quantities that we are bringing to each market the next day, and start organizing the trucks with everything that can go out that night.

Saturdays at markets are early and busy mornings. Set up time before the market opens always seems to fly by since we have so much to display. We keep very busy with customers throughout the day, especially now that we're really in the season for farmers markets. When we're not helping

people, we're going through "fluffing" the produce and trying to make it look as good as possible for our customers. By the end of the day (especially after taking everything down—usually in a much warmer time of day), I'm always ready for a snack and a nap! It's really amazing to see people appreciate

all the hard work we put into growing our produce. It's a very proud moment when you have customers coming to you week after week saying "your [vegetables] are the best!" or "I've been getting all my produce from you guys for 30 years!" and knowing that you play a part in that.

Notes from the Field:

Daily Training Pays Off – I Get to Pound Posts

by Molly McGrath

This summer I had the pleasure of taking on a role as the temporary man of the farm when Michael Bradford left the country for two months. For part of June and July there were no men working on the Vienna farm so I got to learn new jobs like post pounding that required lots of upper body strength. As a woman training for the United States Marine Corps, upper body strength is something I dedicate a lot of time to because it is often highlighted as a reason to keep females out of combat roles. Daily training had paid off as I have a first class male combat fitness score and I have been allowed to learn additional skills at the farm.

Post pounding is important because in between the posts strings are run to hold up tomatoes. When the tomatoes are held up they can be picked

faster and they are less likely to rot because they are not sitting on the ground. First, metal or wooden poles are gathered and carried into the fields and placed between the plants. Next a heavy metal tool is placed on the top of a pole and slammed down until the pole is about a foot into the ground.

I have thoroughly enjoyed farming this summer because I learned new skills such as weeding and harvesting different vegetables. Being outdoors all day is something I love and also prepared me more to train in a similar climate next summer. I appreciate the opportunity to be the man on the farm because the expectation of handling heavy equipment is something that I will need to excel at from carrying around heavy ammo cans to ruck marches where I have to carry over half my body weight.



There aren't many strict rules on this farm, but hard hats are required for post pounding. Molly is good to go.



About twelve years ago, we started the transition from pickup trucks to golf carts. It revolutionized our mobility. Not everyone can have her own cart (like Hana and Carrie and Grandma) but workers can travel in small groups, carry significant loads, and travel all over the farm with maximum joy. Even a ten year old can drive a golf cart successfully. And ten month old Zoey will grow up thinking that golf carts are the way to travel. On the hot days, there is nothing better than the air conditioning of wind on a sweaty vegetable picker. It is hard for us to imagine getting around nowadays without a golf cart. (We act like a senior citizens farm here, even though our age group is closer to 25 than 55.)