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NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS

By John Ferguson

Subject: wilding or regenerative landscaping

We hear a lot about regenerative agriculture, habitat restoration, butterfly or bird gardening, and related ideas. These are all about restoring our connection with nature and how it improves our lives. I recently finished a book that was very inspiring about a farm in England that was restored and the history of how they did it.

“WILDING – Returning Nature to Our Farm,” by Isabella Tree, New York Review of Books, 2018, ISBN: 978-1-68137-371-3

From the publisher – “An inspiring story about what happens when 3,500 acres of land, farmed for centuries, is left to return to the wild, and about the wilder, richer future a natural landscape can bring.

For years Charlie Burrell and his wife, Isabella Tree, farmed Knepp Castle Estate and struggled to turn a profit. By 2000, with the farm facing bankruptcy, they decided to try something radical. They would restore Knepp’s 3,500 acres to the wild. Using herds of free-roaming animals to mimic the actions of the megafauna of the past, they hoped to bring nature back to their depleted land. But what would the neighbors say, in the manicured countryside of modern England where a blade of grass out of place is considered an affront?

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In the face of considerable opposition the couple persisted with their experiment and soon witnessed an extraordinary change. New life flooded into Knepp, now a breeding hotspot for rare and threatened species like turtle doves, peregrine falcons, and purple emperor butterflies.

The fabled English nightingale sings again.

At a time of looming environmental disaster, Wilding is an inspiring story of a farm, a couple, and a community transformed. Isabella Tree's wonderful book brings together science, natural history, a fair bit of drama, and—ultimately—hope.”

Another review can be found [here](#).

For me this book was an encouragement as I have been working to restore my retirement property near La Grange. A lot of the property was clear cut for agriculture, then cotton farmed for decades until the soil was so poor even weeds had trouble growing, water wells and springs had gone dry, and most indigenous animals were missing from the land.

Over the last eight years I have seen the land start to heal, native grasses and wildflowers returning, animals from quail and doves, to foxes and bobcats have returned. I have even seen evidence of a Porcupine.

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I only have a fraction of the land that Isabella Tree had to work with, but it made me remember a lecture by Dr. Doug Tallamy. He stated by working together from one lot or parcel of land at a time it would grow into an enormous restoration effort.

Doug's book explains how this might happen and gives insight on how to transform one's yard.

"Nature's Best Hope- A New Approach to Conservation That Starts In your Yard" by Douglass W. Tallamy, Timber Press, 2019, ISBN-13: 978-1-60469-900-5

This book picks up where Doug's book "Bringing Nature Home" leaves off, which is a must read for all serious gardeners and nature lovers. This book is more of a "How To" book on using our yards as part of our ecological solution to many of society's problems today. Not only do these techniques mentioned bring back life in our yards from bees and butterflies to birds, it saves money and resources.

He calls this concept "Homegrown National Park." This is a place where you can register your yard or farm to help make a database of properties that are being restored. To register your home or farm go to [here](#).



The book below explains why this concept is so important to healthy living.

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"Your Brain on Nature - The Science of Nature's Influence on Your Health, Happiness, and Vitality", by Eva M. Selhub MD and Alan C. Logan ND, Collins Publishing, 2012, ISBN: 978-1-44342-808-8

This book is for anyone whom loves gardening or nature. On many occasions I have wrote about studies that show how gardening drastically improves one's health and well-being. Numerous scientific studies have shown that natural environments can have remarkable benefits for human health. Natural environments are more likely to promote positive emotions, and viewing and walking in nature have been associated with heightened physical and mental energy. Nature has also been found to have a positive impact on children who have been diagnosed with impulsivity, hyperactivity, and attention-deficit disorder.

This book gives hundreds of additional ways that being exposed to nature helps reduce our risk of many health problems from dementia to heart attacks and strokes.

"Physician Eva Selhub and naturopath Alan Logan examine not only the effects of nature on the brain, but the ubiquitous influence of everyday technology on the brain, and how *IT* overload and its many distractions may even be changing it. Offering an antidote for the technology-addicted, the book outlines emerging nature-based therapies including ecotherapy, as well as practical strategies for improving your (and your children's) cognitive functioning, mental health, and physical well-being through ecotherapeutic, nutritional and behavioral means. A powerful wake-up call for our tech-immersed society, Your Brain on Nature examines the fascinating effects that exposure to nature can have on the brain."

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A statement from the book that I love is: "We are long past the time when the difference between soil and dirt should be a point of confusion: soil must no longer be confused with dirt. It is a living, breathing form of nature."

If you are interested in getting started, Doug Tallamy's first book is a good starting point on how to transform your yard.

"Bringing Nature Home - How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants" by
Douglass W. Tallamy, Timber Press, 2014, Edith Printing, ISBN-13: 978-0-88192-992-8

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