
Living Homegrown Podcast – Episode 145 Raising Goats & Other New Homesteading Skills

Show Notes are at: www.LivingHomegrown.com/145

Theresa: This is the Living Homegrown podcast. Episode 145.

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 included organic, small space food gardening, 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'd like to learn more about any of these topics or my online courses, my coaching, or my living homegrown membership, just visit my website, livinghomegrown.com.

Today's episode is kind of fun, because I'm bringing back someone that I had on the podcast, about five or six months ago. Her name is Bev Ross, and she was on episode 122, which was all about lessons from a beginning homesteader. Now Bev has a website and a blog called, Ross Roost. And when I had her on the podcast, what we were talking about was the fact that, she was just starting out in homesteading. She and her husband, and their two children had been living in Phoenix, Arizona, and they moved to 12 acres in Ohio. And when I had her on the podcast for episode 122, we talked about her decision in making that move, and how they were both still working full time, they were telecommuting with the jobs that they'd had while they were in Arizona, but now they were on the side, starting to homestead.

And it was a really interesting conversation. We talked about what they were doing, what they were hoping to accomplish, all of the steps that they were going through. Well, today, I'm having her back on the show. It's been another about five or six months since we spoke to her last, and they are expanding on their homesteading. They're still both working full time, and it's really interesting to watch her journey and her transition with all of this. And I also wanted to have her back on because they have started to raise baby goats, and the photos that she has been posting on Instagram are absolutely

adorable. I will link to her Instagram and her website, and everything else that we talk about in the show notes for today's episode. And to get to the show notes, you just go to livinghomegrown.com/145, and everything will be there.

So I wanted to bring her on today so we could see, what has transpired in the last few months, and exactly what is involved with the baby goats that they are raising, and what are her plans going forward. I think you'll really enjoy this conversation, and it's interesting. It's really interesting to watch someone on this journey. I've always thought baby goats were adorable. I would love to have access to fresh goat milk myself, so I think this will be fun for you to listen to as well.

Now, before we dive into the interview, I want you to know that today's podcast episode is brought to you by my Living Homegrown Institute, which is my monthly membership sight. 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 fermentation, and food growing, and even critter keeping, there are three distinct stages of growth. We start out being curious, we move into experimentation, and eventually we grow into mastery of these different skills.

Now, if you're looking at creating a farm fresh lifestyle for yourself, and you're curious where you may fall on the growth scale on different skills, I have a free resource for you. It's a pdf of my Farm Fresh Success Path that my students use inside my learning institute, and it'll help you decide where you are on your own journey, the characteristics of that stage, and it will give you some action steps and information that you can take to get you to the next level. To get to the success path pdf, you can just go to livinghomegrown.com/path, that's P-A-T-H, and you can download it there for free.

Okay, so are you ready to hear what Bev has been up to her since we spoke to her last? I am too. Let's dive into that interview with Bev Ross of Ross Roost.

Hey Bev, thanks so much for coming back on the show.

Bev: Thanks for having me again.

Theresa: Well this is gonna be kind of fun. You're a recurring story on my podcast, so this'll be kind of interesting I think for everybody. So, in case anybody missed it before, you were on episode 122, called Lessons From a Beginner Homesteader, and we recorded that back in November 2017, and we're now in April of 2018, and I know you've got a lot going on, but what we talked about back then, was that back in November, is that you and your husband, and your kids, you picked up and moved from Phoenix, Arizona to a 12 acre piece of property in Ohio. And now you're both telecommuting while you're

working. So you're still doing the same jobs, but you're working now from your home in Ohio, and you started doing the homesteading on the side. So is that a pretty accurate description about how things were back in November?

Bev: Yep, that sounds pretty accurate.

Theresa: So at the time, back in November, what did you have going on? You had chickens, right?

Bev: Yes, we had chickens and they had just started laying. I wanna say our first eggs showed up like sometime in October, if I'm remembering correctly?

Theresa: Yeah, and then I think you have fruit trees, or you had fruit trees already, some fruit trees on the property?

Bev: We had apples, and I believe plum trees, they didn't actually produce any plums last year but, I think I have those identified correctly. Peaches and cherries.

Theresa: Okay, perfect. So at the time that we were talking, you weren't starting your garden or anything yet, because you were just getting into winter, but you definitely had your hands full with the baby chicks and everything. Now, what has been the biggest change since November? What has been the biggest change at your homestead?

Bev: Oh, it's most definitely goats. We have some baby Nigerian Dwarf goats right now. We've got three of them, and we're getting two more in May, so we're not really sure if we're going to keep one of them, because he was just kind of a loaner goat, I guess for lack of a better word. They needed somebody to bottle feed him since I took all the other bottle babies they had, so it was like, "Yeah, sure, I'll hold onto him," but he's adorable, so I don't know. He might stick around too, it's like a wether.

Theresa: Oh, that's so, so cute. Well I know I've seen your photos on Instagram which are absolutely adorable. They are so, so cute, and that's why I'm excited to talk about this, 'cause I really have never covered goats on the podcast, only mentioning of them when people have goats, but haven't really dived in, and you're in the thick of it right at the beginning, so this'll be really interesting.

So let's back up a little bit. What made you decide that you wanted goats in the first place?

Bev: So I've always really wanted goats, not only for their cuteness factor, because I mean as far as animals you can have on your farm, goats are just so adorable. I describe them as a combination of dogs, cats, and deer, because of their personalities. They're just so lovable. They love to rub on you just like

cats do, but they'll follow you around, like a puppy dog does, and they love to play. And they jump on everything and run, sort of like deer. They do like this thing with their front hooves, where they move both of them at the same time, and sort of gallop along, like you see deer running. They're just so much fun, I could go on and on about how cute and fun they are, but what I really wanted goats for besides that, is I'd like to milk them, because I like goat's milk, and I love making cheese also, and I like eating goat cheese.

So I thought having some goats around would be fun, because I could get all of our cereal milk, and coffee creamer, and ice cream, things like that. Make butter with all of the extra milk we end up with, and they're great to have around. They're smaller than cows, so I thought that, that would be a good place to start if I wanted a milking animal. I mean we have the space her for a cow but, I'm also a new homesteader and a new animal keeper, so I thought things that I could pick up and wrangle and take care of with just my two hands was the way to start.

Theresa: Yeah. Absolutely, I think that's super smart. You definitely starting with a cow, would be like really throwing yourself in the deep end. So I think that was smart. And I'm with you, I have always thought having goats, so you could have the milk and make the cheese, would be such a really fun project, and I know it's a lot of work too, which we'll talk about. But, at the same time, it does give you instant access to the best of the best, and there's so much you can do with the goat's milk, so that's really exciting. What made you pick this particular breed that you picked?

Bev: It was mostly their size. I wanted something small and manageable, and Nigerian Dwarf goats don't get much bigger than a medium size dog, when they're fully grown. Unlike the meat goats and some of the bigger breeds of milking goats, they can get rather large, and I wanted something that stayed small and manageable for the kids, and also for myself and my car. We don't have a farm truck or trailers, or anything yet. So I needed something I could tote around in a dog crate, essentially. Oh, and their milk also has a really high butterfat content, and it's also very sweet, so it's the closest to cow's milk that you can get, as far as goat milk goes.

So if you're a little shy of goat milk, like if you've tried goat milk at the grocery store, that doesn't really taste like what fresh Nigerian Dwarf goat milk tastes like.

Theresa: Ah, that's really good to know. Very good to know. Well I'm sure your kids are really loving this. What are the ages of your kids, and how are they feeling about the goats?

Bev: Well, we have a six year old daughter and a twelve year old son, and they absolutely love them. When we first got them home and they spent a lot of

time out in their barn stall playing with them. It's tapered off just a little bit, you know it's been a few weeks so I think the excitement has sort of worn off. But the weather's starting to get nice again and the goats, because we've bottle fed them, they follow us around like a puppy dog would. So we can let the goats out of the barn, and we can just play in the backyard with them, without being in a fenced in area. It's really fun. The kids are having a great time with it. They just chase us around everywhere, and ...

Theresa: That's so awesome. Well, I loved the names that you picked, and I know that's probably a kind of silly thing to ask, but I would love for you to tell everybody the names of the goats and how you came up with some of them of their names, because they came from books.

Bev: Yes, so, one of our goats is named Tonks, and she's actually named Nymphadora Tonks. She is a Hufflepuff from the Harry Potter series, 'cause I'm a Hufflepuff also, so I was like, "Well, I gotta name one of my goats after a Hufflepuff."

Theresa: Absolutely.

Bev: And we also have Sky, and she is one of the Warbler children from the book series, *The Unwanteds*. It's an excellent book series. I could talk about that all day, also. I'm reading them with my 12 year old son right now. We still read together every evening, so.

Theresa: I love that.

Bev: We did the Harry Potter series, and we also did *The Unwanteds* series. We're not quite through that one, but I wanted the goats to have names that the kids could relate to, so naming after their characters is one of the ways that we did that. We did that with the chickens as well, but we're talking about the goats now. So, we did not name the little boy goat. His name is Mini Coupe, or Mini Cooper. We didn't name him, but he was named that because of his size. He was only one and a half pounds when he was born, so he was super tiny compared to all the other little baby goats, so I believe that, that's why he became a bottle baby. When I took all of the farms other bottle babies, which was Skye and Tonks, I took him as well so that he wouldn't be all by himself, 'cause otherwise he would have been a lonely bottle baby, and lonely bottle baby goats are loud bottle baby goats.

Theresa: Oh, I bet they are, yeah.

Bev: Yeah they really, goats really need friends, so I was happy to take him as well, and our two other goats that we picked out, one of them is named Darby, and she's just this adorable goofy looking goat. I don't know how else to describe her. The pictures that I posted in that blog post where I talk about her name,

like just the look on her face, she just seems so silly. And for some reason, I always wanted to name a goat Darby. It's a movie character. I can't remember the name of the movie right now, but she owned a chicken inside a New York City apartment. And I was just like, "Yeah that is just like a goofy woman, I totally wanna name a goat after her."

Theresa: Love it, I love it.

Bev: And then we have Lady May, which is like with the eyebrows. I don't know, Lovely Lady May is a song by Tyler Childers, and like her eyebrows and just her sweet little personality, I was like, "Yes, she looks like a lovely Lady May." So we named her May.

Theresa: So good, I just love this. Yeah, really, really cute. So when I was reading about the names I thought, that's really good. I know we took a lot of times picking our chicken names too, so I totally get it. I'm sure you guys had a lot of fun with that. Well, so let's talk a little bit about what it's like to take care of these goats, because you got them as babies which I'm sure, is way more intense than if you got them as adults, but you wanted them to be used to your family, and everything else. So what is really involved if you have baby goats like that?

Bev: Well baby goats have to be fed on a schedule, and when we got them, Coop and Sky were a week old, and Tonks was nine days older than they were. So they were all still being bottle fed four times a day, which means that whenever the goats had to be fed, somebody had to be here to feed them. Which is pretty intensive. I don't think I quite realized how intensive that was gonna be, like once you factor in kids activities and other social things that you wanna go to. You know we had this race that we were already registered for that was gonna be an over night thing. We had to set up somebody to feed the goats for anytime that we weren't gonna be around. And feeding three goats at the same time isn't very easy, 'cause you don't have three hands.

Theresa: Right, right, so if someone's doing it all by themselves, that's kind of a challenge.

Bev: Yeah, yeah it is, and as they've gotten older, they've gotten a little more feisty about it too. The one Tonks, she was mama raised before she was bottle raised, so she's really rough on the bottle. She backs up, she bucks, she head butts it. I think that must have been what she did to the udder, when she was eating. I don't know how mama goat put up with that, because she had to nurse three other baby goats, because Tonks came from a set of quads. So she's kind of a pain to feed, 'cause you have to hold onto the bottle really tight, and then the other two were never mama fed, so they're very calm and they mostly just stand there and eat, which is really nice, but it's still tricky to

feed three goats at the same time. They're now down to three feedings a day, and starting at the end of this week, I get to start cutting them down to two feedings a day, and my plan is to fully wean them by around 12 weeks. Which, will be very nice. I'm very much looking forward to that.

Theresa: Yeah, I bet. So when they're fully weaned, what sort of food do they eat? Do they have special food since they're still young?

Bev: No, they won't have any special food since they're still young. They'll get to graze out on the pasture. We have a pasture for them. We haven't quite finished the fence, but even if their fence and their little goat shed that we're building were done for them, they're so small they couldn't live out in the pasture. We have coyotes, and we actually have a neighborhood bobcat. We caught it on our game camera, so we're like, "Goats can't sleep outside in their goat shed until we figure out whether that has moved on or not." But we have a really nice, big barn, and it's a big horse stall for them. I believe it's about 10 by 10, so it's huge. They've got tons of stuff to play in, in there.

So they love living in there, but I also believe all creatures deserve some sunshine and grass. So for now, they'll be moved out into the pasture during the day, and sleep in the barn, once we get that fence done and everyday I try to give them some outside time. And then, they need access to hay, and hay has to be kept up off the grounds for them. Goats are super picky, they won't eat anything off the ground. I thought that, that was a urban legend or a myth, but no, once you drop it on the ground, the goats don't wanna eat it. It's the strangest thing. I mean, unless it's straw. For some weird reason, my goats are chewing on straw which is not food. Straw is bedding, hay is food, and my goats keep chewing on straw. But if the hay touches the ground, they won't touch it.

They also get a mix of alfalfa. The brand that I prefer is called Chaffhaye, I believe is how you pronounce it. But I can't get ahold of that here in my small town, and I haven't found a place that's in reasonable driving distance to get it, but it's basically just like high quality alfalfa. It comes in a packed cube in plastic, sort of like pine shavings come, you know when you buy your pine shaving bedding. That's what it looks like, and they've got free access to that as well. And some people feed their goats grain, some people don't feed their goats grain. But it's basically like the pelleted goat food. Normally that only takes up about 10% of their diet though, and you can feed it to wethers but it's not necessarily recommended, because it can cause a build up of calcium inside their urinary tract system, so normally when you feed that type of food to wethers, it's medicated so it can prevent that buildup.

Theresa: Yeah, you've got this all dialed in, that's really, really good. How many goats are you actually keeping? I know you don't know whether or not you're keeping the one. So how many total do you have?

- Bev: We have three currently, and we're picking up two more, and Coop might go back. So our plan right now is four female goats, but if we keep Coop then we'll have four female goats and one wether.
- Theresa: Got it. Okay, and then what is your plan for managing them so you'll be able to milk them? Are you only going to breed one, are you going to breed all of them? Do you have a plan?
- Bev: So I will end up breeding all of them and I think I'm going to breed them on a cascading schedule. I wanna wait to start breeding them until they're about a year old, so that'll mean that the first one can get bred sometime towards the end of January, I believe was when she was born. Darby is the oldest one, so when she's bred, she'll kid in about five months after she's bred which will put it around May or June. And so the second, third, and fourth does, I might wait to breed them until they would kid in the fall, because you don't want them going through kidding season while it's super hot. A lot of people have their goat kids born early in the year, January, February, March. I believe part of that reason is to take advantage of 4H kids wanting their 4H projects, but also spring is normally a really nice time of year to have goat kids. This year not so much. That has not been our case this year.
- Theresa: Yeah, weather has been like weird.
- Bev: Husband's like, "Can we have our goat kids in May, so that we know that we're not gonna have snow on the ground when they're born?" Well, I don't know what next year's gonna bring but, March, April, May are probably great times to have goat kids, also. I wouldn't do it through June, July, and August, and then maybe again towards the end of September and October.
- Theresa: Got it, okay. So this is really exciting, so I'm gonna be watching every move that you make with these to see how it goes for you, and I kind of do hope you get to keep the make goat as well. I think he's adorable in the picture. Just so-
- Bev: He is.
- Theresa: ... yeah. Does he have a nice personality?
- Bev: He does, he has a great personality. And the breeder actually let me know that one of the reasons why you might wanna keep a wether around, 'cause I was telling my husband we were taking on this loaner goat for a little while. He kind of looked at me and was like, "Really, are you really gonna give this goat back?" Well we used to foster dogs, maybe, I don't know. But the breeder told me wethers will let you know when your does are getting ready to go into heat, so you can be more successful at breeding them. So if he has

a job, it's possible that he gets to stay around. I mean, when you run a small homestead, you can only have so many just for fun animals, if that makes-

Theresa: Yeah, that's a really good point. You can only have so many just for fun animals, and that's absolutely true. I'm sure, it's a lot to manage, you do have kids that do have events going on, and their school, and driving, and then just managing 12 acres, you can't do too much extra just for fun, yeah. Makes a good point, okay.

Well let's talk a little bit about how are you planing on managing the goats with the chickens, because I think when we talked once, you were talking about how you might like to have them graze together?

Bev: Yeah, that is actually something that I'm planning on doing. We're working on hatching some chicken eggs soon. I think I'll start those by the end of next week actually, because I'm hoping to get a rooster. And when we get a rooster, and we get the goats all moved out into the pasture, my plan is to bring the chickens out there to free range in the controlled pasture, so I used free range in air quotes I suppose. With the goats, they'll help keep the bug population down in the pasture. They'll eat all of the hay that the goats waste, when they're pulling it out of their feeder and it falls on the ground, the goats won't eat it anymore. The chickens will happily go in there and eat it. And they'll also just have more access to sunshine, grass, bugs. Places to scratch and peck around and sunbathe and what not.

We have a really nice coop but our run is kind of small, and I didn't realize it til the chickens were fully grown, like how small it really looked with all of them in it. And I think that they'll be happier and healthier getting to do that. So, they'll sleep in their coop at night, and then be let out to pasture with the goats during the day, on days that is nice.

Theresa: Fantastic. Yes, and I'm the same way. I have a very small run for my chickens in my little ... you know I live in Los Angeles on one tenth of an acre. But my run is very small, so my chickens are let out every day, because I'm the same way. I want them to stretch their legs, have sunshine, roll around in the dirt, all of that. It just makes for a healthier, happier chicken, which is why I have them. So, it makes perfect sense.

Yeah, well so, tell us a little bit more about your chickens, because when we talked last, you had not yet had any, I guess I'd say chicken catastrophes, but we had talked about it, and has anybody knows who homesteads, there's always ups and downs and things happen. Always happen, and so you have had your first, I guess I meant to say your first chicken death, that happened on your farm. So can you tell us a little bit about that?

Bev: Yeah, one of our Silver Lace Wyandottes got what I believe is sour crop. Now, one of the things about chickens is, they hide their illnesses so well, so by the time you notice that a chicken is really sick, they're really, really sick. And she was. She wouldn't come when I was throwing treats down on the ground. She wasn't hanging out with the rest of the flock, and I looked at her and I'm like, "Something is not right with this hen." So I grabbed her up right then and brought her inside the house. We have a no farm animals in the house rule, but when they're really sick I get to bring them in the laundry room, so that I can figure out what's going on and clean them, and it was still winter, it was February when this happened.

And we went through a number of things to try to figure out exactly what it was. I bathed her, I checked her vent really well. I felt her crop but, as a new chicken keeper, it's kind of hard to really diagnose and tell those kind of things, and you're reading descriptions of things on the internet, and everybody describes it just a little differently I guess, for lack of a better way to describe it. And we just could not figure out what it was. We turned their brooder into, we call it sick bay, and it's in the other barn stall, 'cause our barn has two barn stalls. Fill it with straw, it's got clean water and food, and a heat lamp in it, because one lone chicken in the winter time can't keep warm enough in a giant barn stall by themselves.

So we tucked her away in there and she survived the night, so I was very hopeful that she would end up surviving and we would figure out what it was, but when I went and got her and brought her inside the house and we were feeling her crop again, we must have disturbed it enough that whatever was stuck in there started coming out, and she ended up aspirating while she was vomiting I guess, because we didn't realize what she was doing. So when the liquid came out, we were like, "Oh yeah. This is definitely sour crop, now we recognize it." And we were just too late to act appropriately and she ended up dying. We were very upset, but I sort of feel like that's the way that you have to learn some of these lessons while you're homesteading. You can watch all the videos, you can read all the books, and read all the blog posts, but until you've touched it, smelt it, and dealt with it, it's really hard to imagine all of the ways that it really plays out.

Theresa: Absolutely.

Bev: So I have a plan for our next sour crop, but ...

Theresa: Yeah, and absolutely, I agree with you so much. And it's very devastating because you feel a little bit helpless. The first time I ever lost a chicken, it was exactly the same situation, where I'm with my chickens every day. It wasn't that I had ignored them for a week and suddenly like, "Oh whoops, that one's sick." They do hide it, they absolutely hide it. And when I noticed that one of my chickens, something was definitely off, she just wasn't acting herself, and

when I picked her up, was when I realized she had lost weight, and so you would never see it, because they're so fluffy. So I knew something was wrong and it was evening time, and by morning she had died. And I never did figure out what it was, but it was one of those things where now, I watch even more closely than I did before.

It was a good lesson, but I think even if I had watched it, sometimes it's already happening and it's something we can't fix, you know we can't always figure it out. But, yes I totally feel the pain of that, because we do care about these animals and we're trying to do our best, but things happen and that's a little, it happens on a little scale for me, but when you're working with 12 acres, I know it happens on a bigger scale for you. So thanks for sharing that though, because I want people to know that, no matter how diligent you are, things can still go wrong. And it's not that you're being a bad chicken keeper, or that you're not being good with animals, so thanks for sharing that.

Bev: Oh yeah, and that's exactly my sentiment too. At first I was really upset with myself, but then I sort of backed up and realized, I don't know that I necessarily could have prevented this. I made a couple of changes to the way that I do take care of the chickens. Like I make sure that they always have access to grit. They have a lot of dirt and stones and stuff around in their run. So I figured that they would just grab it from there, but sour crop can develop when they're not getting enough grit in their diet, so now they have a wall mounted thing full of grit, so they can get it. They don't take out of it very often, so I think my original assumption about their run was correct, but just in case, anything I can do to help prevent anything like that from happening again.

When disaster strikes, you can sort of step back and re-evaluate what you're doing and see if there is anything that you can change, but I think most of the time, it ends up being out of your control.

Theresa: Yeah absolutely, but that's part of having the animals. I mean we do our best. That's all we can ever do. And I know with everything that you guys are doing, it seems like your kids are starting to get more and more involved with taking care of all these animals, and one thing I was curious about was if they were going to start doing 4H now that you have, I mean you have chickens, now you have the goats. Are they getting interested in that sort of thing?

Bev: So they are really interested in 4H and in fact, Ryan had told me that he wanted his first 4H animal to be a steer. And I honestly did, I mean I did entertain that for a little while, and my husband looked at me and he's like, "Seriously, like come on." All right no steer, maybe we'll start with rabbits or a goat, or something, or chickens would even be a good start. But I missed the sign up deadline for them this year. There's just so much going on around

here, and they're involved in a lot of activities through their school also. So this year we're gonna sit out 4H.

We're gonna go to the fair again this year, and pay more attention to what's actually available. Because our fair is a terminal fair. Not all fairs are. So I'm not 100% sure what exactly that means, but I know that all animals in the meat category end up going for slaughter, so there's no buying your meat animal back and not having it be slaughtered. If you buy the animal at our fair, it gets processed. So I need to talk to the kids and figure out what animals and categories they wanna be in, what events we can take part in, or animals we can take part in and everybody be happy and feel like they had a good experience with it.

Theresa: Right, that's so important because you don't want that to be a surprise at the end, and it may make them decide that they don't want to do it, which is okay too, if they raise this animal and they decide, "Nope, I'm not okay with that." Then that's their choice as well. So very, very good.

Well I know you guys are gonna be possibly adding rabbits, so what do you have for plans for other animals, or what plans to you have now, going forward with the homestead?

Bev: Well I think our next project is gonna be hatching the chicken eggs. It'll be the first time that we get to do that, and I mean I'm gonna let Aurora be in charge of the incubator and hatching the chicken eggs, so it's gonna be really fun. She's six, I think she's really gonna enjoy that. And then I'm hoping that in May, I'll get to go pick up our meat chickens. I'm planning on raising some Cornish crosses for our meat chickens. We've got our meat chicken tractor already built, and in fact I did write a blog post about it that's got a SketchUp file of the actual chicken tractor that we built, so if anybody wants to recreate it, they can using that if they do woodworking and they use SketchUp.

And I'm planning on doing two or three rounds of those because I'm hoping to have enough to get through the year, and if it goes really well, we'll build another tractor next year and make enough for friends and family to come and help and get some meat chickens also, which will be fun. I'm a little nervous about butchering them for the first time. One of my friends though, she just said that she skins them, and then cuts them all up into their different parts, which is the way that you buy your meat from the grocery store most of the time, and I thought well maybe that would be an easier way to do it, rather than investing money in a chicken plucker.

Theresa: So yeah, that might be a better way to go. I don't know if it's easier or not, but you'll have to come back and tell me.

Bev: Yeah it'll be a fun experiment to see how we end up doing that, and you know worse case scenario, if we find out that we're really terrible at it after the first couple, we can send that batch off to be processed at one of the meat processors nearby. Watch a few more YouTube videos or see if someone we know who knows how to do it, can come here and show us and help us, and then we'll try again. And I feel like that's sort of our motto around here. We just sort of dive in, "That didn't work, back up and try that again."

Theresa: And you know what? That is actually the attitude that you have to have. Because otherwise, you'll end up sitting on the sidelines, and not doing anything. You have to be willing to get on the field of play, and give it a shot, and just know that you might get a little bruised up, but you'll put on a bandaid and go back out, and you'll be better the next time, and it works out at the end and you gain the experience. So that's fantastic. Is there anything else, like with the garden that you're adding this coming year?

Bev: Yeah, so I actually have some fruit trees on order, and some grapes on order. They should be here any time. As long as spring arrives, I can actually get them in the ground. But I planted some fig trees last fall, that they didn't make it through our super cold winter. I tried packing them like the instructions said to do, to insulate them in case the temperature got super cold, but it didn't work. They must have been a little too tiny. So those died. The company replaced them for me though, and I'll get those back in the ground.

We're gonna have three pear trees, and then we also have three grape trellises, so I ordered three different varieties of grapes to put on it. And my husband has these beautiful garden plans that we built in SketchUp, and we're hoping to get started on this year, but we have an awful lot going on and right now, our garden plot is actually a giant pile of dirt because we have to have our driveway regraded. So, we've gotta sort of get that cleaned up, get the garden beds built, and then plant some stuff in it, so we'll see. My actual garden this year might be a mostly container garden, with just a bed or two if we can get that all sorted out. Yeah, we're trying to do as much as we can, with all of the spare time that we have, which is another word that I use in air quotes.

Theresa: I was just gonna say, what spare time?

Bev: Yeah, but we enjoy all the work that goes into it, so it makes us happy to be outside and getting to do it, so.

Theresa: Yeah and it's a process, and it's okay if you don't get plots in the ground planted, but by planting the trees, and the grapes, you do have a garden. I'm curious, what kind of grapes did you get? Do you remember?

Bev: Oh you know unfortunately, I don't remember. It was a mix that was from Stark Brothers website, it's their red, white, and blue mix I believe is what they call them. So I got two of those because I have enough trellises to put in two vines of each kind of grape.

Theresa: Okay, well so you'll have to, after we record, you give me the links and I'll put it in the show notes for everybody in case they're curious what kind of grapes you are planting. And I love Stark Brothers. They have really a nice selection of everything. So they're a great source, I'm glad you're ordering from them.

Well I'm really excited about everything you have going on, and I'll be sure to link in the show notes about those chicken tractor plans that you have, or to the post that you have about the chicken tractors, because I think a lot of people would be interested in that. But I so appreciate you coming back Bev, and telling everybody where you've been in the last six months, so it's like we're doing six month intervals of your whole journey here, and it's really exciting to see you trying new things, so thanks for coming on and sharing.

Bev: Oh thanks for having me again, it's a lot of fun to share.

Theresa: Well I hope you enjoyed that interview with Bev Ross of Ross Roost. Now as always, I will include in the show notes for this episode everything that Bev talked about, including that post she has with the plans on the chicken tractor, and I wanted to tell you also that Bev has a new podcast. She and her friend just started a new podcast called, We Drink and We Farm Things. It's really cute. I'm gonna link to that in the show notes as well. Now, as a reminder, today's podcast episode was brought to you by my Living Homegrown Institute, which is my membership site, and if you'd like to get the free pdf, Success Path, that my students use inside my membership, just go to livinghomegrown.com/path, and I'll have it there for you for free.

So that's it for today's episode. I hope that gave you a little bit of inspiration so that you can see, it's really all about baby steps. And I love seeing how Bev is going on this journey, and all the things that she's tying into her everyday life that just makes it a little bit more exciting. So 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 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.