

Simple Homemade Life

Episode 1: Spring Garden Prep

- Brian: Welcome to A Simple Homemade Life with an Oregon Cottage.
- Jami: It's a series where we share what we're doing in the garden, in the kitchen, and our old farmhouse fixer.
- Brian: Things that have gone great, and things that have gone not so great.
- Jami: In other words, a simple homemade life.
- Jami: Real food, organic gardening, DIY remodeling, and how to make it doable and easy, simple, homemade life.

In The Garden

- Brian: Okay, so for our first episode, we just wanted to bring you into our garden, and kind of show you what we're doing in mid spring, and maybe what you can be doing to get your garden ready.
- Jami: Right, some spring garden preparation, since that's kind of what's big on everybody's mind, if you're a gardener right now.
- Brian: And we should say that we're in Oregon, so our climate might be a little bit different from yours at this time of year. And that is, what zone?
- Jami: Zone 8.
- Brian: Zone 8?
- Jami: Zone 8.
- Brian: So, anyway, what should people be doing, if similar climate, to be getting their garden ready?
- Jami: Well, this is the time to get your beds ready, to get your soil ready. We like to layer compost on the soil, not dig it in, layer it. Get a compost that has some barnyard manure in it, and that will give even more food for your vegetables. So, I just layer it on.
- Brian: Now, wait a minute, don't dig it up and mix it in?
- Jami: No.
- Brian: Just layer it on?

Jami: Yeah.

Brian: Now, why is that?

Jami: We want to smother the weeds, we don't want them to wake up.

Brian: So, we just want to like kill the weeds in a very peaceful way. In their sleep we're going to kill them, okay.

Jami: Just smother.

Brian: That's where you layer that compost on.

Jami: That's right.

Brian: What's another thing we do?

Jami: So, once our beds are ready, and if you've been gardening in zone 8, like we have, we started this a month or so ago, and we planted some early crops like broccoli and lettuce and spinach, some of those things that don't mind the colder weather. But we still have a lot of empty beds that are going to be for our summer crops. And those are the peppers, and the tomatoes, and the green beans. So, those are the beds that you kind of just pick the beds first. That's why you need to have a plan because you have to do some beds first, and then you get the next layer of mulch, and you do the next beds. So, that's what's next.

Jami: So, planting, yeah, you're going to plant. If you haven't gotten your early spring things in you probably might be too late, depending on where you are. The further North you are, you could probably still plant things like broccoli, cauliflower, and lettuce, and spinach. But definitely get those beds ready for tomatoes, and peppers, and green beans, and zucchini, those are all ready to be planted.

Brian: So, some things you can plant now, a few things, and for the rest you're just getting ready to plant, right?

Jami: That's kind of ... yeah.

Brian: Okay. So what else do you do? So, all your beds are ready or they're planted. What's some other spring things?

Jami: Right so, and we'll show you some of our already planted early spring crops, because one of the things I like to do is keep them covered. Obviously we have to keep them covered because we have a lot of animals that eat our food here. But I always grow things like broccoli and cauliflower underneath netting, not a netting, but a row cover the whole season because it keeps those bugs and those white butterflies that lay the worms, it keeps them away from it. And so, we get clean broccoli, no aphids on them. And so, that's really key, and we'll show you that.

Jami: So, other things you can be doing is taking care of your paths. Get them covered now before the weeds get really big. So, use cardboard and wood chips, or grass clippings, or straw, whatever you can find to cover the cardboard and make your paths set.

Brian: So, just so I get this straight, so you put the cardboard down-

Jami: Yes.

Brian: And then, you put the chips on top to walk on it.

Jami: Yeah.

Brian: Doesn't that just get wet and disintegrate? I mean, that will keep the weeds-

Jami: Well, eventually it will and next year you'll just refresh it.

Brian: But that keeps the weeds down for all summer?

Jami: Yeah.

Brian: Okay. So, we do that. And I know that we've been on the lookout for wood chips because around here it's like this-

Jami: Free wood chips.

Brian: Hot commodity. Oh my gosh. People, I don't know, what they guard their whatever else in other parts of the country. But in Oregon it's wood chips, you guard that pile.

Jami: Yeah, free wood chips.

Brian: The free wood chips. Yeah, the word gets out and people go running to get it.

Jami: Yeah, it's pretty cool. But, so anyway, yeah so take care of weeds while they're small, get your soil ready, and then start prepping for your plants. Either where you're going to buy them, or if you've started them from seed, we can show you what our peppers and tomatoes look like under our lights inside, they're not out yet. It's kind of late to start those from seed, so if you haven't started from seed you'll have to go in and buy them. But get them, start planning where are you going to put things and yeah, that's kind of what to do now. But it's kind of prepping, just getting things cleaned up from the winter, getting the weeds under control, so that you can just focus on the vegetables.

Brian: Because you want to be ready to go. You don't want to plant too early because what happens if you plant too early?

Jami: Well, they die.

Brian: They die, okay.

Jami: Because of frost and cold, or they're stunted. Now, here's the biggest thing with tomatoes, do not go by what the stores have available for you to buy. That's the biggest tip because they will bring out the warm weather seedlings way sooner. I saw corn, and tomatoes, and peppers, little teeny sad little looking things at the stores in early March, we're still getting 30 degree weather. We're getting lower than freezing at night, and they don't like it. And so, they didn't look healthy. But people must buy them because they're there every year. But wait, wait, wait, wait. Don't buy them then, they don't like to be cold.

Brian: Okay. And I know that planting too late, I learned my lesson with planning too late. We have funny story because I'm really not the gardener in the family, but I had used this compost that wasn't quite ... how come the compost had so many active seeds?

Jami: Well, it was homemade compost.

Brian: It hadn't actually composted. It was full of tomato seeds is what happened. I used it to cover some bed that needed just something over it. And all these volunteer tomatoes-

Jami: But it was in June.

Brian: Yes, so in June all these volunteer tomatoes popup, which is really late for tomatoes. When are tomatoes supposed to be in?

Jami: Well, I mean you plant a big start like this in May, but a seed, you'd start that way back in March or in February.

Brian: So, I'm like, "I'm so late." So, seeds in June versus March. Anyway, so they're growing, and I'm so proud of them. I'm kind of identifying and feeling proud of my tomato plants that are just growing up like crazy. And I have them all tied up and everything. And I'm just telling Jami about what we're going to do with all the tomatoes that my plants are going to produce. Well, of course, they got green tomatoes, they got really big and then the cold hit. And, basically, they were just too late, and the plants rotted out from under the tomatoes.

Jami: I think there was one. You got one?

Brian: Did I get one tomato?

Jami: One ripe one and then one we could bring in to ripen, it started to turn, but-

Brian: I'm Googling, "What can you make with green tomatoes?" Yeah, so don't be like me, prep now, and don't plant too late.

Jami: That's true, yeah. You want to plan on time.

Brian: Well, if right now it's too early to be planting, and you're just kind of done with prep, I think I would really suggest you do, as long as the ground is thawed and you have time, is consider putting in an automatic watering system. That's something that we did this last year kind of in two phases. Just because

basically, what would happen before we had one, we'd be laying in bed at night, and one of us would say to the other, "Did you remember to shut the water off?" And so, you have to get up in the dark and go out to the garden and shut it off. First of all, we have a whole video on how to do it.

Jami: Yes.

Brian: It's so simple. If I can do it, you can do it.

Jami: It's PVC pipe.

Brian: Cheap.

Jami: Cheap.

Brian: PVC pipe is cheap, it's easy to work with, it's like doing Legos. And then, we just hooked it up with a really cool timing computer. And you just set it for when you want it to go, and it just waters automatically, and you could be gone.

Jami: It's been amazing. We had half of the garden done last year and it was amazing.

Brian: It saves so much work.

Jami: It was great.

In The Kitchen

Brian: So, a big reason to have a garden is so you can have garden fresh produce to eat.

Jami: What do we do with it?

Brian: I mean, come on, otherwise, you just grow flowers.

Jami: That's right.

Brian: So, what are some-

Jami: Which I like flowers, there's the good flowers, yeah. But yeah, the vegetables, oh man, that first time when you grow your own food and you're like, "I grew this," it's amazing.

Jami: So, right now I kind of like to do seasonal things. If you have asparagus, that's seasonal. And you can pick that out of your garden, or you can get it fresh from the store. And making an asparagus quiche with it is so good. It's just springtime in a dish right there. And so, that is a recipe we'll link to in the show notes, and you can find that on the blog. Also rhubarb. So, asparagus and rhubarb are perennial fruits, vegetables. And if you have room to keep these, and have enough room, I would suggest it because you plant them once pretty much it's a forget. You plant once and you just don't have to do hardly anything to them. Their yearly compost, the asparagus ferns have to be cut back, but that's about

it. And they'll just come back for you every year, get stronger and stronger. So, those are two great things to plant.

Jami: So, one thing I like to do with rhubarb is make a delicious chutney. Again, we'll link that recipe because it is so good, it's ,with pork? Ahh.

Brian: Oh man, it's good.

Jami: It's good with pork. And then the last thing, of course, is if you planted, about a month and a half ago, you planted lettuce, you're able to start harvesting it and that tender lettuce from the garden is so good. So, making a homemade dressing will make that shine. I love the honey mustard dressing, I have a perfect honey mustard dressing on the site. I will link that also because it would be perfect on your new lettuce.

What's Next

Brian: Well, that is it for in the garden today. In our next episode we're going to answer the burning question that everybody keeps asking us, which is, "What is up with your farmhouse?" We have this 100 year old farmhouse, in case you didn't know. And so, in our next episode I'm going to tell what happened when I got a couple of buddies to help me install a 12 foot beam across the kitchen. And you are going to laugh when you see what happened. We can laugh about it now.