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## Living Homegrown Podcast – Episode 142 Farming on 5 Acres or Less with Josh Volk

**Show Notes are at: [www.LivingHomegrown.com/142](http://www.LivingHomegrown.com/142)**

- Josh: But I also wanted consumers to be able to read the book and see this is what happens, this is where your food comes from, or this could be where your food is coming from.
- Theresa: This is the Living Homegrown Podcast, episode 142.
- Announcer: Welcome to the Living Homegrown Podcast, where it's all about how to live farm fresh without the farm, to help guide the way to a more flavorful, and sustainable lifestyle is your host national PBS TV producer and canning expert, Theresa Loe.
- Theresa: Hey there everybody. Welcome to the podcast. I'm your host Theresa Loe, and this podcast is where we talk about living farm fresh without the farm, and that includes organic, small space food growing, canning and fermenting the harvest, and artisan food crafts, like baking your own bread. It's all about the different ways that we can live closer to our food, and take small delicious steps towards living a more sustainable lifestyle. If you want to learn more about any of these topics, or any of my online courses, coaching, or my Living Homegrown Membership, just visit my website [livinghomegrown.com](http://livinghomegrown.com).
- Theresa: On today's episode, we're going to be talking about small scale farming, but if you are not planning on becoming a farmer I still really invite you to listen, because basically we're having a conversation with a farmer who grows our food, and understanding what it is that they're doing, and where they're coming from just brings us closer to the connection of where our food comes from, and where we are buying our food. You know, I talk on this show a lot about going to farmers markets, or growing your own food, so that you can have the most delicious seasonal favor, but there's also that connection piece, understanding the seasons, understanding where your food comes from, what's in it, what's not in it. These are all super important things if you want to live a more sustainable lifestyle, and understanding where the farmers are coming from, the farmers who are growing our food in an organic, sustainable way brings that connection even closer.
- Theresa: Today, I wanted to talk to Josh Volk, and he has written a book called, Compact Farms: 15 Proven Plans for Market Farms on Five Acres or Less. The reason why I wanted to bring him on was not only to have that connection with a farmer, and have a discussion with a farmer, but a lot of you have written in and said, that you've really enjoyed the conversations I've had with homesteaders, and I have had conversations with farmers on this podcast, and you wanted more interviews, so when I discovered Josh's book I thought, well, what better person to bring on, because he's interviewed 15 different farmers who have

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very small scale farms, and he writes all about it in this book. It really is an interesting read, and if you are interested in starting your own farm, or maybe it's a dream you have, maybe it's something that you're actually starting to do, I think you would really enjoy this book, as well, because each farm has its own unique take on how they are producing a lot in a very small space.

Theresa: I just found it to be a really interesting book. In our conversation, we talk about really what it means to be a small scale farmer, what makes you successful, what makes you sustainable, what sort of things you have to look at, and we even talk about certain farms and how they've done some things differently. One thing we do talk about is CSA's. Now, if you're not familiar with CSA it stands for, Community Supported Agriculture. It's where you are supporting a farmer by buying into a share of the crop that they're going to be growing out, and harvesting, and delivering in a particular year. It usually works that you make a payment upfront, and then throughout the harvest season you go to the farm and pick up a box with a harvest from the crops. I just wanted to point that out in case any of my listeners are not familiar with what a CSA is, they don't have them in all the areas, but if you have any farms near you, especially an organic farm, or a small scale farm it's really fun to be part of the CSA.

Theresa: You learn so much and you actually do develop a relationship with the farmer. You're helping them out by giving them money upfront to actually get their seed, and get everything growing, and get it going, and then in return you get part of the harvest, and you're taking part of the risk with them, so if they have a total crop failure of some particular crop then you're not going to get that crop in your box, so you are investing and taking the risk alongside of them, but by doing that you're supporting these smaller farmers who may not be able to do it otherwise, because it's very hard. You have to put the money upfront, and it's very hard to do that when you don't have the crop at the end, yet, to sell and make your profit. Especially starting out with farms, CSA's are a great way to go.

Theresa: We do talk about that, here, in the podcast, as well. Everything that we talk about will be in the show notes for today's episode, and to get to the show notes you go to [livinghomegrown.com/142](http://livinghomegrown.com/142). Now, let me tell you a little bit about Josh before we dive into the interview. Josh Volk has been working on small scale farms for the past 20 years. He started as a mechanical engineer with a garden, and then was inspired by John Jeavons to learn production techniques he apprenticed on a tractor farm in California before managing farms and setting up tractor based systems for 10 to 15 acre vegetable operations. For the past 10 years, he's been splitting his time between a return to hand scale production, consulting for tractor scale operations, designing tools, and writing articles about farm tools and techniques. He's the author of the recent book, *Compact Farms: 15 Proven Plans for Market Farms on Five Acres or Less*. He currently lives and farms in Portland, Oregon. Okay.

Theresa: Now, before we dive into the interview, I just want to tell you that today's podcast episode is brought to you by my Living Homegrown Institute, which is my membership site. Now, I believe that living an organic farm fresh lifestyle is really a journey in learning, and as we learn different skills such as food

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fermentation, food growing, or even critter keeping there are three distinct stages of growth. We start out with curiosity, and then we move into experimentation, and eventually we grow into mastery of these skills.

**Theresa:** Now, if you're working at creating a farm fresh lifestyle, and you're curious where you may fall on that scale for any of your skills, well, I've got a free resource for you, it's my Farm Fresh Success Path, and it's what my students use inside the learning institute. It will help you decide where you are on your own journey, the characteristics of that stage, and it'll give you some action steps, and lessons to take you to the next level. To get to the success path PDF, just go to [livinghomegrown.com/path](http://livinghomegrown.com/path), that's P-A-T-H, and you can download it there for free. Let's dive into my interview with Josh Volk, the author of Compact Farms. Hey, Josh. Thanks so much for coming on the show today.

**Josh:** Oh, thanks for having me.

**Theresa:** I was really fascinated by your book. I'm not personally wanting to become a farmer, but I have a lot of listeners who are either farmers already, or are interested in farming. My entire podcast is really focused on small space food growing, so your book, Compact Farms, was really a perfect topic for my listeners, so I really appreciate you coming on. I guess we should start by having you tell everyone, how did you really get interested in farming in the first place?

**Josh:** There's a number of different ways that, you know, a number of different interests that I had that drew me to farming. One, kind of the simplest one is just that I really like to eat, and I'm somebody who likes to know how things work, so knowing how food was grown was something that was really interesting to me. I grew up, my parents had gardens, but I didn't really connect with the gardening, so much. At that time, I was more interested in riding my bike, and kind of doing other things. As I started cooking more, and my mom was always great about making my sisters, and myself cook at home, so we would make meals. Then when I moved away from home, after high school, I was cooking all my own meals, and I started to get more interested in how do I grow this stuff, and so that's kind of what got me back in the garden. Then I was volunteering in community gardens at the same time.

**Josh:** I got a mechanical engineering degree, and I thought I was going to work in the bicycle industry, because that's kind of what I had been doing, but I ended up working in a factory that was making widgets essentially, and it was a creative job, I was designing tools for the factory floor, and so the creativity was great, but it wasn't a particularly inspiring setting, but on the weekends I was volunteering in community gardens, and that was a super inspiring setting. That combined with the gardening at home, and then also the garden shop that I was, you know, kind of the local garden shop where I was going, this garden shop that had been started by the same organization that John Jeavons, who I mention in the book, very influential character in my early farming days, he was teaching workshops through that garden store, and I took some workshops with him, and one was kind of on how to make money growing, you know, how to make an income growing in a very small space.

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- Josh: Between all of those experiences I started to think, oh, you know, maybe the farming thing is something that I want to actually explore a little more and figure out, and urban agriculture was initially what I was really interested in, but a chance meeting with a guy that worked in urban agriculture internationally he encouraged me to go and learn farming from farmers before bringing that back to the urban setting, so that's basically what I ended up doing was going into apprenticing on some smaller scale farms that weren't necessarily urban with the idea that I would bring that back to the urban setting, at some point.
- Theresa: That is so interesting about your engineering background, because I have an engineering background, also. I have an industrial engineering degree, and I did the same thing, started working out in the industry, and although it was fascinating from the technology, which I loved, because I loved understanding how things went together. It was very uninspiring for me from a creativity point of view, and it was funny because we were talking beforehand that I think getting into the soil, and the food there's still a lot of fascination with that. Understanding how things work and how things go together and how the soil all comes together is still fascinating to me, and I know it is for you, too, so I just thought that was real interesting that you had an engineering background, but I want to back up to something that you said, and that was getting training, or education from John Jeavons, so a lot of my listeners may not know who he is, and what biointensive food production is, so let's talk about that for a minute. Can you explain what is biointensive food production, and how John Jeavons was part of that for you?
- Josh: Yeah. John Jeavons wrote a book, well, he and a bunch of other folk's kind of started this project in powwow back in the '70s, I believe it was, and what they were doing was they were trying to, they were kind of taking techniques and trying to figure out basically how to grow as much food as possible using sustainable methods in as little space as possible. He ended up writing this book based on their techniques called, *How to Grow More Vegetables*. It's still in print. It's been printed in languages, many, many languages distributed all over the world. He has created this nonprofit called, Ecology Action, that actually is still working on researching methods for what are the best ways to grow the small plot food, generate as much food out of these small spaces as possible using as little energy as possible, because that's part of the sustainability piece.
- Josh: It's very labor intensive in a lot of ways, the methods that they're looking at, so the biointensive is really focused on double digging, and that's kind of the basis of the technique, so that is this digging technique, and he has a very well defined, very agronomic technique for doing this deep digging, it goes down and loosens the soil, basically two feet deep, and you're doing that fairly regularly, actually, and then you're planting plants very high intensity using a lot of compost, concentrating all of the labor, and the fertility, and the water that you're using in this small space in order to create a very productive small space and not spreading out the efforts over larger spaces.
- Josh: That really connected with me and kind of the community garden, the urban setting where you're limited to a very small space, and was something that I

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was interested in, so I went and took some courses with him. They still teach workshops, I'm not sure how much he travels anymore, but I was able to do a three day intensive when I was in Pennsylvania, when I was first starting out farming. They have run intensives all over the world. I actually wasn't sure whether or not he was still working, and I just last month ran into somebody at a conference who works with him and was like, "Oh, no. He's still going, and still going strong, and plenty of energy," so I was really glad to hear that.

Theresa: Yeah. That's awesome, and that's so awesome that you got to work with him directly. I definitely have that book on my shelf, because I have a little tiny, tiny garden, but you're right it is a little bit more labor intensive, more for when you're really going to be farming a lot, but there's some great information in there, and I know that several of the farmers that you featured in your book follow those methods. We should say that in your book, I think, you featured 15 different farms, all small, what did you consider small? What is the acreage of the farms that you featured?

Josh: Yeah. The book has this name Compact Farms, and that kind of came out of a series that the publisher was doing with compact houses, and compact cabins, and then compact farms was kind of the follow on to that. For the book, I kind of set the size that I was interested in looking at was less than five acres. Slow Hand Farm [inaudible 00:15:20], which is my farm that was profiled in the book, that one is the smallest of all of them, so that was basically a tenth of an acre of production, and that's kind of more the biointensive scale, and then there are farms that kind of range up into that five acre, and some of them are on more than five acres of space, but they're doing five acres at the most actual production space, so it might be a 10 acre property, or a 20 acre property, or something like that, but only five of the acres is really in direct productions.

Theresa: Yeah. I thought it was also interesting one of the farms, Liberty Farms, started out at 4.5 and then they pulled back and went down to 1.5, and they're just selling to restaurants, so what I wanted everyone to understand was that each farm has kind of their own little take on doing small scale production, or producing a lot in a small space, and they were selling to different, some do farmers markets, some do wholesale, some have CSA's, so it really can give anyone who's interested a lot of ideas on different ways to go. I wanted to also talk about your farm, because in the book you mentioned that you started it working part-time, but as we were talking before we got on the recording here you had actually already had a lot of farming experience before you went into it part-time. Is it possible for someone if they're interested in starting a farm to start small and work up, I mean, is that really viable?

Josh: Yeah. I think that is a totally viable way to do it, and I mean as you were pointing out part of the thing that I was trying to make clear in the book by having these 15 different examples, which are all very different examples, so the examples are from farms all across the country, and it's mostly, it's kind of mostly northern tier. There's a number in the northwest, pacific northwest, which is where I am. There's one down in California. There's actually one out in Hawaii, so that's definitely the furthest south, and then there's also northeast,

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there's a couple in the middle of the country, and then on the east coast the furthest south is North Carolina.

Josh: There's a bit of a range there just in terms of geography. There's also urban. There's rural. There's peri-urban, which is kind of what I would call just outside of the cities. There's all these different ways that people are doing it. Now, in the book *Slow Hand Farm* is the only farm that's profiled in the book that is part-time, and I don't remember the back stories of all the farmers, but I think most of those farmers probably started out really with a full-time farming, and I started out full-time farming, also. I would say that the big benefit to starting out full-time is that you are really americing yourself, and you're just learning, you have more days to learn what's happening.

Josh: All of that said, I know a lot of farms that do start out part-time, and those weren't necessarily the ones that I profile, and maybe they continue part-time, or maybe at some point they work themselves into full-time. Thinking about it now, at least one of the farms in there, and I think several of the farms the case would be that maybe one person starts out full-time, and they kind of jump into it, but they have a partner who still has a day job, and then that person kind of slowly works their way into it. There's lots and lots of different ways that this can work out. There's not just one way, and hopefully that comes clear through the examples in the book.

Theresa: Yeah. I love that, because I think that's one of the things that can be a roadblock. Is like why can't I just like make the leap, and you're right having a partner where one person is like really working it, and the other person maybe still has a 9:00 to 5:00 to bring in the money until you get everything up and running, so definitely I think that's awesome that it is an option. That's good. Now, one thing that you talk about in the book, there are some pros and cons to being a small farm, so let's talk about some of the benefits. What are some of the benefits of smaller farming versus trying to dive in really big?

Josh: Yeah. One of the benefits for me and I think a lot of the benefits have to do what is it that you're looking for, so with the small farming the way that I was able to set it up was with no tractors, and I appreciate the work that tractors do, but they're also, it's loud work, and it's working around kind of smelly, greasy machines, and a lot of the work is actually working on the machine, also. I wanted to get away from that, and on small farms in general it's less machine work, or you can get it all the way down to the point where it's no machine work, so that was a big benefit. Another benefit, I think, is just that connection to this space. It's a lot easier to pay attention, and kind of walk through, and see all of the different spaces on a farm in a very short period of time, and have a very tight connection to all of those spaces.

Josh: It's just more manageable, and kind of human scale, to me, so that's what I really appreciate about it. The other thing, I would say is because you're not producing enormous amounts of product, you don't need as large a market, you don't need as many customers, and that allows you to have a little bit more direct connection to your customers. For some people, myself included that social part of the farming, kind of having that connection to where the produce is going, and who the people are that are supporting the farm directly, that's

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really important, so I think that's one of the other benefits to the small scale farming.

- Theresa: Well, I know my listeners are a lot of, you know, they shop at farmers markets even if they're not wanting to be a farmer, they're very connected to their food or want to be connected to their food, so having that connection with their own farmers I know is important to my listeners. I know it's important to you guys as well when you guys are growing this food for us, and to have that connection with us, I'm sure it's definitely a two-way street. Since so many of my gardeners are really into sustainability, and being organic, you talk in the book about the three pillars of sustainability, which you think are important for small farms. You said, "People plant it, and profit." Could you talk about those?
- Josh: Yeah. That's a framework and sometimes it's environment, equity, and economics, so there are different ways that people say it, but it's a framework that's coming up more and more just in business in general. A lot of people, I think, have thought about businesses for a long time as the important part being the economics, you know, how does the financial piece of it work out? Can it be profitable? But it's also important for me to think about how are the workers, the people who are working on the farms, so that would be the people part, and not just the workers on the farm, but also the people that are impacted by the farm, the customers for the farm, what's being provided to all of these different people that have some connection to what's happening. Then of course what's the environmental impact of everything that we're doing? Is it sustainable in environmental ways?
- Josh: The sustainability has to be looked at through all three of those, I think, in order for it to really work. I think to some extent in the organic movement sometimes the environment gets emphasized a little bit too heavily and we don't look enough at the equity piece both for the workers, and in terms of access to the food, and we also don't look enough at the economics in certain cases where yes people are willing to put in a lot of hard work in order to make this happen, and the environmental piece is really important, but are people making the living that they need to make? Is enough money coming in? Is the economics working out? All three of those pieces, I think, need to line up for it to be really successful. I was trying to pick farms that I thought had all three of those pieces, you know, not to perfection by any extent I think that you're always working on all of those, but at least we're considering all three of those, and trying to move forward with all three of those at the same time.
- Theresa: Yeah. You know, I think of the three for me not being a farmer profit, is something that I don't really think about, but it probably should be the most important thing that a farmer should think about, and if they're not, if they're working so hard, and they're not making a profit then, you're right it's not sustainable, they won't continue. I can see why that's so important, and you do talk a lot in the book about profitability, and the different ways that people found that little golden niche of an area that was working for them, and that's why I was saying that each farm is so different, because they all found that profit spot in a different place.

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- Josh: Yeah. They all have different markets, and they all have different, you know, they're all living in different places, so there's a different, and they have different needs in terms of what does that livelihood look like to them. The farm in Brooklyn in the middle of New York City that one the people have a very different income requirement than the farm in Ohio kind of outside of the city in Ohio. The cost of living are very different in those places. That's just one piece of it.
- Theresa: Yeah. Absolutely. One of the questions I saw that you asked each farmer was what they felt made them successful, and they had different answers for what was success for them. What do you feel makes a small farm successful?
- Josh: You know, I think that is very much up to the person whose farm it is, and kind of in the same way that, that economic piece, so the economics, how do you consider yourself successful economically, that has to be answered individually and it's a function of where is it that you're living, and what is it that you like to do, and how much do you need to be making in order to be living a way that you want to be living. I think that's a hard question to answer just in general, you know to generalize across everybody, but I think that everybody needs to be thinking about that for themselves. For me, I'm trying to live in a way where I feel like I'm not taking more than my fair share, I suppose, but that I am comfortable, and I'm stable, and that I can continue working in that same way. That's kind of the economic success for me is if I can make that happen.
- Theresa: I think you're absolutely right and I thought it was just so interesting, like some people were talking about the beauty, and working outside, and just the fact that they got to do that was success for them. I can totally relate to that being a gardener, so that makes sense. I guess, then what I would want to know is what after interviewing all of these different farmers did you notice that there was any particular trait or characteristic that they kind of shared that you felt helped them be successful in running a business like this?
- Josh: You know, I think that one of the traits was that everybody that I interviewed was excited about growing food and even the flower farmers I mean I think that, that was part of it, so some people weren't just growing food, they were growing flowers, so they were doing other things, and making a contribution to the community, whether, or not that was just their very immediate community or the larger community, and kind of going back to what we were talking about in terms of the engineering, for me, when I was just making the widgets it was very difficult for me to see that direct connection to how was I benefiting my community?
- Josh: But with the farming, I have that very direct connection to I know that everybody needs to eat, and I know that I'm producing really good food, and I know the people that are eating that, so I think when I was interviewing other people that was coming up a lot, also. Where they felt that they were doing something positive environmentally in terms of producing food in a more sustainable fashion, environmentally, but that they also had this social impact with the communities that were surrounding them. I think for them that was part of the success.

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- Josh: I also love that example of just being able to work in a beautiful place. For me, you know, being outside that was definitely one of the big draws to getting into farming, and getting out of the concrete block factory that I was in, but the thing that has really kept me in the farming more than just that opportunity to be outside is that it's just been a really wonderful group of people that I've been able to work with, so not just the customers, but also the community of farmers that I've been able to interact with.
- Theresa: You know, we've noticed that too just from our filming of our PBS show, Growing A Greener World. We travel the country and we are interviewing farmers all over the country, and there's an instant connection, and they're just all really good people. Really, really good people, so I absolutely would love to be working with them just for that reason alone, so I can relate to that, as well. With all the different farms that you went through, is probably going to be like trying to pick your favorite kid, but did you have a favorite story with any of the farms that you featured?
- Josh: You know, I think the favorite farmer and it was somebody who was new to me, so I actually, I probably knew about maybe less than half of the farms when I started out, so I know a lot of farmers, and I know a lot of farmers on different scales, but I did have to do a bit of research with this book to find more good examples kind of across the wide arrange, so I reached out to friends, and connections and places, and one of the farms was Cooks Garden, and a friend of mine in Ohio said, "Oh, you know, I visited this guy 15 or 20 years ago, and I wonder if he's still doing it? Because I was really inspired by him," and he found him, and I got in contact with him, Stephen Cook, and it was just a really, really interested in his story.
- Josh: He's actually somebody who was also inspired by John Jeavons, and I think he grew up with a father who was a market gardener in England, but hadn't necessarily considered doing it himself, and then after reading John Jeavons book, he told me, he said, "You know, maybe I could do this, here," so he set up his market garden, and I think he maybe got into it a little bit more slowly kind of over a couple of years, but he's now been running that market garden since the mid '80s, so 30 some years. He was just a really great guy to work with. He was also the only person that didn't do email. I actually had to do email through his wife, and she was great. But we had some great phone conversations, so a lot of the book was done through email, and I had phone conversations with everybody, but Stephen was somebody who, he doesn't type, so anytime I would send an email I would always get an email back from his wife, which was wonderful.
- Theresa: That's so funny. He was just out in the field all the time, he didn't have time for that sort of thing?
- Josh: Yeah. You know, I think he'd been farming for long enough and kind of came from a generation where he didn't need to necessarily learn how to do that, so he didn't and he still hasn't, and it just works really well for him.
- Theresa: Yeah.

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Josh: But it was also fun because he had that John Jeavons connection, and so he's not using specifically the biointensive techniques, but he's certainly been influenced by them, and I really, really loved seeing how he had taken it in his own direction.

Theresa: Yeah. He definitely was showing longevity, which is nice for anyone who's wanting to go into this, you know, he's been doing it for so long it's obviously a proven system for him. One of the things that you talk about also was community supported agriculture, CSA's, which I think my listeners are familiar with, because some of them are part of CSA's, but for your particular farm you had what you called a CSA Light, can you explain what that was?

Josh: Yeah. I've worked on, kind of coincidentally I think all of the farms that I've worked on, and I've worked on a number of different farms, have a had a CSA component to them. They weren't necessarily exclusively CSA, but they were producing CSA shares as generally the largest part of their marketing. On the small farm, I think it's a really great model and it fits very well. When I was looking at what were the markets that I wanted to do Slow Hand Farm, I didn't initially think that I was going to do CSA, but the farm was so small that I actually didn't necessarily have enough product to take to a farmers market, so what I did was I designed this CSA share that kind of fit with that small scale of the farm, and most CSA's, at least the ones that I've worked on, and the ones that I've seen are trying to provide the vast majority of the vegetables that people are eating, and that their shareholders would be eating, and they're trying to do that through kind of a diversity of products, and also a pretty decent quantity of each one of those products.

Josh: I knew that there was something, some stable crops that I just didn't have enough space to grow, so I couldn't grow a lot of potatoes, or I couldn't grow a lot of onions, but I also knew that when you start going down the farming road, and getting away from the gardening what happens is you do start to have to think about, okay, how do these products handle in terms of being able to pack them up and transport them somewhere and have them stay in good shape until they get to the customers hands. That's not the same necessarily as the wholesale markets where things have to travel thousands of miles, but you still have to get them 20, 30, 40 miles somewhere. There's a lot of garden variety, and you also need to basically have something that's consistent, so that all the CSA members are getting the same thing, or at least that was the way that the CSA's that I was working on where.

Josh: I wanted to do more garden type varieties with a lot more variation within the variety, things that people weren't going to be seeing at the farmers markets, even, they would only have the opportunity to eat if they were in their backyards, but the other thing that I saw was that a lot of CSA shares people would split the share, because it was just too big for them, and in some cases I worked on CSA's where people were splitting the shares between three or four different families. There weren't many individuals who were signing up for CSA's, and there also weren't people like students who were signing up, because they weren't necessarily in town for long enough, they might go away for the summers, so I set up a CSA, which was kind of the sampler share much,

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much smaller. Then I also broke up the seasons into very short chunks, so people would sign up for three months at a time, basically.

Josh: I had four three month seasons, so they could sign up just for the spring, or just for the summer, or just for the fall, or just for the winter, or they could sign up for a combination of multiples, and if they wanted more food they could sign up for multiple shares, but the share was so small that it really wasn't something that somebody was ever going to split with somebody else. That was the idea behind that. I did end up getting a lot of customers that I never would have seen at other CSA's, and hopefully it was bringing people into the CSA community that hadn't had that opportunity before, just because CSA shares kind of too big, and too big a commitment for them, but these are people that did want to support small farmers, they just hadn't had that opportunity before.

Theresa: That is so cool. That is a brilliant idea, because as a mom in the summer time there are periods of time that we might be on vacation, and I would always be having to figure out who's going to take my box.

Josh: Yes.

Theresa: It's kind of tricky, but doing it three months at a time, if we knew that we were going to basically be gone for an entire month, we could just maybe skip that quarter, and support either in the spring, or the fall, or both, and skip out on summer. Before we had kids, I would have never done a box, because you're right it would have been too much.

Josh: Yeah.

Theresa: That's very, very clever. I'm glad we explored that, so if anyone is starting out, if you're going to have a small farm, that's a really good solution to still be able to do a CSA without feeling like you have to fill this giant box to feed a family of six.

Josh: Yeah. It doesn't need to be just one thing. Yeah.

Theresa: Yeah.

Josh: The concept of CSA doesn't mean that it has to be a full family, the concept of CSA is more about kind of that mutual support between the customers and the grower.

Theresa: Absolutely. I think from a consumer side I learn a lot more about what's in season by doing that, especially if you're a beginner gardener, or you're not a gardener you really learn to eat with the seasons, and the food tastes so much better when you're eating in season and not picking something up at the supermarket that was shipped from outside of the country and isn't even in season right now, you're like, this doesn't taste so good, well there's a reason for that.

Josh: Yeah.

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- Theresa: I love when people join a CSA it kind of opens their eyes to the flavors that are available, and like you said, trying things that they probably would never find anywhere else, so very, very cool. Josh, I can't thank you enough for coming on. This has just been really fascinating, and being a consumer myself getting to talk with the farmer, and kind of understanding where you guys are, what you guys are doing, and your goals, and aspirations just makes the connection to food for me and to my listeners even better. Thank you very, very much for coming on today.
- Josh: Oh, you're welcome. I hope that people will read the book, also, because I think that I wanted people who were interested in farming to read the book, but I also wanted consumers to be able to read the book, and see this is what happens, this is where your food comes from, or this could be where your food is coming from.
- Theresa: Yeah.
- Josh: I really appreciate you having me on the show.
- Theresa: Yeah. Absolutely. I agree with you, because you know I'm not planning on being a farmer, but I was fascinated by the book, so great. Yeah. Thanks for coming on. Well, I hope you enjoyed that interview with Josh Volk, the author of, Compact Farms. I know that I really learned a lot from reading this book. It was really fascinating to me how each farm had their own unique way of being profitable, and marketing what they grow, but they all had a love of food, and a love of the environment. It was really inspiring read for me.
- Theresa: If you're interested in anything that we talked about in today's episode, it's in the show notes, and you can get that at [livinghomegrown.com/142](http://livinghomegrown.com/142). Just a reminder, that today's podcast episode is brought to you by my Living Homegrown Institute, which is my membership site, and if you're interested in getting your own farm fresh success path PDF, just go to [livinghomegrown.com/path](http://livinghomegrown.com/path) and I'll have it right there for you. Thank you so much for joining me today on the podcast. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I enjoyed delivering it to you. Until next time, just try to live a little more local, seasonal, and homegrown. Take care.
- Announcer: That's all for this episode of the Living Homegrown Podcast. Visit [livinghomegrown.com](http://livinghomegrown.com) to download Theresa's free canning resource guide, and find more tips on how to live farm fresh without the farm. Be sure to join Theresa Loe next time on the Living Homegrown Podcast.