

Homestead Farmer Program

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Currently the fossil energy supply of the world is nearing its end, meaning that within a few decades we won't have fuel for tractors or trucks to stock grocery store shelves. Already prices of food and energy are increasing at a rapid pace.

We need roughly 90% of people to go back to living on the land as homesteaders or farmers, growing their own food and firewood, and trading the surplus for other commodities in town at the market, to make it possible to maintain our current population levels overall.

A homesteader is one who settles lawfully on government land with the intent to acquire title to it. A farmer is a country person that grows their own food and firewood, selling either their surplus or value added products for income.

If you are interested in volunteering for a program to receive 1.2 hectares (3 acres) of land per person, which you will homestead/farmer, then read on.

If you have concerns about your ability to do it note that if you are capable of dressing yourself independently then you likely have sufficient intellectual and physical capacity to learn to grow your own food and firewood with guidance.

We do not yet know what support measures you may need to get started, but certainly we will likely start with candidates that are able to do as much as possible with minimal assistance.

At a bare minimum we are expecting to be able to provide you with the land, a mailbox and OW/ODSP payments so you could get yourself bulk food, and essential supplies.

In collaboration with some organization we should be able to provide you camping gear, basic tools, and introductory material.

1 Living Accomodation

Initial living accomodation will likely be the hammock bedroom and hot tent kitchen option.

A winter-grade hammock for Owen Sound consists of a double hammock, a winter grade underquilt, a -25C or colder grade sleeping bag, and a waterproof tarp, or tarp and polyfilm combination, for summer also a mosquito net is essential.

Hot tent option to use as a kitchen would be a tent with a small efficient wood tent stove. And possibly some tarps to cover it. You will also need

animal proof food storage container(s). You will be able to dry out your clothing and sleeping gear in the hot tent.

Since you will have 1.2 hectares of land for single occupancy, a pit toilet should suffice, though it needs to be 100m away from nearest water source to avoid cross contamination. You will likely either have a source of water on your land, or right of way to reach a nearby stream or pond to fill up. As well you will need a means of filtering your water, to reduce boiling requirements.

Once you have to you can make a cistern which can fill with rainwater runoff from your roof(s). That way can have your water source nearby.

Later on you will be able to build yourself a more permanent accomodation as means allow.

2 Lumber/Firewood

One of most important commodities is a source of heating fuel. At least half of your land will need to be dedicated to growing wood to keep yourself warm in the winter and cook your food in summer. With 1.2 hectares of land your land is able to produce roughly half a cord (900kg) of regular firewood, or as much as a full cord of short rotation coppice willow (1800kg).

You should aim to plant at least 3 trees for each you cut down, because not each one will make it to adulthood. To plant a willow is fairly straightforward process of taking a cutting roughly the width of a finger in spring that has 6 buds, and sticking it into some wet soil so that 5 of the buds are in the ground, and one bud is above ground. Willows need lots of water to grow well, so you may need to water it during any dry weeks, at least for first 2-3 years. Alder is a good nitrogen fixing tree that you can also grow in wet areas. Otherwise it is easier to plant them in a wetland like environment that stays moist most of the year. Poplar, black locust and honey locust are coppicable trees that can grow in drier areas.

It is good to get familiar with what tree species grow well on your land, and the fastest growers with best quality wood, are best candidates for either taking cuttings from, or to grow from seed.

3 Growing Food

In order to produce enough food to feed one person for a year you'll need to cultivate an area that it at least a quarter hectare (50m by 50m or 164ft by 164ft). About 2/3 of your crop can be something starchy, wheras the remaining third should be a nitrogen fixing legume of some kind, such as bean or pea family. For example the North American traditional arrangment is corn, beans and squash. Two thirds are starchy (corn and squash) and one third is nitrogen fixing protein source (beans).

You can also use the other quarter hectare for growing perennials food crops, such as hazelnuts, peashrub, elderberries, nannyberries, apples, pears, plums, persimmons, walnuts, pecans, oaks, etc.

Eventually you will be able to subsist entirely on the perennials, without having to put in the extra effort of annuals.

For salad greens there are many options, some of the easiest being dandelions in spring and autumn, and sunflower greens for summer and autumn. Grape leaves from the native grape vine are also a good candidate for summer greens. You can dry or pickle greens for the winter. Though you can also have a winter source of vitamin C via red/blue spruce needle tea, or white pine needle tea. Note that fir, yew, and red pine needles are toxic, so know what you're getting.

Initially if you already have a woodland on site, you'll be able to collect dead wood for burning. But dead wood is good for building soil, and as a host for mushrooms. So as soon as you are able, it will be best to use cord-wood, or wood that has been cut, dried and stored for the special purpose of being used as firewood.

Generally trees are cut down in the winter, and piled up, when the ground is frozen, as it easier to move large logs. then split, stacked and dried in the spring/summer, so they are ready for use in the autumn and winter.

Spring is typically planting time, so time for splitting logs may be limited.

4 Transportation

The best and most reliable vehicular transportation in the area is a single speed bicycle. While multi-speed bicycles can make it easier to go up hills and faster to go down them, the gear shift mechanism has a tendency of breaking, so single speed is more reliable. Such as by having 32 teeth on the front wheel, and 16 teeth on the back wheel, a 2:1 ratio. If you have many hills to climb, then you may wish to have 18 or 20 teeth on the back wheel.

For moving things you will want to have a rack over the back wheel with pannier bags. For transporting larger things, you will want to have a trailer of some kind.

Eventually you may wish to invest in a mid-drive kit to convert your bicycle into an e-bike.

For traveling in the winter you will need to use a fat-bike, which is the ones with the wide tires, they are able to go over snow with good grip. Depending on your property, you may also wish to make or get snow shoes.

5 Communication

For communication the easiest thing is a phone, though you will need a way of charging it. That can be done with either a solar panel, a thermo-electric generator you can use with your wood stove, or a pico hydro electric generator if you're lucky enough to have a stream or river going through your property. Another option is to have a battery bank (such as a 1kW e-bike battery) that can charge in any outlet when you go into town for the market.

6 Market

Currently the best market in the area is Keady Market, as it has the lowest barrier to entry. All the other markets need board approval before someone can sell there. Hopefully we will have more low-barrier markets in the future as well.

7 Socialization

For the pilot we will probably get a fairly large piece of land, and segment it into multiple 3 acre chunks, so you will have neighbours that are in the same situation as yourself, from whom you can get help, and whom you can help.

Also you will have support from the program co-ordinators.

8 Call to Action

Notably, if there is little or no interest in this program, then it will likely be halted, and wont be available in future.

So if you are sincerely interested in joining the program, then can leave a voicemail message at Lyis Food Forestry 226-537-0147 with your name, contact info, and that you are interested in joining the homestead farmer program. Or you can email lyis@liberit.ca with the same information possibly from your local library.

You can also get your friends who are interested to send in that they are interested as well. Ideally if you send an email then you will explain why you think you are a good candidate for the program, this will help us in choosing the first participants.

Additionally you can speak to your local city councilors, mayor and deputy mayor, expressing an interest in becoming a homesteading farmer. (Owen Sound City Hall @ 808 2nd Avenue East, Owen Sound, phone: 519-376-1440, email: council@owensound.ca). The city currently has vacant land which could be used as a temporary place where people can camp while they wait for the county to allocate some land for homesteading.

You can also talk to Grey county staff at the county building (595 9th Ave East, Owen Sound, phone: 519-376-0445, email: housing@grey.ca) expressing your interest in becoming a homesteading farmer. That can also be very helpful, as it is the county who is in charge of the land usage and allocation, and thus will be one of if not the most important aspect of this program.

For additional reading material you can check out <https://lyis.ca> for technical information and for spiritual information <https://1being.org>

May you have health, wealth, community, liberty, purpose, unlimited love, joyful equanimity and gratitude. May you be blessed.