



Will Bonsall's Essential Guide to Radical, Self-Reliant Gardening: Innovative Techniques for Growing Vegetables, Grains, and Perennial Food Crops with Minimal Fossil Fuel and Animal Inputs

By Will Bonsall

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"Society does not generally expect its farmers to be visionaries." Perhaps not, but longtime Maine farmer and homesteader Will Bonsall does possess a unique clarity of vision that extends all the way from the finer points of soil fertility and seed saving to exploring how we can transform civilization and make our world a better, more resilient place.

In *Will Bonsall's Essential Guide to Radical, Self-Reliant Gardening*, Bonsall maintains that to achieve real wealth we first need to understand the economy of the land, to realize that things that might make sense economically don't always make sense ecologically, and vice versa. The marketplace distorts our values, and our modern dependence on petroleum in particular presents a serious barrier to creating a truly sustainable agriculture.

For him the solution is, first and foremost, greater self-reliance, especially in the areas of food and energy. By avoiding any off-farm inputs (fertilizers, minerals, and animal manures), Bonsall has learned how to practice a purely veganic, or plant-based, agriculture—not from a strictly moralistic or philosophical perspective, but because it makes good business sense: spend less instead of making more.

What this means in practical terms is that Bonsall draws upon the fertility of on-farm plant materials: compost, green manures, perennial grasses, and forest products like leaves and ramial wood chips. And he grows and harvests a diversity of crops from both cultivated and perennial plants: vegetables, grains, pulses, oilseeds, fruits and nuts—even uncommon but useful permaculture plants like groundnut (*Apios*).

In a friendly, almost conversational way, Bonsall imparts a wealth of knowledge

drawn from his more than forty years of farming experience.

"My goal," he writes, "is not to feed the world, but to feed myself and let others feed themselves. If we all did that, it might be a good beginning."

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Editorial Review

Review

Publishers Weekly-

"Homesteader, organic farmer, and visionary Bonsall offers a thorough, albeit apocalyptic, farming guide to surviving the current times and, if need be, the end times. The title is misleading; the book is not so much a gardening guide as a set of survival instructions, and not for the casual gardener. Drawing on 40 years of personal experience growing his own food, Bonsall emphasizes three principles: economic exigency that requires making do; planning to survive a future catastrophe; and transforming civilization. To this end, the book focuses on staple foods, including grains, dried legumes, and oilseeds, as well as the usual greens and root crops, while discussing such fundamentals as assessing soil fertility, composting, using manure (including human), mulching, grafting, pollinating, seed saving, milling, malting, freezing and fermenting. The book will not suit everyone, but those who share Bonsall's vision will be well served and firmly grounded. Over 200 full-color photos."

"Every gardener and small farmer can benefit from Will Bonsall's decades of focused, quality experience. Will's book is *one of the key practical resources* you should read?as you reach for *full* sustainable soil fertility in your garden or farm!"--**John Jeavons, author, executive director of Ecology Action, and developer of sustainable biointensive mini-farming**

"Will Bonsall's homestead is a 'thinking farm,' not one engaged in armchair musings about agriculture, but where difficult questions are addressed by intense experimentation. This book pairs the incredible depth of Bonsall's gardening knowledge with his infectious enthusiasm. It is both a magnificent reference and an inspiring call to action. Every practical lesson throughout is guided by the vision that our humble gardens can affect the world."--**Steve Conaway, Conservation and Outreach Director at Greenwich (CT) Land Trust**

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“Here is a bright star in the constellation of voices for land-based sustainability. Not only is Will Bonsall incredibly learned – the result of decades of careful studies in the field and out – he is bawdy and brave and bold. His credibility is a Ph.D. in homesteading and his rambunctious wisdom is very worth reading. If you want to learn from a master, you need this book.”--**Janisse Ray, author of *The Seed Underground***

"The risk of describing *Will Bonsall's Essential Guide to Radical, Self-Reliant Gardening* as a gardening book is that the aspiring reader may miss the reality that it is really a book on *life*, centered as a good life should be, around a garden.

Will is a patient teacher with encyclopedic knowledge. His writing style is warm and authentic, accentuated by his dry New England humor. To read this book is akin to having Will stop by and visit by the glowing kitchen cookstove. He shares a lifetime of observations and conclusions – both useful and essential – and a deep respect for those who have come before us.”--**Jim Gerritsen, certified organic seed potato grower and owner of Wood Prairie Farm**

"Will Bonsall?Mr. Scatterseed himself?has done it all, and this book covers it all, from maintaining soil fertility with minimal external inputs to growing annual and perennial vegetables, fruit, nuts, grain, beans, and even oilseed crops. Will's methods are all vegan based and garden scale, with little resort to tools beyond hand tools and a rototiller and shredder. His description of making oil-seed seed meals and cooking with them is particularly interesting.

Will's book is a great introduction to gardening for the beginner, and it also offers enough brand new original material to delight even the most expert. Best of all, the interweaving of Will's coherent personal philosophy, decades of gardening experience, down-to-earth style, and touches of humor all make for an interesting, entertaining read.”--**Carol Deppe, author of *The Tao of Vegetable Gardening* and *The Resilient Gardener***

"*Eco-efficiency* is the key new word and *gardens-without-borders* is the key new concept with which Will Bonsall illuminates 'this experiment we call civilization.' His view is wide and deep. You can accept his warm, witty invitation to explore the big questions. Or/and you can, with grace and ease, pluck out practical, hands-on directions as needed for all aspects of cyclical food production and use. I will read it again and again for reference, guidance, inspiration, and delight.”--**Eva Sommaripa, pioneering organic farmer at Eva's Garden in Dartmouth, Massachusetts, and the hero of *Wild Flavors* by Didi Emmons**

"If you wish to live well and eat well no matter what is going on in the rest of the world, this book is for you. Thresh your own grain and press your own oil. Can't buy seeds, no problem. Can't buy fertilizer, no problem. Will Bonsall will help you enjoy the good life under any and all conditions.”--**Eliot Coleman, author of *The New Organic Grower* and *The Winter Harvest Handbook***

About the Author

Will Bonsall has worn many hats since going "back to the land," including prospector, draftsman, gravedigger, hobo, musician, logger, and artist, among others; however, he considers subsistence farming to be the only true career he ever had. He is the director of the Scatterseed Project, which he founded to help preserve our endangered crop-plant diversity. His first book, *Through the Eyes of a Stranger* (Xlibris, 2010), is an eco-novel set in a sustainable society of the future. Will lives and farms in Industry, Maine, with his wife, Molly Thorkildsen, and two sons.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Joseph Anderson:

Hey guys, do you really want to find a new book to learn? Maybe the book with the subject Will Bonsall's Essential Guide to Radical, Self-Reliant Gardening: Innovative Techniques for Growing Vegetables, Grains, and Perennial Food Crops with Minimal Fossil Fuel and Animal Inputs suitable to you? The book was written by well-known writer in this era. The book entitled Will Bonsall's Essential Guide to Radical, Self-Reliant Gardening: Innovative Techniques for Growing Vegetables, Grains, and Perennial Food Crops with Minimal Fossil Fuel and Animal Inputs is the one of several books which everyone reads now. This specific book was inspired lots of people in the world. When you read this publication you will enter the new shape that you ever know previous to. The author explained their plan in the simple way, so all of people can easily be aware of the core of this publication. This book will give you a lot of information about this world now. In order to see the represented of the world in this book.

Anna Harlow:

Spent a free time for you to be fun activity to complete! A lot of people spent their free time with their family, or all their friends. Usually they carrying out activity like watching television, gonna beach, or picnic inside the park. They actually doing ditto every week. Do you feel it? Do you wish to something different to fill your free time/ holiday? Can be reading a book might be option to fill your totally free time/ holiday. The first thing that you will ask may be what kinds of book that you should read. If you want to try out look for book, maybe the publication entitled Will Bonsall's Essential Guide to Radical, Self-Reliant Gardening: Innovative Techniques for Growing Vegetables, Grains, and Perennial Food Crops with Minimal Fossil Fuel and Animal Inputs can be good book to read. Maybe it is usually best activity to you.

Rosemary Taylor:

Playing with family in a park, coming to see the water world or hanging out with buddies is thing that usually you might have done when you have spare time, subsequently why you don't try issue that really opposite from that. 1 activity that make you not experience tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you are ride on and with addition of information. Even you love Will Bonsall's Essential Guide to Radical, Self-Reliant Gardening: Innovative Techniques for Growing Vegetables, Grains, and Perennial Food Crops with Minimal Fossil Fuel and Animal Inputs, you are able to enjoy both. It is fine combination right, you still need to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh come on its mind hangout folks. What?

Still don't have it, oh come on its referred to as reading friends.

Ophelia Ellis:

Is it anyone who having spare time and then spend it whole day by watching television programs or just laying on the bed? Do you need something totally new? This Will Bonsall's Essential Guide to Radical, Self-Reliant Gardening: Innovative Techniques for Growing Vegetables, Grains, and Perennial Food Crops with Minimal Fossil Fuel and Animal Inputs can be the solution, oh how comes? A fresh book you know. You are so out of date, spending your time by reading in this fresh era is common not a geek activity. So what these books have than the others?

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