## ANIMAL LIFE IN THE GARDEN CONT.

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England sheep rarmers once formed a successful crowexterminating cooperative because they thought crows
were killing new-born lambs. The following year when
their pastures dried up they discovered that crows were
the natural control for grubs that ate the grass roots,
Mithout the crows they were soon without pasture.

One last friend I will mention is the skunk, Naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton once touted the skunk as
replacement for the eagle as our national emblem.
Tongue-in-cheek to be sure, But Seton reasoned that the
skunk is more of a friend to man, eating harmful grubs
and field mice, Further, he has stripes like our flag,
is fearless, never fires unless fired upon, and always
emerges the victor by a nose.

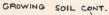
## Backyard Livestock: How to Grow Meat for Your Family

book entru...one which is definitely as good in general as (Belanger's) and even superior in certain ar Excellent general coverage of how to select and raise poultry, rabbits, sheep, goats, pigs, and veal calves. Also goes into raising their feed to keep costs low, de-tailed plans for building shelters for each, butchering, tanning, and extensive veterinary info." -- Earthbooks Lending Library.

"Maybe Steven Thomas should have called this excellent book, 'Economical Backyard Livestock,' because his focus is not only on how to care for the animals from which you take your food, but on the most economical way to raise them -- and that information is necessary unless homestead stock are to be just an expensive hobby." --Organic Gardening and Farming.

288 pp. Paper \$5.95; Cloth \$8.95. Add 50¢ for shipping. THE COUNTRYMAN PRESS, TAFTSVILLE, VERMONT 05073





Does your village pile its leaves in a dump? If so, the under layers will likely be black and crumbly nature's own compost, Do you have a compest pile? If so, your favorite barber may be glad to save out hair which would otherwise be sweet up and thrown away. It a good addition to a compost pile, or a good mulch nigh in nitrogen.

Do you have access to a woods? A few bushels from the forest floor would make a good mulch under young avergreens or other acid-loving trees or bushes. For plants that like a high PH add lime when you mulch with forest topsoil.



## by doug jones WATER, WEEDS, WORMS, AND MULCH

The practice of mulching, or covering the soil, is being increasingly recognized as a valuable tool by vegetable farmers and gardeners alike. Some people use it primarily as a weed control method, others value it's shility to retain moisture, but it does both of these things and much more. Sometimes, however, mulch can have a negative impact, so let's examine its functions and learn how to use it right.

It is important to realize that Nature keeps most of her soil covered with decaying organic matter from previous years' growth. When soil is bared to the elements, it can easily gain or lose too much moisture and organic matter, especially if it is a light (sandy) sail. Son and oxygen will "burn" up the organic matter, especially if it is a light (sandy) sail. Son and oxygen will "burn" up the organic matter, instead of its being digested by the thousands of species of soil organisms that form a stable humus or nutrient bank, for new plant growth. Bere soil can also dry out faster, or wash away in heavy rains, or, especially in the case of heavy soils; form a hard crust on the surface.

The different mulching materials available to you will have differing effects on your garden. The most available mulch in dairy country, is old or spoiled hay — many farmers, especially after last year's bad hay season, have old hay that they would love to have cleared from their barns to make way for the new stuff. If they's a lready taken it out and piled it somewhere, even better — the rains will have started it rotting, which is what you went Despite the sliminess of some of the bales, partly rotted hay will "dissolve" into your soil by next spring and not interfere with tillage, The same is true of other mulches —leaves, saw dust, woodohips, pine needles, newspaper— in their fresh state, all are high in carbon, low in nitrogen. This means they can tie un nitrogen in your soil as they decay, starving your vegetables. The microorganisms will take nitrogen from the top soil layer to digest these carbonaceous materials. The sol

Warning: much can't take care of all your weeds -prass will come through if you don't mulch heavy enough (3-4"sfter it has settled), some animals in the rows or beds will come through the same spaces as the vegetables. You must deal with these, if you have future gardens in mind -one annual weed casts thousands of seeds some do it in July, most in August. Weed thoroughly before mulching, especially in the rows of vegetables, and then keep pulling the escapees. Finally, when those you missed shoot up suddenly and start flowering, take a sickle around the garden and cut them off as low as possible (pulling big weeds often disturbs vegetable roots) -it's worth the effort.

A word on hoes and sickles - these can be valuable tools if kept razor sharp and used at the right time. When annual weeds are less than three inches tall, a light scraping with a sharp hoe just below the surface will easily do them in. You'll notice that you can kill 95% of the weeds between your rows with a hoe, leaving a few in the rows to pull by hand, les a file on the bevelse dep of the hoe, pushing toward the edge. We even file the sides of the hoe blade, for hoeing in our narrow 7" spinach rows.

One thing I Torgot—mulch prevents the fruits of your vegies from rotting, worms, or insects through soil contact-this is important for cukes, beans, summer squash, unstaked tomatoes, and melons.

Good luck - you'll be glad you mulched.

